



## **A New Park for the Westbard Sector: The Willett Branch Stream Valley Greenway**

*The Willett Branch stream valley should become the center of a large greenway park to relieve the density of the Westbard development and provide paths connecting Westbard to the Capital Crescent Trail. Instead of a concrete ditch, there should be spaces to gather, educational opportunities, ecological improvements, and new wildlife.*

### **Oppose the Equity One Sketch Plan. It Does Not Support the New Park:**

#### **Equity One's Sketch Plan Must Provide Adequate Protection of the Stream Buffer. No New Buildings in the Buffer.**

State and County Environmental Guidelines recommend a minimum 100-foot buffer on either side of the stream. This means NO parking structure behind Westwood Tower, and the new buildings on the Westwood II and Bowlmor sites must be pulled back. New townhouses on the Manor Care site must not be in the buffer.

#### **Equity One's Sketch Plan Must Provide Funds to the Stream Valley Park as a Public Benefit.** Early dedication of land and substantial funds for the park are mandatory public benefits and must be addressed in the Sketch Plan.

#### **Equity One's Sketch Plan Must Show the Area near Westwood Tower as a Gateway to the New Greenway.** This area is rich in African-American history and the heart of the park. There must be adequate and welcoming access to the park from Westbard Avenue so that the public may easily enjoy this new amenity.

#### **The Cemetery Must be Surveyed before Adopting Plans for Buildings on the Site.** There is documentation of a cemetery in the area between 1911 and 1958. Much evidence suggests that the graves were never moved when Westwood Tower was constructed. This must be settled with cemetery delineation before buildings are sited.

#### **Equity One Must Show Buildings that Embrace the Park and Allow a Free Flow of People to the Park.** The Willett Branch should be an attractive and accessible green space. Buildings must not turn their backs to the stream, but embrace it with cafes, shops, and other features.

### **Why You Should Support the new Park:**

**Economic Benefit to the Area:** A stream valley park that runs through the development is a valuable amenity and will increase property values. A study of property values nationwide shows that proximity to a park increases residential property values as much as 70 percent in some areas (Crompton, Journal of Leisure Research, 2001). In the grand scheme, the cost of creating an urban greenway is small while the benefit to the residents and developers is great.

**Honors the Rich African-American History of the Area:** There was a vibrant post-Civil War freed slave community, a Rosenwald School, and a cemetery in Westbard. All that remains of the community is the Macedonia Baptist Church. The new park would honor this history with signage and other features.

**Provides a Valuable Respite for Residents:** The park will be the only new natural, green area in the Westbard Sector and the only real public amenity. It will connect to the Capital Crescent Trail and allow for a quieter trail experience.

**Brings the Stream into the 21st Century and Helps with the Chesapeake Bay Clean-up:** Current clean water laws would not permit the existing concrete-lined stream with stormwater draining in from adjacent parking lots, but would require a 100-foot+ natural stream buffer. The new park would bring the stream back to life. Healthy up-stream waterways contribute to a healthier Chesapeake Bay.

**Show Case for Montgomery County:** Other jurisdictions have successfully incorporated naturalized waterways into urban development. Carroll Creek, in Frederick, MD, was transformed from an industrial drainage ditch to a bustling urban park. It is now a show case for the city, with waterlilies and aquatic life providing enjoyment to residents and visitors. Restoring the Willett Branch will be a major amenity for our area and a model for the entire nation.