



*Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor*

PLANNING COMMISSION

Sean Davis, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



*Thomas J. Stosur
Director*

February 1, 2018

REQUEST: Upper Stony Run Strategic Plan

RECOMMENDATION: Acceptance

STAFF: K. Reni Lawal

PETITIONERS: Friends of Stony Run, Roland Park Community Foundation

OWNERS: Mayor and City Council and Multiple Private Property Owners

GENERAL AREA

The Stony Run is a wooded stream valley in North Baltimore City. From Northern Parkway to the Jones Falls Trailhead on Wyman Park Drive, a three mile walking path runs alongside the stream—in the old rail bed of the Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad. The stream valley serves as a local green space, a school connector, a community connector, an off-road transportation alternative, and an opportunity for environmental study. The path along the Stony Run lies within the watershed and serves as a green connection between universities, schools, parkland, shops, trails, and neighborhoods throughout north Baltimore City.

While the entire Stony Run corridor is a magnet for activity and recreation, it is not a clearly defined amenity. It is primarily characterized by passive woodland spaces, and passes through and alongside 15 neighborhoods. The landscape provides rich habitat for wildlife, stimulating scenery for recreation, and a lush contrast to the urban city within which it lives.

The public park lands are owned by the City and managed by the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks (BCRP), while the stream itself is regulated by the Department of Public Works (DPW). The public lands and informal pedestrian walking path extend from the Gilman School property line in the north to Sisson and 29th Streets to the south. The “Upper Stony Run” (north of University Parkway) includes Linkwood Park and a series of smaller, informal open spaces. The “Lower Stony Run” (south of University Parkway) is comprised of Wyman Park along the entire western side of the stream and portions of the eastern side.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The request conforms to the goals and objectives of the Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan, specifically:

- LIVE Goal 2: Elevate the Design and Quality of the City’s Built Environment

Objective 5: Improve Water Quality and the Environmental Sustainability of the Chesapeake Bay

Strategy 2: Reduce pollutants in streams, rivers and reservoirs to meet Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for each body of water

- PLAY Goal 3: Increase the Health of Baltimore's Natural Resources and Open Spaces for Recreation and to Improve Water Quality and to Improve Neighborhood Social, Economic, and Environmental Well-Being

Objective 1: Maintain and Well Managed System of Parks and Open Space

Strategy 4: Improve park stewardship and safety by expanding current parks partnership program

Objective 2: Protect and Enhance Baltimore's Natural Habitat and Environmental Resources

Strategy 5: Target sidewalk, lighting and signal improvements near parks and open space

Strategy 6: Develop a plan to reduce trash within and along Baltimore's parks and open space

Strategy 8: Increase Baltimore's green infrastructure by increasing the number of trees and tree canopy size (See LIVE, GOAL 1, Objective 3, Strategy 6)

The request conforms to the goals and objectives of the Baltimore Sustainability Plan, specifically:

- CLEANLINESS GOALS: Towards Our Vision of a CLEAN Baltimore
Goal 1: Eliminate litter throughout the City of Baltimore
Goal 2: Sustain a clean and maintained appearance of public land
- GREENING GOALS: Towards Our Vision of a GREEN Baltimore
Goal 1: Double Baltimore's Tree Canopy by 2037
Goal 3: Provide safe, well-maintained recreational space within ¼ mile of all residents.

ANALYSIS

The Upper Stony Run Strategic Plan is a community-managed plan sponsored by the Roland Park Community Foundation (Stony Run Planning Committee) in partnership with the Friends of Stony Run organization. It was prepared by Mahan Rykiel and Associates. While this plan was not initiated by any City agency, the Department of Public Works and Department of Recreation and Parks were identified as key stakeholders and engaged throughout the process.

Purpose & Plan Scope

The Stony Run Strategic Plan is a framework to guide stewardship efforts in the Park. While efforts to care for and enhance the stream and adjacent park spaces had grown somewhat organically over the years, a more concerted effort to fill the gaps along the path, improve community access, maintain the woodland ecology, promote responsible use of the path and

associated park spaces, and coordinate individual stewardship efforts was needed as determined by the stakeholders adjacent to Stony Run. This Strategic Plan is a tool to guide both short and long-term initiatives to protect and enhance the Stony Run. While the plan includes enough detail to guide many projects or efforts, many recommendations need to be considered more fully, vetted with adjacent communities, or detailed further before they can be implemented. The plan is intended to be used as a framework for improvements to the Upper Stony Run guiding volunteers and stakeholders who identify the needs of the Stony Run and align their available resources with proposed improvements.

The scope of this Strategic Plan is for the section of Stony Run between Gilman School at the north and Overhill Road at the south. However, the planning process included participation of community stakeholders and representatives of Friends of Stony Run from beyond the plan's limits. Therefore, the Strategic Plan includes for consideration recommendations that extend south to University Parkway and north to Northern Parkway. University Parkway is seen as a logical boundary between Upper and Lower Stony Run as this is where the character of the corridor (and extents of the associated public park land) changes significantly. The segment between University Parkway and Overhill Road is relatively narrow and associated with the Upper Stony Run. South of University Parkway, the corridor is much broader and the stream is encompassed by Wyman Park.

It is important to note that because many of the recommendations of the Strategic Plan are applicable to both the Upper and Lower Sections, the hope is that this Strategic Plan can be used as a tool to leverage funding and support by other partners to extend the planning effort south to Sisson and 29th Streets.

Process

Project planning developed through three successive phases—from a pre-planning phase, through analysis and concept development, and finally to a period of refining and finalizing the Strategic Plan. Throughout the planning process, there were numerous “touch points” for engaging stakeholders. Community members and other stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide their input via:

- A project website and forum
- A digital map for providing comments
- Three public meetings
- An online survey (also offered in a hard copy for those without computer access)
- Walking tours of the project area
- Online Draft Plan comment forum

Recommendation Summary

GOAL 1 | PROTECT AND IMPROVE ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

- A. Improve Water Quality and Stream Health**
- B. Repair and Prevent Erosion**
- C. Address Flooding and Stormwater Management**
- D. Remove and Control Invasive Plants**

- E. Maintain a Cohesive, Native Planting Palette
- F. Enhance Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity

GOAL 2 | ENHANCE PARK LEGIBILITY AND COMFORTS

- G. Balance the Park's Presence as Part of an Overall Park System While Maintaining its Understated Character
- H. Stabilize and Enhance Walking Path and Surfaces
- I. Provide Appropriate Signage
- J. Provide Appropriate Furnishings
- K. Preserve the Diversity of Experiences Provided by Different Areas
- L. Promote the Park's Cleanliness

GOAL 3 | PARTNER, PROGRAM AND MAINTAIN

- M. Provide Balanced Programming and Opportunities for Engagement
- N. Identify and Adopt Stony Run-Specific Use Policies
- O. Enforce Rules and Regulations
- P. Develop and Nurture Partnerships
- Q. Discourage Negative Behavior

GOAL 4 | PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- R. Demonstrate the Value of Improvements Made
- S. Identify the Importance of Stream Renovation
- T. Partner with Schools, Advocacy Groups, and Others to Integrate Teaching Opportunities

Accepting the Upper Stony Run Strategic Plan, means that the City recognizes and supports the goals, direction and major concepts expressed by the plan, but is not obligated to implement each recommendation that has any City agency listed as a partner. The plan can also be used to provide guidance to the Planning Commission for any actions related to the Upper Stony Run and inform the City's comprehensive plan.

NOTIFICATIONS

Staff has notified by email the Friends of Stony Run Organization, Roland Park Community Foundation, adjacent neighborhood associations, Councilwoman Sharon Middleton-Green, Councilwoman Mary-Pat Clarke, DPW Director Chow, BCRP Director Moore, and City agency staff.



**Thomas J. Stosur,
Director**