

# *Kemp Mill Civic Association*

Silver Spring, MD 20902

A Registered Montgomery County Civic Association

June 6, 2001

## **VIA FACSIMILE**

Arthur Holmes, Jr.  
Vice Chairman  
Montgomery County Planning Board of the  
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760

Re: **Park and Trail Concept Plan for the Kemp Mill Vicinity  
(Public Hearing Draft)**

Dear Mr. Holmes:

I currently serve as president of the Kemp Mill Civic Association (“KMCA”) and submit these comments on the Public Hearing Draft of the Park and Trail Concept Plan for the Kemp Mill Vicinity (“Plan”) on the KMCA’s behalf.

As an initial matter, I applaud the careful attention paid to the parks in the area by your staff in developing the Plan. It is clear that they understand the area and its needs. As a community comprising heavy concentrations of families with small children and senior citizens, the parks in the area for us assume a particular importance. With that in mind, I ask that you consider the points addressed in these comments as indicative of those items on which we place the highest priority and of those isolated issues where the Plan gives us cause for concern.

### **Kemp Mill Urban Park**

This park is a central gathering point for much of the community and also one of its most visible landmarks. As such, its physical condition reflects in a very public way on the community as a whole. We agree with the Plan’s conclusion that the park suffers from deteriorated facilities and believe that it is in urgent need of attention. Indeed, although we are pleased to note that the staff preliminarily has recommended development of a plan for “future total park renovation” (Plan at 34), we would urge that such renovation take place sooner rather than later.

We include here several specific items – some quite simple, and others that might require more substantial effort -- that should be addressed even in advance of a comprehensive renovation:

- The park's ponds are in disrepair and should be thoroughly cleaned.
- The playground itself experiences heavy use, particularly on the weekends, and would benefit from the installation of additional swings and other playground equipment.
- The buildings, slide and other public surfaces surrounding and in the park are in many places marred by graffiti, contributing to a less than pleasant overall appearance. We would greatly appreciate any efforts by the Board to clean up those surfaces as part of its initial efforts.
- In a similar vein, the concrete sidewalks within the park are showing their age and should be repaired.
- Dark corners of the park should be better illuminated, and consideration should be given to urging the police department to increase monitoring, preferably through occasional evening or nighttime walk-throughs.<sup>1</sup> At times, the park has witnessed vandalism, altercations or drunken or other unruly activity that lighting and an increased police presence could discourage.
- The park's drinking water fountain does not work properly and is in disrepair. It should be replaced or materially improved.
- We agree with your staff that landscaping should be added to create a buffer between the basketball court and the playground area. The park generally could use more landscaping and regular maintenance attention – pruning of bushes, more frequent addition of mulch to the playground area and the like. Moreover, the refurbishment of the existing picnic table and perhaps the addition of another would be welcome.
- The addition of another trash receptacle would be welcomed.

**Kemp Mill Estates Local Park (on Claybrook)**

We agree with your staff's conclusion (Plan at 34) that this park requires renovation, particularly in the playground and around the recreation center. This park possesses great potential, and we believe would be even more heavily used if renovated.

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<sup>1</sup> We are unaware that such walkthroughs take place at present.

### **Proposed Changes to the Sligo Connector**

The Plan discusses three options to extend the hiker and bicycle trail in Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park to connect with Wheaton Regional Park (Plan at 19-22). Staff preliminarily has recommended the third option, which would require extension of the trail through parkland south of Arcola Avenue to Kemp Mill Road.

We expect that some residents of Kemp Mill may view this alternative with concern. Objections likely will include worry that the proposed extension will impact existing wildlife refuges, displacing deer and other animals into residents' yards and destroying existing tree cover. Residents also may voice concern that the proposed route – which has preliminarily been recommended in part because of safety concerns – inadvertently may create *unsafe* conditions. Because the route, as currently contemplated, would require users of the trail to double back by some distance in order to cross Arcola at the Kemp Mill Road intersection, some residents may feel that users may choose simply to cross further up on Arcola.

We do not in this letter take a position on the staff proposal for the connector. However, we would urge the Board to consider the various alternatives carefully and, if it is inclined to adopt the staff's preliminary recommendation, we request that it advise the KMCA in a timely manner so that we may solicit the input of residents in an organized fashion. If, after such consultations, the KMCA decides to oppose the proposal, we would then ask that it be rejected.

### **Northwest Branch**

We have no specific comments on the discussion of Northwest Branch in the Plan, other than to note that many residents are quite pleased with the current status of Northwest Branch as a wonderful wildlife habitat. The new wooden footbridges and signs have engendered very positive reaction. The KMCA generally applauds the staff's recognition of the value of this community resource and encourages continued restraint on the part of the Board when considering changes in the name of improvement to the area.

### **Traffic Island at Kemp Mill Road and Arcola**

Finally, we would like to address an item not mentioned in the Plan – the traffic island at the intersection of Kemp Mill Road and Arcola Avenue. The island currently is an eyesore. It has experienced heavy use in connection with recent construction activity. As one of the gateways to our community, we ask that the Board consider landscaping the island through the addition of attractive, colorful foliage of some sort. The KMCA hopes to generate sufficient funds in connection with a separate project involving the traffic island at Lamberton and Arcola to support the purchase and placement of a community

sign on the Kemp Mill/Arcola island as well, but we lack the resources to tackle this larger project.

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In closing, I, on behalf of the KMCA, reiterate our enthusiastic support for the objectives articulated in the Plan. In this submission, we have noted those areas that represent our priorities or that raise particular sensitivities of which we want the Board to be aware. I thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments and invite the Board or your staff to contact me via any of the means listed below should you have any questions or desire further to discuss any of the topics addressed in this letter.

Respectfully submitted,

Behnam Dayanim  
President, Kemp Mill Civic Association

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