

Blandair Q and A

Questions received on Blandair Park in e-mails after the Public Meeting of 9-11-08

Answers by the Department of Recreation and Parks.

1. Q: *Why do the fields need to be opened until 11:00 p.m. ? If it is better for the neighborhood, why can't that area of the park close at 9:00 p.m.?*

A: By lighting the fields until 11:00 p.m., more games can be scheduled for each field to meet the demand for playing time. In this way, usage of the fields is optimized, thus reducing the need to build more fields. Typically, youth teams are scheduled up to 8 pm and adult teams from 8 to 11 pm. With the lights on, players can finish games that go into extra innings or into overtime play, but the lights will go off automatically at 11 p.m. We would like to point out that the lights are especially designed to minimize light spill into the surrounding areas and into the night sky, so the effect on neighborhoods should be minimized. However, not all games will be played late, and there are days when games may not be scheduled, so the lights will not be turned on, or could be turned off early. Also, some park activities, such as skateboarding, may be lighted only to 8 pm on school nights.

2. Q: *What facilities do the Glenmont residents want? And what is their expectation of how people will access the park?*

A: Representatives of the Glenmont residents have told the County that they do not want playing fields, parking lots, nor picnic pavilions. They prefer only passive recreation such as pathways, and a small playground. Because they do not want any vehicular access through their community, they would limit access to only pedestrians or bicyclists. Future resolution of these issues is expected.

3. Q: *Wouldn't street parking cause a greater impact on the Glenmont neighborhood than a parking lot inside the park?*

A: It has been our experience that providing adequate parking spaces within parks has alleviated street parking in adjacent neighborhoods. We receive many requests to increase the size of parking areas in our existing parks, and do not recall that anyone has ever asked us to eliminate parking spaces after a park has been built. Street parking in neighborhoods ties up available spaces and poses the hazard of opening car doors into traffic and unloading passengers and gear into the roadway.

4. Q: *Children's garden idea is nice, but expect deer to come through and eat everything, so is it really practical? Maybe just pond and wildlife areas?*

A: Deer do pose a challenge to maintaining a garden. However, there are some measures that we can take to reduce their impact, such as planting less-appetizing varieties of plants and the judicious placement of fencing. Prior to building the park, we are continuing to manage the herd size so that it will be appropriate to the available forage in the natural areas.

5. Q: *A rush to build the multi-purpose fields?*

A: Blandair Regional Park has been in various planning stages for the past ten years. In all of the plan versions—from the earliest concept plans to the more refined master plans—several multi-purpose fields have always been included, because the demand for them has always existed. They are versatile. Several types of sports can be played on them, such as soccer, football, and lacrosse, thus meeting the recreational needs for many players over many seasons. As the time for building the park draws near, three multi-purpose fields have been included in the first phase of construction. The first part of the park that can be built is one that can be accessed by existing roads—the South Area, which is served by Oakland Mills Road. The fields, and their supporting facilities (parking lot, restroom, shelter), and a small playground, have been planned for that area, which is currently open cornfields. It will be approximately two more years before they are ready for play.

6. Q: *I would like to know if the Advisory Committee, citizens and elected officials have had the opportunity to walk the actual site—particularly the high-impact, high-activity areas that are closest to the surrounding residents. If such a site tour hasn't been established, when will it?*

A: The members of the Advisory Committee have visited, and walked, the site on several occasions, as have many elected officials at the State and County levels, from a Governor to State Senators and Delegates, County Executives, and Council Members. The Advisory Committee Members have also toured every one of the proposed access points to the site. Members of the consulting design team and Recreation and Parks staff have often been on site. Currently, the site is difficult for the public to access because of the lack of entry roads and severely limited parking; however, some areas may be observed by driving through Oakland Mills Road. At present, we do not plan to organize another site tour.

7. Q: *I would like to ask about what access would be provided to the three multi-purpose fields of Phase One and what the traffic implications are for the surrounding neighborhoods along Thunder Hill Road, Oakland Mills Road and Old Montgomery Road.*

A: Phase One access will be via Oakland Mills Road to an internal parking lot. The County has commissioned a Traffic Study on the surrounding roads, and it is being developed by a consultant.

8. Q: *I would like to know the measurements and aesthetic style of the proposed multi-purpose building and skateboard park, and what landscaping and screening is proposed to buffer those facilities from the neighbors.*

A: The exact size of the multi-purpose building has not been determined, pending decisions on the programming of activities there. At this time, we are planning to house indoor basketball courts, a meeting room, restrooms, and office space, but it could change. Our consulting architect is developing some sketch plans and intends that there be a unifying theme to all of the structures in Blandair Park that will be reflective of the historic farm. The multi-purpose building will not be erected until a later phase of construction. We anticipate that the skate plaza will be about 40,000 square feet. The use of earth berms as well as evergreen screening will create the buffer.

9. Q: *Regarding the multi-purpose building, what lighting is proposed for the facility, including safety lighting, and what hours will the lights be lit?*

A: Details of lighting have not been worked out, but will include lighting for pedestrian walkways, lights at doorways and for signage; as well as emergency and security lights. The lights will be used after dark, until the park is closed, which is anticipated to be at 11 PM.

10. Q: *I would like to ask why the park can move forward without the county resolving the questions about access via Timesweep Lane and Summer Hollow.*

A: Phase One construction does not require access at those two locations. The County will work towards resolving the access as construction progresses, and hopes that the residents will come to realize the advantages of providing convenient access from their neighborhoods to the new facilities.