

My name is Eva Santorini. My husband and I have lived in the Rosemary Hills section of Silver Spring since 1988. As I have done in the past, I am grateful to you for this opportunity to offer public testimony on the long-term County's CIP Budget and, specifically, support of our beloved County parks and Montgomery County's Department of Parks.

## **PARKS**

We live around the corner from Rosemary Hills-Lyttonsville Park which is especially popular and beloved for its open green space and its well-visited athletic fields and tennis courts. I love to watch neighbors during my walks: young and old; homeowners and apartment dwellers; long-established neighbors and newly-arrived immigrant families; dog walkers; students; and fitness fans. My favorite sight is seeing children learning to navigate the playground equipment and watching some run, just enjoying themselves as they chase a ball or each other.

Support of Montgomery County's Department of Parks continues to be critical, especially as the County faces budget shortages. After the neighboring communities of Lyttonsville, Rosemary Hills, and Rock Creek Forest advocated for long-neglected maintenance issues and improvements of Rosemary Hills-Lyttonsville Park, we recently received an update from Lori Moore on the improvements that had been promised: some changes will go ahead, while some are in danger of being delayed due to budget constraints.

As the Purple Line inches towards completion, we are excited about the Lyttonsville Civic Green. The transformation of this tiny parcel of land - still used as a construction staging area during PL construction - into a beautiful park which will serve as the perfect spot to honor the historically Black community of Lyttonsville. Users of the Capital Crescent Trail which will run adjacent to the small park will be able to rest there and read historic panels.

One program that I want to specifically call out is the **EXCELLENT Weed Warrior program**, headed with great diligence by Mc. Corinne Stephens for many years. The training I received years ago has been invaluable and continues to make a big difference: keeping non-native invasives at bay and sharing the relatively easy information with neighbors helps keep our parks – and our ecosystem - healthier. The Weed Warrior newsletters are a great resource of information and let us know of new volunteer opportunities. Now that Silvia Nuñez has joined the program, awareness of the insidious problems of non-native invasives are being shared within the Hispanic community, as well.

## **RECREATION**

Ensuring funding for our County's Department of Recreation and its 37 Rec centers is more critical than ever. Many of the facilities are old and are being used more and more and require

sufficient funding for staffing and maintenance. Summer recreation programs provide a safe and fun time for children and youth. The use of fitness centers and attendance in after-school programs and classes for seniors around the county continues to rise. The building and equipment (HVAC, security cameras, plumbing, etc.) need to be maintained and replaced.

I would like to draw your attention to one specific project that has been in the making for many years: the Linden-Lyttonsville Museum which is to be temporarily housed at the Gwendolyn E. Coffield Community Recreation Center. Patricia Tyson continues to exhibit a large-scale display of historic photographs during February in celebration of Black History Month.

### **LIBRARIES**

I care deeply for our precious Montgomery County libraries. They are real ‘soft diplomacy’ investments in our children and all residents, and promote literacy and knowledge and curiosity and quality of life and lifelong learning. As a child, my sisters and I often spent much of our summer days reading and keeping cool in the air-conditioned, comfortable, and safe libraries. Even today I feel rich when visiting my local libraries and leaving with a few new books to devour.

### **RIDE-ON BUS SERVICE**

I cannot say enough of the wonderful Ride-On bus service! THANK YOU – the system works so well! The drivers are courteous and run on time, and you can’t beat “free!”

In closing I would like to thank you for this opportunity to speak up and support some of the wonderful programs and departments I feel strongest about in Montgomery County.

Eva Santorini



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