

State of Maryland

2006 Bond Bill Fact Sheet

1. Senate		House		2. Name of Project
LR #	Bill #	LR #	Bill #	
0973	SB26	2552	HB1180	Creation of a State Debt – Montgomery County - Agriculture Activity Center Expansion
3. Senate Bill Sponsors				House Bill Sponsors
Sen. Garagiola, Forehand, and Hogan				Del. Montgomery, et. al.
4. Jurisdiction (County or Baltimore City)				5. Requested Amount
Montgomery County				\$750,000
6. Purpose of Bill				
Authorizing the creation of a State Debt, the proceeds to serve as a grant to the County Executive and County Council of Montgomery County for the construction, repair, reconstruction, and capital equipping of the Agriculture Activity Center at the Agricultural History Farm Park located in Derwood.				
7. Matching Fund Requirements				
The bill requires a standard match.				
8. Special Provisions				
None.				

9. Description and Purpose of Grantee Organization (3000 characters maximum)

Montgomery County supports a prosperous agricultural industry and is dedicated to educating the public about the importance of agriculture and the variety of benefits derived from farming. With more acres in Agricultural Preservation than any other county in the entire country, Montgomery County's commitment to agriculture is a model for the state. This dedication to the future of agriculture is shared by the five principle agricultural agencies in the County: Montgomery Cooperative Extension, Montgomery County Department of Economic Development-Agricultural Services Division, Montgomery Soil Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service and the USDA-Farm Service Agency. These agencies work cooperatively to promote agriculture in Montgomery County through education, research, preservation, awareness, technical assistance and financial aide to farmers and through a variety of other mechanisms designed to keep agriculture prosperous. These agricultural agencies are all located at one convenient facility, providing farmers and the general public with a very accommodating one-stop-shop for all the services they need. However, with the increasing interest in soil conservation and agricultural preservation programs, as well as the enhanced emphasis on hands-on training and agricultural education, the size and resources available at the facility are no longer adequate to meet the demand in Montgomery County.

Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) is a regional planning and land management agency created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1927 to develop and operate public park systems and provide land use planning for the physical development of the majority of Montgomery and Prince George's counties. MNCPPC administers a park system of more than 52,000 acres. It is composed of stream valley parks, large regional parks, neighborhood parks and park-school recreation areas. The MNCPPC owns and manages the Agricultural History Farm Park where the Agricultural Activity Center is located.

This grant will be provided to Montgomery County for building an addition onto the Agricultural Activity Center located at the Agricultural History Farm Park in Derwood. The Agricultural History Farm Park is a 455-acre facility owned and operated by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC). The property has a number of important resources, including historic structures and landscapes, natural areas, modern agricultural fields, and an Activity Center which was constructed in 1988. The MNCPPC is undertaking a landmark effort to enhance the prominence and utility of this site for both historic educational opportunities and modern agricultural learning programs. As part of this effort, a comprehensive plan is being developed to evaluate programming options and guide future expansion of the facilities.

10. Description and Purpose of Project (3000 characters maximum)

The Agricultural Activity Center expansion is important to Montgomery County for a number of reasons. The effort to clean-up the Bay has sparked greater interest in agricultural programs and a renewed emphasis on conservation practices. Promoting and administering these programs is the responsibility of the Montgomery Soil Conservation District (MSCD). The existing space for the MSCD was not planned for any future expansion, which now represents a critical challenge as the mission and the mandate of the MSCD is expanding. Unfortunately, the office space available to MSCD makes it difficult to provide a professional setting for our agricultural clients and allows for no expansion to meet the increasing demand for our services. The MSCD staff has an average work space of about 60 sq. ft. each, with several employees having closer to 50 sq. ft.

The agencies located at the Agricultural Activity Center conduct a wide array of educational programming that frequently exceeds the capacity of the existing facility. Montgomery Cooperative Extension has a "Master Gardener" program that involves hundreds of volunteers. Cooperative Extension also holds workshops and training sessions where they are forced to limit the number of participants due to the capacity limitations of the current auditorium. MSCD coordinates a nationwide high school environmental challenge competition, known as the Envirothon, at the Farm Park every Spring. This program involves over 100 students from high schools throughout Montgomery County, and it exceeds the capacity of the auditorium.

The hallmark educational event held at the Ag Activity Center is "Close Encounters with Agriculture." Every spring the agencies from the Ag Activity Center collaborate to provide this nationally recognized hands-on agricultural education experience for 4th graders throughout the county. For 3 weeks every spring the Ag Activity Center hosts about 2,700 fourth graders. Students learn a wealth of information about agricultural production, natural resources, nutrition, livestock, land and soil conservation, and where the food at the grocery store comes from. Children participating in this program are exposed to important agricultural, health and conservation concepts in a hands-on, interactive fashion that enhances their understanding and enjoyment of the material.

The proposed expansion will involve the construction of an additional wing onto the current Ag. Activity Center. This addition will include office space for approximately 10 MSCD staff members, additional storage and meeting rooms, and a large auditorium for educational events and training workshops. This addition will also provide much needed room for the "Close Encounters with Agriculture" program.

Round all amounts to the nearest \$1,000. The totals in Items 11 (Estimated Capital Costs) and 12 (Proposed Funding Sources) must match. The proposed funding sources must not include the value of real property unless an equivalent value is shown under Estimated Capital Costs.

11. Estimated Capital Costs

Acquisition	
Design	\$100,000
Construction	\$2,000,000
Equipment	
Total	\$2,100,000

12. Proposed Funding Sources – (List all funding sources and amounts.)

Source	Amount
Montgomery County	\$750,000
State	\$750,000
MNCPPC	\$600,000

24. Impact of Project on Staffing and Operating Cost at Project Site			
Current # of Employees	Projected # of Employees	Current Operating Budget	Projected Operating Budget
38	45	multiple agencies	
25. Ownership of Property (Info Requested by Treasurer's Office for bond issuance purposes)			
A. Will the grantee <u>own</u> or <u>lease</u> (pick one) the property to be improved?			Own
B. If owned, does the grantee plan to sell within 15 years?			No
C. Does the grantee intend to lease any portion of the property to others?			Yes
D. If property is owned by grantee and any space is to be leased, provide the following:			
Lessee	Terms of Lease	Cost Covered by Lease	Square Footage Leased
MNCPPC leases space to the other government agencies located at the facility.			
E. If property is leased by grantee – Provide the following:			
Name of Leaser	Length of Lease	Options to Renew	
26. Building Square Footage:			
Current Space GSF	18,600 sq. ft.		
Space to Be Renovated GSF	8,600 sq. ft.		
New GSF	27,200 sq. ft.		
27. Year of Construction of Any Structures Proposed for Renovation, Restoration or Conversion		1988	
28. Comments: (3000 characters maximum)			

As valuable as the “Close Encounters with Agriculture” program is, only about 25% of fourth graders in the County have an opportunity to participate. Although staff availability is an issue, the primary limitation to increasing the number of students is the lack of space. Even at the current level of participation the facility does not provide adequate room for the program. There is great interest within the County for increasing the availability of this learning experience. The only hope for providing Close Encounters with Agriculture to a broader student population is through the proposed building expansion.

The Chairman of the Planning Board, Mr. Derick Berlage, has announced that he intends to make the Agricultural History Farm Park to agriculture what Brookside Gardens is for horticulture. While this represents a bold initiative which will take considerable resources and political will, we believe this is not only possible, but absolutely necessary. In a county with nearly 1 million people, it is imperative that residents have an opportunity to understand how important agriculture is to our lives, to our land use patterns, to our national security, and to our future. Montgomery County clearly recognizes the importance of agriculture, as evidenced by the land use planning and agricultural preservation programs in the county. In the Agricultural History Farm Park, MNCPPC has a valuable resource that can become a regionally recognized agricultural and conservation education center. In order to accomplish this, and to fulfill the vision put forth by Chairman Berlage, the Agricultural Activity Center must be renovated to meet the current demands on the facility as well as the future aspirations.