

1
2
3

City of Falls Church
Planning Commission

Meeting Date: 4-20-20	Title: W&OD Dual Trails Project	Agenda No.:
<p>Proposed Motion:</p> <p>WHEREAS: In 2016, the City adopted a master plan for the W&OD which envisions the W&OD as a grand, 16 acre park space within the City, and directly calls for separated walking and biking trails and restored, native landscaping; and</p> <p>WHEREAS: the planned expansion of the Washington and Old Dominion Trail provides significant community benefits, and achieves the essential objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and W&OD Master Plan; and</p> <p>WHEREAS: this project, as well as it’s collaboration with the City’s current work on four trail crossings, makes a significant step toward improving the overall accessibility and safe usage for both pedestrians and bicyclists alike; and</p> <p>WHEREAS: the Planning Commission finds approval of the site plan is consistent with the objectives of Division 7 <i>Site Plans</i>, Chapter 48-1137; and</p> <p>NOW THEREFORE I MOVE THAT: the Planning Commission approves Site Plan Application #2019-1098, with the following conditions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An updated final site plan that addresses the staff comments letter dated March 30th, 2020 must be submitted for review and approval by Planning Director; 2. The updated site plan must also addressing of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reevaluate detour options in the areas of Lincoln Ave and N Winchester Street in light of social distancing needs and one-street configuration. b. Present proof of necessary Arlington County permits as part of project construction detour. c. Coordination with current city storm water management and mitigation efforts 		
<p>Originating Dept. Head: Paul Stoddard , AICP, Planning Director 703-248-5041 PS4-15-20</p>		<p>Report Prepared By: Jeff Hollern, Planner 571-395-0707 JH 4-15-20</p> <p>Akida Rouzi, Principal Planner / Deputy Zoning Administrator 703-248-5104 AR 4-20-20</p>

4
5
6
7

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic has had an unforeseen impact on the schedule and approval process for this project. The pandemic has resulted in the cancellation of both the April 6th and April 20th,

2020 Planning Commission Meetings. In consultation with the Planning Commission Chair, staff has scheduled this item for administrative action, as allowed under the City's site plan ordinance.

To increase public awareness and encourage input, application materials are posted in three places:

- Planning Commission Page: <https://www.fallschurchva.gov/364/Planning-Commission>
- City Project Page: <https://www.fallschurchva.gov/2041/WOD-Dual-Trails>
- NOVA Parks Project Page: <https://www.novaparks.com/parks/washington-and-old-dominion-railroad-regional-park/updates/planned-improvements-to-the-wod-0>

Public comments will be accepted through Monday, April 20, 2020 7:30 pm (note this would have been the start time of the Planning Commission Public Hearing). Comments can be sent to Jeff Hollern jhollern@fallschurchva.gov.

REQUEST:

In consideration of the Planning Commission's April 20, 2020 meeting being canceled, Planning Commission members are requested to provide feedback to staff individually on the site plan application for the proposed Washington & Old Dominion Dual Trails expansion, located along the W&OD Trail between Little Falls Street and North West Street.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is currently considering administrative approval of the project with the following conditions:

- that an updated plan set that addresses outstanding staff comments be submitted for staff review and acceptance
- that the construction detour plan be reconsidered in light of social distancing recommendations and one-way traffic patterns
- that the applicant continue to coordinate with the city on any needed, city-initiated stormwater management and mitigation efforts

UPDATES SINCE PLANNING COMMISSION WORK SESSION DECEMBER 16, 2019

The applicant presented 90% Design plans at the Planning Commission's December 16th, 2019 work session. Incorporating Planning Commission and staff feedback into the Dual Trails expansion, the applicant resubmitted their plans to staff at 100% Design (Attachment 2) on March 9th, 2020.

Also submitted on March 9th, 2020 were 30% Design Plans for a lighting system that could be installed as part of a future effort.

The applicant presented the project to the Architectural Advisory Board on March 11, 2020, which resulted in a positive recommendation to the Planning Commission (Attachment 4). Staff has since reviewed the 100% Design Plans and provided comments to the applicant on March 30th, 2020 (Attachment 3).

52
53 NOVA Parks launched a project website (add weblink) and City staff posted a project website also
54 ([https://www.novaparks.com/parks/washington-and-old-dominion-railroad-regional-](https://www.novaparks.com/parks/washington-and-old-dominion-railroad-regional-park/updates/planned-improvements-to-the-wod-0)
55 [park/updates/planned-improvements-to-the-wod-0](https://www.novaparks.com/parks/washington-and-old-dominion-railroad-regional-park/updates/planned-improvements-to-the-wod-0)).
56

57 **APPLICATION:**

58 The development proposal seeks to construct parallel walking and biking trails in the W&OD
59 Railroad Regional Park between N West Street and Little Falls Street. The project would include
60 replacing the existing 10-foot wide shared-use trail with an 11-foot wide bicycle trail and an 8-
61 foot wide pedestrian trail separated by a 2 foot-wide stamped asphalt buffer, regrading much of
62 the park, updated storm water management, and coordination with the ongoing Founders Row and
63 City projects that are updating the at-grade street crossings of the W&OD trail.
64

65 **Site Plan**

66 Pursuant to Sec. 48-1134 of the City Code, a site plan is required when a project significantly
67 affects pedestrian facilities or when any land disturbance exceeds 2,500 square feet.
68

69 **BACKGROUND:**

70
71 **W&OD Railroad Regional Park**

72 The Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park (W&OD) (which includes the W&OD
73 Trail) stretches from Shirlington in Arlington County to the Town of Purcellville in Loudoun
74 County. The park has a typical width of 100 feet, contains more than 533 acres and stretches a
75 distance of 45 miles. The portion of the park within the City measures approximately 16 acres in
76 size, making it the second largest park space in the City behind the playing fields at George
77 Mason High School and Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School.
78

79 The W&OD Railroad Regional Park, and the W&OD Trail serve several purposes, including:

- 80
- 81 • Recreation and Exercise – place to bike, jog, walk, play
 - 82 • Transportation – connection to regional activity centers, transit facilities (including the
83 East Falls Church Metro Station), and other bike trails
 - 84 • Environment – tree canopy, open space, wildlife habitat, gardens, water quality (wetland
85 along Four Mile Run)
 - 86 • Economic Development – the W&OD Trail provides access to the City’s commercial
87 districts; additional wayfinding information could direct trail users to City businesses
 - 88 • Scenic Vista – in certain areas of the City, the Trail also serves a scenic and physical
89 buffer to nearby homes from adjacent more intensive uses;

90 **Site and Surrounding Area Characteristics**

91 The trail is a 16-acre, linear park that cuts through the City’s northern residential areas. The
92 mixed-use trail allows for both recreational and practical passage through the City, as it is
93 suitable for pedestrians, bicyclists, scooters, or other types of non-motorized transport. The
94 historical markings, exercise equipment, and mix of native or invasive plant species along the
95 path allow for opportunities for users to learn about their surroundings while being active.
96

97 The surrounding uses of the trail are mostly single-family housing, but has several close
 98 connections with the city’s commercial corridors along Broad Street and N Washington Street.
 99

100 **Table 1 – Surrounding Properties**

Parcels	Future Land Use	Zoning	Current Land Use
North	Business, Parks and Open Space, Low Density Residential	R1-A, R1-B, R-TH, M-1	Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Residential Townhouses, Light Industry
South	Business, Parks and Open Space, Low Density Residential, Private Institutions, Mixed-Use	R1-A, R1-B, B-1, B-3	Low Density Residential, Medium Density Residential, Limited Business, General Business
W&OD	Parks and Open Space	R1-A	Low Density Residential

101
102
103
104
105
106
107
108
109
110
111
112
113
114

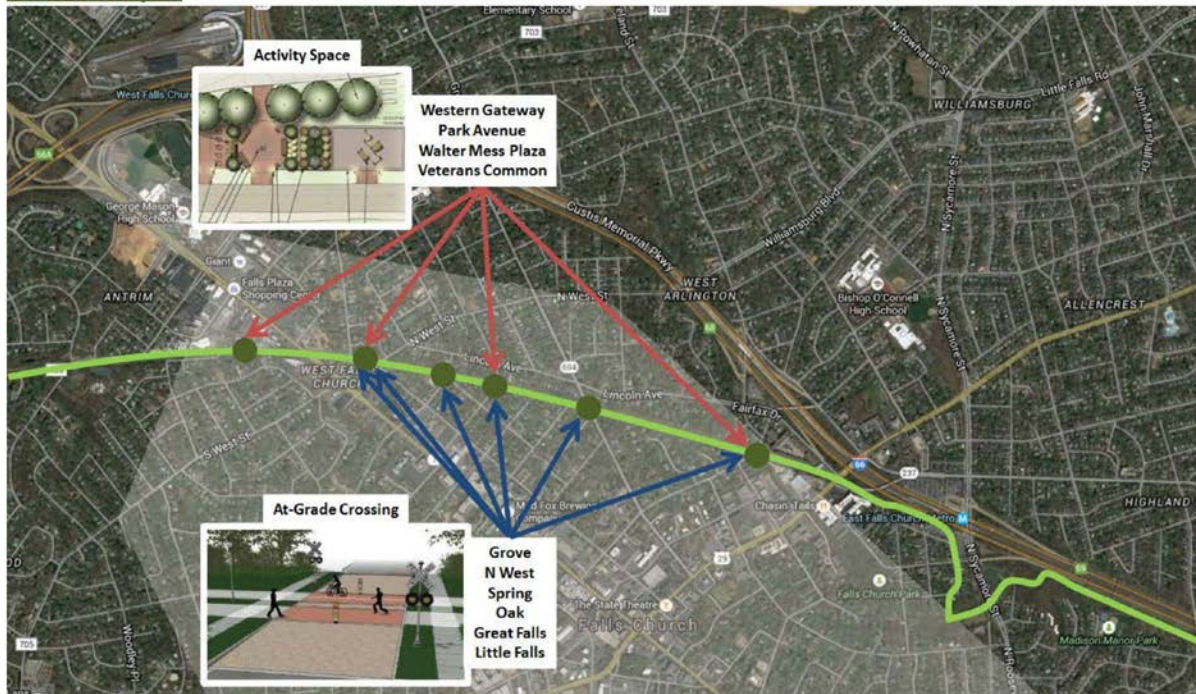
STAFF ANALYSIS

W&OD Master Plan:

In 2016, the City Adopted a Master Plan for the W&OD, 24 titled W&OD Park Master Plan: The City’s Greenest Street (<http://www.fallschurchva.gov/WODMasterPlan>). The Master Plan envisions the W&OD as a grand, 16 acre park space within the City. To achieve that vision, the plan calls for five investments:

1. Separated walking and biking trails
2. Improved crossings at street intersections
3. Plazas / resting spaces that tell the history of the W&OD
4. Restored, native landscaping
5. Lighting

Future Park Layout



115
116
117
118
119
120
121
122
123
124
125
126
127
128
129
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
138
139
140
141

Comprehensive Plan

The City's Comprehensive Plan makes multiple references to the W&OD being a Great Street - a signature street in the City with attractive landscaping that signals the W&OD is a special place within the city. The Plan calls for specific improvements in the Park, including:

Expand W&OD Trail Capacity - Work with the NVRPA and its ongoing efforts to expand capacity to the W&OD Trail between Columbia Pike and the Broad Street overpass by widening the existing Trail or adding a parallel paved pedestrian path. (Chapter 7: Transportation: "Mobility for all Modes")

Enhance W&OD Right-of-Way: Enhance the W&OD right-of-way with pavilions, community gardens, and lighting; install special crossings of the W&OD. (Chapter 6: Parks, Open Space, and Recreation)

Multimodal Safety Improvements

The city is a Regional Activity Center and is working to increase multimodal options to keep up with regional travel demand. This project will increase usage of the W&OD and increase patronage at nearby commercial uses and employment destinations. However, as pedestrians experience the trail currently, there are frequent conflicts with bicyclists which lead to a diminished experience for pedestrians. These conflicts may result in avoidance of the trail by users who do not feel safe, which will worsen as volumes increase. The parallel trails will provide greater capacity and encourage bicyclists and pedestrians who may avoid the facility due to overcrowding.

142 **Coordinated Implementation**

143 City staff and NVRPA are working jointly to implement the City’s W&OD Master Plan. Current
144 implementation efforts include updating all six trail/street crossings and replacing the existing
145 dual-use trail with separate walking and biking trails. Four of the trail/street crossings are being
146 updated by city staff with funding from the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The
147 remaining two trail/street crossings will be updated as part of the Founders Row project at the
148 developer’s expense. The separate walking and biking trails are being implemented by NVRPA,
149 with substantial funding from the NVTA. Note that this project is included in the City’s approved
150 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) because the city is a pass-through entity for the NVTA
151 funding.

152
153 Design and implementation of this project is also being coordinated with a City stormwater project
154 in the vicinity of W Columbia St, Shadow Walk, and Little Falls St that is under consideration by
155 the City’s stormwater taskforce.

156
157 **Staff Review**

158 Staff has reviewed the 100% Design Plans submitted on March 9th, 2020 (amended to include
159 planning comments on March 23rd, 2020). On March 30, 2020, staff transmitted a comment letter
160 in response, citing minimal comments to the applicant ahead of their Public Hearing date,
161 originally set for April 6, 2020. Remaining comments have been listed as part of the conditions
162 for approval.

163
164 **FISCAL IMPACT:** None. Although the project is included in the City’s CIP, all project funded
165 is provided by the NVTA, TAP, and NOVA Parks.

166
167 **TIMING:**

- 168 • June 17, 2019 30% Design Plans Received
- 169 • July 1, 2019 Planning Commission Work Session
- 170 • Nov. 1, 2019 Site Plan Submission (60% Design)
- 171 • Dec. 16, 2019 Planning Commission Work Session
- 172 • January 9, 2020 90% Designs Received
- 173 • March 9, 2020 100% Designs Received
- 174 • March 30, 2020 Latest comment letter transmitted to Applicant
- 175 • April 6, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting Canceled Due to COVID-19
- 176 • April 20, 2020 Planning Commission Meeting Canceled Due to COVID-19
- 177 • April 20, 2020 Public Comment Deadline
- 178 • April 27, 2020 Administrative Action

179
180
181 **LIST OF ATTACHMENTS**

- 182 1. Future Land Use and Official Zoning Map
- 183 2. 100% Design Plan Submission (March 9, 2020)
- 184 3. Staff Comment Letter and Memo (March 30, 2020)
- 185 4. Architectural Advisory Board Minutes (March 11, 2020 Meeting)

- 186 5. Architectural Advisory Board Applicant Presentation Slides
- 187 6. Property Owner Notice Letter, Mailed out April 10, 2020