

February 22, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA:

John A. Carter, Chief AC

Community-Based Planning Division

Glenn Kreger, Team Leader, Silver Spring-Takoma Park

Community-Based Planning Division

FROM:

Nancy Sturgeon for the Department of Park and Planning

(301-495-1308)

PROJECT:

Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Forest Glen Annex, Fire

Station #54

CASE NUMBER:

Mandatory Referral #01113-NCPC-1

REVIEW TYPE:

Mandatory Referral

APPLICANT:

Department of the Army, Walter Reed Army Medical Center,

Forest Glen Annex, Silver Spring, Maryland

ZONE:

R-90

LOCATION:

Silver Spring at the corner of Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter

Avenue

MASTER PLAN:

2000 North and West Silver Spring Master Plan

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH COMMENTS

The following comments are provided on the proposed fire station:

- 1. The applicant is bound by all submitted site plans and development plans.
- Stormwater management and water quality controls are strongly recommended for this site due to the amount of impervious surface, the use of on-site pavement areas for washing, and, most importantly, the location of this site near wetlands and the lower Rock Creek watershed, which has degraded stream conditions.

- 3. The prominent location of the fire station building on a hill above a main entrance to the Annex presents an important opportunity to create an attractive presence for the building as well as an improved, enhanced entrance to the Army's Forest Glen facility.
- 4. Attention should be given to the chain link security fence that is proposed to surround the perimeter of the fire station. The fence could detract from the overall site and building design if it is not appropriately screened. Shade trees located at the perimeter of the site, especially along Brookville Road, should be planted outside the security fence to provide screening as well as shade to the adjacent sidewalk. Additional shade trees should be planted along Stephen Sitter Avenue, between the fence and the sidewalk.
- 5. Existing sidewalks should be retained along Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue with the existing lawn panel between the sidewalk and curb.
- 6. The dumpster in the corner of the parking lot should be enclosed and screened; it is in a very visible location.

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION: None

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This project involves the construction of a new fire station at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Forest Glen Annex. (See Attachment 1.) The 1.4-acre site for the new fire station is the corner of Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue in Silver Spring. (See Attachments 2 and 3.) The existing fire station that serves the Forest Glen Annex is currently located on adjacent Army-owned property at the National Park Seminary Historic District (NPSHD), which the Army is surplusing. The Army is currently working with the General Services Administration to find a new user and transfer ownership of the NPSHD. If the NPSHD is conveyed to a new owner, the fire station must be relocated. In addition, the current fire station is located in a historic building that was originally built as a garage. The facility is outmoded and inadequate for modern fire-fighting equipment and personnel.

BACKGROUND

The Department of the Army has submitted final site and building plans for a new, relocated fire station complex for the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC), Forest Glen Annex. Preliminary plans were provided to Park and Planning staff and written comments were conveyed to the applicant via a letter from the Chairman to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) dated December 20, 2001. (See Attachment 4.) The NCPC reviewed the preliminary fire station plans on January 10, 2002, and provided a written report to the Department of the Army. NCPC approved the building plan, but requested revisions to the site plan prior to final submission. The

Department of the Army submitted the new fire station for Mandatory Referral on February 5. On February 12, the Army requested an expedited final review in order to facilitate review by NCPC on March 7 and to prevent a delay in construction and an increase in costs associated with this project. (See Attachment 5.)

Mission of Walter Reed Army Medical Center

The Walter Reed Army Medical Center is one of the Army's largest health care facilities and is a major medical care, research, and teaching center. The main section of the WRAMC contains the hospital and major research and teaching facilities and is located in northwest Washington D.C. between 16th Street and Georgia Avenue. (See Attachment 1.) The Forest Glen Annex of the WRAMC contains 159 acres and is located inside the Beltway approximately ¾ of a mile west of Georgia Avenue; it is accessed via Seminary Road to Linden Lane, or via Brookville Road. The Annex is bounded by the Capital Beltway, the CSX railroad tracks, the edge of the industrial area along Garfield Avenue, and Rock Creek Park. The Annex provides a variety of research facilities as well as service and support to the main section. A new building for the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), the largest military medical research laboratory in the Department of Defense, was completed at the Forest Glen Annex in 1999.

Disposition of the National Park Seminary

The Army's Forest Glen Annex includes the 27-acre National Park Seminary Historic District, which is located north of Linden Lane. In 1998, the Army decided that they no longer needed the NPSHD and commenced a formal disposition process. In 1999, the Army prepared a "Report of Excess Real Property" to the General Services Administration, which is now in the process of trying to find a new user. In addition to the 27-acre NPSHD, the Army has included a five-acre site across Linden Lane from the Seminary as part of the disposition, for a total of 32 acres.

There are currently two remaining uses in the NPSHD – the Carroll House shelter and the WRAMC fire station, formally known as the Forest Glen Annex Fire Prevention and Protection Division. Both of these uses have to be relocated if the Army transfers the Historic District to a new owner. When the fire station is officially moved from its current location in a historic building (#121) at the NPSHD, the Army must ensure that this building is secured and properly maintained until the entire site is transferred to a new user.

Master Plan Consistency

The proposed location for the new fire station is consistent with both the Army's Master Plan and the M-NCPPC Master Plan for North and West Silver Spring. The new fire station would be located on vacant land on the south side of Stephen Sitter Avenue at Brookville Road. This area is designated as a facility maintenance zone in the Army's Master Plan. This location was designated as the future site for the Annex's fire station in the Army's 1992 Master Plan Report for the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Forest Glen Section. This location has served as the south entrance to the Forest Glen

Annex for many years. The 1992 Master Plan stated the following with regard to the fire station: "A two-stall facility is located in Building 121 in the Historic District. Constructed as a garage in 1907, this structure is totally outmoded for its present use. A new facility is programmed." (page 6-7)

The Forest Glen Annex of the WRAMC is located within the boundaries of the 2000 Approved and Adopted North and West Silver Spring Master Plan. The Master Plan discusses the Forest Glen Annex in general, but does not specifically address the fire station. The Plan states that the Brookville Road entrance should be considered the main entry to the Forest Glen Annex of the WRAMC. The other entrance to the Annex is on Linden Lane. "Brookville Road is classified as an arterial highway, while Linden Lane is a secondary residential road. Brookville Road is an appropriate main entrance to the base." (page 40) The location of the fire station at Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue does not affect which entrance is considered the main one. However, a prominent, visible, architecturally appealing building at this location will enhance the Brookville Road entrance and make it more recognizable and visually interesting.

ANALYSIS

The proposed, new fire station will replace the existing one currently located in a historic building in the National Park Seminary Historic District. It appears that the new fire station will be a state-of-the-art facility that will efficiently accommodate all operational requirements for fire protection personnel serving the Forest Glen Annex. Since the Army and the General Services Administration are in the process of disposal of the NPSHD, staff is pleased that the Army is moving forward on their plans to relocate the fire station.

The WRAMC Forest Glen Annex is in the R-90 zone and is surrounded by residential and industrial uses and parkland. Land uses adjacent to the Annex include light industrial uses to the south along Brookville Road and Garfield Avenue, Rock Creek Park to the west, the single-family neighborhood of Forest Glen Park to the north, and the CSX railroad and additional light industrial uses to the east. Land uses immediately surrounding the proposed fire station site include an existing Army laundry building, which will remain, to the west; the Army's perimeter open space buffer area to the immediate south with light industrial uses along Garfield Avenue; light industrial uses to the east along Brookville Road; and Army storage buildings to the north. (See Attachment 6.)

The proposed site for the new fire station is a 1.4-acre piece of vacant land at the intersection of Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue at the Annex's southern entrance. The site is an open, grass hill with moderate slopes. There is a six- to eight-foot elevation change sloping from north to southwest on the site. There are several existing trees and a drainage swale at the west side of the site that evolves into steeper terrain and provides surface water drainage to isolated wetlands that drain to the lower Rock Creek watershed.

Key features of the site and building design include the following:

- Total area of the site: 58,915 square feet or 1.4 acres
- Area of the fire station building and site coverage: 7,800 square feet
- Access to the fire station will be from an existing driveway off Stephen Sitter Avenue that will be shared with the adjacent laundry facility.
- The new fire station will be easily visible and accessible at the Annex's entrance.
- The building design includes a drive-through fire apparatus bay.
- Separate entrances for visitors and employees are provided.
- 17 parking spaces are provided, including 10 for fire station personnel, four for visitors, two for inspectors, and one for the fire chief.
- Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for walkways at the points of entry to the building.

The new fire station site will occupy a prominent location along Brookville Road. This location presents an opportunity to create an attractive, significant presence at the Annex's southern entrance. The 1992 Army Master Plan did not include design guidelines, which were to be prepared subsequent to the Master Plan, with the long-term goal of improving the physical and visual environment for WRAMC. According to the NCPC, the proposed fire station design adheres to the facility's proposed exterior design guidelines, involving the use of light red brick, gabled sloping roofs, and limited articulated architectural trim detailing. The proposed building design for the fire station demonstrates features used in other buildings at the Forest Glen Annex, particularly the new Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) building. The preliminary drawings for the fire station show a blue roof, red brick, and yellow trim colors, which match details at the large WRAIR building. Using a similar color scheme will help to create some unifying architectural elements at the Annex, where building design has not been a key component of the base's development.

Sidewalks

There are currently sidewalks along Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue. The "Site, Landscape, and Lighting Plan" that was submitted does not show a continuous sidewalk along Brookville Road, although there is an existing sidewalk that extends to Garfield Avenue. Sidewalks along Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue should be retained with the existing tree/grass panel that separates the sidewalk from the curb.

Parking and Dumpster

The site plan shows parking for 17 vehicles, including 10 for fire fighter personnel, two for daytime inspectors, one for the fire chief, and four for visitors. NCPC notes that the proposed parking is not consistent with the Federal Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan, which would permit only six employee parking spaces for the 11-12 employees to be located on this site. NCPC states "in view of the resource protection and emergency responsibilities of the personnel, including the need to respond to security alerts at this federal facility, and the requirement that Fire Department personnel provide around-the-clock fire protection service, the specified

number of employee parking spaces is a reasonable variance to the Comprehensive Plan goal." Park and Planning staff would agree with NCPC on this exemption to the federal parking requirements, as long as there is proper attention to stormwater management to address the impervious areas at this facility.

A dumpster is proposed to be located at the entrance of the parking drive aisle. This is a visible location, so it is important that the dumpster be adequately enclosed and screened.

Impervious Areas and Stormwater Management

The preliminary submission reviewed by staff last December did not contain a stormwater management plan. Both NCPC and M-NCPPC staff requested that the final submission include a stormwater management concept plan, which has been provided. NCPC provided extensive comments to the Army regarding these issues in their January 10, 2002 report. NCPC approved the preliminary building plans for the new fire station, but did not approve the site plans. NCPC requested revisions to the site plan, including a reduction in the amount of impervious surface pavement for the project and a site grading plan that incorporated low-impact stormwater site design features. NCPC emphasized that the new fire station location will create site water runoff that drains into adjacent wetlands and ultimately to Rock Creek. NCPC suggested that the use of bioretention techniques would be appropriate because the site layout provides opportunities for low impact site drainage design.

This site is located in the Capital View tributary and subwatershed of the lower Rock Creek watershed. This subwatershed has poor stream and habitat conditions and is identified as a Watershed Restoration Area in the County's Stream Protection Strategy. All efforts should be made to address degraded conditions by improving runoff, stream restoration, and stormwater retrofit.

The final site plans have addressed issues of imperviousness and stormwater. The amount of impervious surface has been reduced slightly, but the applicant has indicated that this pavement is necessary for a variety of purposes, including sufficient room to maneuver 60-foot long hook and ladder vehicles, washing area for vehicles and long fire hoses, outside vehicle storage, group drills and training exercises, and two-way traffic. It is noteworthy that the fire station access to Stephen Sitter Avenue will be shared with the adjacent, existing laundry facility. This is an efficient use of pavement that eliminates the need for a new, separate driveway. Shared use of the driveway, however, requires adequate room for two-way traffic so that emergency vehicles are not impeded.

To address stormwater issues, the applicant has provided an underground stormwater collection and quality control system at three locations around the perimeter of the site that will slow runoff velocity and improve infiltration. Three pretreatment lawn buffer areas will clean the water before it enters the underground gravel trenches where it will be stored and gradually absorbed by the surrounding soil. Water quality will be achieved by routing the water from the paved areas through a 20-foot pretreatment area and then into underground infiltration trenches. Roof drainage will be collected and

distributed to the infiltration trenches. All underground trenches will connect to the stormwater system by pipes. A valve will be provided to relieve the underground system or divert the surplus stormwater to the existing storm system, if required.

Forest Conservation

The site currently consists of grass lawns, wild grasses, scrub, and a single mature holly, which will be removed. Two mature cherry trees and recent plantings along Stephen Sitter Avenue will remain and be protected during construction. This property has been granted an exemption from the requirement to submit a Montgomery County Forest Conservation Plan because it is less than 1.5 acres. State of Maryland Forest Conservation regulations require that 15 percent of the developed area be reforested. Reforestation will be provided adjacent to the fire station site along the southern edge of the Annex property in the area identified by the Army as the perimeter open space buffer.

Landscaping

The applicant has provided a landscape and lighting plan in their final submission. Staff had requested shade trees be provided along Brookville Road and the plan shows six trees. The plan also shows a six-foot high security chain link fence around the perimeter of the site, which was not shown on the preliminary site plan reviewed previously. Staff is concerned about the appearance of this fence. Staff requests that the street trees along Brookville Road be located on the outside of the fence, rather than inside the fence as currently shown. Planting the street trees outside the fence, between the fence and the sidewalk, will help conceal and screen the fence and provide shade to the sidewalk. Additional landscaping, such as hedges or shrubs, should be considered to screen the chain link fence.

Staff requests the same landscape treatment along Stephen Sitter Avenue. The plan shows the security fence next to the sidewalk with no landscaping or screening. Only two trees are shown on Stephen Sitter Avenue, near the driveway entrance, and these appear to be existing trees. Additional shade trees should be planted along Stephen Sitter Avenue, outside the fence, between the fence and the sidewalk to screen the fence and provide shade for the sidewalk. Additional landscaping should be considered along Stephen Sitter Avenue to screen the security fence. All mechanical elements on the outside of the building, such as the gas meter and electrical boxes should be screened with landscaping or appropriate enclosures that complement the building design.

Reciprocal Agreement

A standard agreement between the federal government and Montgomery County formalizes fire protection support assistance between the two jurisdictions. The Montgomery County Fire Department assists the Forest Glen Annex with fires, if needed, and also provides paramedic assistance from the station located on Seminary Road near Georgia Avenue, less than one mile from either the Linden Lane or Brookville Road entrances to the Annex. The Army's Annex fire station provides

assistance to the local community, if requested, after all County personnel have been utilized.

Community Outreach

In the December 20, 2001 letter from M-NCPPC Chairman Arthur Holmes, Jr. to NCPC Executive Director Reginald Griffith, the Army was encouraged to seek community input from adjacent property owners as well as the residential community. On January 10, 2002, the NCPC approved transmission of a report to the Department of the Army on the preliminary building plans for the new fire station; the M-NCPPC letter was attached. In response to staff's questions about community outreach, NCPC responded that the Army's public affairs office identified and circulated the NCPC agenda to the local community associations and no one expressed interest in the proposed fire station.

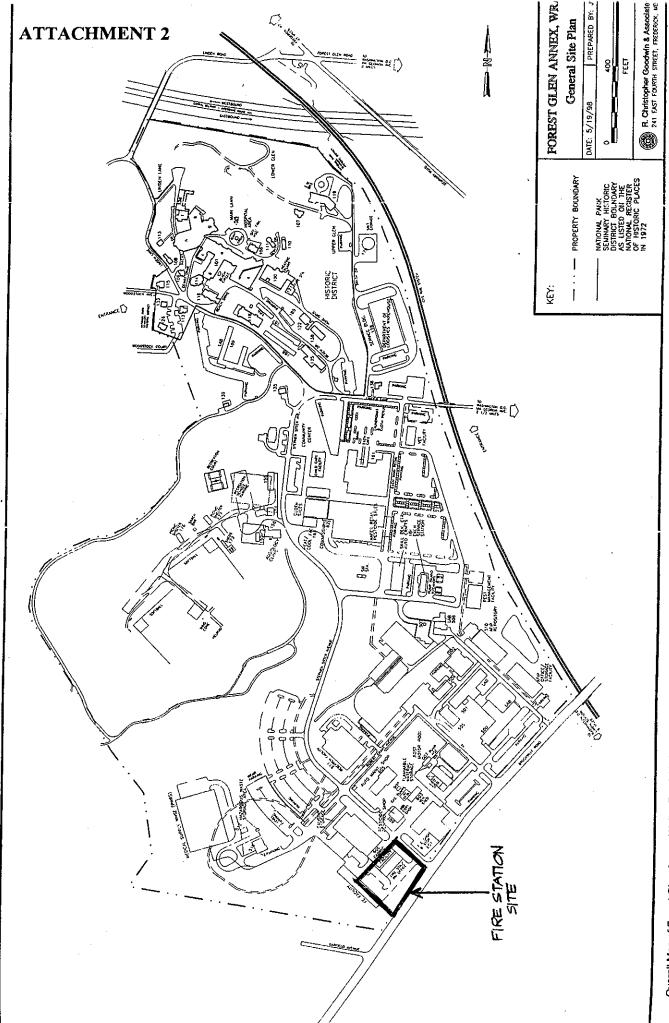
CONCLUSION

Staff recommends approval of the Forest Glen Annex Fire Station Number 54 with the conditions outlined above. The new, relocated fire station will provide a modern, state-of-the-art facility for fire protection services at the Annex. The architectural design of the building complements the new WRAIR building and demonstrates an attempt to create unity and a thematic presence for the newer buildings at the Annex. Additional attention needs to be paid to screening and landscaping the security fence and improving the edges of the site along Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue. The Army should ensure that, once the fire station relocation is complete, NPSHD Building #121 be secured and maintained until the property is transferred to a new owner.

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Attachments





Overall Map of Forest Glen Annex, Walter Reed AMC

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ATTACHMENT 4



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

December 20, 2001

Mr. Reginald W. Griffith, Executive Director National Capital Planning Commission 801 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20576

SUBJECT: Preliminary Review of Fire Station #54

Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Forest Glen Annex

Dear Mr. Griffith:

The Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) has submitted a Recommended Design and Project Narrative for a new Fire Station No. 54 at the Forest Glen Annex of the WRAMC in Silver Spring. According to the letter we received from Mr. Nino Fleri, the Army is requesting preliminary project approval from the National Capital Planning Commission for a concept design for the Fire Station. As you know, the Montgomery County Regional District Act (Section 7-112) requires that all federal, state, and local governments submit proposed projects to The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for Mandatory Referral review and approval by the Commission. It is our understanding that a formal project submission for the WRAMC Fire Station is forthcoming. We appreciate the opportunity to provide preliminary, informal comments from our staff at this time and look forward to reviewing the formal submission through the Mandatory Referral process. As a helpful reference for the Army, we have enclosed a packet of information about our process, entitled *Uniform Standards for Mandatory Referral Review*.

The new Fire Station will replace the existing one currently located in Building 121 at the National Park Seminary Historic District. Since the Army and the General Services Administration are in the process of disposal of the National Park Seminary Historic District, we are pleased that the Army is moving forward on their plans to relocate the Fire Station.

The proposed site for the new Fire Station—a small hill overlooking Brookville Road and Steven Sitter Avenue—is the entrance to the Forest Glen Annex of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Since this is a prominent location along Brookville Road, the site presents an opportunity to create an attractive, significant presence at the Army's entrance. The preliminary drawings that were submitted indicate that the Fire Station design will include elements of the new Walter Reed Institute of Research, especially the color scheme. The blue roof, red brick, and yellow trim colors appear to match those used at the larger building, which will begin to create some unifying architectural features at the base. Landscaping and street trees would also enhance this site.

An important component of the Mandatory Referral process is the submission of the Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) by the applicant. All County projects involving a site of more than 40,000 square feet are required to comply with the Forest Conservation Law pursuant to Chapter 22A of the Montgomery County Code. Compliance with this requirement is determined through the NRI/FSD and an approved Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan. While other comments and recommendations made by the Planning Board in a Mandatory Referral are advisory, the conditions of the forest conservation plan are binding on all County projects. Federal projects are not required to abide by County laws, including the NRI/FSD. However, we encourage the Army to prepare and submit a modified NRI/FSD. An existing site plan (i.e., without the proposed building) that shows property lines, topography, existing trees, streams, wetlands, and floodplains would serve this purpose. The appropriate forms for this information are enclosed.

Montgomery County's Local Area Transportation Review Guidelines require that any project that generates 50 vehicular trips during a peak hour must submit a traffic study. A traffic impact study will not be needed for the WRAMC Fire Station. However, it would be helpful to know the total number of employees and staff who will be at the Fire Station during the largest shift. We would also like to know if the WRAMC at the Forest Glen Annex has a reciprocal agreement to assist Montgomery County should an emergency situation arise in the area.

Arranging the Fire Station access and circulation so as to share the existing curb cut and paving area for the laundry facility is an efficient use of pavement. In reviewing the preliminary site plan, staff requests that consideration be given to reducing the amount of impervious surface of the squared-off pavement area next to the row of parking spaces (see enclosed mark-up of site plan). Perhaps this could be designed as a drive aisle to reduce the pavement area.

Additional items we would like to see in the formal Mandatory Referral submission for the Fire Station include a stormwater management concept plan and a landscape and lighting plan. Before formally submitting the Fire Station project for Mandatory Referral, we encourage the Army to seek community input from adjacent property owners as well as the residential community. Our Department can provide community contacts.

The Department of Park and Planning appreciates the opportunity to provide preliminary comments on this project and looks forward to reviewing the formal Mandatory Referral submission. If you have any questions, please contact the planner for the North and West Silver Spring area, Nancy Sturgeon, at 301-495-1308.

Sincerely,

Charles R. Loehr

Director

CRL:NS:ha: a:\sturgeon1\wramc fire station

Enclosures



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY WALTER REED ARMY MEDICAL CENTER WASHINGTON, DC 20307-5001

Charles R. Loehr, Director
Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

SUBJECT: Forest Glen Fire Station No. 54, Silver Spring, Maryland -Final MNCPPC Review

Dear Mr. Loehr:

We appreciate your office's 20 December 2001 preliminary review comments and your staff's subsequent meeting with our project team. During our meeting we hope we've conveyed our commitment to meet your concerns. After our final submission to NCPC on 1 February 2002, Mr. Eugene Keller, the NCPC Project Review Officer, informed us that your staff will not have time to respond to NCPC's referral of our re-submission prior to the 7 March 2002 NCPC Commission meeting.

We have been working on the goal of transferring our historic district property for almost two decades and we are entering the crucial final stage of this process. Your approval of our Fire Station No. 54 which re-houses the existing firehouse within the historic district is critical. Unfortunately missing the 7 March 2002 NCPC Commission meeting will severely delay construction and the Federal Government may incur exorbitant delay and impact costs. Our obligation to vacate our historic property may be broken.

We respectfully request that you forward final submission comments, if only informally, to Mr. Keller in time for the 7 March hearing. We are striving to meet your concerns within our constraints and have provided the following:

- 1. 15% Re-forestation complying with the Maryland Forest Conservation regulations
- 2. Forest conservation plan outlining existing conditions.
- 3. Revised centralized storm water management plan to a decentralized low impact solution.
- 4. Traffic and personnel information.
- 5. Revised landscape plan including recommended street trees.
- 6. Justification for the station's extensive paved areas.
- 7. Fire Department letter of reciprocal agreement with Montgomery County.
- 8. Neighborhood groups with interest in the Forest Glen Annex have been contacted concerning this project.

Thank you for any special effort you can make to refer comments to NCPC in time for the 7 March 2002 hearing. We are dedicated to supporting the public interest that your organization and review process protects.

Sincerely,

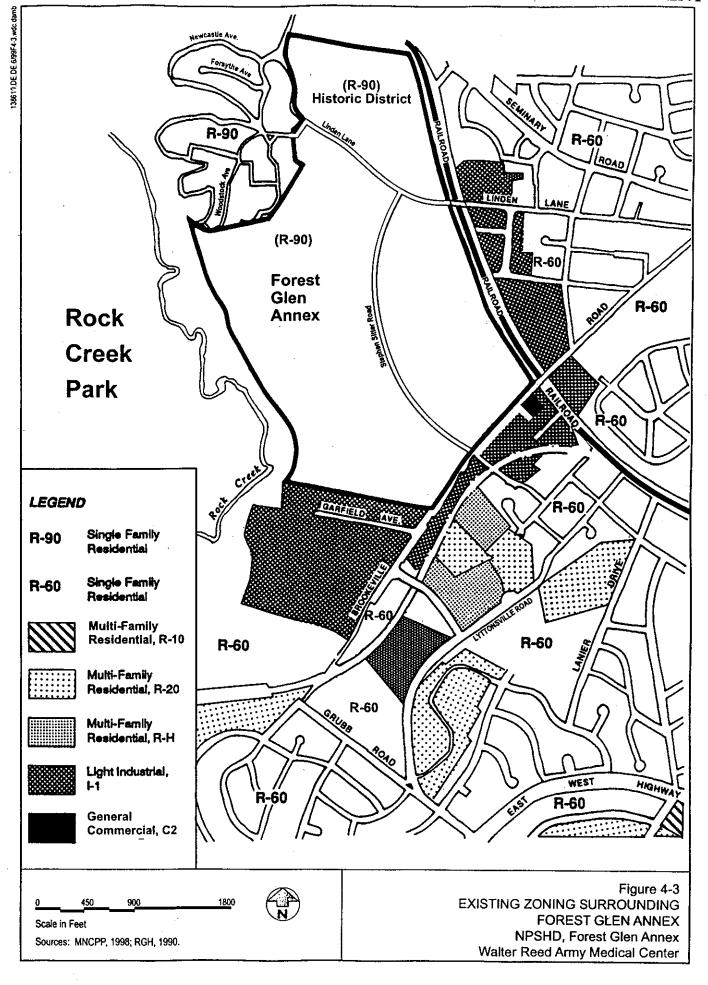
Nino Fleri Acting Director

Directorate of Public Works

of Olori

CC: Nancy Sturgeon, MNCPPC

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