

Progress on the Oxon Run Bike Trail & Floodplain Issues



In 2009, Professor David Myers from the University of Maryland's School of Landscape Design held charrettes with citizens on the Oxon Run Bike Trail, which would run from the National Harbor area to the Southern Avenue Metro station in the District of Columbia. They presented drawings of how the bike trail would look and how the Town of Forest Heights could fit into the overall picture. While the wheels of progress have been slow, I have worked to keep this vision and these plans alive, as well as a few other champions of the project on the District side of Oxon Run. As a result of our persistent work, on May 14, representatives from the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the U.S. Park Service and the Town of Forest Heights sat down to begin discussion on what needed to be done.

At this monumental multi-jurisdictional meeting held at the Forest Heights Town Hall Building, government representatives agreed to work collaboratively toward a restored Oxon Run. Agencies articulated their priorities and concerns for such a large project moving forward. In general, there was consensus that the project was worthy of pursuing, but that there were still many issues that we needed to have a better understanding of in the early stages. The project was large and complex, but it was agreed that smaller groups should convene to work together on several focus areas as part of the initial exploratory phase of the project.

The primary focus areas established were floodplain issues, Low Impact Development (LID) and restoration opportunities, funding, and bike trails and restoration. Citizens who are interested in becoming involved in this long-term project – which will be a positive asset to the Town – should contact Mayor Jacqueline Goodall at (301) 839-1030 and leave your name and contact information.

Several areas in the Town of Forest Heights are within the floodplain of Oxon Run, citizens in those flood-prone areas should be knowledgeable of the risks and learn about flood assistance programs that are available to them.

The Prince George's County Department of the Environment will be hosting a **Flood Risk Open House on June 10, 2015 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at 1801 McCormick Drive, Suite 140, Largo, MD 20774**. County staff also will be available to assist residents one-on-one and provide information. At the Flood Risk Open House, residents and business owners will have the opportunity to discuss the preliminary Flood Insurance Study (FIS) and Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for Prince George's County and incorporated areas with representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), City of Laurel and Prince George's County.

Flooding is one of the most frequent and costly disasters in Prince George's County. The risk for flooding changes over time due to erosion, land use, weather events and other factors. This risk can vary within the same neighborhood and even from property to property. Knowing your flood risks is the first step to flood protection. You may also stay up-to-date and view the flood hazard mapping at www.rampp-team.com/md.htm. For general information about the flood map modernization project, please visit www.mdfloodmaps.com. You can also contact the Department of the Environment at (301) 883-5834, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.