

Recommendations for Enhancing Non-Motorized Access to the Palisades Recreation Center [DRAFT]

DRAFTED BY THE TRAILS COMMITTEE OF THE PALISADES CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

BACKGROUND

The Palisades Recreation Center building is scheduled to be renovated and expanded in 2016. The new facility is expected to draw additional users to a site that is already plagued by limited parking and vehicle access. In order to partially address the parking/traffic constraints, improve pedestrian safety and enhance community life, the Palisades Citizens Association endorsed enhancing non-motorized access to the Recreation Center as a project priority. Subsequently, the DC Department of Transportation allocated funds to the Department of General Services – the entity responsible for the overall Recreation Center project – to achieve this goal. The city has asked for community input to be considered as part of the design/build process. The following draft recommendations were formulated by the Trails Committee of the Palisades Citizens Association for communal consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For the segment of the Trolley Trail from Galena Place to Chain Bridge Road, a crushed stone surface with a re-graded and permeable base is preferred in order to:
 - Address persistent drainage issues along this section of the trail
 - Encourage increased non-motorized access to the Recreation Center
- The existing asphalt trail which currently ends at the entrance to the Recreation Center tennis courts should be extended with permeable asphalt around the back of the tennis courts to the eastern end of the Arizona Avenue pedestrian bridge – providing paved access from the pedestrian ramp at Sherier Place/Arizona Avenue intersection all the way to the Recreation Center grounds
- The width of the new trail surface should be limited to eight feet
- Privacy landscaping that currently exists within the trail property lines should be preserved wherever possible

NOTE: An illustrative map and FAQs are provided on the following pages



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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What surfaces were considered?

Crushed gravel, permeable pavers, a grass grid, and permeable asphalt were all considered. A study was commissioned to help visualize the options and understand their advantages and disadvantages. The study is available on the Palisades Citizens Association website for review.

NOTE: Although considered in the study, it was advised that neither permeable pavers nor a grass grid surface are feasible within the project budget.

How long is the trolley trail segment under consideration?

Only a half mile segment of the path from Galena Place to Chain Bridge Road is under consideration in the immediate vicinity of the Recreation Center grounds.

Why was crushed gravel recommended for the trolley trail segment?

Crushed gravel drains well, it has a natural feel, and it is a hard enough surface to accommodate some bicycles and strollers without allowing for high-speed use.

Where can I see an example of crushed gravel?

The closest example of crushed gravel is the C&O Canal Tow Path. There are also finer examples of crushed gravel, known stone dust, which can be found adjacent to the paved part of the Capital Crescent Trail in Bethesda.

Why was asphalt recommended for the path behind the tennis courts?

Crushed gravel is not possible due to the steepness of this particular path. Also, extending this asphalt route around the tennis courts to the Arizona Avenue pedestrian bridge would ensure a hard surface all the way from the Recreation Center grounds to the pedestrian ramp at the southwest corner of Sherier Place

and Arizona. Given the danger of crossing Arizona Avenue here, a hard surface route that is accessible to all types of strollers, wheelchairs and bicycles will promote safety.

Are these recommendations consistent with the trolley trail survey results?

The survey results showed that over 75% of local respondents support enhancements that will result in improved drainage, grading and erosion control. The survey was not conclusive regarding surface preference. About half of Palisades respondents favor introducing a new surface for part of the trail, and about half of Palisades respondents favor retaining an exclusively grass/dirt surface as it is now. Retaining an exclusively dirt/grass surface was not considered for this initiative as it was felt such not address the underlying drainage issues which impede wider use of the path as an access route to the Recreation Center. Also, the trolley trail is approximately 20 feet wide, and the envisioned crushed gravel surface will be 8 feet wide – ensuring that a majority of the trail will remain grass and dirt.

How will this project impact the rest of the trolley trail right of way?

The impetus for this project is exclusively to encourage more non-motorized access to the Recreation Center in the immediate half-mile vicinity. From Chain Bridge Rd to Foxhall Road, the trail will be unaffected.

Who is making the final decision?

The city has asked for input from the local community, but the ultimate decision lies with the DC Department of General Services and the DC Department of Transportation.