MCPB
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Date: 12-1-11

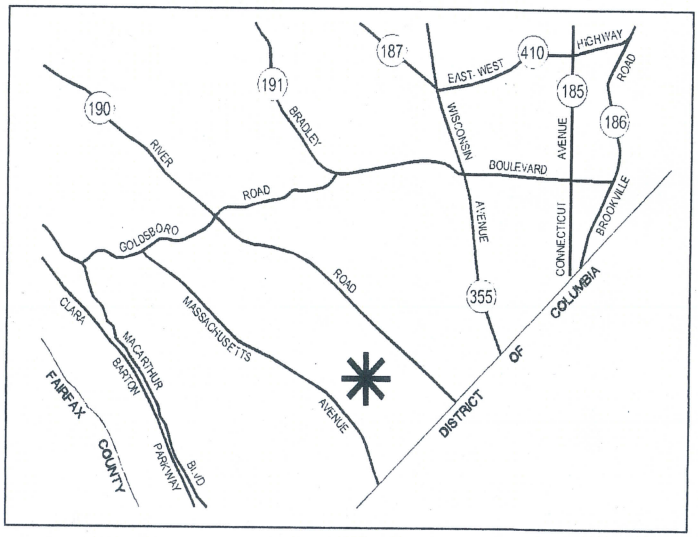
Westbrook Elementary School, Mandatory Referral, MR2012006

Margaret K. Rifkin, Lead Reviewer, Margaret.Rifkin@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495 4583
Cherian Eapen, Planner, Cherian.Eapen@montgomery planning.org 301 495 4539
Robert Kronenberg, Supervisor, Robert.Kronenberg@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495 2187
Rose Krasnow, Chief, Rose.Krasnow@montgomeryplanning.org, 301 495 4591

Date of Staff report: 11-15-11

Description

This is a review of an addition to the Westbrook Elementary School located at 5110 Allan Terrace in the R-60 zone on a 12.13 acre site. It is in the Palisades sub area of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan area. This submittal was made by Montgomery County Public Schools on October 6, 2011.



Summary

The Planning Board's action today is to decide what comments to provide to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) concerning changes to the existing school facilities. The proposal is an improvement to the existing school and includes several new play areas, more parking spaces and additional space for students to eliminate the need for temporary classrooms. This is an advisory review which highlights issues concerning neighborhood character environmental stewardship and traffic circulation.

The Planning Board must also act on the Forest Conservation Plan which is addressed in a separate staff report.

Comments for Transmittal:
The following comments should be transmitted to the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS):

1. Record additional conservation easements per the recommendation in the staff report for the review of the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan and Variance requests for this project. Continue to work to maximize preservation of the trees on the site beyond that required in the Forest Conservation Plan:

    a. Remove invasive species from the tree buffer along the parking area. Add additional plantings to ensure screening after the invasive species are removed.

    b. Coordinate with neighbors on Allan Terrace and work with Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), Fire and Rescue and the utility companies, on strategies to reduce impacts on the critical root zones of trees when finalizing the design of the proposed improvements to the street.

2. Include a traffic study in any mandatory referral submission for future improvements at the school, if those improvements will increase the school's student core capacity beyond 640 students.

3. Explore the feasibility of a crosswalk across Allan Terrace just east of the expanded school bus loop in coordination with Montgomery County Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of Permitting Services (DPS).

4. Continue to consult with the Maryland Historic Trust to ensure that all project work is undertaken in a manner consistent with the Secretary's Standards and compatible with this potentially historic school building.

Description

The existing school property is approximately 12.13 acres and is north of Allan Terrace and east of Westridge Drive. It is bordered on the north by Little Falls Park. The school was originally constructed in 1939. The addition includes the construction of a new building of 46,389 square feet, construction of two new asphalt play areas, one new mulched play area, expansion of the parking lot and reconstruction of sidewalks and an existing mulched play area.

The purpose of the project is to expand the main school building to accommodate the students currently being taught in temporary classrooms and to update the layout of the school's interior to allow for enhanced educational programs. In addition, the school facility will be available for public use under the Montgomery County Community Use of Public Facilities program.

Today, the limited vehicle parking and small capacity of the bus parking area contribute to traffic congestion on Allan Terrace during times of high use. Therefore, the proposed site plan consists of an expanded bus loop and additional parking spaces to bring a total of on-site parking to 70 spaces. Allan Terrace will be widened to provide a fully separate parking lane in front of the school. Cars currently

park on both sides of Allan Terrace, causing the road to function as a one-way street for vehicles accessing the school.

Additional features include provision of ADA compliant routes for pedestrians, that includes a new ramp at the front entrance of the school, as well as one to play areas, two new mulched play areas on site, two new paved asphalt play areas on site, and preservation of many existing quality trees. However, several quality trees are proposed for removal. The site design includes a two tiered retaining wall around the asphalt and mulch play areas, to create adequate space.

Analysis

The analysis of this proposal addresses:

- **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; and

- **Environmental Stewardship** –as indicated by consistency with county policies addressing energy, the environment and transportation alternatives.

Community Vision

The proposal is consistent with the vision for the community as expressed in the recommendations in the B-CC Plan if additional conservation easements are provided per the recommendations in the staff report for the Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan. "*This Plan supports the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas that are not already within parkland*." (page 137). The B-CC Plan also includes recommendations concerning mandatory referrals such as this one. The B-CC Plan states:

> *"…the mandatory referral process should be used to ensure that proposals for school modernization, additions, and reuse are compatible with the surrounding areas. Issues to address include:*
> *1. Traffic and parking controls*
> *2. sensitive siting of modular classrooms, additions, or new buildings, and*
> *3. Landscaping and parking lot screening" (Page 146)*
>
> *"…where there is space available on the site [of an existing public facility] for expansion, community-enhancing functions should be planned….Such facilities should be linked to the neighborhood by pedestrian and bicycle paths and small-scale public transit." (Page 149)*

As called for in the B-CC Plan, the project is compatible with the surrounding area. Traffic and parking control issues are being addressed by the provision of more parking spaces on the site and a larger bus drop off area in front of the school. The addition is sensitively sited to fit the terrain and take advantage of the slope of the site to minimize visual impact of the three story building. New landscaping is provided particularly in locations where

existing trees are being removed to accommodate the construction activity, utility lines and the building addition. Parking lot screening is provided in an area that contains mature trees and lower screening growth that includes many invasive plant species. The invasive species should be removed and new plantings placed to fill gaps and create screening. The community-enhancing functions of the project, such as a new gymnasium in the building addition, are typical for such local elementary schools.. Existing links to the neighborhood by pedestrian paths and bicycle paths will remain. "Small-scale public transit" takes the form of Ride-On bus service which stops 1400 feet from the school.

Neighborhood Fit

The proposed addition and site improvements fit the neighborhood well. They are consistent with the development standards of the R-60 zone, which are the standards for the private development of one-family detached homes in this neighborhood. However, the proposal does not meet the zoning ordinance standards for the parking lot. This is acceptable in this case due to the characteristics of this particular retrofit and the fact that this is a public facility which is not legally required to adhere to those standards. . The proposal minimizes impacts on existing trees along the western property line, and other plantings that already soften the visual impact of the parking lot today.

Addressing the development standard for 5% internal green would not be a net benefit because it would require expanding the parking lot into areas that are already green. While there is no "solid wall or fence or compact evergreen hedge" for screening from the adjoining and facing residential land, on the south and west, there is already a green edge including existing mature trees that is to be left undisturbed. While there is no "perimeter landscaped strip", the parking lot has the required setbacks and those setbacks are green and planted and will continue to include trees. (59.E.2.72)

Invasive species should be removed from these green edge areas and infill plantings added to ensure an effective screen.

Analysis of the Project and Development Standards in the R-60 Zone

Development Standard 59-C-1.3 22-.28	Required for Private Development of Single Family Detached Homes	Proposed
Minimum Lot Area	6,000 square feet	9.7 acres 422,532 square feet
Minimum Lot Width At Building Line	65 feet	>65 feet
Min Lot Width At Street	25 feet	>700 feet
Minimum Setback From Street	25 feet	65 feet
Minimum Set Back From Adjacent Lot One Side Yard Sum Of Both Side Yards	 8 feet 18 feet	 90 feet 275 feet
Rear Yard	20 feet	222 feet
Maximum Building Height	3 stories or 40 feet	3 stories: 35.52 feet

Development Standard 59-C-1.3 22-.28	Required for Private Development of Single Family Detached Homes	Proposed
Max Percent Of Net Lot Area That May Be Covered By Bldgs	35%	12%
Maximum Percent Of Front Yard Of Surfaced Area	35%	< 35%
Parking Facility 59-E-2.81		
Setbacks Front One Side Yard Rear Yard	 30 feet 8 feet 25 feet	 50 feet 30 feet
Internal Landscaping 59-E-2.73	5%	0%
Parking Spaces - (Existing 25)	NA	60 on site 10 on-street

Compatibility

Compatibility with the existing neighborhood is achieved. The exterior features and building design are an appropriate response to the small, environmentally constrained site within a neighborhood of modest one-family homes. The preservation of trees, the planting of new trees and the placement and design of the addition all contribute to compatibity. Of particular note is the fact that the original school building, which faces Allan Terrace, is a potential historic resource based on State of Maryland criteria. The new addition references key features of that original building such as the brick, the slate roof, the windows and the roofline. The massing of the addition is broken into volumes that relate well to the scale and shape of the original building. The height and setbacks are appropriate for the neighborhood.

Connectivity

Connectivity is provided for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Allan Terrace forms a large “U” and is a secondary residential street primarily serving local residences and the Westbrook Elementary School. It will be widened as part of this project to provide for easier passage of emergency vehicles. The widening will occur only on one side, and only in front of the school.

The project will not change the current school access or circulation scheme. It will provide more parking on the site and easier vehicular circulation. There will be more space for busses and student drop off. These improvements will help relieve the temporary congestion that occurs at busy times as well as overflow parking issues. They may also improve overall pedestrian safety and vehicular circulation at the school. Having more on site spaces will help address the problem of cars parking across the street in front of homes. Those homes need the on street parking, because they do not have driveways for parking off street.

The modernized school will have a total of 60 parking spaces on school property compared to the 25

parking spaces that currently exist. There are also 10 additional spaces on street that are counted as part of the school's complement.

The school site is well connected by sidewalks and a path with a pedestrian bridge over a stream to the surrounding neighborhood it serves. The project will include a newly relocated sidewalk along the north side of Allan Terrace (to the east of the bus loop) and new lead-in sidewalks from Allan Terrace to the school building entrances. ADA improvements are also provided. They include a ramp to the front entrance of the school on Allan Terrace, and another ramp with switchbacks, to the play areas below the school.

There is transit access. Transit services in the area include RideOn Bus Route 29 along Massachusetts Avenue that runs between Bethesda Metro Station and Friendship Heights Metro Station. Bus stops related to this route are approximately 1,400 feet from the school at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Baltimore Avenue/Falmouth Road. This is considered to be a reasonable walking distance.

Review of the traffic study indicated that the study complied with the requirements of the Local Area Transportation Review/Policy Area Mobility Review Guidelines and the traffic study scope developed for the project. The mandatory referral satisfies the Local Area Transportation Review requirements of the Adequate Public Facilities test.

To satisfy the Policy Area Mobility Review requirements of an Adequate Public Facilities test, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Policy Area requires mitigation of a minimum of 25 percent of new trips generated by a use.

MCPS is achieving 39 percent trip mitigation at the school, primarily through bussing of students to the school. This is well over the 25 percent minimum requirement for the Policy Area. The project, therefore, satisfies the Policy Area Mobility Review requirements of the Adequate Public Facilities test.

Environmental Stewardship

Sustainability

The most significant measures being addressed with the proposal are the siting and design of the building to minimize its footprint. The addition is 2- 3 stories and, therefore, has a smaller footprint than if it were spread out in one story. On this constrained site, the addition is carefully located entirely outside the stream buffer and configured to limit the impact on the forested area north of the building. The modifications to the parking lot and driveway focus on using the paved area within the existing curb line wherever possible. This minimizes encroachment on trees and stream buffer. The Forest Conservation Plan and Variance requests are discussed in a separate staff report.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater management is addressed through the use of porous pavement, micro bioretention facilities and a green roof. A Stormwater Management concept plan was approved by the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) on August 4, 2011. A recommended condition of approval for the Forest Conservation Plan is to require the submission to M-NCPPC of the stormwater management plan before

it is finalized, along with the Final Forest Conservation Plan to ensure consistency of the limits of disturbance and the associated tree/forest preservation measures.

Green Building

According to MCPS, features consistent with LEED Silver Certification are incorporated in the new addition. However such certification is not formally sought for additions, only for modernizations. The following energy conservation measures will be incorporated into the Westbrook Elementary School addition:

1. Energy recovery from building exhaust to pre-treat outdoor ventilation air
2. Pipe insulation thicknesses to meet International Energy Conservation Code
3. Motorized dampers to minimize infiltration
4. Demand controlled ventilation in assembly spaces
5. Occupancy sensors for interior lighting control
6. Time of day exterior lighting control
7. Exterior building envelope design to reduce energy loss.

The vegetated roof reduces energy use due to the insulating effects of the vegetation and planting medium. The proposed trees on the school grounds will ultimately provide additional shading of the school building.

Neighborhood Response

Several neighbors inquired about tree preservation. One concern in particular was about the mature trees that face Allen Terrace and the impact on those trees of the proposed widening of the street. MCPS reports that the street widening is required to provide safe access for emergency vehicles and is supported by MCDOT. Unfortunately, the impact of the widening will result in the removal of several specimen trees as well as some smaller trees. Removal of the specimen trees requires a Variance. This is discussed in the accompanying staff report on the Forest Conservation Plan and Variance Request. In addition, the tree save plan will specify supplemental measures for individual trees that will be preserved fronting Allan Terrace. There will also be new trees planted in that area.

MCPS has held a series of community meetings while planning this project. The most recent meeting was in October 2011.

Conclusion

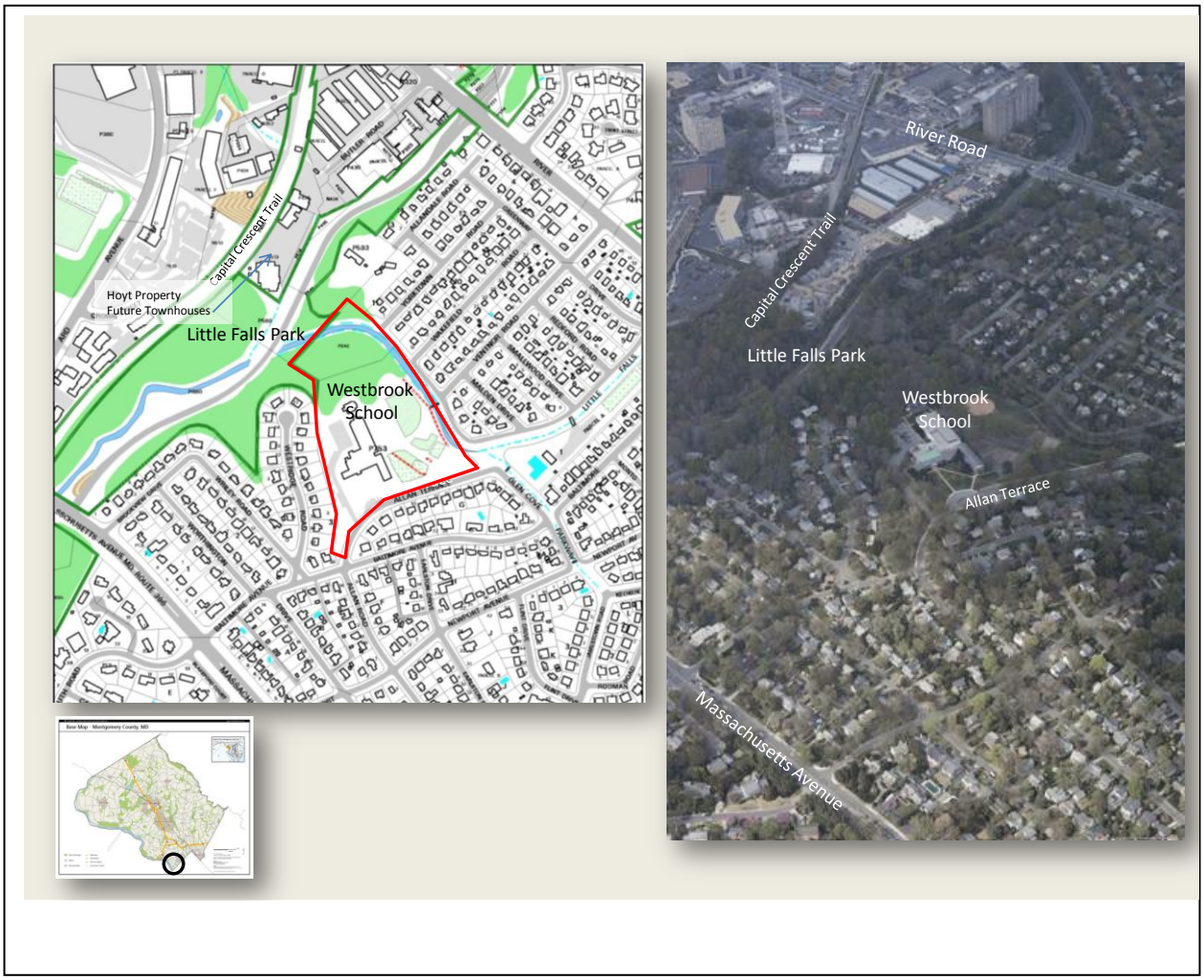
Staff recommends that the Planning Board transmit the comments to the Montgomery County Public Schools concerning tree preservation, a new cross walk and continued coordination with the Maryland Historic Trust.

ATTACHMENTS

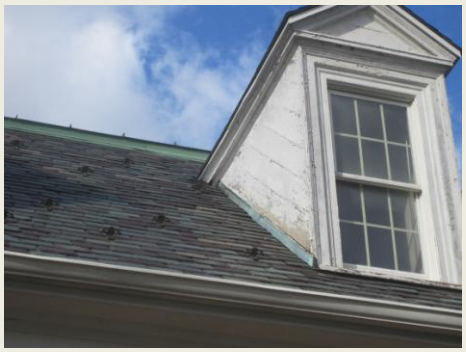
Vicinity Map
Existing Conditions
Existing and Proposed Plan of Site

Perspective of Proposed Changes
Proposed Changes
E-Mail from Allan Terrace Resident
E-Mail from MCPS regarding widening of Allan Terrace

Vicinity Map

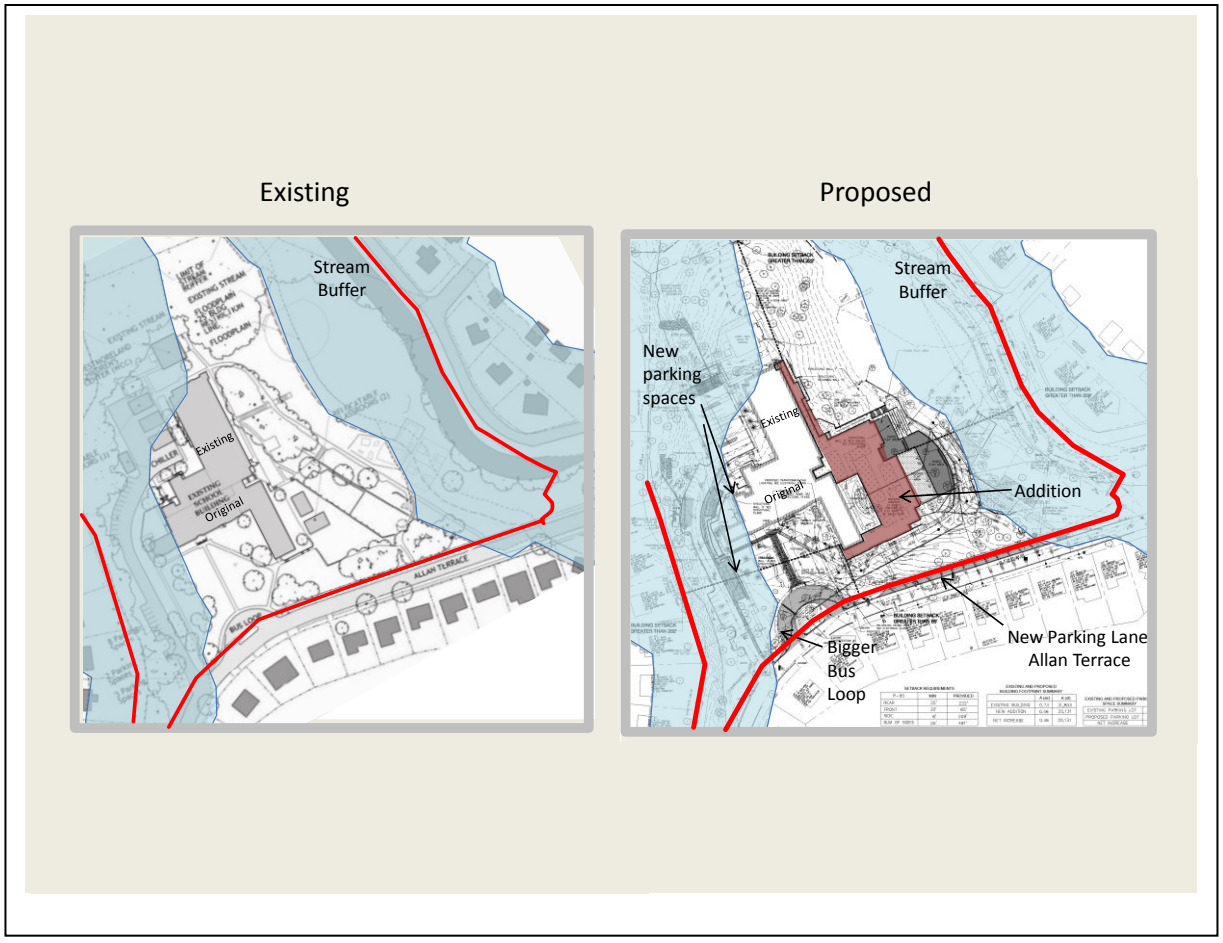


The existing building includes the original 1939 structure .

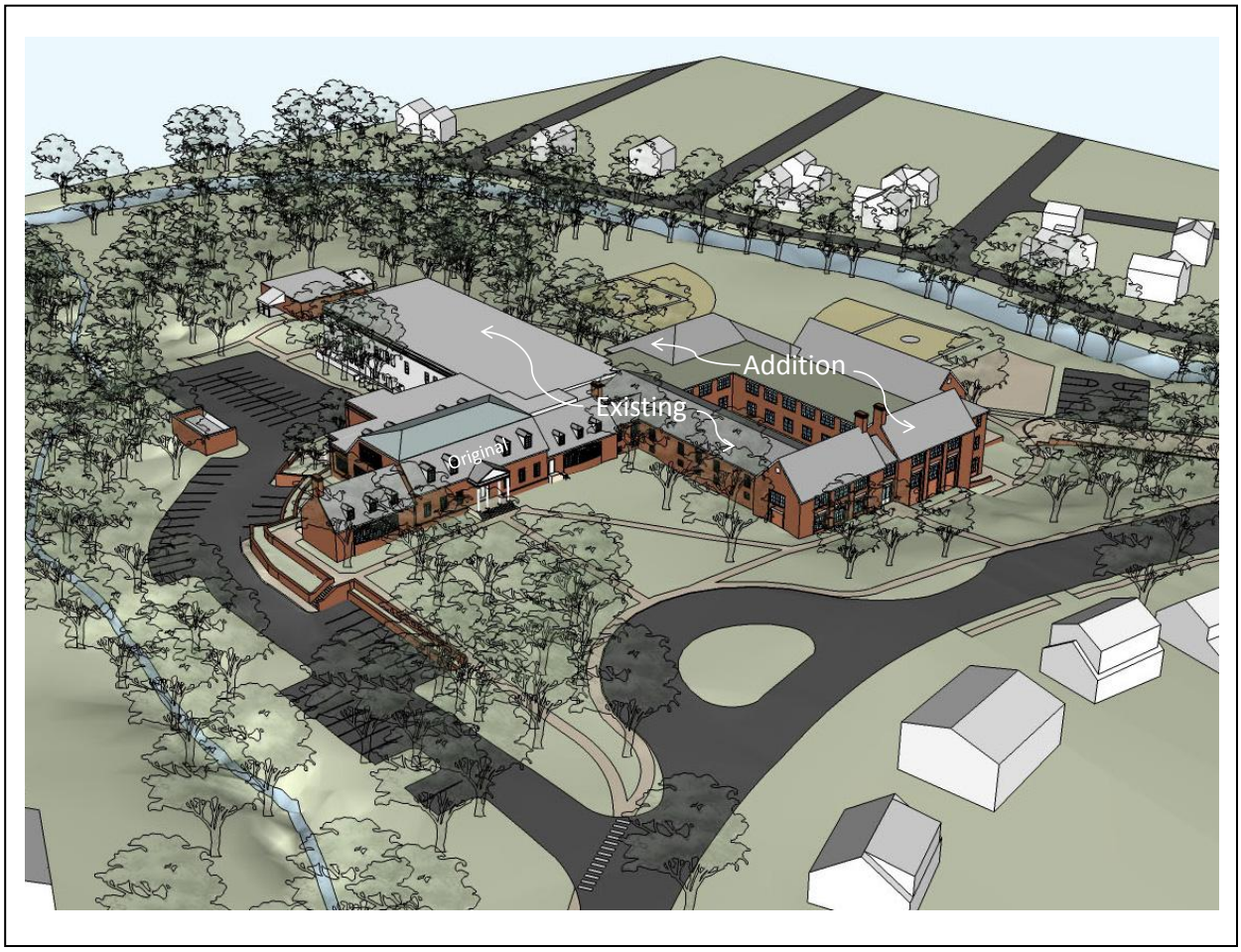


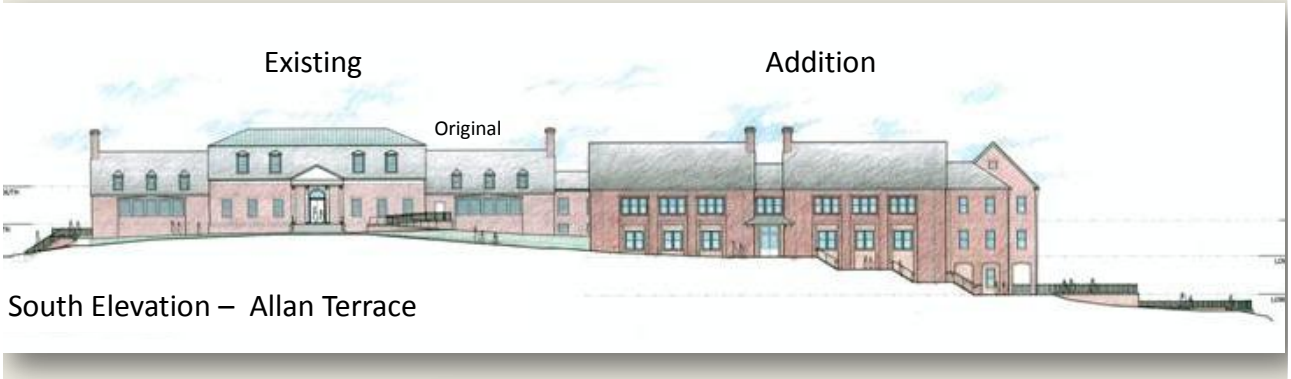
The site includes streams and stream buffers, flood plane, woodland and specimen trees.

Existing and Proposal Plan of Site



Perspective of Proposed Changes





South Elevation – Allan Terrace


EL. 249.52'
MAIN FLR. SOUTH
EL. 237.14'
LOWER LEVEL FLR. SOUTH
EL. 223.80'
LOWEST LEVEL FLR. SOUTH
EL. 244.18'
MAIN FLR. NORTH
EL. 230.64'
LOWER LEVEL FLR. NORTH
2
A2.05
EAST ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

E Mail from Allan Terrace Resident

-----Original Message-----
From: Maureen Greiger [mailto:mgreiger@msn.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 26, 2011 5:40 PM
To: Joseph_Derosa@mcpsmd.org
Cc: Rifkin, Margaret
Subject: Westbrook ES Meeting

Mr. Derosa,

Unfortunately I will be unable to attend tonight's meeting, as I am presently laid up due to a health condition.

I have spoken with Ms. Rifkin about possible tree compromise/ removal as a result of widening our street, and she is aware that removing any of the very healthy trees across from our home would not be a very popular option.
We would be interested in hearing about any alternative means of reducing the relatively small increase in "congestion" that we as residents directly impacted have observed thus far.

I have no doubt that our neighbors, and particularly those on our street, are of the same mind, and would find the loss of any of those trees quite disturbing, as most are very ecology-minded.
Please keep us apprised of the evolution/resolution of these issues!

Thank you,

The Greigers
5117 Allan Terrace

E-Mail From MCDOT via MCPS Concerning Allan Terrace Street Widening

From: Gries, Jean [mailto:Jean.Gries@montgomerycountymd.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2011 8:31 AM
To: Derosa, Joseph
Subject: Proposed Road Widening on Allan Terrace

Dear Mr. DeRosa,

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) is submitting this email to support the proposed road widening of a portion of Allan Terrace as part of the Westbrook Elementary School addition project.

MCDOT believes that this widening is imperative to improving traffic safety on Allan Terrace. This is the ultimate opportunity to improve a recurring problem, and it would be negligent not to do so as part of the addition project.

Sincerely,

Jean E. Gries, Planning Specialist

Traffic Engineering Studies Section

Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations

Montgomery Department of Transportation