

Short List Site Analysis

Recommended Sites in or within 2 Miles of Cabin John Regional Park (CJRP)

- #1 --- Noah's Arc
- #2 --- Pee Wee Soccer Field and adjacent open field

Additional Site Evaluations

Within 2 Miles of CJRP - Falls Road Local Park, Wall Local Park, Timberlawn Local Park

Within CJRP - Deer Pen Area, Campground Road Site

#1 Noah's Arc

It is staffs' opinion that this site is a feasible location for a DEA. (*Figure 4*)

The original area for Noah's Arc was clear and open, approximately 3/4 Acres and was calculated in the Regional Parks' 1/3 Development ratio required for Regional Parks. The area has a slope of 0-3%. An additional 1/4-Acre could be taken from the surrounding forest. If done carefully by hand, according to our park forest ecologist, erecting fencing would not harm large trees, and could make the site a total of 1 Acre in size. According to the park manager, the existing parking lot is shared with other park users and picnickers and would provide usable parking spaces for dog owners. The site would provide plenty of shade, a desirable factor in DEAs, and nearby water could be restored. An existing bridge across the railroad tracks remains from the Noah's Arc activity. It is in good repair and could easily be reopened for dog owner access.

Some negative aspects include the following. Using the existing bridge would take dogs close to picnickers and other park users. A split rail fence could be erected to provide a sense of separation at key locations if necessary. There is another possible entry point. However, users would have to walk across the tracks at grade. This provides an entry point closer to the parking lot. Risk Management will advise us on how to do that safely if it is decided to use this point of entry. Possible solutions include installation of automatic gate which closes when a train is in the vicinity, whistles and lights as for a real train crossing, signs to warn users about trains, or the train itself could be restricted to slower speed at that point which is close to the station anyway.

These solutions carry a variety of price tags and differing degrees of liability, on which Risk Management should advise (*Figure 3*). The Miniature Train operates full time, 7 days a week 4 Months of the Year; May - August and during the months of April and September runs only on weekends. It does not operate October through March. The surrounding forest has an under story of plants which will have to be removed or will eventually be trampled. The site was reforested approximately 10 years ago and is now grown into a sparse forest with under story consisting mainly of non-native invasive species. Dangerous and dead trees within and around the proposed DEA fenced area would have to be removed for safety but no living trees would have to be removed. According to our Forest Ecologist, it is not something she would have suggested given the fact that CJRP is already very close to the 1/3:2/3 ratio, however, since it is in a preexisting disturbed area, if this is the best location for a DEA, clearing the under story will be excusable for the better public good.

Staff also feels that the public will have serious opposition to adding any new development anywhere in the park. Clearing a forested area will also be their concern.

#2 Pee Wee Soccer Field and the Adjacent Open Field (Figure 5)

This site is next to the Pee Wee Soccer Field at the southern end of Cabin John Regional Park and accessed by way of the main entrance road from Westlake Drive. At first thought, this was the most ideal site and a number one choice for a successful DEA, according to the park manager. The site can accommodate 1 Acre in size, utilizes existing parking areas, has a water source nearby, is in no apparent conflict with existing park uses.

The main conflicts for this site are two. The issues include: conflicts with overflow parking and probable protest from local citizens.

Povich Field issue: Regular games for permitted games throughout the park start at 5:30 PM during the permit season. On a regular night in the summer, all parking lots are full to capacity. In addition to ball players, the park is open to ice skaters, tennis players, walkers, joggers, basketball players, spectators, etc. and all the parking spaces are needed. With the addition of the Povich Field, additional parking was necessary. There are approximately 25 - 30 games a year and each has potential to draw large crowds. It cannot be predicted when there will be those extra large crowds. It was estimated that spaces for up to 50 cars was needed. The Pee Wee Soccer Field was fitted with lights by Bruce Adams in order to provide safe overflow parking to address the problem. *Staff's solution:* Share the site with overflow parking. The figure drawn on the map allows for a 1 Acre DEA and still leaves 16,000 sq. ft. for over flow parking. According to our park engineer, one parking space measures 8 x 10 feet or 80 sp. ft. The area as drawn would accommodate 4 times as many spaces as suggested parking up to 200 cars.

Staff is aware that neighbors have objected vehemently to other facilities being proposed at the sight as well as other places in the park. They feel that the park is completely built out and no more facilities should be constructed. The residents immediately adjacent in the high-rise apartments have stated they don't want to look out their windows and see anything but green space.

Additional Site Evaluations within 2 miles of Cabin John Regional Park

Falls Road Local Park (Figure 6) a possible location exists only in the 1 acre spot nearest to Falls Road on the east side of the park. The size is right, there seems to be enough parking but the aerial photo shows cars using the grass as overflow parking even though there is no game in progress. The area is flat and large enough for the 1 acre DEA, has water near by and some trees for shade. Rachel Newhouse, park designer, and landscape architect, is of the opinion that having a DEA close to that type of playground may enhance the experience. Theme-wise she feels they are compatible. The playground was provided by McDonald's Frontier Village.

The other two areas at Falls Road are not suitable. They are too close to the ball fields. Both are now grown up with clumps of shrubs and small trees that are not mowed. They may have field drain outlets in them or are rocky. There was 1 dog walker in the park and 2 others were walking on the sidewalks around the park but not in. One staff experienced a very crowded parking lot around the playground. According to the park manager: "While Falls Road has the space, additional parking would be a necessity. The playground is heavily used meaning the existing parking is strained to the max between ballgames and the playground. The neighborhood has also had issues with people parking on the side streets. That area in question is the closest to adjacent neighbors to the north, which could present an issue".

Wall Local Park: (Figure 7) Not recommended. The three polygons as outlined on the attached maps are not suitable. The existing trees and wooded areas act as buffers to the busy traffic on the 3 adjacent roads. Old Georgetown, Nicholson, and Executive. Putting up a fenced DEA would necessitate clearing the under story and thus exposing the area. There appears to be enough parking. There were no dog walkers there on Monday morning.

- 1) In the wooded area on the west adjacent to Old Georgetown Road are paved trails with an exercise course. Putting up a DEA would interfere with use of the trails. In addition, the area is wooded with mature trees and well established under story of holly, pines and other bush species. Some non-native invasive species exist as well but mostly at the edges. Furthermore, after the weekend rains the northern end was wet.
- 2) The area due south of the Swim Center is now a parking lot.
- 3) The area in the corner adjacent to Executive Blvd. and Nicholson Lane has a storm water management facility in the open unforested area and would be dangerous to dogs and their owners, and not to mention, most likely not allowed as a shared use. The rest of the area has a few picnic tables and the wooded strip is not suitable mainly because of size.

Timberlawn Local Park: (Figure 8) Not recommended. The area outlined is wooded with mature forest and steep slopes. A paved trail winds through the area as well. There appears to be enough parking spaces. There was no visible water source. There didn't seem to be any place there to put a DEA without displacing other facilities. The soccer fields were worn in the middle indicating heavy use. There were no dog walkers there.

Additional Site Evaluations within Cabin John Regional Park

The following sites in CJRP were ruled out.

Deer Pen Area (Figure 9) This site was eliminated from the list primarily because of it being completely forested and it was only about 3/4 Acre in size. Furthermore, a known archaeological site is located very near or within the site. Although the site has adequate parking, a suitable path directly to it, which is now used by hikers and dog walkers, and is otherwise acceptable for a DEA, staff felt that the site should be deleted from the list. This site is in the middle of a high quality forest. Other sites that were not forested could be utilized. According to Carole Bergmann, Forest Ecologist, the woods are of high quality with tree girths averaging 10-20", and consisted of several species of oaks and tulip poplars. The under story was also present and healthy which is a rarity in this area of large deer population.

Campground Road Site at Tuckerman Lane (Figure 10) The site was eliminated from the list primarily because of its location in the 100 yr. Floodplain. Much of the site is wetlands and contains many wetland species of plants as were described by Carole Bergmann. One acre could be drawn there but staff agreed to eliminate it.

Recommended Sites within 2 Miles of Leisure World

- #1 -- Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park
- #2 -- East Norbeck Local Park

Additional Site Evaluations within 2 Miles of Leisure World

– Olney Manor Recreational Park, Northwest Golf Course

#1 Norbeck-Muncaster Neighborhood Park (Figure 11)

Staff recommends this location as its # 1 top choice. The site has existing parking for 16 cars and 2 more could be striped. There is water, and 1.5 acres is currently mowed. The mowed area is almost level with a slope of about 2% to the north. According to Park Forest Ecologist, the forested area is of low quality. It could be fenced in to provide shade with little harm to its quality. This site would accommodate at least one acre and could even be 2 or more acres in size with few limitations. According to the park Manager this site gets very little use. It is ready to be built.

There are a few concerns that need to be addressed. Direct access to the site is a bit cumbersome as turns off of Muncaster Mill Road at this time. Improvement to Norbeck Road may or may not improve this situation. Presently vehicles must make a tight turn onto a narrow driveway soon after turning off of Norbeck Road. Leaving the facility one must make a right turn only onto Muncaster Mill Road. The short distance for Norbeck Rd. currently makes this dangerous.

There is currently one existing home located immediately adjacent to the park boundary on the south side below the existing ball field. One staff was concerned about opposition from adjacent landowners and residents. The house itself is 100' from the park boundary. The DEA we would install could easily be separated from the property line further by locating it at the back of the site.

The 16 parking spaces are currently shared by park users, Recreation Center users and with the churchgoers immediately adjacent to the recreation center. One staff was concerned that a DEA would not be compatible with the church and recreation center. Gwen Wright of Historic Preservation states the significance of that historic church. It is a freedman's black church and the community center which was an historic black school from the 20's are all that remain of the historic Norbeck settlement; a settlement of freed black slaves who settled in this area.

The recreation center was not designated as historic because it had been altered. According to the park manager, church services occur only on Sunday morning and Tuesday evening. Scheduling the DEA to be closed during those times can solve that conflict. Also, according to the park manager, the recreation center building occasionally hosts a summer camp during the morning hours however it's use should not be a conflict with DEA users.

There is a possible conflict with pending development in the wooded area to the east as part of Smalls Nursery project and the widening of Norbeck Road. According to Doug Powell of Park Development Review and Dan Hardy of Transportation Planning, there is nothing in either the timing of or the design of either project that would prevent building a DEA at that site. Preliminary plans previously discussed for Smalls Nursery are on hold. Originally, we were to get some land enough to build a soccer field there and improve the entrance to the park however, that has all changed and the soccer field was moved to East Norbeck LP. At this time, September 20, 2004, no new plans are complete. Nothing has been submitted. The last plan for the development of that area showed a storm water management facility, parking, and elderly day care housing as possible use of the wooded area adjacent to the park boundary. The future residents at that site won't be moving in for at least 5 years and probably longer. The developer

is likely waiting for the State Highway Authority (SHA) to complete upgrade of Norbeck Road since they (SHA) will take some of the corner to redo the intersection with Muncaster Mill. SHA will likely break ground in 2-3 years from now for Norbeck Rd./ Muncaster Mill intersection improvements. Design and engineering will occur in the next 1 - 2 years from now since SHA is now just beginning working on designs.

M-NCPPC will most likely get some land in dedication but that is not clear at this point.

#2 East Norbeck Local Park (Figure 12)

Staff recommends this location as it's # 2 top choice. The site proposed at East Norbeck Local Park is an open 1.8 Acre site across Norbeck Road from Leisure World. The site is currently mowed 1-2 times a year by park maintenance to keep it open for development. The approved Concept Plan calls for a Wildflower Meadow with a mowed path around its perimeter for walking and nature study as well as some tree planting to increase the forested edge. This site is number two on our recommendation list because of timing for construction. In it's current condition there is not enough parking and no access. However, once completed the renovations in the park would allow for sufficient parking, a paved 8' wide paved path 545' from handicapped parking, and few if any user conflicts.

A cross walk is being planned for Norbeck Road near the location. Parking will be approximately 545' from the DEA but an 8' wide paved path is proposed to access the site. Accessibility was considered during the facility planning because many folks from Leisure World will be using it.

According to Linda Komes, the Project Manager, the Planning Board approved the Facility Plan for East Norbeck in June of 2003. She sees no serious conflict with the approved plan although an amendment to the approved plan would be required. The RFP for Design work is being drawn up now and will go out in the next few months. According to the Adopted FY05-10 CIP, moneys for design and construction documents were made available. Site improvements and utilities installation will begin in FY07 and continue through FY09.

Staff expressed concern about the timing of the project renovations, the distance from the parking lot to the site, and with citizen approval of Concept Plan changes.

Timing of renovations: Staff is concerned because renovations will likely not begin for another three years and assumes the Department would like to build a DEA within this fiscal year. The proposed parking lot will be 545' feet away. The distance is of concern for people with disabilities and difficulty walking or in wheelchairs. Some staff feels that is too long of a distance for someone in a wheel chair. However, the public had no concerns about that during the public hearing to approve the concept. Finally, Staff cannot predict what the citizens will want or not want in their Local Park. Nonetheless, the citizens were quit strong-minded about their desire to keep the field for passive uses, specifically a path through a wildflower meadow. Because this Concept Plan was approved it is strongly recommended that it be taken back to the public for input before amendments are made.

Additional Site Evaluations within 2 miles of Leisure World

Two sites at Olney Manor Recreational Park

The committee looked at two proposed sites in Olney Manor Recreational Park (*Figure 13*). The two sites numbered 1 and 2, as drawn on the aerial photo, are approximately 1 Acre in size. Both sites could utilize the existing out field fence of the respective ball fields, which would lessen the overall cost. Parking and water is available within 50'. Both areas are presently mowed grass with a number of good shade trees. Security is not a factor. Current use of both sites is as open space and un-programmed

The park manager states: "The park is categorized as a Recreational Park and as such is built out with active use facilities and according to the park manager is built to capacity. The primary draw back of these sites is a matter of what value is non-programmed open space. Because it is a highly active use area, un-programmed open green space is very limited and the park manager feels that it is something the park users value. Users who wish to lay out a blanket and read a book, picnic, or throw a Frisbee utilize these areas. Site number 1 is also used for Horse Shoe games; 2 horseshoe pits are present.

Another concern in both cases is liability of injury from fly balls, which could and does occur. According to the park manager balls come over the fences regularly. Fly balls could potentially drop into the DEA, causing harm to people and dogs that are not necessarily paying attention to the game as spectators do". Staff suggests that mesh screening similar to that used at golf driving ranges may be installed to prevent that. It would also add to the expense of the site construction.

Site # 2 has unanswered questions about the PEPCO Right-of-Way. Whether that is an allowed use in the their ROW. Staff was unable to get a conclusive answer from PEPCO at this time.

Based on the above factors, staff feels these sites could be considered however, pending solutions to the unanswered questions. Furthermore, staff feels that these factors should be considered and weighted very heavily in the decision. Staff does NOT recommend them as a primary SHORT LIST sites.

The North West Golf Course (NWCG) (*Figure14*)

The area WEST of the parking lot at NW Golf Course seemed to be a possible site. It is mowed and water is at the nearby golf course. Much of it is in the Sensitive Area Buffer. The site is previously disturbed. Park Police attest that it would be good for security of the parking lot since a lot of vehicles are broken into there during the day. Dogs and owner presence would deter that.

Questions remain about conflict with existing uses of golf course. It may have been a site where sludge from dredging the pond was put. Staff has not been able to determine that at this time. If it is decided that the site is not in conflict it could possibly be used as DEA in the future. Staff does NOT recommend it as one of our primary SHORT LIST sites.

Conclusion

All other parks within the 2-mile radius of Cabin John Regional Park and Leisure World were eliminated from our Long List based on our site selection criterion.

Staff's suggestions: Conduct a public meeting to brief the public on the entire issue and the process followed by the Site Selection Committee. Review the need, the process and the alternatives. List all the pros and cons and facilitate a discussion.