

Anne Tulkin Testimony
CIP Budget

February 6, 2024

Good evening. My name is Annie Tulkin. I am an 8 year resident of the Long Branch neighborhood in Silver Spring. I'm here tonight to talk about FY25-30 Planning Board and Montgomery Parks budget request, which has direct impacts on my community and other communities across Montgomery County which have been designated by the State's Department of Natural Resources as "Greenspace Equity Areas" by the and have also been determined to be "overburdened" and "underserved" by the Maryland Department of the Environment's environmental justice screening tool (https://mde.maryland.gov/Environmental_Justice/Pages/EJ-Screening-Tool.aspx and <https://dnr.maryland.gov/pages/parkequity.aspx>). This means that my community is disproportionately impacted by environmental issues which result in poor air quality and increased heat, and it also means that community members in Long Branch and Quebec Terrace have less access to greenspace and parks. If the County Executive's proposed budget is passed, this could greatly reduce or cut the funding for the projects that are meant to address historic and persistent inequity in several underserved communities, including, but not limited to, funding for:

- The Long Branch Parks Initiative, which is an equity priority aimed at finally bringing resources to create vibrant, safe, accessible parks spaces to Long Branch.
- The Wheaton Regional Park Master plan. Where cutting funds would disproportionately impact the area directly east of Wheaton Regional Park which according to the state's DNR equity map and MDE's environmental justice map is designated as the lowest equity score.
- Renovations to the Lyttonsville Civic Green. Large sections of Lyttonsville and neighboring Rosemary Hills are also identified with low equity scores.

These are only a few of the projects that would face cuts and they are in the areas with the greatest need.

Additionally, with climate change bearing down on us and transit equity on my mind, cutting funding to projects to enhance bike trails and promote vision zero and pedestrian safety, and accessibility, specifically in areas within the Purple Line walkshed in Long Branch and other areas of the county seems ill advised.

Park spaces serve as space to encourage physical activity and social connections through the lifespan, across communities and abilities. Professionally, I work on disability and accessibility related issues, and I would be remiss if I did not mention that some of the funds that are on the chopping block are meant to bring park spaces into

ADA compliance and to universally design spaces to make them usable for all community members.

It is for the aforementioned reasons that I encourage the council to support the full Parks budget request.