

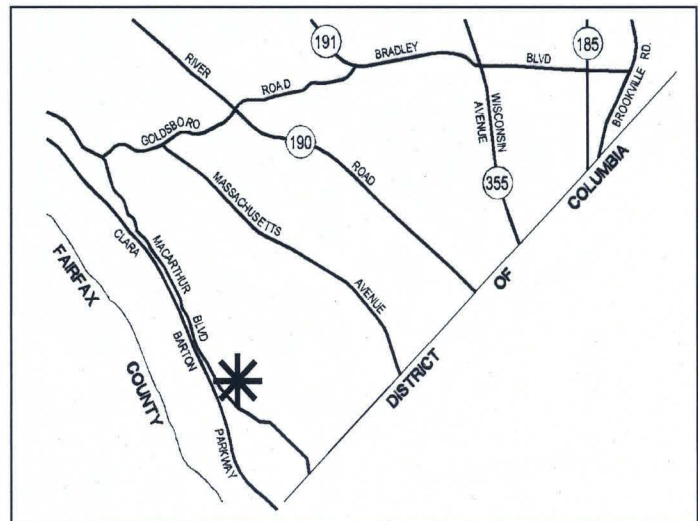
Intelligence Community Campus-Bethesda (ICC-B), Mandatory Referral, MR No. 2011105-MDP-4

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description

This is a review of the Site Development Guide (SDG) or master plan for a federal facility that involves the reuse of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency's Sumner site at 4600 Sangamore Road as the *Intelligence Community Campus-Bethesda (ICC-B)*. The plan covers 30 acres in the R-90 Zone within the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan area.

This is an advisory review highlighting issues concerning the draft Transportation Management Plan (TMP) and issues related to traffic and compatibility with the neighborhood.



summary

The Planning Board's action today is to decide what advice to provide to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and Department of the Army (DOA) with respect to the "Site Development Guide" (SDG) for the new Intelligence Community Campus (ICC-B) on this site. The overall plan is an improvement over the existing conditions because several buildings will be joined to function as one; surface parking will be replaced by pervious area and a parking garage, the queuing of vehicles for security checks will occur entirely on site, not on Sangamore Road, and the total amount of impervious surface will be reduced. The focus of the advice is about encouraging alternative means of commuting and addressing compatibility and neighborhood character issues. This should be achieved by collaboration with the community and the Planning Department as future mandatory referral submittals of more detailed site and landscape designs are provided.

Comments for Transmittal:

1. Revise the Draft Transportation Management Plan provided August 31, 2011, to include additional strategies to achieve the National Capital Planning Commission's (NCPC) recommended maximum of 1 parking space for every 1.5 employee.
2. Ensure access into and out of the site at the new entrance is safe and adequate.
3. Minimize the disturbance of the forested steep slopes near the proposed location of the new parking structure.
4. Screen views of the new parking structure from the adjacent Sangamore Local Park. Coordinate with the Montgomery County Parks Department (The M-NCPPC) to provide additional trees and shrubs along the shared northern boundary.
5. Submit plans of site and landscape designs for each phase for mandatory referral review. At that time address consistency with the development standards in the zoning ordinance and, in consultation with the neighboring communities, the compatibility of the design with the community character. Include:
 - Massing, articulation and materials of the visible buildings;
 - Landscape design to include the proposed fence;
 - Streetscape design subject to approval of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT);.
 - Setbacks and screening of views from the residential property to the south.

Description

This 30 acre campus sits above the Potomac River on a river bluff. The drop to the Potomac River is approximately 150 vertical feet at the rear of this site. The slope and the mature forest cover on the land managed by the National Park Service along the Potomac filter views of the structures on the site from below. The campus shares its northern boundary with the Waldorf School which rents a Montgomery County public school site. It also shares a northern boundary with Sangamore Local Park which is owned by The M-NCPPC. Across the street in the Sumner neighborhood is a local shopping center, the Shops at Sumner Place previously known as "Little Falls Mall." Next to the Mall are the Sumner Highlands garden apartments. The only access to the campus is from Sangamore Road.

The site was recently home to the National GeoSpatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) once known as the Defense Mapping Agency (DMA). Approximately 3000 people worked on the secured site and there are 1,800 parking spaces in a paved surface parking lot. Vehicle parking on the site absorbs nearly half of the overall area (approximately 14 acres.) Most of the NGA workforce has been moved to a new location, and the campus is in the process of being retrofitted to serve as a new intelligence community campus with approximately the same number of employees on site as when the NGA was present.

The plans for this property will accommodate up to 854,000 square feet of secure administrative space within a consolidated building footprint, an increase of 147,800 square feet of space. This extra space and reconfiguration will be instrumental to the success of the interagency missions planned for the

facility. The number of people working on site is expected to remain at approximately 3000 for the 25 year planning duration of the project.

The SDG calls for increasing the number of parking spaces to approximately 2,200. The site design requirements for this secure facility mandate minimum stand-off or separation distances from the building for security. This automatically limits the use of surface parking. This factor, combined with the “poor and inconsistent aesthetics “of the existing site described in the SDG, contributed to the decision to consolidate the parking facility in an above ground parking structure.

To accommodate the new use, the existing office structures will be connected to function more as a single unified building. This involves renovating and upgrading existing buildings, including improvements for security, and removing two buildings closest to the perimeter. The removal of existing surface parking will be accompanied by replacement with a new pervious planted area primarily in the front of the campus along Sangamore Road.

Construction on the improvements is scheduled to start in fall 2011. It will begin with the North Campus and include the new parking structure. The south campus construction is scheduled to begin in mid 2012, with partial occupancy scheduled to start in 2014. An update on the schedule will be provided by DIA at the Public Hearing.

Analysis

The analysis of this draft master plan is discussed in the following three categories:

- **Community Vision** as expressed by consistency with the Bethesda Chevy Chase Master Plan (B-CC Plan);
- **Neighborhood Fit** as indicated by consistency with the development standards of the zone, compatibility with the existing neighborhood, and connectivity;
- **Environmental Stewardship** –as indicated by consistency with county policies addressing energy, the environment and transportation alternatives.

Community Vision

Recommendations from the B-CC Plan are followed by an assessment of this draft plan’s response.

Page 64 “Palisades-Western B-CC”

“This plan recommends preservation of the Potomac Palisades’ unique environmental features of steeply wooded slopes and vistas and the perpetuation of the open space character established in the area.” ...

...“The scenic Palisades is one of the few areas in Montgomery County with a combination of delicate, irreplaceable environmental features of wooded bluffs, river, and cliffs. The large stands of mature trees are not only a critical asset from an environmental perspective but also greatly contribute to the ambience associated with the area. The steep slopes of the Palisades are an integral part of this character since they form the scenic vistas and overlooks of the Potomac River. Their preservation in an undisturbed state is essential to minimize erosion and stream degradation. Due to these unique, lovely and relatively unspoiled characteristics, it is of great importance to protect this area through a variety of measures.”

Page 69 "This Plan recommends preservation of steeply sloped areas of 25 percent and greater by strict adherence to the criteria established in the "Staff Guidelines for the Protection of Slopes and Stream Valleys," prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Department staff April 1983).

Comment: Minimize the disturbance on this site of the steep and wooded slope affected by the location of the proposed parking structure. There will be some disturbance and tree removal due to the need to provide adequate distance from the main buildings for security purposes combined with the objective of limiting visibility of the parking structure from Sangamore Road.

Page 70 "It is recommended that all Federally-owned property currently in a natural state be maintained as protected open space and that the former Glen Echo trolley right of way be preserved as public open space and for other public uses."

Comment: This site is not in a natural state. However, the proposed changes, which include significant increases in the pervious and landscaped areas, will contribute to the objective of providing green open space and will contribute to the overall character of the Palisades area.

Page 92 "...Although the Master Plan supports this type of Federal employment, increases in numbers of employees at any of these three facilities [staff note: National Institutes of Health, Naval Medical Command and NGA/Defense Mapping Agency] should occur in a constrained fashion."

..."A moderate level of employment development must be maintained at the Federal facilities so as to not unduly limit other development levels in the larger planning Area."

Comment: The level of employment is being held at approximately 3000, which is comparable in number to that of the workforce for the NGA/DMA previously operating at this site.

Page 92 ..."This Plan recommends careful design review on future Federal construction projects to assess the visual impact on the adjacent neighborhoods and on the open space character of the site....This recommendation...stresses the importance of a compatible relationship between the Federal properties and the well established surrounding communities. The review should focus on neighborhood compatibility, setbacks from campus borders, building heights, and peripheral landscaping and buffering."

Comment: Review of more detailed plans for the site will provide the opportunity for the careful design review recommended in the B-CC Plan. The draft SDG begins to address them but resolution will occur when more detailed plans are prepared for review. This is discussed in the section below on "Neighborhood Fit" and compatibility.

Page 93 "3.63 Defense Mapping Agency (DMA)"

"The dual-sited Defense Mapping Agency, with its stable employment population of about 3,900, has no adopted campus plan. Although no increase in employees or structures is projected, there are transportation considerations regarding existing workers commuting to and parking on the sites."

Carpools and vanpools, as well as other means of ride-sharing, should be more aggressively promoted among employees. Since neither of the two sites is on a public transit route, this Plan endorses future consideration of public transit as critical for the area."

Comment: This is discussed in the section below on "Connectivity" with recommendations for a revised TMP that should include strategies that reflect use of the above measures.

"It is the policy of this Plan not to approve added parking unless a formal traffic reduction program is implemented. Any additional parking which is being planned for DMA should be carefully reviewed by appropriate agencies with regard for location, neighborhood compatibility, and adequate buffering."

Comment: A formal traffic reduction program is proposed. When the program reflects the comments concerning timing, staging and strategies in this staff report, it will be appropriate to provide the additional parking.

Neighborhood Fit

Development Standards in the R-90 Zone

The review of the SDG as a draft master plan does not include the submittal of detailed plans of the site design or landscape design. However, when those detailed plans are prepared for future mandatory referral review, they should meet or exceed the standards in the R-90 zone if possible. The standards for building height, setbacks from lot lines, and building coverage are particularly relevant as are those standards that apply to parking facilities. Due to their size and location in this residential zone, the buildings on this campus should be considered as one "main building" for purposes of interpreting the zone.

The standards for Parking Facilities (59-E-2.7-9) should also be addressed in the detailed plans. Particular attention should be given to perimeter landscape areas, landscaping on the top level of the proposed parking facility, and setbacks and screening from the adjacent land which includes both land in a residential zone and institutional property, the Waldorf School.

Compatibility

The SDG includes conceptual illustrations of the proposed buildings and their landscaped setting. The intent is to redevelop "in a context sensitive manner" and "improve the appearance of the neighborhood" (SDG Section 5 page 7). It is the intent that landscaping will enhance views from Sangamore Road and break up building massing. The landscape plan will include native species. However, there remains a key design issue as acknowledged in the SDG:

"It is vital that the redevelopment must capture all the functionality of a new state-of-the-art campus while preserving the history and community context of the existing facilities." ... and

"The campus architectural design concept focuses on a contemporary high-tech aesthetic appearance using a precast panel and curtain wall system. This may be refined to include the use of a metal panel system to reflect the historic character of the existing building on site and blend into the neighborhood architecture more effectively."

While the proposal is a vast improvement over the expansive pavement, chain link fence and industrial appearance today, there remains the challenge of providing a good fit with the surrounding neighborhood while meeting other design objectives. The retrofitting will combine a new contemporary building envelope with seventy-year-old structures. The intent of the glass curtain wall system is to break up the building mass from the outside perspective, with the reflective properties of the glass façade capturing the surrounding landscape. However, it is not evident that this will indeed be the case. For this reason, in subsequent mandatory referral submittals the following is recommended:

In consultation with the neighboring communities, address the compatibility of the design with the community character and consistency with the development standards in the zoning ordinance to include the following:

- Massing, articulation and materials of the visible buildings;
- Landscape design to include the proposed fence;
- Streetscape design subject to approval of the MCDOT;
- Setbacks and screening of views from the residential property to the south and the park and school to the north.

A significant positive impact on the community is the fact that the queuing of vehicles waiting for security checks will be accommodated on site. The new design includes stacking space for 40 vehicles. This also contributes to improving connectivity for residents on Sangamore Road.

Connectivity

The plan's objective of maximizing connectivity to the site, including bicycle, bus, rail and pedestrian access, should be improved. This can be done by revising the draft TMP provided August 31, 2011 and then, of course, implementing that plan. The TMP should include additional strategies to achieve the NCPC's recommended maximum of 1 parking space for every 1.5 employees. To achieve that ratio, there should be no more than 2,000 parking spaces.

Three to six months before opening, a Transportation Liaison Officer or an Employee Transportation Coordinator should be actively engaged and in contact with employees before they start work and begin to establish their commuting behavior. All policies and programs should be ready from the first day including carpool/vanpool options, transit incentives, shuttle programs, biking/walking incentives, employee recognition programs, Guaranteed Ride Home and similar programs. Incentives and the provision of showering/changing facilities should be provided for employees who bike or walk to work. There should also be bike-share and car-share options for the site. If site security conflicts with that, then a joint venture with local businesses to locate the bike/car-share facilities nearby should be considered. Electric vehicle charging stations that are referenced in the SDG should be included in the revised TMP.

The ICC-B should take full advantage of existing transit services and coordinate with MCDOT and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) regarding improving bus service. Consideration should also be given to providing a dedicated shuttle to the Bethesda Metro/Purple Line and Friendship Heights Metro Stations.

Improved off-road bikeway connections to the site from existing regional trails should be provided. For example, the Capital Crescent Trail is within ½ mile of the campus. Improving connections may require

the construction of new shared-use paths. The Planning Department would like to work with the ICC-B to identify good connections and projects for inclusion in the County's Capital Improvements Program (CIP), in coordination with the MCDOT. Enhancements such as clear signage, and appropriate paving and markings should be explored with the MCDOT as well as the possibility of such enhancements being provided as part of this project.

Environmental Stewardship

Key components of the plan include optimizing energy usage at the facility to reduce overall greenhouse gas contributions and reduce life-cycle cost of building operations. Stormwater impacts will be reduced through the use of permeable pavements, vegetative infiltration areas and other best management practices. These features will be designed in accordance with Maryland Environmental Site Design principals. The proposed facility will result in improvements to water quality due to the reduction in the amount of impervious cover on the site. The redevelopment of this site will take the site from a 67% impervious cover condition to approximately 38%, a 49% reduction.

Stormwater design will be developed following federal requirements for Low-Impact Development outlined in the Energy and Infrastructure Security Act (EISA, Section 438) and governing body policies. Consolidating the parking into a garage enables the proposed development to restore significant green space to the front of the building. Approximately 6 acres of existing site pavement will be reclaimed for landscaping under the proposed plan. (SDG Section 3 page 9).

The achievement of environmental objectives will be documented through the LEED process. The proposed development is focused on achieving, at a minimum, LEED Silver certification (SDG Section 3 page 9).

Connectivity as discussed in the above section is also integral to environmental stewardship. In sum, the environmental stewardship of the site, as reflected in the SDG, is very good.

Neighborhood Response

There are several issues that have been raised by the community in response to the reuse of the site:

- Provision of a clear process with community engagement;
- Protection of trees and habitat and addressing the impact of tree removal on property values;
- Protection of neighborhood character with attention to building height and trees with one association requesting a height limit of five stores;
- Addressing traffic & parking impacts.

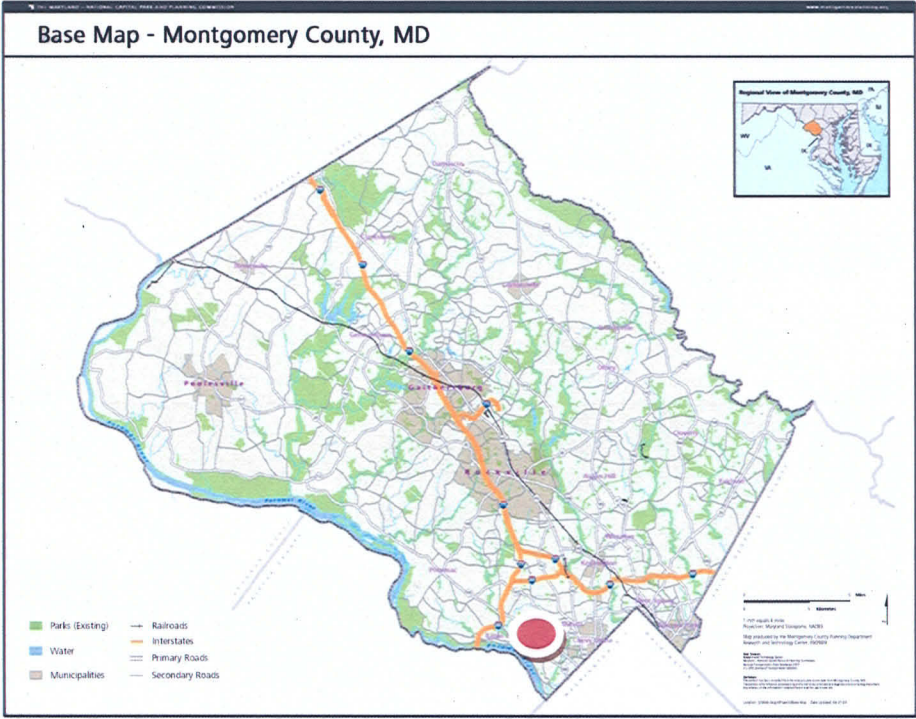
A meeting with the community is scheduled for October 6, 2011.

Conclusion

Staff recommends that the Planning Board advise the Defense Intelligence Agency and Department of the Army to address the transportation issues and continue to work with the community and the

Planning Department to address compatibility and neighborhood character issues through subsequent mandatory referral submittals of detailed site and landscaping plans.

ATTACHMENTS



Vicinity



Figure 1.3: Regional Setting, 4600 Sangamore Road, Bethesda, Maryland (ICC-B Site), The site is located approximately 5 miles south of I-495 and the Bethesda Downtown Commerce District and Metro Station; and approximately 6.5 miles from the I-66 corridor in downtown D.C.; (2008 image courtesy of Montgomery County GIS Department);

Existing Site

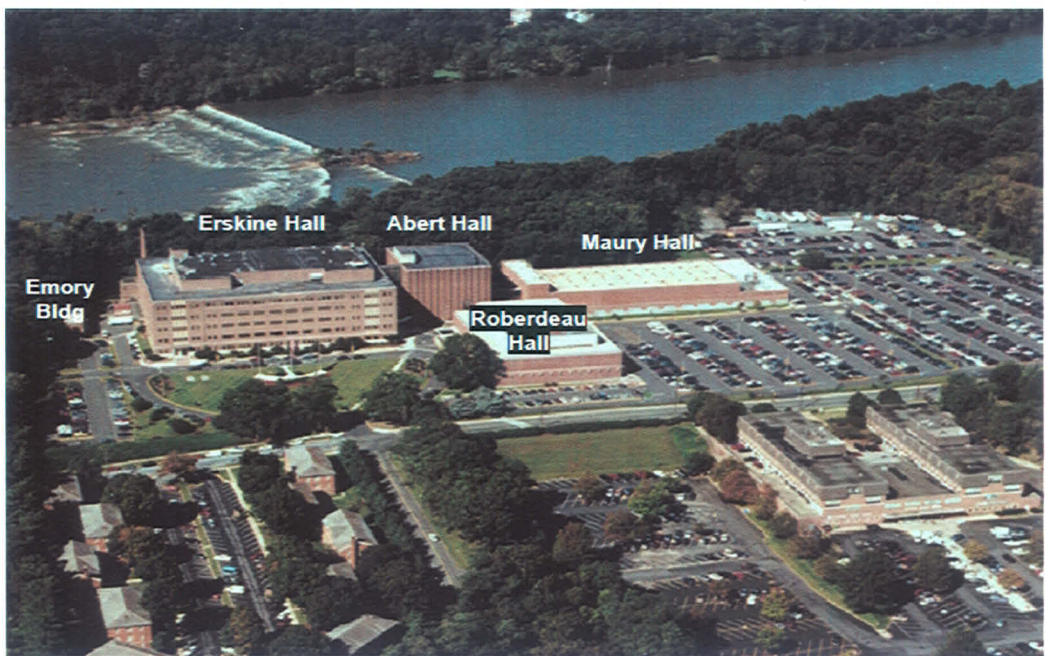
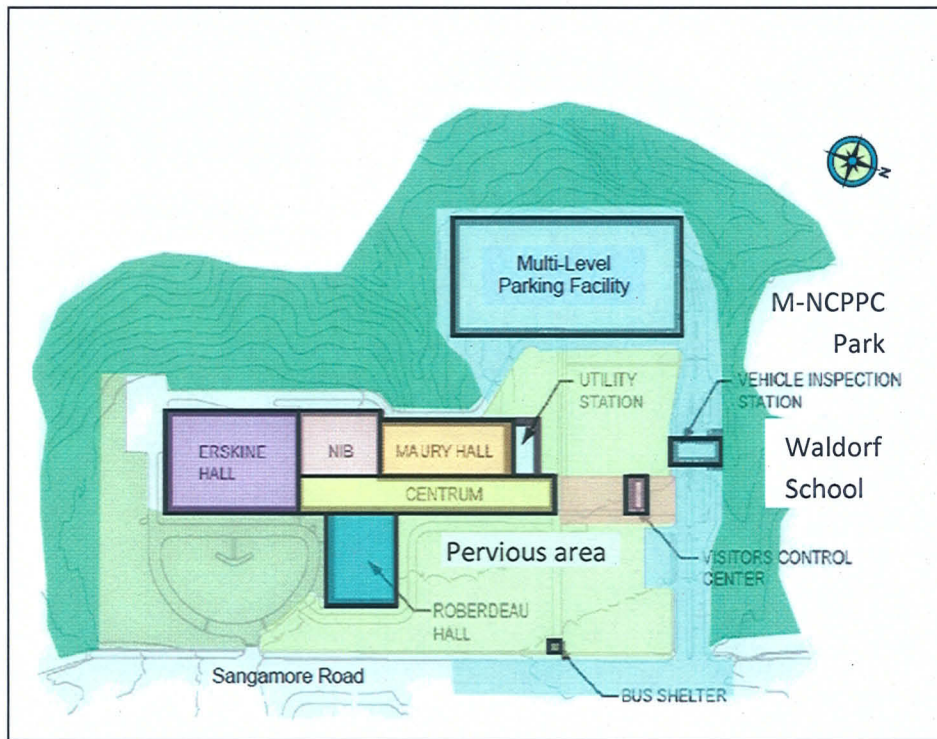


Figure 1.6: Existing site facilities perspective, (Courtesy of NGA site personnel)

Plan of Improvements



Sequence of Improvements

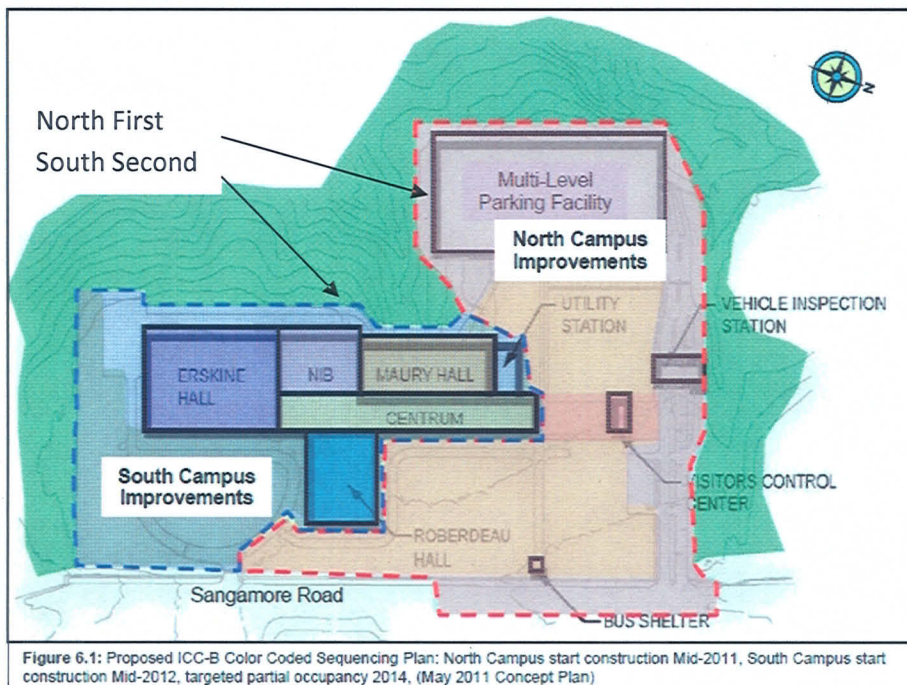


Illustration of
Concept

