



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

March 4, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *JAC*
Sue Edwards, I-270 Team Leader *SUE*
Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Pamela Johnson, Planner Coordinator, I-270 Team (301-495-4590) *PJ*
Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. 03701-MCPS-1, South Lake Elementary School Addition, 18201 Contour Road, Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan

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

- (1) Specify locally sourced sustainable or renewable materials, recommended by the U.S. Green Building Council standards for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), where feasible, in the proposed construction.
- (2) Extend the sidewalk along Contour Road near its corner with Horizon Run Road so that it crosses the driveway and connects to the sidewalk next to the school building on the outside of the bus loop in the northwest corner of the school site.
- (3) Plant additional shade trees along the northeastern side of the driveway between the front entrance to the school and the parking lot, and more evergreen trees between the parking lot and Horizon Run Road for screening of the proposed building additions. These trees should be planted at intervals of about 30 feet off-center.

PROJECT SUMMARY

South Lakes Elementary School is located behind the Off-Price Shopping Center at 18201 Contour Road in the Montgomery Village section of Gaithersburg. Part of the Watkins Mill Elementary School cluster, South Lakes Elementary School lies within the Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan. The Montgomery County Board of Education would like to replace ten relocatable classrooms currently at the school with permanent space and also build other facilities to meet its present and future needs. The base proposal consists of constructing six regular classrooms (including two kindergarten rooms), six specialized classrooms, and various support space. Further construction, depending on the costs of the selected architectural design, include an addition with six more classrooms (including two kindergarten), and a gymnasium. Primary site improvements consist of constructing a pick-up/drop-off loop for students, enlarging the parking lot, and providing more sidewalks and landscaping.

BACKGROUND

Description of Site

The existing site is a rectangular, 10.2-acre lot. The site has frontage on Contour Road. Tunstall Drive and Horizon Run Road form the southeastern and northwestern boundaries respectively of the property. Contour Road intersects with Odendhal Avenue east of Tunstall Drive. Montgomery Village Avenue, Midcounty Highway, Goshen Road, and Frederick Avenue North are within a short distance of the school. The school is located in the T-S (Town Sector) Zone, a planned, mixed-use zone. The school faces the rear of a Safeway and other stores in the Off-Price Shopping Center, and is surrounded by townhouses in the Goshen, Cider Mill and Horizon Run neighborhoods on its other three sides.

The largest portion of the site, including the building site itself, is basically flat. Steep slopes on the building's east side empty onto a large fenced flat field, which sits on an embankment running along Tunstall Drive. The large field holds an asphalt playground, an overlay soccer/softball field, a grassy playground and additional open space. A stand of mature trees is located in front of the school and a thick grove of trees also buffers the playfields from Tunstall Drive. Other trees and various shrubs are along Contour Road and scattered throughout the premises.

Originally constructed in 1972, the school is a one-story brownish brick building. The 50,426 square-foot building holds a current enrollment of 608 students. Ten relocatable classrooms needed to help accommodate these students are behind the central portion of the school. A parking lot for 66 faculty/visitor cars is at the northern corner of the site, and has an access drive leading from Contour Road near its intersection with Horizon Run Road. A bus pick-up/drop-off loop in front of the school has entrance and exit points on Contour Road. The exit drive for the bus loop also serves as the entrance drive for the parking lot. A sidewalk parallels the school's frontage with Contour Road and also follows much of the front and western sides of the building.

Project Description

MCPS plans to replace the relocatable classrooms with permanent space, provide for a projected enrollment increase to 654 students (46 additional students), as well as provide other facility improvements, with construction beginning in June 2004. Six to twelve additional teachers will be hired to accommodate the expansion. Most of the proposal will be incorporated in a rear, two-story addition to the east. Other building additions will extend to the northwest, behind the two-story addition where the existing relocatable classrooms are now located, and will consist of infill to the existing structure. The basic proposal totals 21,308 square feet and includes two kindergarten rooms, four regular classrooms, an art room, a music room, three (3) English-as-a-second-language rooms, administrative space, and other support space.

If costs permit after the selection of the architectural design, another addition intended as a size reduction initiative will include two more kindergarten and four more regular classrooms. A final addition, if affordable, will be a gymnasium located between the parking lot and the kindergarten and two-story additions. These additional construction proposals total 11,417 square feet.

Site improvements include adding eleven spaces to the faculty/visitor parking lot; providing a student drop-off loop on Contour Road just southeast of the bus loop; and extending sidewalks around this drop-off loop, behind the new building addition, and between the building and athletic fields. New trees are proposed to be planted in islands in the parking lot, and near the proposed gymnasium. A row of shrubbery is proposed between the parking lot and the gymnasium. MCPS indicates that site lighting will be designed to shield adjacent residences from intrusive glare while maintaining a safe and secure site.

During construction, the relocatable classrooms will be moved to the southeast corner of the site between the play area and Contour Road. The existing parking lot will be the staging area for equipment during construction. MCPS is negotiating with management of the Off-Price Shopping Center, which owns the parking spaces in front of the Safeway and the other stores in that shopping center for the use of 75 parking spaces for the school faculty during the 2004/2005 school year.

ANALYSIS

Master Plan

South Lake Elementary School is located within the 1995 Gaithersburg Vicinity Master Plan. The Plan shows the school as being located in an area with Town Sector Zoning, and does not indicate any changes for the school.

Transportation

Staff has reviewed the proposal relative to adequate public facilities (see Attachment 1 for detailed review). As a result of its review, staff recommends that a sidewalk be provided to connect the existing sidewalk along Contour Road near its intersection with

Horizon Run Road and the sidewalk next to the school building on the outside of the bus loop in the northwest corner of the site. Staff notes that the proposal will improve other sidewalk connections on the site.

Contour Road is a secondary residential street with a 60-foot right-of-way, no bikeway, and existing sidewalks on both sides. A traffic study was conducted and submitted which concluded that the site satisfies local area transportation review. The critical lane values at the intersections analyzed were less than the congestion standard for the Montgomery Village/Airpark Policy Area.

The South Lake Elementary School is an existing land use already accounted in the staging ceiling numbers. Currently, the Montgomery Village/Airpark Policy Area has a positive 37 jobs remaining in the staging ceiling as of February 29, 2004, under the *FY 2004 Annual Growth Policy*.

Landscaping

MCPS proposes new planting in the parking lot, and between the parking lot and the gymnasium. Staff recommends that landscaping for the school be enhanced by providing additional shade trees along the northeastern side of the driveway between the front entrance to the school and the parking lot, and by more evergreen trees between the parking lot and Horizon Run Road for screening of the proposed building additions. These trees should be planted at intervals of about 30 feet off-center.

Environment

Staff recommends approval of the proposed development with the condition that the applicant consider using locally sourced sustainable or renewable materials, recommended by the U.S. Green Building Council standards for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), where feasible, in the proposed construction. Staff comments on additional elements in the following paragraphs.

Forest Conservation – The proposal has a single-lot exemption from Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) requirements. Environmental issues are not significantly affected by the proposed additions. The construction will not affect critical root zones of existing trees offsite or specimen or significant trees onsite. A Tree Save Plan is not required.

Water Quality – The school is in the Whetstone Run of the Middle Great Seneca Creek Watershed. A good riparian buffer is in the upper reaches of the watershed. Stream and habitat conditions in that portion of the watershed are also “good”, according to the Countywide Stream Protection Strategy. Conditions degrade to “fair” in the lower watershed section below MD 355.

Impervious Area and Stormwater Management – Since the additions will be constructed over existing asphalt, the proposal will not generate a substantial change in the percentage of impervious area. The School Board has submitted an application and supporting documentation for Stormwater Management Concept Review to the Department of Permitting Services (DPS), which proposes both quality and quantity control for the site. The drawings show that drainage from the site will be collected and treated within a precast storm filter treatment structure with an outlet and overflow into an underground storage facility. The MCPS has asked for a reduction in storage requirements due to cost and because the receiving waters for the site include Lake Whetstone.

Leadership in Energy in Environmental Design (LEED) – Staff encourages the use of sustainable building design in all public projects, in keeping with the work of LEED. As part of the proposed renovation and new additions, the applicant plans to use items that conform with the LEED-NC 2.1 Checklist, improve water efficiency, and improve indoor environmental quality (see attachment from MCPS). Future projects of this sort could go further in promoting LEED or green building practices. (See attached Environmental Planning memo).

Noise Control – The work onsite should not exceed the allowable noise levels for construction.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

MCPS convened a Facilities Advisory Committee to review various schematic design options for the project. Representatives from the Montgomery Village Foundation, the Horizon Run community, the Parent-Teachers Association for the school, the faculty, the school administration, and the architects, met several times in August and September 2003 to participate in this review. Comments of the participants were solicited at these meetings, various aspects of the plans were altered and the presently submitted design was selected as a result of those meetings. MCPS has also posted the final selected design in the schools for public information and comment, and met with community representatives again in late February 2004.

Staff also sent notices of the proposal and of the scheduled hearing date of the mandatory referral to local citizen associations, the Montgomery Village Foundation, and to other interested affected parties. To date, no comments have been received on the proposal.

CONCLUSION

Based on its analysis, staff believes the proposal is consistent with the Master Plan, meets the requirements of the Town-Sector Zone, and meets applicable environmental and transportation guidelines and requirements. The Department recommends approval of this mandatory referral and transmittal of comments.