



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

April 12, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *JAC*

FROM: Glenn Kreger, Team Leader, Silver Spring/Takoma Park Team *GK*
Nancy Sturgeon, Planner Coordinator, Silver Spring/Takoma Park Team

SUBJECT: Site Disposition, National Park Seminary Historic District

Per the Planning Board's request, the staff will provide a briefing on the site disposition process for the National Park Seminary Historic District in North Silver Spring. Our April 4 memo to the Planning Board is attached to provide relevant background on this topic. The staff will also draft a letter to the County Council to inform them about our efforts to facilitate the reuse process, the results to date, and our thoughts about our future involvement in this process.

GK:ha: a:\kreger2\NPS briefing.doc
Attachment



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

April 4, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *JAC*
Glenn Kreger, Team Leader, Silver Spring-Takoma Park *GK*
Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Nancy Sturgeon, Planner, Community-Based Planning Division *NS*

SUBJECT: Status of Disposition of National Park Seminary Historic District

The purpose of this memo is to provide the Planning Board with a status report on the disposition process for the National Park Seminary Historic District (NPS), which is located in Silver Spring adjacent to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Forest Glen Annex. The NPS is within the boundaries of the *North and West Silver Spring Master Plan*, approved and adopted in August 2000. The Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee of the Montgomery County Council will be briefed on this subject on April 8.

Background

The United States Army has owned the National Park Seminary since 1942 when it was acquired as a convalescent hospital for returning World War II veterans. The NPS property was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and on the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation in 1979. In May 2001, the Army transmitted a Report of Excess to the General Services Administration (GSA) documenting that the NPS was surplus to its needs, which initiated the formal disposal process. The total amount of land that the Army is including in the disposition is 32.07 acres: the 26-acre Historic District and an adjacent six-acre parcel on the west side of Linden Lane.

In July 2001, the PHED Committee requested that the Department of Park and Planning work with the Federal Government to identify a suitable reuse of the NPS site and facilitate the disposal process. Park and Planning staff identified criteria for evaluating potential reuses, including consistency with current zoning, impacts on the surrounding residential neighborhood, historic preservation, the extent of public sector involvement required, and public access to portions of the site.

Staff determined that an educational institution would best meet these criteria. Public and private schools are located in residential neighborhoods throughout the County and the two uses are considered compatible; a zoning change would not be required. A minor master plan amendment would not be required for a school, since the *North and West Silver Spring Master Plan* states that an amendment would be triggered if the proposed reuse for the site could not be accommodated by the existing R-90 zoning.

The longest continuous use for the property -- and that for which it was named -- was an educational institution; the National Park Seminary was a private girls school from 1884-1942. Reuse and renovation of the historic seminary as a new educational facility would not only restore the site to its former use, but would likely require less interior reconstruction than other uses. Spaces such as the large dining hall and kitchen could be reused for the same purpose by a new school. The ballroom could serve as an auditorium. And, schools (including private ones) often allow public use of facilities, especially recreational areas.

Discounted Conveyance to Educational Users

Part of the Federal property disposal process is known as discounted public conveyance. GSA determines whether surplus property could be used for purposes that are beneficial to the general public, including education, parks and recreation, historic monuments, wildlife conservation, or public health. If a property is determined eligible for one of these GSA-defined public purposes, discounts of up to 100 percent may be available. Federal regulations and requirements must be met in a public benefit conveyance and, in order to ensure these laws are met, an appropriate federal agency becomes involved to review potential applications. In addition, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act requires that federal properties be made available to public bodies and eligible nonprofit organizations concerned with providing assistance to the homeless.

On October 19, 2001, GSA released the official notice of surplus determination that identified the National Park Seminary as suitable for discounted public conveyance for educational purposes or as a historic monument. The site was concurrently offered to homeless providers as well as to state and local governments. The surplus notice described the property as "Twenty-nine (29) buildings (24 historic) consisting of 410,152 square feet and 32.07 acres. Twenty-four (24) of the buildings are in poor condition, and have the presence of asbestos and lead-based paint. The property's most recent use was as a hospital annex, lab, and office. Historic Preservation Covenants over the entire property will affect reuse."

In the fall of 2001, staff began outreach efforts to local schools and small colleges to stir up interest and knowledge about the site. Staff arranged several tours of the site with interested parties. Since GSA had designated the site as appropriate for educational uses, staff coordinated directly with the United States Department of Education (DOE). (We also informed the Executive staff of our activities periodically.) Staff worked with DOE on a mailing list that was distributed to over 300 educational organizations in the Washington metropolitan area in October 2001. Educational organizations were

instructed to respond to DOE with written expressions of interest in either all, or a portion of the site.

Thirteen educational organizations responded and DOE mailed each of them a detailed packet of information, including a formal application for public benefit acquisition of federal property for educational purposes. The application required educational institutions to provide details about their program, estimated costs for renovation of buildings or new construction, and evidence of their financial ability to implement their proposal. Any school awarded the site would need to enter a contractual obligation with DOE to utilize the land and buildings for approved educational programs for 30 years.

In mid-November, a tour of the Seminary was conducted with educational parties. Staff helped organize and conduct the tour and, in our welcoming remarks on-site, announced to the 50 participants that we were available to provide background information, documents, as well as meet with them individually as necessary. This offer of assistance was reiterated in a DOE E-mail to the schools following the tour. Soon after the tour, half the parties withdrew their interest, noting the tremendous challenges of the site, particularly the cost of renovating all of the historic buildings. Only six educational parties remained interested. Around this time, DOE announced that the deadline for applications to be submitted to their Department was extended from January 17, 2002 to March 1, 2002.

Takoma Academy

Several schools initially requested information from Park and Planning, but there was very little follow-up. Staff interpreted this silence as a lack of serious interest in the site. It became increasingly clear that only one school was seriously interested in pursuing the Seminary – the Takoma Academy, a private, Seventh Day Adventist school. The Adventists are a large consortium organization that provides educational and health care services. The educational component includes the Takoma Academy (9-12), Sligo Adventist Elementary School (K-8), and Columbia Union College, a liberal arts college in Takoma Park. The Adventist Health Care system includes the Washington Adventist Hospital, Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, and a number of other facilities in the metropolitan region.

During the master plan efforts in East Silver Spring and Takoma Park, staff became aware that the Adventists were interested in relocating the elementary and high schools from their current site on Carroll Avenue near University Boulevard. The *Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan* (PROS Plan) identified a significant need for additional active recreational space in this area, especially ballfields and basketball courts. As stated in the *East Silver Spring Master Plan*: “Because the area is substantially developed, there are limited opportunities to provide additional services and facilities... the Takoma Academy and other Adventist institutions may relocate in the future, thus providing an opportunity for the public to acquire a major site and structures.” (Page 45)

Both the *East Silver Spring Master Plan* and the *Takoma Park Master Plan* include recommendations for public purchase of the Takoma Academy High School, the Sligo Adventist Elementary School, and the Takoma Adventist Book Store if these properties become available. Subsequent to the adoption of the two master plans, a letter was sent to the representatives of the Adventist organization from the Chairman expressing interest in the site, especially the outdoor recreational space. The site was also included in the Legacy Open Space Master Plan.

In the fall of 2001, Community-Based Planning staff contacted the Adventist organization to inform them about the availability of the Seminary site. The Adventist group was interested and staff arranged several visits to the site, provided copies of studies and documents with detailed information about the site and the buildings, and met with the group to answer questions and discuss their ideas for the property.

Representatives of the Adventist group began discussing the Seminary site with the various Boards within the organization and architects were hired to analyze how the site could be reused for a K-12 educational facility. The scope of the Adventist program included utilizing the entire 32-acre surplus site. They were also interested in an adjacent parcel that contains a warehouse and salt dome, which the Army has not included in the surplus package. A copy of the Takoma Academy proposal is attached.

Differences Emerge between Department of Education and the Maryland Historical Trust

In January, discussions began to take place between GSA and the Maryland Historical Trust about covenants that would be placed on the property to protect the historic district once the property was transferred to a new owner. In a process established by federal law, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and provide the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and/or the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment. The SHPO for the state of Maryland is the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), within the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.

It soon became clear that there were major differences between the MHT and the Department of Education concerning who would have final decision-making authority over changes to the property when it was transferred to a new owner. In anticipation of additional time being required to resolve these issues, DOE notified educational parties that the deadline for applications would be extended to April 1, 2002.

At the same time, the Takoma Academy had also begun expressing concerns about the substance of MHT's historic preservation requirements after they met with MHT. In a January 16 E-mail to DOE, the representative for Takoma Academy stated: "We do not see how covenants for interior or site preservation would allow us to have a building that meets modern educational needs. Also, the potential expense of the restrictions are going to put this project beyond our ability. We met with our architects yesterday and have concluded that unless the only easement is exterior we will have to withdraw from the application process."

MHT had proposed a restrictive deed of easement that included preservation and renovation of both the exteriors and the interiors of all the contributing buildings in the historic district, with MHT oversight for review and approval of all aspects of the site's renovation. DOE responded that they could not agree to MHT's proposed easement because it was "inconsistent with DOE's statutory and regulatory mandate to ensure that the entire site is fully utilized at all times for educational programs, that the property is not encumbered or altered without the prior written permission of the Department, and that the federal educational interest in the property is not compromised." DOE asked MHT to consider alternative historic preservation covenants that had been used in previous DOE deeds as well as language that had been previously approved by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation for use with other historic properties. MHT reviewed these and responded that the DOE language was unacceptable because it did not allow the MHT "the ability to negotiate a design/treatment solution and to deny or approve work items as appropriate."

Department of Education Announces Withdrawal

On February 27, DOE sent a letter to GSA formally withdrawing its interest in the Seminary for an educational public benefit conveyance due to the unresolved easement/covenant issues between the MHT and DOE. DOE also informed the educational parties that had expressed interest in submitting an application for the property that they were withdrawing their participation in the disposal process. After this announcement, Takoma Academy was the only school that expressed concern, which confirmed that the other schools were not seriously interested in this site.

County Council member Derick Berlage wrote a letter to Senator Sarbanes and Howard Denis wrote to Congresswoman Morella requesting their assistance in getting the process back on track with the Department of Education. A meeting was scheduled with Senator Sarbanes' staff, but was postponed twice and has now been rescheduled for April 11.

Park and Planning staff have suggested that a mediator be hired to help MHT and DOE resolve their differences and find common ground. Such a mediator would come to the table with background and knowledge about each agency's legal and statutory requirements so that the interests of the parties are understood and a resolution can be found. If DOE is not brought back into the process, GSA will begin to market the site to the private sector during a process known as public sale. The criteria used by GSA during the public sale process is simply that the property goes to the highest bidder; no pre-qualifications in terms of economic viability or consistency with local zoning are considered. It is possible that the property could be transferred to a party that cannot implement a reuse, or has insufficient resources or unrealistic expectations. Furthermore, at least a year will be lost in the disposal process (i.e., the past six months working with DOE and at least another six months before GSA would complete their marketing and noticing and reach the final bidding stage). Lastly, the Adventist group has decided that they cannot participate in the process if GSA undertakes a general public sale due to the time, resources, and continued uncertainty surrounding the NPS property.

Timeline of Recent Events on the National Park Seminary Disposition

- July 2001 PHED Committee of the County Council discusses NPS and directs Park and Planning staff to work with the federal government to identify suitable reuse options for the site
- August Park and Planning staff met with Executive branch staff to coordinate work efforts and outline a time frame
- September Meeting held with GSA, MHT, and preservation groups to discuss what mechanisms were available to protect the historic buildings during the disposal process
- Park and Planning staff evaluated reuse options; educational institution was a preferred option for compatibility and other reasons; developed mailing lists of educational institutions
- October GSA released "Notice of Surplus Determination" that identified NPS as appropriate for educational purposes, homeless housing, or a historic monument. Local and state governments were also given the opportunity to express interest in the property
- Oct. 19 DOE mailed notice of availability of NPS to 300 educational institutions
- Nov. 15 Tour of NPS conducted by DOE and Planning staff with representatives from educational institutions
- Jan. 2002 MHT and GSA agreed on draft covenant language for NPS
- Feb. 7 Meeting with GSA, DOE, MHT, Park and Planning on discrepancies between MHT and DOE on covenants; DOE proposes alternative language
- Feb. 25 MHT responded to DOE covenants via E-mail that DOE proposal was unacceptable
- Feb. 27 DOE sent letter to GSA formally announcing that they were withdrawing their interest in NPS
- Feb. 28 Howard Denis sent letter to Congresswoman Morella requesting assistance in resolving the issues between MHT and DOE and keeping DOE involved
- March 7 Derrick Berlage sent letter to Senator Sarbanes requesting a meeting with the parties and desire to keep DOE involved in the process
- March 13 Meeting scheduled in Senator Sarbanes office – postponed

March 26 Meeting scheduled in Senator Sarbanes office -- postponed

April 8 PHED committee briefing on NPS

April 11 Meeting scheduled in Senator Sarbanes office

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Attachment

cc: Gwen Wright

**THE RESURRECTION OF THE
NATIONAL PARK SEMINARY
AT FOREST GLEN**

BY

TAKOMA ACADEMY



**WIENCEK + ZAVOS
ARCHITECTS, PC**

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PROPOSED SYNERGISTIC PLAN FOR THE RESURRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SEMINARY AT FOREST GLEN

K-12 EDUCATION

The core operation of the proposal is to operate the facility as a K-12 educational site. Takoma Academy and Sligo Adventist Elementary School would move their present school programs from Takoma Park to Forest Glen with a starting enrollment of 850, divided into K-6 (235); Junior high school grades 7-9 (225); and High school grades 10-12 (395).

The schools would operate primarily from main building "ye old Forest Glen Inn" and utilize many of the unique sororities as department offices, guest rooms for parents of students living out of the area, or as a museum for National Park Seminary (Pagoda bldg), etc.

A new sports facility would be built to house two (2) gymnasiums, a swimming pool and recreational ball fields/track. Sports facility to be made available to local community. Current concept is to build sports facility underground with ball fields located on top of gyms. This would preserve the open atmosphere of the Forest Glen annex.

New chapel/assembly complex to be built to seat 500. New complex to be used for student body activities and available for public use.

COMMUNITY CHAPEL

Forest Glen chapel to be renovated and leased to local churches as a church facility.

COLUMBIA UNION COLLEGE (CUC) / ADVENTIST HEALTHCARE

Because of the high local need for trained medical personnel, CUC and Adventist HealthCare, with Adventist Community Services, would renovate the Spanish Villa and English Castle located on the Northeast side of the glen.

The renovation would preserve the exterior design but convert the former faculty housing unit into an educational center. Beginning nursing courses such as CNA/LPN would be available to Washington Metro residence as well as computer technology and ESL courses.

Some of the high school classrooms could also serve as classrooms for CUC's adult evening program.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

Because of the size and scope of the program, the entire Forest Glen Annex property would be utilized. However, this proposal assumes that the historic easements required apply only to the exterior integrity. Renovation of the interior space would render the site useless for current educational purposes. The size and type of rooms needed for teaching would be inadequate. The cost would also be prohibitive.

Parking is also a great need and the proposal strongly suggests that Army building "service #178" with the adjoining salt pile be included in the donation package. This area is greatly needed for parking purposes.



**THE RESURRECTION OF NATIONAL PARK SEMINARY AT FOREST GLEN BY TAKOMA ACADEMY
CONSORTIUM ORGANIZATION**

February 14, 2002



**TAKOMA ACADEMY
CONSORTIUM**

SLIGO
ADVENTIST
SCHOOL
(K-8)

ADVENTIST
COMMUNITY
SERVICES



 Adventist
HealthCare

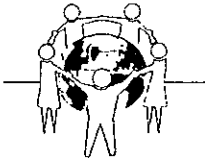

COLUMBIA UNION COLLEGE
Gateway to Service

CONSORTIUM ORGANIZATION



- A Seventh-day Adventist High School, founded in 1904, located in Takoma Park, Md.
- Grades 9-12
- Accredited by: Maryland State Board of Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Board of Regents, Office of Education and General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist
- Current Enrollment = 460
- 6000 plus alumni

A Christian School ...



With the International Advantage

- Sligo Adventist Elementary School, founded in 1918, located in Takoma Park, Md.
- Grades K-8
- Accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and Board of Regents of Seventh-day Adventist
- Current Enrollment = 325



- A Seventh-day Adventist Liberal Arts College, founded in 1904, located in Takoma Park, Md.
- Accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Seventh-day Adventist Board of Regents, American Association of Colleges, State Board of Maryland and National League for Nursing
- Current enrollment for traditional students is 700 (including 100 pre-nursing students); adult evening = 300 community students
- Operates WGTS-FM a 30,000 watt Christian radio station
- Operates the "Center for Law and Public Policy"



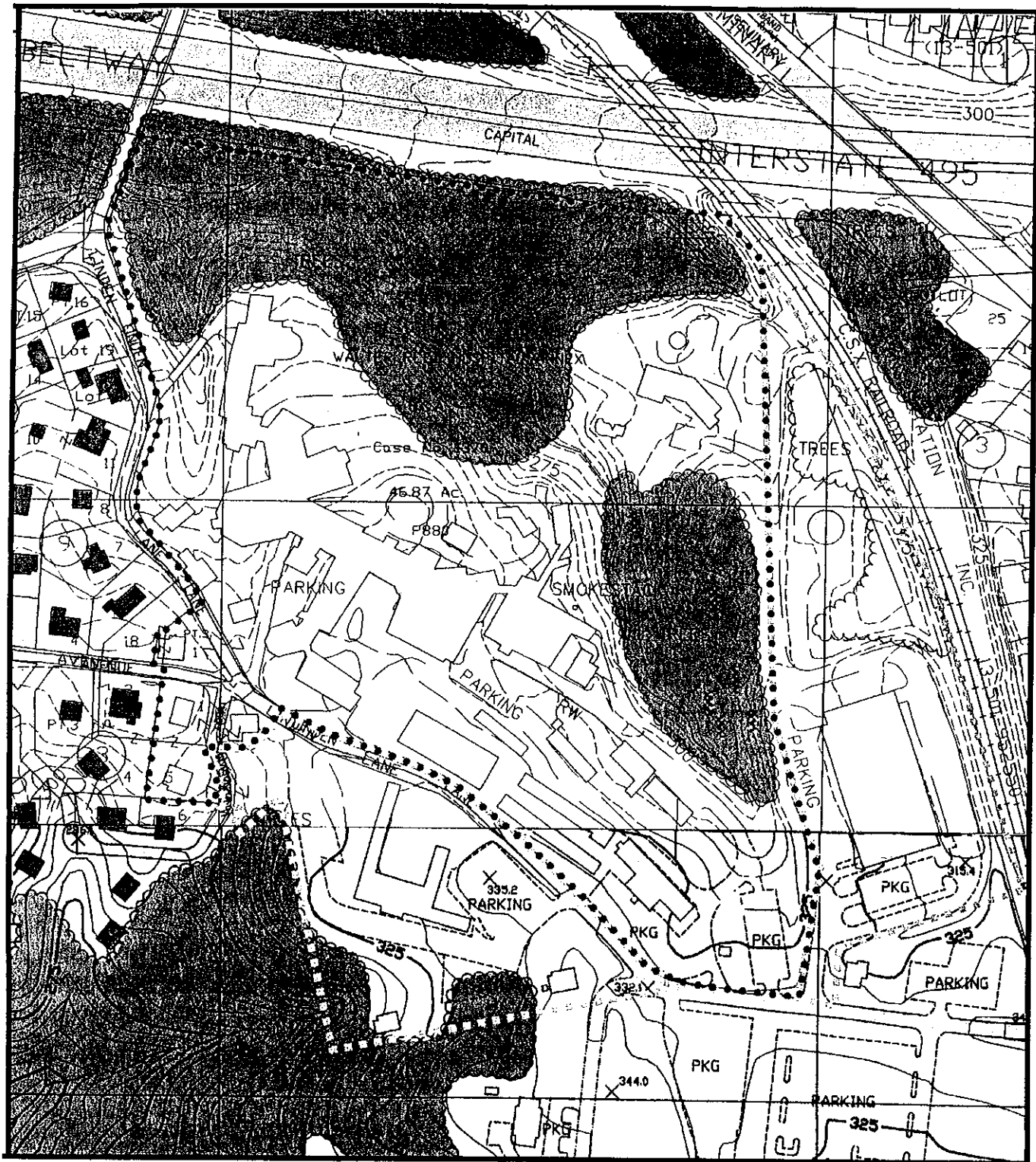
- Coverage includes: Virginia, DC, Maryland, West Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware
- 6,000 employees
- 250,000 patients per year
- Maryland facilities:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adventist Choice Nursing Adventist Home Health Services Adventist Preferred Nursing Adventist Senior Living Services Bradford Oaks Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Fairland Adventist Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Kessler-Adventist Rehabilitation Services Kingshire Manor Potomac Ridge Behavioral Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shady Grove Adult Care Shady Grove Adventist Hospital Shady Grove Adventist Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Sligo Creek Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Springbrook Adventist Nursing and Rehabilitation Center Washington Adventist Hospital Maryland Regional Cancer Care Center Greater Washington Sleep Disorder Center
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THE RESURRECTION OF NATIONAL PARK SEMINARY AT FOREST GLEN BY TAKOMA ACADEMY
EXISTING SITE PLAN

February 14, 2002



EXISTING SITE PLAN

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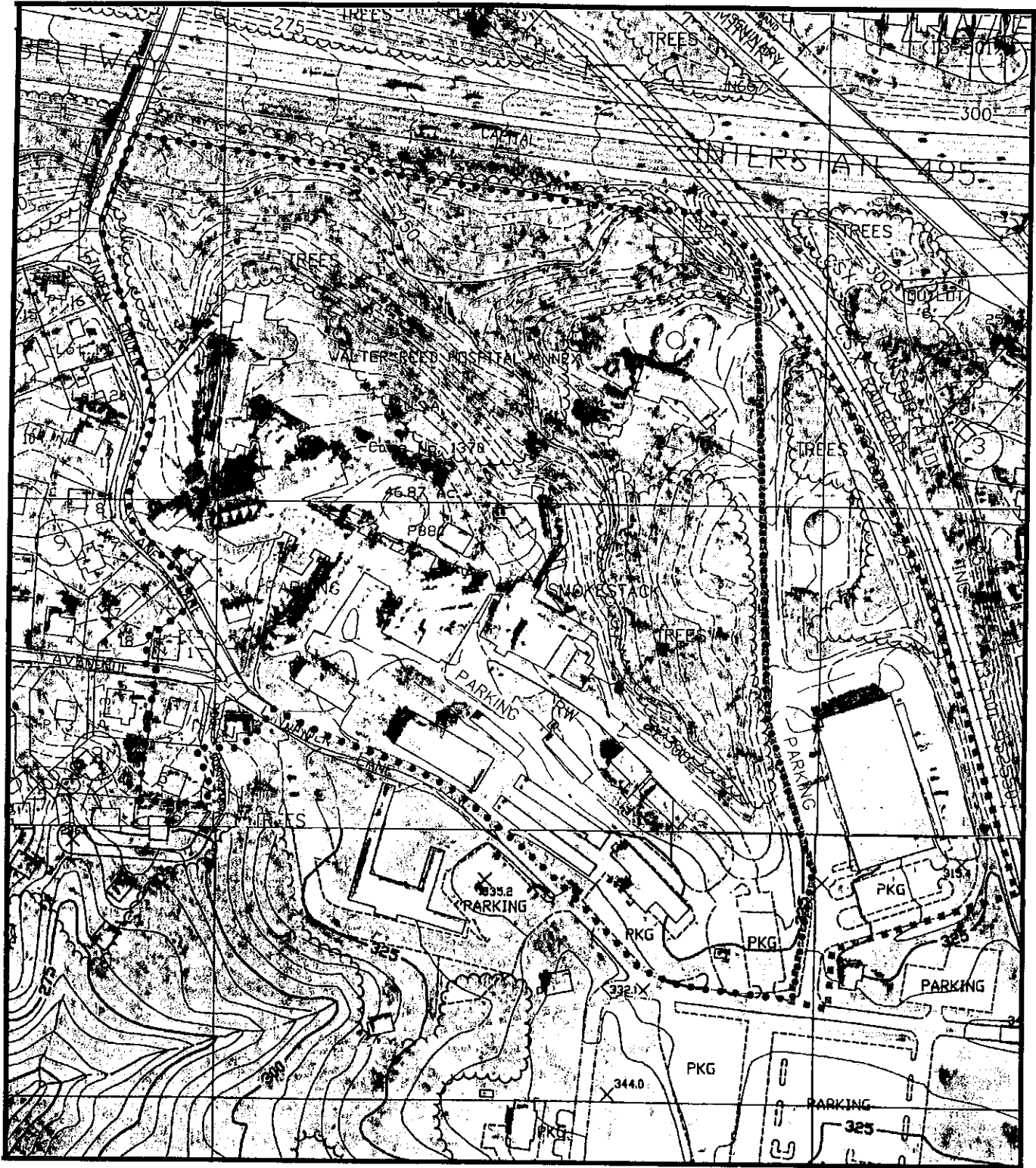




THE RESURRECTION OF NATIONAL PARK SEMINARY AT FOREST GLEN BY TAKOMA ACADEMY

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

February 14, 2002



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

WIENCEK + ZAVOS
ARCHITECTS, PC

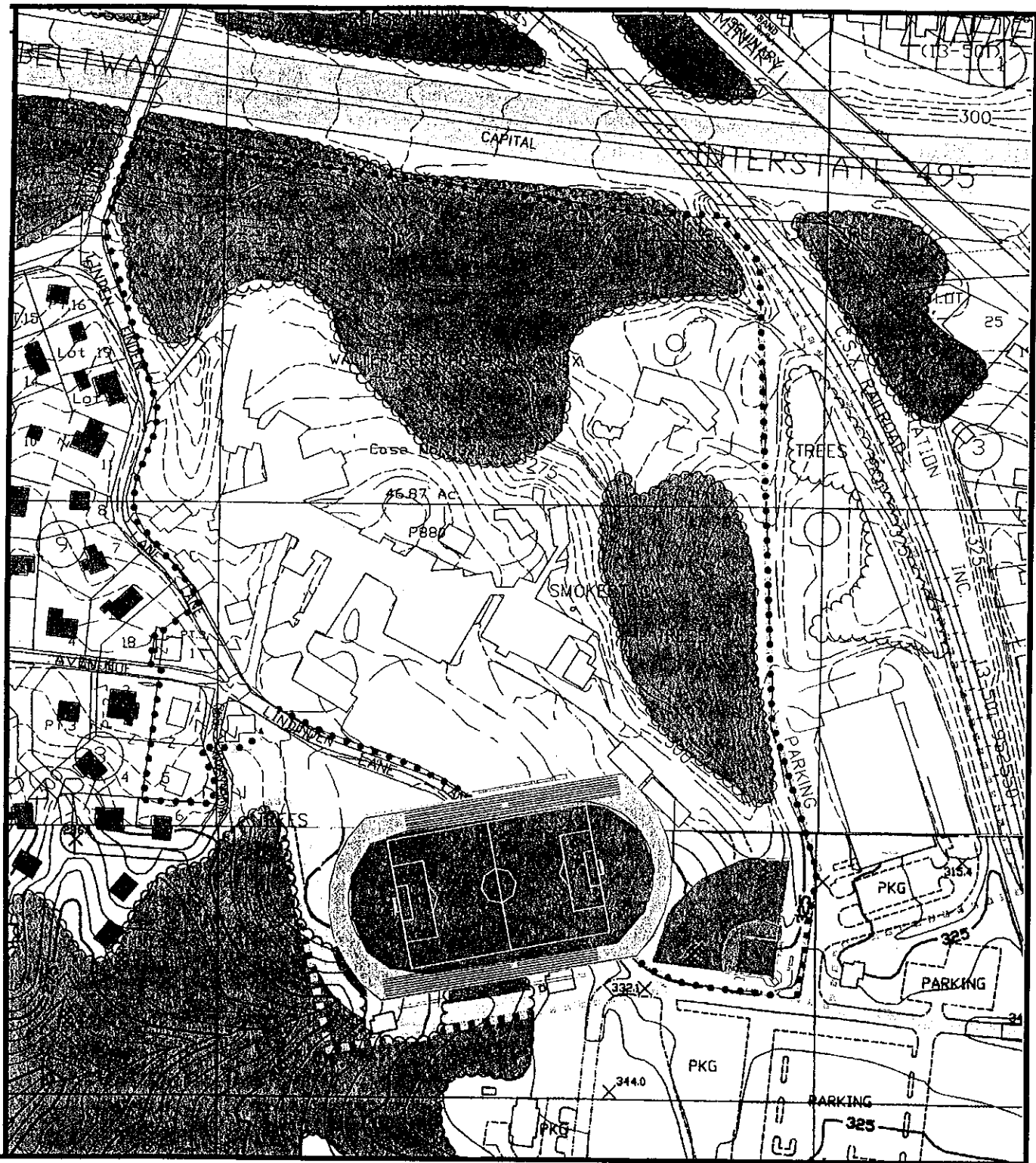
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THE RESURRECTION OF NATIONAL PARK SEMINARY AT FOREST GLEN BY TAKOMA ACADEMY
PROPOSED SITE PLAN (SCHEMATIC - IN PROGRESS)

February 14, 2002



PROPOSED SITE PLAN
(SCHEMATIC - IN PROGRESS)

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