



May 11, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Area 2 Planning Division *GK*
Khalid Afzal, Planning Supervisor, East County Team *KA*
Area 2 Planning Division

FROM: Luis R. Estrada Cepero, Planner Coordinator/Urban Designer (301/495-4641)
East County Team, Area 2 Planning Division *LRE*

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. 2011204-MCPS-1: Weller Road Elementary School Modernization Project – 3301 Weller Road, Silver Spring, R-60 Zone, 1989 Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL** to transmit the following comments to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS):

1. Any Mandatory Referral submission for future improvements at the school must include a traffic study if those improvements will increase the school's student core capacity beyond 740 students.
2. MCPS should provide an additional lead-in sidewalk at the east end driveway opposite Bluhill Road.
3. Comply with the approval conditions listed in the regulatory memo for the review of the related Forest Conservation Plan.

This staff report reviews and makes recommendations for the Weller Road Elementary School Modernization only. The Planning Board must act on the related Forest Conservation Plan, which will be addressed in a separate staff report.

Project Description

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) propose to modernize the existing Weller Road Elementary School located at 3301 Weller Road in Silver Spring. The project will consist of demolishing a portion of the existing school and constructing a new school on the same site.

The proposed building will contain approximately 113,086 square feet, including roughed-in square footage for four future classrooms. It has been designed for an initial capacity of 654 students and 37 teaching stations, with a master-planned (core) capacity for 740 students (including the four future classrooms).

Weller Road Elementary School is part of the Downcounty Consortium. It was originally built in 1953; expanded in 1956 (classroom addition), 1966 (instructional media center addition), 1974 (gymnasium addition), and more recently in 2007 (classroom addition). The latest classroom addition and the existing gymnasium will remain in place, but the gymnasium will be updated as part of the proposed modernization. The existing school is a single-story 76,296-square-foot building located on a property of approximately 10.1 acres zoned R-60, at the intersection of Weller Road and Bluhill Road in Silver Spring. The immediately surrounding neighborhood consists of single-family detached dwelling units, which are also zoned R-60. The A. Mario Loiderman Middle School is located on an adjacent property immediately to the west (also facing Weller Road), and Wheaton High School is located three blocks south of this location, along Bluhill Road.

There are 575 students currently enrolled in kindergarten through the 5th grades, exceeding the current building's capacity of 532 students. There are currently two portable classrooms in place. Projected enrollment through 2016 is approximately 626 students, making this a much needed modernization. School hours are from 8:50 a.m. to 3:05 p.m. Various existing programs and after-school activities will continue once the modernization is completed, when the school will be available for public use under the Montgomery County Use of Public Facilities Program.

No phasing of construction is planned; a holding facility has been identified, and classes will be relocated prior to the beginning of construction.

ANALYSIS

Master Plan

Weller Road Elementary School is within the area covered by the *1989 Master Plan for the Communities of Kensington-Wheaton*. The Master Plan has no specific recommendations for this particular site, but its Community Facilities Plan chapter recognizes the need for quality education in its objectives and policies (p. 136), relying on the Approved Master Plan for Educational Facilities, the annual CIP, and the annual Growth Policy as statements of direction to establish needs in the area. This modernization will be consistent with Master Plan comments of "providing the operating public school facilities necessary to sustain high quality educational programs."

Neighborhood Compatibility

Walkability - This project is located within an existing neighborhood with good pedestrian access. Most streets in close proximity to the school have sidewalks, and safe access will be increased by maintaining pedestrian paths from Janet Road and Dean Road through the school grounds.

Building Scale - The replacement building adds a partial second floor to the school's program, but the footprint of the new school will not be much larger than the building being replaced. The building sets back substantially from Weller Road, which allows space to efficiently contain the bus loop on site for student drop-off, and for parking

space in front and to the side of the building. Front areas between the sidewalk and the vehicular and parking areas in front of the school will be adequately landscaped to soften the presence of the building on Weller Road.

Transportation - The on-site traffic circulation is designed to provide safe and adequate access to the school by pedestrians and maximize on-site stacking to minimize the overflow onto nearby streets.

Zoning Analysis

The site is zoned R-60. The following chart depicts the requirements of this zone. As submitted and shown on this chart, the new school will satisfy the requirements for the R-60 Zone.

| Zoning Section | Development Standard | Required | Proposed |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 59-C-1.322 (a) | Minimum Lot Area | 6,000 sf (0.2066 acres) | 436,068 sf (10.01 acres) |
| 59-C-1.322 (b) | Minimum Lot Width | | |
| | Lot Width | 60 ft | 439 ft |
| | Width at front building line | 25 ft | Not Specified |
| 59-C-1.323 | (a) Minimum Setback from street | 25 ft | 114 ft |
| | (b) Minimum Setback from Adj. Lot | | |
| | (1) Side Yard | | |
| | - Side (One Side) | 8 ft | 83 ft (NE) 232 ft (SW) |
| | - Side (Sum of Two) | 18 ft | 315 ft (NE & SW) |
| | (2) Rear | 20 ft | 81 ft (NW) |
| 59-C-1.327 | Maximum Building Height | 35 ft | 32 ft |
| 59-C-1.328 | Maximum % of lot area coverage | 35% | 21.2% |
| | Parking Facility Setbacks | | |
| 59-E-2.81 | Front | 25 ft | 25 ft (S) |
| | Side (One Side) | 20 ft | 27 ft (NE) |
| | Rear | 20 ft | 203 ft (NW) |

Environmental Analysis

Site Description - The site is a mostly flat, 10.01-acre plateau within the Rock Creek watershed - a Use I watershed, and contains no forest, streams, wetlands, or environmental buffers.

Environmental Guidelines - The applicant submitted and received approval of a Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD), number 420101160, on January 29, 2010.

Forest Conservation – Forest conservation issues are covered in a separate regulatory memo to the Planning Board. In summary, this property is subject to Chapter 22A, Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law, and a Forest Conservation Plan has been submitted for approval.

Sustainability – Montgomery County has a number of goals that work towards creating a sustainable community. These goals include reducing the carbon footprint of proposed development, promoting walkability, reducing urban heat island effect, and protecting air and water quality. Public projects should lead the way in promoting sustainability by becoming examples of the multiple benefits of sustainable development to future generations.

Carbon footprint – Carbon footprint analysis can be divided into three basic categories – embodied energy (energy utilized while constructing the building), transportation energy (energy associated with traffic to and from the building), and building energy emissions (energy emissions created as a result of every day building operations).

- *Embodied energy* – Locally-sourced and recycled material will be used to construct the new building, and a construction waste management plan will divert 75% of demolished materials from waste disposal.
- *Transportation energy* – This school is located at the edge of an existing neighborhood where many of the students are able to walk to school. Bus stops served by Ride-On bus routes are located along Weller Road and along adjacent Connecticut and Georgia Avenues, within walking distance to the school.
- *Building energy emissions* – The proposed building organizes most program spaces around two interior courtyards. This maximizes access to daylight and green areas for both students and staff. Vegetated roofs will reduce energy use due to the insulating effects of the vegetation and planting medium. A geothermal field will be located under the playing field to further minimize energy requirements.

Urban Heat Island Effect – Median areas and green strips peripheral to parking areas, and between parking areas and adjacent residences, will be planted with a variety of shade, evergreen, and ornamental trees. The school is using a vegetated roof, which will help reduce urban heat island effect.

Stormwater Management – MCPS submitted a Stormwater Management concept plan to the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) on August 17, 2010. The concept includes a 4" vegetated roof over approximately 55% of the building, microbioretention areas, and water quality swales.

Green Buildings – This project will need to comply with County Council Bill 17-06, Montgomery County Green Buildings Law. The project is registered, and MCPS is seeking LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver Certification for Schools (or higher) for this project.

Transportation Analysis

Area 2 Transportation Planning staff reviewed the Mandatory Referral traffic study for compliance with the requirements of the LATR/PAMR Guidelines and recommends approval with conditions. Relevant comments from their report are summarized below.

Vehicular access to and from the school site is from three driveways located along Weller Road: two of them lead to the bus loop/staff parking area, and a third leads into the student drop-off/parent parking/service access areas. Sidewalks currently exist along both sides of Weller Road, as well as a marked crosswalk at the eastern leg of the intersection with Bluhill Road. Lead-in sidewalks will be provided from all three driveways, and bike racks will be provided along the south side of the building, near the main entrance and the student drop-off loop. Transit service is available along Weller Road via Ride-On Route 41, which provides service to the Glenmont Metro Station. There are also bus routes along adjacent Georgia and Connecticut Avenues, all within walking distance from the school.

A traffic study was required to satisfy Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) because the modernization project was expected to generate 30 or more total peak-hour trips during the morning peak-period. A traffic study for a core capacity of 740 students, during the weekday morning and afternoon peak-periods, indicated that the proposed project satisfies the Policy Area Mobility Review (PAMR) requirements of the Adequate Public Facilities (APF) ordinance, and that the intersections would be below the applicable congestion standard for the Kensington-Wheaton Policy Area (1,600 CLV). Therefore, the PAMR requirement is satisfied primarily by busing of students and encouraging students to walk to school.

Parks Department

No part of the project will be located on or adjacent to Park property. Parks Department staff had no comments on the application.

Community Notification

The MCPS prepared the proposed plans for the Weller Road Elementary School modernization project based on educational specifications. MCPS organized a Facility Advisory Committee organized to provide input on the proposed plans, which included MCPS and school staff, the architectural design team, parents, representatives of local civic associations, and staff from the County DPWT and the State Department of Education. MCPS notified adjacent homeowners and additional neighborhoods by mail and by signage at the school site about the proposed design committee meetings. The committee held four preliminary design meetings at the school over the course of the past year, on the following dates:

- February 10, 2010
- February 24, 2010
- March 17, 2010
- April 6, 2010

MCPS modified the plans in accordance with the suggestions and recommendations of the committee. The local PTA also reviewed the proposal.

After receiving the Mandatory Referral and Forest Conservation Plan applications, Planning Department staff notified via mail local citizen associations, adjoining and nearby property owners and other interested parties of the submittal and invited comments. Staff did not receive any comments or requests for information during its review of the proposal.

CONCLUSION

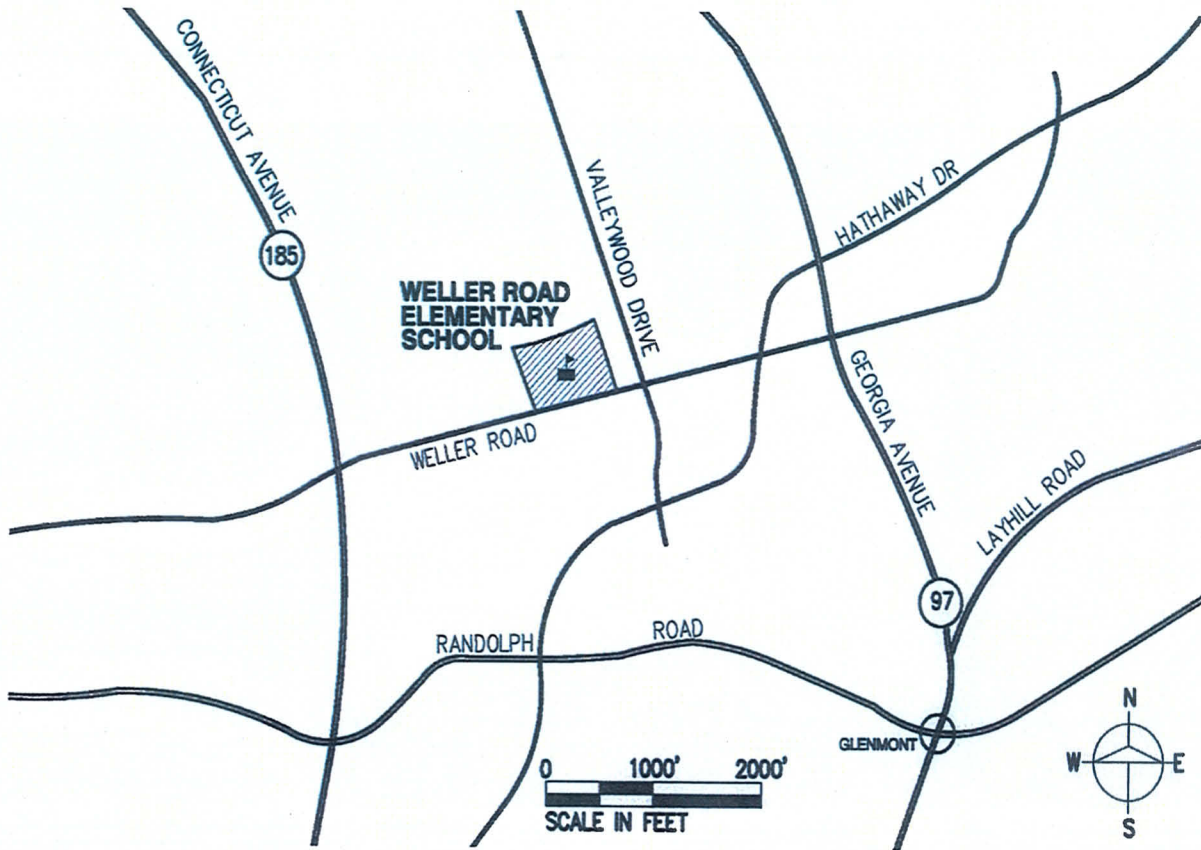
Based on information provided by the applicant and the analysis contained in this report, staff concludes that the proposed Mandatory Referral meets the applicable standards and guidelines for the environment, the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance as well as the development standards for the R-60 Zone. Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral with comments listed at the front of this report.

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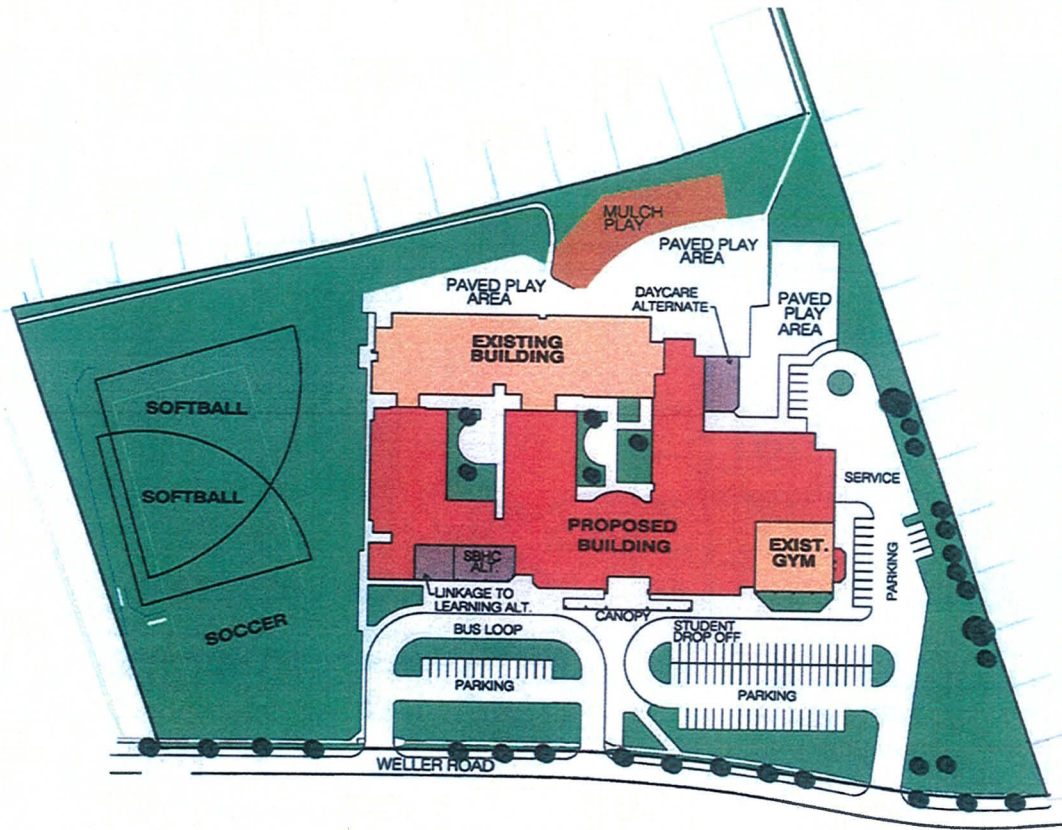
Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map and Existing Conditions Photo
2. Proposed Site Plan
3. Existing and Proposed First Floor Plans
4. Proposed Second Floor Plan and Exterior Elevations

ATTACHMENT 1: VICINITY MAP AND EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTO



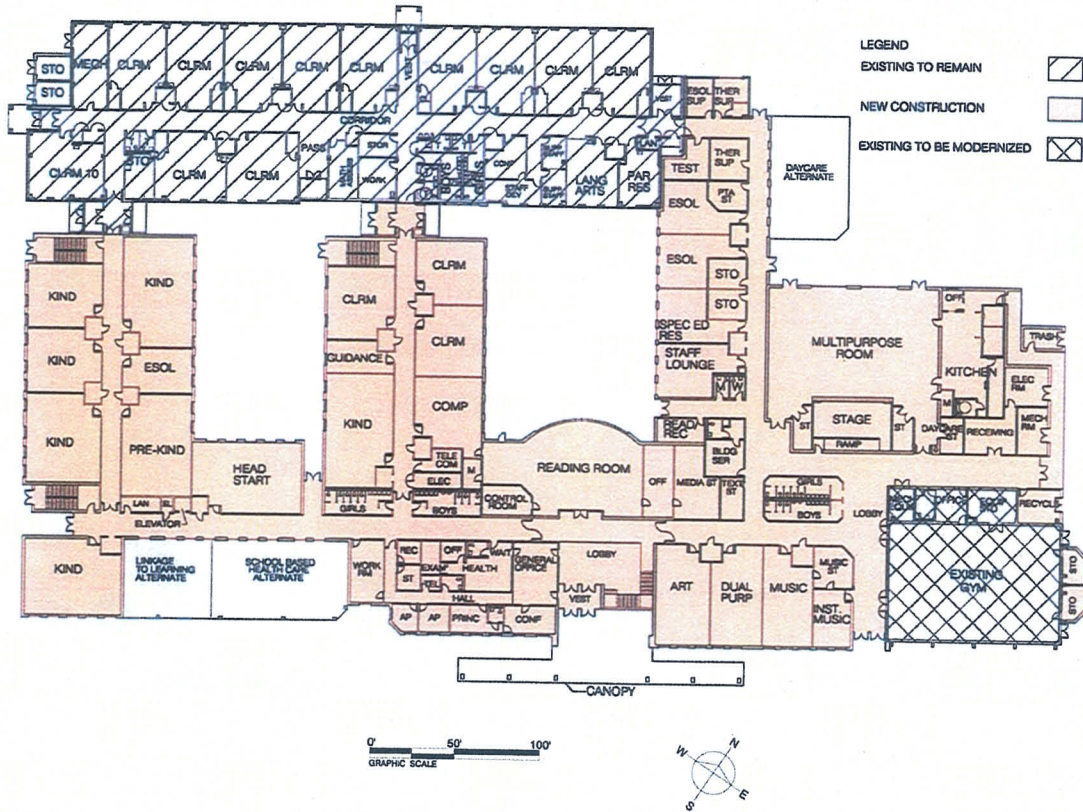
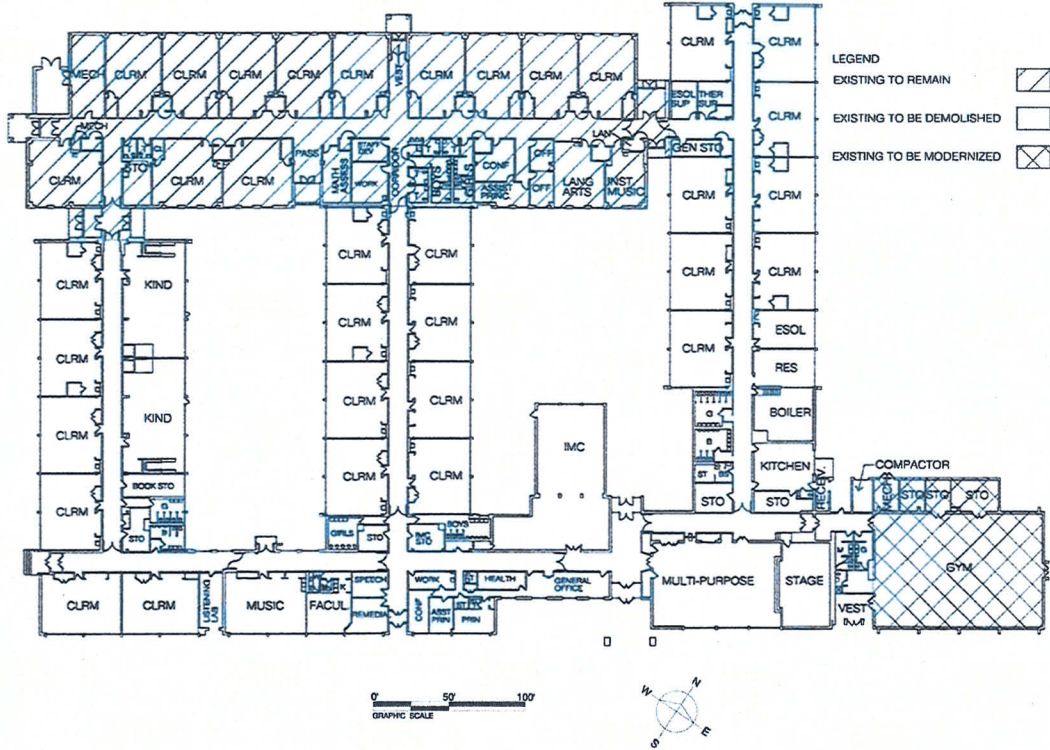
ATTACHMENT 2: PROPOSED SITE PLAN



0' 50' 100' 150'
GRAPHIC SCALE



ATTACHMENT 3: EXISTING AND PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLANS



ATTACHMENT 4: PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN AND ELEVATIONS

