

	FORMS/ASSURANCES/CERTIFICATIONS	SUBMISSION
4	Project Narrative (Form Below) The proposal is a narrative description that should specifically address each of the review criteria (see the Application Review Information section on page 17). The project narrative must be under 10 pages, in font size of 11 or larger, and have 1-inch margins. The 10-page limit includes all text and figures. Only include information that is pertinent to the proposal.	Required

Project Narrative

Section 1: Project Data

Submission Date (to State of MD)	08/24/2026
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Applicant Information

Applicant Organization	Maryland Department of Natural Resources
Applicant Contact Name	Molly Pickel & Denisse Guitarra
Applicant Contact E-Mail	Molly.pickel@maryland.gov Denisse.Guitarra@montgomeryparks.org
Applicant Contact Phone	Molly: 443-223-4302 Denisse: 301-495-2483
Project Sponsor Organization	Montgomery Parks (MNCPPC)
Project Sponsor E-Mail	Denisse.guitarra@montgomeryparks.org
Project Sponsor Phone	301-495-2483

Project Information

Project Title	Henderson Ave. Courts and Community Area
Park/Property Name	Wheaton Regional Park
Property Title Holder	Montgomery County (M-NCPPC manages under 1972 agreement – attached)
Property Address/Location	2000 Shorefield Road, Wheaton MD 20902
LWCF Boundary Acreage	3.4-acre project area
Project Type	Combination of New Development (courts area) and Renovation (parking lot area)
Has this property received previous LWCF/ORLP funding?	This property has not previously received LWCF funding since it is not within an encumbered area.
Brief description of project and its impacts (100 words or fewer)	This project will transform an inaccessible, underutilized and unprogrammed gravel lot into a vibrant recreational destination and community gathering spot that serves all ages and abilities. Proposed improvements include four sports courts; seating and picnic areas (including a large picnic shelter); and accessible pedestrian and bicycle connections. Improvements to the adjacent parking include shade tree planting, impervious surface reduction, pedestrian safety, traffic calming, and accessibility. The project advances environmental goals and resiliency through reforestation tree planting, native planting, stormwater management BMPs and habitat enhancement.

Section 2: Project Overview

1. What are the property's physical features (e.g., terrain, water, built structures, existing amenities)? Quantify where possible. (e.g., 50 acres of forested land)

The approximately 3.4-acre project area is located within the Shorefield Area of Wheaton Regional Park and consists primarily of previously developed land. Existing features include a large asphalt parking lot, an overflow gravel parking area, internal drives with parking islands, pedestrian connections, and scattered mature trees. The site generally slopes from north to south toward Henderson Avenue, with steeper slopes concentrated along the southern and eastern edges of the project area. There is a tree canopy beyond the perimeter of the site, with limited trees within the existing parking areas. The site also contains existing stormwater management and drainage infrastructure, including two stormwater management facilities along the southeastern portion of the project area. No streams are located within the immediate project area.

2. What are the current uses of the property? Note whether those uses will be discontinued or remain in place when the project is completed

The project site currently functions primarily as a parking and circulation area serving the Shorefield Area and surrounding amenities within Wheaton Regional Park. The northern portion of the project area contains an existing asphalt parking lot, while the southern portion contains an overflow gravel parking area. Under the proposed project, the primary parking function will remain in place, with the existing asphalt parking lot reconfigured and renovated to improve its layout and incorporate additional landscaped islands and stormwater management. The existing overflow gravel parking area will be repurposed as a new recreation and community gathering area.

3. What site constraints exist, such as utilities, easements, rights-of-way, contamination history, or other physical or legal limitations

Site constraints include existing utilities, stormwater infrastructure, topography, environmental features, and the configuration of existing park facilities. Existing water, sanitary sewer, and electric utilities traverse or occur adjacent to portions of the project area and will need to be considered during future design and construction. Existing stormwater infrastructure includes drainage areas, a storm pipe/network, existing BMPs, and two stormwater management facilities along the southeastern portion of the site. Topographic constraints include moderately steep slopes (15–25%) and steep slopes (25%+), particularly along portions of the southern and eastern site perimeter. Existing tree canopy is also present along the perimeter and represents an additional consideration for site disturbance and development. The site contains Type 2 and Type 3 hydrologic soils, and mapped streams and sensitive-area buffers occur in the surrounding area, although the streams themselves are outside the immediate project area.

Acquisition Description: N/A- No Acquisition Required
Development Description (only if project includes development)

1. What are the planned physical improvements and facilities?

a. New Construction:

- (4) full-size athletic courts – combination of dedicated basketball court, dedicated soccer, and courts striped for multipurpose use
- Large picnic pavilion/shade structure (approximately 30'x60')
- Accessibility upgrades - connections to sidewalks in adjacent neighborhoods, connections to existing trail network in Wheaton Regional Park
- Site amenities – including benches, picnic tables, bike racks, trash/recycling receptacles.
- Utility enhancements – court lighting, site lighting, drinking fountain, hose bib connections, electrical outlets.
- Spaces for community events - food trucks, entry plaza, flexible seating areas
- Environmental improvements - native plantings and landscape trees

b. Areas for Conservation:

- Reforestation (trees, shrubs, no-mow areas): for habitat expansion and visual/auditory screening to adjacent residential properties
- Stormwater management best management practices (such as micro bioretention) with native plant materials
- Landscape tree planting.

c. Rehabilitation:

- Parking lot renovation, including improved drop-off area, traffic calming, ADA parking, sidewalks, and increasing green space by reducing unnecessary impervious surfaces.

2. What are the expected impacts on the natural landscape? Note whether they are temporary disturbances or permanent changes.

The project area has been disturbed since the initial development in the 1960s. As a redevelopment project, additional impacts to the natural landscape will be very limited compared to a new development with the ambitious recreational, environmental, and social connection goals of this project. The summary below identifies the project's temporary disturbances and permanent changes; these are typical of construction projects. However, the table also demonstrates how Montgomery Parks' experienced team (including planners, horticulturists, engineers, landscape architects, urban foresters, operations, and construction managers/inspectors) will manage and mitigate these impacts throughout the planning, design, construction, and operations of this project.

	Example	Management and Mitigation Strategy
Temporary Impacts	Environmental protection (e.g., soil disturbance, erosion, tree protection, forest conservation)	• Work with the Department of Permitting Services and Planning Department to ensure the best strategy and design for protecting environmental resources. • Hold a pre-construction meeting with inspectors and contractors to ensure proper installation and coordinate critical areas. • Maintain sediment controls throughout construction and prior to and after storms. • Install tree protection fencing prior to any work to limit construction access to designated work areas only.
	Routine construction activities and demolition (e.g., construction equipment, deliveries, inspections, stockpiles, debris removal, dust, debris removal, visual impacts)	• Regular on-site presence of construction inspectors and construction managers to ensure continual progress, adherence to applicable safety and environmental regulations, and site cleanup and housekeeping. • Adhere to local regulations for noise and work hours. • Communication between contractor, owner, and public.
	Rough and fine grading, earthwork (e.g., subbase preparation, drainage, excavation for SWM, utilities, footings)	• Ensure compliant erosion and sediment control measures. • Implement same-day soil stabilization in key areas. • Strip and preserve topsoil for reuse. • Limit work to specific areas to control size of disturbance.
	Continuity of public access and awareness (e.g., maintaining public access and use to the carousel, mini-train, adventure playground; safely diverting pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles around the construction zone)	• Maintain regular communication with the public online and on-site in coordination with Public Affairs team. • Establish a plan for phasing, sequence of construction, and maintenance of traffic. Manage impact, build the project in a logical order, and include detour signage, barriers, and fencing. Ensure access around work areas.

Permanent Changes	Flatwork construction activities (e.g., concrete, asphalt, and courts)	• Create accessible walkways and multipurpose trails linking the adjacent residential community into the park and its existing and proposed attractions. • Reconfigure existing parking lot to reduce impervious surface, improve drainage, and increase green space. • Build four new hard-surface courts, in accordance with community requests during the 2022 Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan.
	Implementation of new structures (e.g., picnic shelter, site furnishings)	• Add a large picnic shelter, seating areas, and site furniture to create welcoming environment for community events and informal gathering, resting, spectating, and picnicking. • Add utility improvements (court lighting, electrical, drinking fountain) to attract park users and encourage longer visits.
	Stormwater management	• Implement stormwater management best management practices to capture runoff from the adjacent courts. Previously this gravel lot was untreated, resulting in erosive flows downhill. • Encourage on-site infiltration and create habitat with native trees, shrubs, and perennials.
	Trees and habitat establishment (e.g., reforestation, landscape tree planting, stormwater management)	• Design to not encroach into adjacent forest and protect highest quality trees along the edges; limit tree removals to only where absolutely required by project design. • Increase native vegetative cover (in reforestation areas, landscape trees, and SWM facilities) to promote long-term canopy establishment, habitat creation, and increased species diversity.
	Transformation of a disturbed and underutilized gravel lot into a vibrant public amenity	• Expand access to outdoor recreational amenities (sports courts). • Provide ADA accessible recreational amenities. • Create areas for community gatherings and events. • Integrate multiple environmental enhancements, such as forest expansion, tree planting, and stormwater management, which offer increased shade, improved stormwater infiltration, and habitat value.

Collectively, the temporary disturbances and permanent changes associated with this construction activity will transform the space from a disturbed and underutilized site into a more environmentally beneficial landscape full of recreational activities and amenities for community connection, all of which will benefit the local community will enjoy for years to come.

Population Description

1. What is the most recent census population of the Qualifying Urban Area?

- a. Washington--Arlington, DC--VA—MD: 1,958,361

2. What is the community's low-income status?

- a. The community has a Tract Median Family Income of 62.13% which qualifies it as low income using the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council's Census data.
- b. The community has a CEI Moderately Disproportionate Disadvantaged with Poverty as the main driver.
- c. **OR Tract Median Family Income % - This must be below 80%.** This compares the tract level median family income (MFI) to the Metropolitan Statistical Area/Metropolitan Division (MSA/MD) level MFI. 62.13%.

Section 3: Merit Review Criteria

1. Increasing Access to Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

The project is in the Shorefield Area of Wheaton Regional Park (<https://tinyurl.com/3yeun2n6>), which is adjacent or nearby to several multi-family apartments and townhome communities. These communities house thousands of residents who primarily are people of color and speak a language other than English at home. These communities provide playgrounds for young children, but do not have recreational facilities for older children, teens, and adults. This project will offer active recreational opportunities within convenient walking distance of these multi-family communities.

Wheaton Regional Park functions as a local park for the residents of numerous multi-family communities nearby the park. While there are some neighborhood parks and other public spaces in the general vicinity (within one mile), these parks and public spaces offer few active recreational opportunities for residents older than age 12. This project will add basketball and soccer courts to an area of the park that primarily caters to families with young children.

2. Alignment with Community Needs

During public outreach and community engagement for the 2022 Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan, we heard from residents that this area of the park lacks recreational facilities for older children, teens, and adults. In response, the master plan recommends basketball and soccer courts. Basketball and soccer courts only require a ball to play. Special equipment and athletic attire are not required. These courts provide an affordable and safe place for teens and young adults to gather, play, exercise, and socialize.

During public outreach and engagement for the Wheaton Regional Park master plan -- which was

conducted in English, Spanish and Mandarin -- we received more than 2,000 comments. The outreach campaign included advertisements in English and Spanish on buses, at bus shelters, and at transit stations along major roads nearby to the park. It also included advertisements on Latinx radio and TV stations. A common comment about the Shorefield Area, where this project will add courts, is that it lacks recreational opportunities for teens and adults. See Chapter 2 of the master plan (pp. 13-16) for more information about the planning process and community engagement. See pp. 41-54 of the plan for analysis and all recommendations for the Shorefield Area (<https://tinyurl.com/2r9jef3h>).

In addition, this project supports Goal 4: "Improve What's Already Available" of Maryland's Land Preservation and Recreation Plan, which serves as the state's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan by redeveloping an underutilized area of the park to provide recreational facilities and social gathering spaces the community requested during the master plan public process.

3. Leveraging Resources in Support of Recreation

In repurposing an underused existing area that is largely impervious, the project minimizes impact to existing resources and provides an economical location for redevelopment and improvements to Wheaton Regional Park. The project greatly improves the recreational opportunities in the park by converting overflow parking to active recreation & social spaces.

4. Promoting Conservation and Ecological Benefits

This project will improve heat island effect in this area of Wheaton Regional Park by adding tree canopy and enhanced planting areas in the improved parking lot. In addition, improved stormwater infiltration strategies and habitat creation through both new stormwater facilities and reforestation are part of the project plan. In the development of all park plans, Montgomery Parks strives to maintain and improve downstream water quality through stormwater BMPs.

5. Project Feasibility

Montgomery Parks, part of the bi-county Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), is well suited to successfully implement the Henderson Avenue Courts and Community Area project. M-NCPPC has stewarded public land since 1927, and Montgomery Parks currently manages more than 37,000 acres across 417 parks that serve over one million county residents. M-NCPPC is both a six-time winner of the National Recreational and Parks Association Gold Medal and nationally accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). Our work promotes physical activity, social connection, & environmental stewardship.

Montgomery Parks' project team brings the full array of skills and expertise needed to deliver a transformational project such as the Henderson Avenue Courts and Community Area project. Our staff includes planners, landscape architects, engineers, architects, community outreach specialists, urban foresters, horticulturists, environmental specialists, construction professionals, trades staff and operations personnel. These professionals collaborate throughout planning, design, construction, and operations to ensure that projects are safe, properly funded, accessible, well designed, constructable, and maintainable. Additionally, this project team regularly collaborates on projects like the Henderson Avenue project, including sport courts, parking lots, ADA walkways, trails, site furnishings, picnic areas, stormwater management, outfall restoration, reforestation, tree planting, utility infrastructure, and community gathering spaces). The project team ensure compliance with all federal, state & local requirements.

The planning-level budget included with this application demonstrates a realistic estimate of costs associated with professional services, permitting, construction, and contingency. Montgomery Parks develops and updates a cost estimate at each project milestone to ensure the project remains on budget. At the same time, Montgomery Parks administers a six-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and Operating Budget. The CIP funds new parks, renovated parks, and park acquisitions; this funding is regularly used to provide the required funding match for various state and federal grants and will be utilized for the 1:1 match on the ORLP grant. Our Operating Budget supports community events, maintenance, upkeep, utilities, trash removal, and payroll, for example, this will be largely utilized to provide project management, contract administration, public outreach, construction management/ inspections, and maintenance/operations. This Operating Budget will minimize our administrative costs funded via the ORLP grant and instead maximize the grant funding for park improvements such as recreation, community spaces, accessibility, and environmental enhancements.

The project is supported by a sound, reasonable plan grounded in community input. The project scope was established directly from ideas shared by residents during the Wheaton Regional Park Master Plan engagement process. The site – a previously developed but underutilized existing gravel lot – was thoughtfully selected to ensure the protection of surrounding forests and streams and provide convenient and accessible access from existing park infrastructure (parking lots and walkways) and neighborhood sidewalks. These early planning decisions reduce implementation challenges and construction costs. As the project moves forward into detailed design, Montgomery Parks will continue public outreach including a community meeting, survey, website, signage, and social media.

Once built, the project will be incorporated into our established management workflows. New amenities will be tracked in our asset management software; stormwater management and tree planting areas will be added to our regular horticultural aftercare; all improvements will receive regular maintenance and inspections from operations staff; and structural repairs will be made by our trades crew. The Wheaton Regional Park includes an existing regional maintenance yard that stewards all parks in the Wheaton Management Area, including the regional park itself and the Henderson Avenue project specifically. Collectively Montgomery Parks has the organizational resources, technical expertise, financial stability, and maintenance programs to successfully implement and maintain the project to ensure it best serves the public.