

Upper Bluemont Engagement #2 Summary

December 2022

The goal of this Parks Maintenance Capital project is to replace the tennis court complex, lighting, restroom/storage, shelter, parking lot, site circulation, section of Four Mile Run Trail, site furnishing, drainage and landscaping in the [Upper Bluemont area](#), as well as bring the area up to [2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#). Funding to construct the project will come from an upcoming CIP budget.

This project address objectives specified in the [Public Spaces Master Plan \(PSMP\)](#).

- [Casual Use Space – 1.3.3](#)
- [Sport-specific Outdoor Complexes – 1.5.7](#)

The Public Spaces Master Plan includes priority actions that dedicate this as a tennis facility to meet the community demand. View the priority actions [here](#) on the bottom of page 67 and top of page 68. This engagement process was created to gather additional community input to further the design of this space and update this sport-specific outdoor tennis complex.

About the Process

The first engagement for this project was held in-person in 2019 at the County Fair as well as courtside at the Bluemont Courts. [We learned a lot](#) about community interest for the number of courts, lighting, seating, court resilience and more. Like many park projects, this project was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic and restarted in 2022. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Based on what we learned from the community as well as local and state ordinances [design concept 1](#) and [design concept 2](#) were developed. We shared information about these concepts through the project's listserv, to nearby civic associations, the Arlington County Tennis Association, the County website, social media, and elsewhere. We received input from 230 people and received more than 500 individual open-ended comments. Most of the participants were white and between the ages of 31 and 70. Most of the participants came from residents in Bluemont (20%) followed by Boulevard Manor (15%) and Ballston-Virginia Square (9%).

Thank you for your feedback!

What we Learned: Concept #1

The top 5 things that respondents liked **most** about Concept 1, in order of preference included:

1. Number of courts
2. Practice court
3. Layout
4. Conservation/preservation of trees
5. Shade opportunities

The top 5 things that they liked **least** about Concept 1, in order of dislike, included:

1. Amount of impervious area
2. Impact to trees
3. Shade opportunities
4. Too many courts
5. Layout

In the comments related to Concept 1 we heard lots about parking. You were pleased with additional parking in this concept, but you expressed concern that it wasn't permeable. You also expressed concern about on-street parking conflicts, neighborhood parking impacts if this facility increases in popularity after it is updated, and about a desire to partner with Ashlawn to use parking at that site.

We also heard disappointment in the comments that the courts were not stripped for pickleball, the practice wall orientation should be changed for acoustical and site-line purposes, the RPA lacked protection, too many trees are near the courts, event courts were not needed, down lighting to minimize light pollution and light trespass, and there were too many courts without dividers/fencing.

When we asked about how well this Concept specifically protects/preserves the natural resources, this Concept scored lower than Concept 2.

What we Learned: Concept #2

The top 5 things that respondents liked **most** about Concept 2, in order of preference included:

1. Conservation/preservation of trees
2. Shade opportunities
3. Layout
4. Number of courts
5. Practice court

The top 5 things that you liked **least** about Concept 2, in order of dislike, included:

1. Layout
2. Impact to trees
3. Too many courts
4. Too few courts
5. Amount of impervious area

In the comments related to Concept 2 you were most vocal that this Concept provided the greatest RPA protection and tree planting. You also noted that the trail location and improvements were better in this Concept. There was concern expressed over mature tree cutting but generally respondents felt the long-term court resilience and RPA benefits in this option were higher, especially with the amount of reforestation.

Similar to the open-ended comments in Concept 1, here for Concept 2, we heard a desire to have pickleball lines on the new court, more parking, change the orientation of the practice wall, and use down lighting to minimize light pollution and light trespass. There were also safety concerns noted about having the large tennis ball play area abutting the street where children may play.

When we asked about how well Concept 2 specifically protects/preserves the natural resources, this Concept scored higher than Concept 1.

Overall Concept 2 was Preferred.

Concept 2 was the preferred option both overall and as it related to environmental protection/preservation. We also heard from the community in the open-ended comments a strong preference for Concept 2. We will use these data points and all input on both concepts as we move toward a final draft design.

Additional comments provided in either Concept 1 or Concept 2 that we captured included:

- Add permeability anywhere possible in either design
 - Consider a green roof for the auxiliary building
 - Make either concept with a permeable parking area
- Protect parking area trees and pollinator areas
- Add a dog play area and water bowl
- Add charging stations for electric vehicles, eBike and phone charging.
- Add more shade generally and shaded seating around the courts
- Add a Capital Bikeshare station
- Ensure resilience of the courts to minimize cracks
- Place and manage trees so the shedding leaves don't impact the courts/play
- Make a court squeegee available to remove water and protect the court surface
- Consider a two-sided practice wall
- Add a family bathroom and consider opening them all year
- Revisit the upper grass overlook for possible stadium seating as the immediate courts below might not be visible
- Evaluate design and material options that would attenuate acoustical impacts of play and the practice wall
- Maximize the overall park open space; consider removing the practice wall
- There was continued interest from players for clear roles and processes for use, times, order of play and reservations, especially as it relates to any new competition courts.

Next Steps - Upper Bluemont Anticipated Timeline

- Q4 2022: Review community input, share feedback with community, and create a final draft design.
- Q1 2023: Share the final design with stakeholders with one last online engagement
- CY 2023: Construction documents, permitting, bidding
- Q1 2024: Board Approves Contract award
- Q2 2024: Construction begins