

Concept Plan Narrative - Neighborhood Park on McCrimmon Parkway

The Concept Plan, a component of the comprehensive Park Master Plan for the Neighborhood Park on McCrimmon Parkway illustrates the layout of proposed program elements, trails, existing natural features, and access points. The Concept Plan responds to the recreational needs and desires of the community while respecting and enhancing the existing environment. The design of this park takes into account its surroundings, ensuring that the park elements are unique, sustainable, and well adapted to the site. The park's greenway system connects it to the surrounding community and provides residents with a way to engage with nature and improve their overall well-being.

Park program elements include:

- Cary Glen Blvd Park Walkway
- Community Garden
- Loop Trails and Greenway Connections
- Nature-themed Playground Area
- Open Lawn
- Parking
- Pedestrian Entrance & Gathering Space
- Picnic Shelter & Restroom
- Public Art
- Preserved Natural Areas and New Plantings
- Stormwater Low Impact Development Strategies
- Tennis and Pickleball Courts with Shade Structure(s)
- WiFi & Charging Station(s)

Cary Glen Blvd Park Walkway

A meandering street-side trail is proposed on the eastern side of the site, adjacent to Cary Glen Blvd. linking park elements such as the play area, the open lawn and the community garden with both on-street and on-site parking. This wide tree-lined walkway, with views into the park, will enhance the pedestrian friendly character of this neighborhood scale street, and connect the community to the park.

Community Garden

An approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre community garden will be located adjacent to the open lawn and the on-site parking lot. The community garden is likely to include individual garden plots and will also foster community engagement, and educational opportunities.

Loop Trails and Greenway Connections

Park trails invite the community to enter and explore, offering numerous possible routes and providing points of interest along the way. The park trail system provides connections between the various park elements, a (+/-) 0.75 mile walking loop, and opportunities for people to directly engage with the natural setting. View areas are proposed along the trails for contemplation and relaxation – small rest stops with seating that frame views of the creeks and forested areas on site. The Morris Branch Greenway and Green Level Church Road Street-side Trail are integrated into the park's trail system, providing and extending connections to Cary's greenway system.



Nature-themed Playground area

The playground area provides a fun and active space for children of various age-groups. It is located adjacent to the open lawn, the picnic shelter, and the restroom. It is also near parking areas, and especially accessible from the off-site parking area on Cary Glen Blvd. The playground area is envisioned to have a nature theme and is subdivided into two categories: traditional play, and informal nature play. Traditional play refers to manufactured play equipment and game tables. The nature play area attempts to fit play structures into existing topography and woodland vegetation and allow for interaction with the natural environment. The plan will preserve existing canopy trees in and around the play area where possible, and plant additional trees to ensure that children are provided with shaded play spaces. The nature play area should offer a sense of discovery and exploration and should be an inclusive space with educational opportunities that stimulates a child's interest in nature.

Open Lawn

An open lawn (+/- 1 acre) provides park users with a relaxing space for informal recreational use and occasional small community events. It acts as a central node for several of the nearby park elements, such as the community garden, the court area, the playground area, the parking lot, and the park promenade along Cary Glen Blvd. The lawn area will be gently sloped for water drainage.

Parking

There are two parking areas designated for this park, one within the site and one along the street. One is located within the park on the south east end. The on-site parking lot, located within the park on the south east end, with the entrance aligned with Summerhouse Road, has space for about (45) vehicles. The off-site parallel parking is located along the eastern edge of Cary Glen Blvd. and has space for about (15) vehicles. It aligns with the existing parallel parking on the opposite side of Cary Glen Blvd.

Pedestrian Entrance & Gathering Space

The pedestrian entrance at the intersection of McCrimmon Parkway and Green Level Church Road is intended to be a gathering space for the community. Among the people who may use this space are high school students, often seen walking along McCrimmon Parkway to and from Panther Creek High School. This corner is very visible from the two major roads and sidewalks so an attractive pedestrian entry will draw attention to the park and welcome in visitors. A sculptural element at the corner or within this area, such as the proposed hammock sculpture element, and a basketball half-court would enliven the corner, draw further interest from passersby and provide opportunities for relaxation, informal gathering, and exercise. A Wi-Fi and a charging station, possibly solar powered, would further enhance use of this area.

Picnic Shelter & Restroom

A picnic shelter and restroom are located at the center of the park to allow access from all points of the park. They are near the playground, courts, and community garden, and easily accessed from parking, especially the on-street spaces. The shelter offers views into the wooded central stream valley.

Preserved Natural Areas & New Plantings

The preserved natural areas on site are central to the vision for this park. These areas are located along the creeks that pass through the park; Morris Branch along the south boundary, and a Morris Branch tributary crossing diagonally through the center of the site. The stream buffers ensure that the attractive hardwood forest vegetation and existing natural landscape will be protected. One of the goals of this concept plan is to preserve existing trees when possible. Protecting the existing natural landscape will create an environmentally responsible and visually appealing setting for the park.

New trees and vegetation will be planted in the areas cleared for construction of the park features to restore the woodland character of the site and provide shade and greenery within and between the park activity areas. Plantings will also be added along the Green Level Church Rd frontage to extend the park landscape out to the street and integrate the existing street-side trail. Plant materials used should be primarily native and compatible with the existing woodland vegetation.

Public Art

The artist's concept for the public art within the park is to build community through a shared imaginative space. The proposed hammock sculpture will provide a large group of friends and families with a place to relax, gather and interact. The design was based on interviews and comments from local high school students who expressed a disconnect from neighborhood parks. They wanted a place to congregate, hang out, and spend time with each other in a creative environment that is photo worthy.

Stormwater Low Impact Development Strategies

Stormwater control measures are located in low areas within the park, mostly along Morris Branch on the south side of the park. Stormwater control measures that follow a low impact development strategy and are small scale and attractive or unobtrusive in appearance, are encouraged. They should be designed as a system, if possible, so they can be monitored and maintained as one entity. These measures ensure that storm runoff on site is collected, treated and released with reduced velocity, suspended solids and nutrients.

Tennis and Pickleball Courts with Shade Structure

Six lighted tennis courts and four lighted pickle ball courts are spread along the gentlest slopes found on site and will step down the slope to minimize the disturbance of the natural landscape. These courts will provide the community with an active space that encourages fitness and builds community relationships. Juxtaposing tennis and pickle ball will allow for multi-skill and multi-generational community members to play at the same park. The court area is located adjacent to the parking lot, which increases its accessibility. The court area also includes a shade structure which may be used for resting or observing. Players and spectators will also be able to enjoy views into the adjacent central valley. Space between banks of courts will allow for grade changes and tree plantings for shade and visual separation. There are various access points to the court area which is well connected to the community and the rest of the park via greenway and loop trails.

WiFi and Charging Stations

The plan calls for provision of charging stations as part of the park infrastructure and WiFi if feasible.