



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** November 23, 2004

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** Rose G. Krasnow, Chief *RK*  
Development Review Division

**FROM:** Catherine Conlon, Acting Supervisor (301-495-4542)  
Development Review Division *CAC*

**REVIEW TYPE:** Preliminary Plan of Subdivision

**APPLYING FOR:** Preliminary Plan Approval for private institutional facility (school)

**PROJECT NAME:** Washington Christian Society

**CASE NO.** 1-04055

**REVIEW BASIS:** Pursuant to Chapter 50, the Subdivision Regulations  
and Chapter 59, the Zoning Ordinance

**ZONE:** RE-2

**LOCATION:** On the south side of Batchellors Forest Road approximately 1,300 feet  
east of Georgia Avenue (MD 97)

**MASTER PLAN:** Olney

**APPLICANT:** Washington Christian Society, Inc.

**ATTORNEY:** Lerch, Early & Brewer

**ENGINEER:** Rodgers Consulting, Inc.

**HEARING DATE:** December 2, 2004

**Staff Recommendation:** Approval, subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval under this preliminary plan is limited to a private educational institution for grades K-12 with up to 1,140 students, 100 faculty/staff, and 12 faculty/staff housing

units such that trips related to the proposed school (with the TMA referenced in Condition #2e below) do not exceed 189 total peak-hour vehicle trips during the weekday morning peak-period and 91 total peak-hour vehicle trips during the weekday evening peak-period.

2. Compliance with the following transportation related conditions:

- a) To preserve potential Intercounty Connector (ICC) options related to this application per the request of Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) in their letter dated November 19, 2004 (see Attachment C), and shown on Attachment D ("Master Plan Option") and Attachment E ("Norbeck Options"), the record plat(s) for the property shall not be recorded until the earlier of (a) September 1, 2005; or (b) a final Record of Decision is issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), provided that Record of Decision does not include the Norbeck Options, or any portions thereof, within the final ICC alignment.
- b) If the FHWA final Record of Decision includes either of the Norbeck Options, the applicant shall submit a revised preliminary plan that appropriately reconfigures all development within the property not affected by the Norbeck Options.
- c) If FHWA issues a final Record of Decision that includes the Master Plan Option, the applicant shall dedicate and show on final record plat, consistent with the 1980 Approved and Adopted Olney Master Plan (and the May 2004 Olney Master Plan Planning Board Draft) necessary right-of-way along the ICC as shown on Attachment D (a minimum of 150 feet from the roadway centerline).
- d) Any future contract of sale between the applicant and any prospective buyer of the property must (a) advise the buyer in writing of the location of the Master Plan Option and the Norbeck Options; and (b) advise the buyer that they can contact the SHA for current information on these alignments. This notification requirement is binding on the applicant's heirs/successors and/or assigns, and shall be required as long as the Applicant is precluded from making an application for building permits under Condition No. 2a, above.
- e) The Applicant shall satisfy the LATR and PATR components of the APF test by entering into a TMA with the MCPB to sponsor, develop, implement, and operate a monitored trip mitigation program prior to the release of any building permits for the school. The agreement shall continue to be in effect as long as WCA occupies the property.
- f) Extend existing southbound Muncaster Mill Road to eastbound Norbeck Road left-turn lane by 100 feet with adequate transition, through coordination with SHA.

g) Provide within the Olney Policy Area the following to reduce LATR impact from the proposed school (per Section IV-B of the LATR Guidelines) by 60 peak hour vehicle trips:

- i. One thousand three hundred feet of sidewalk,
- ii. One thousand three hundred feet of bike path (in addition to the facility described in Condition #12),
- iii. Two bus shelters, including a concrete pad, and
- iv. Two real-time transit information signs.

Coordinate with Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT), the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) and the Transit Services Division for guidance on the implementation of above representative trip reduction measures.

- h) Manage all school-related vehicle queues including any parking related to student drop-offs and pick-ups within the school property to prevent spillover to Batchellors Forest Road or other adjacent local streets/driveways.
- i) Dedicate, and show on final record plat, consistent with the 1980 Approved and Adopted Olney Master Plan (and the May 2004 Olney Master Plan Planning Board Draft) adequate right-of-way along Batchellors Forest Road to provide 35 feet of right-of-way from the roadway centerline.
- j) Coordinate with Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) per letter dated November 12, 2004, on improvements to Batchellors Forest Road between Georgia Avenue and school access driveway.
- k) Coordinate with the DPWT per letter dated November 12, 2004 on design requirements and adequate sight distance for the proposed school access driveway to Batchellors Forest Road. The driveway should be designed to permit the largest vehicle anticipated at the school, including a school bus, to safely enter/exit the site from/to Batchellors Forest Road.
- l) Construct the Gandel Property Connector (B-14) as a Shared Use Path (Class I bikeway) between the ICC Shared Use Path (SP-40) and Batchellors Forest Road, within the subject property, with lead-in connections between the path and the school buildings, as appropriate.
- m) Coordinate with DPWT and DPS on satisfying relevant on-site County requirements, including parking and traffic circulation.

- 3) Compliance with the conditions of approval for the preliminary forest conservation plan. The applicant must satisfy all conditions prior to recording of plat(s) or MCDPS issuance of sediment and erosion control permits.
- 4) Compliance with the conditions of approval of the MCDPS stormwater management approval dated October 8, 2004.
- 5) Compliance with conditions of MCDPWT letter dated, November 12, 2004 unless otherwise amended.
- 6) Access and improvements as required to be approved by MCDPWT prior to recordation of plat(s).
- 7) Applicant to establish a minimum 25' wide Public Use Trail Easement along the entire west side of the subject property from Batchellors Forest Road to the land owned by Montgomery County to the south of the property wherein the master planned hiker/biker trail will be located.
- 8) Applicant to construct within the Public Use Trail Easement, an 8' wide, hard surface trail (as referenced in condition 2k above) to extend from the proposed entrance street off Batchellors Forest Road to the Montgomery County owned land on the south side of the subject property. Trail to be constructed to park standards and specifications. The exact alignment shall be coordinated with MNCPPC staff. Easement and trail to be adequately marked and signed to identify it for public use.
- 9) Applicant to install fencing along the western property boundary between the bike trail and the adjacent cemetery property. Prior to recordation of plat, applicant to submit a landscape plan for MNCPPC technical staff review and approval, that provides natural screening (existing and/or planted vegetation) between the proposed bike path and the fence.
- 10) No recordation of plat prior to final County Council approval of Water and Sewer Map Amendment No. WSCCR 03A-OLN-03 extending water and sewer service to this property for a Private Institutional Facility.
- 11) Record plat to reflect a Category I easement over all stream valley buffers and forest conservation areas.
- 12) Record Plat to reflect all stormwater management areas.
- 13) The Adequate Public Facility (APF) review for the preliminary plan will remain valid for sixty-one (61) months from the date of mailing of the Planning Board opinion.
- 14) Other necessary easements.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION AND SURROUNDING AREA:**

The subject property is a 59.99-acre undeveloped property located within the Olney Master Plan area. The property is located on the south side of Batchellors Forest Road approximately 1,300 feet east of Georgia Avenue (see Attachment A). The property is zoned RE-2. The site is currently completely forested and contains two tributary streams to Northwest Branch (Use Class IV-P stream) which bisect the property from northwest to east, and southwest to east. The site contains approximately 54.5 acres of forest, 4.3 acres of wetlands, and 15 acres of environmental buffer.

The Norbeck Memorial Park Cemetery is located to the west of the property, within the southeast quadrant of the MD 97/Batchellors Forest Road intersection. The Trotters Glen Golf Course and the William H. Farquhar Middle School are located to the east/northeast of the property along Batchellors Forest Road. The Olney Manor Recreational Park is located immediately to the north of the proposed school. The master planned alignment of the proposed Intercounty Connector (ICC) is along the southern property line.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO THE 1980 OLNEY MASTER PLAN AND PENDING MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT**

The approximately 60-acre Gandel property is currently zoned RE-2 and is located in the southeast area of the Olney Master Plan. The current 1980 Olney Master Plan does not have any specific comments about this site or the proposed use on this property. The 1980 Plan states that the southeast portion of Olney is a transitional agricultural area and recommends the RC (or LDRC) zone for properties in this area. Currently, the Olney Master Plan is being revised and the County Council is reviewing the proposed Planning Board Draft of the plan amendment.

The Planning Board discussed the potential use of the subject property by the Washington Christian Academy during its review of the Staff Draft of the Olney Master Plan. Although the draft Master Plan states that the preferred option for this site would be preservation in its entirety, if possible, it acknowledges the potential use of the site by Washington Christian Academy. The draft master plan recommends that new development, residential or institutional, be clustered in appropriate areas to minimize new imperviousness on the site and preserve as much of the existing forest as possible. The draft plan also recommends a trail connection on the property that would connect the Olney Manor Recreation Park to the future ICC on the south side of the property.

Since the Draft Plan recommends that this property be rezoned to RC, staff believes the proposed preliminary plan should be consistent with the controls of the RC zone so there are no non-conformance issues for the proposed development if rezoning occurs. Consistency with the RC zone also ensures there would be no issues for any future renovation or expansion of the school under the RC zone. The proposed school plan meets the 60 percent open space requirement for the RC zone by providing extensive forest and stream valley protection, and in ball fields and other non-preservation open areas. Given the draft master plan recommendations and the open space preservation on other properties in the southeast quadrant, staff recommends a minimum 50 percent of the property be preserved through forest conservation easement, and that the remaining 10 percent (or less) open space be provided by the

proposed ball fields and other open spaces on the site. The proposed plan provides approximately 50 percent of the site in conservation easement which satisfies this recommendation.

Based on the 1980 Master Plan and Draft Master Plan comments and recommendations, staff supports approval of the preliminary plan development proposal for this property.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This application proposes to create a private school with associated ball fields, faculty residences and parking (see Attachment B). The school will include grades K through 12 and will have a maximum student enrollment of 1,140 students with 100 faculty/staff. Twelve residential units are proposed for faculty housing. The residential units will be located along the western property boundary, and are currently proposed to be attached townhouses. The housing is an accessory use for the school and will not be located on individual recorded lots.

The plan preserves the stream valleys and environmentally sensitive areas. Safe and adequate access for vehicles and pedestrians will be provided by existing Batchellors Forest Road and the internal vehicular, sidewalk and bike path system.

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

APF review of the subject application required the preliminary plan to satisfy Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) and Policy Area Transportation Review (PATR) components of the APF test since the development was estimated to generate more than 50 total weekday peak hour trips during the morning and evening peak periods. The Applicant is proposing to satisfy the above requirements with a Traffic Mitigation Agreement (TMA) with the Montgomery County Planning Board (MCPB) to sponsor, develop, implement, and operate a monitored trip mitigation program.

Vehicular access to and from the property is proposed via a driveway to Batchellors Forest Road at the northwest corner of the property. MCDPWT has required channelization at this driveway to restrict movements to right-turns in/left-turns out only to orient school-related traffic towards Georgia Avenue. Parking within the school is provided to the rear (southwestern portion of the site), as well as, along the west side of the property. The bus queuing plan for the school will queue/stack the buses entirely within the school property.

Batchellors Forest Road along the northern property boundary is a two-lane roadway that extends between Georgia Avenue to the southwest and Olney-Sandy Spring Road (MD 108) to the northeast. School related traffic is proposed to be oriented to the west towards Georgia Avenue, where a median on Georgia Avenue limits movements on Batchellors Forest Road to right-turns in/right-turns out, and to southbound left-turns in from Georgia Avenue. Traffic leaving the school and bound for southbound Georgia Avenue will have to make a U-turn at the signalized Georgia Avenue/Emory Lane/Olney Manor Recreational Park driveway intersection to proceed south. It would also be possible, although not desirable, for school-related traffic to cut-through the Olney Manor Recreational Park and make a left-turn at the above signalized intersection. Georgia Avenue in the vicinity of the school is a north-south multi-lane divided

major highway, and has three southbound lanes and two northbound lanes at Batchellors Forest Road. The roadway has a sidewalk along its east side and a Class I bikeway along its west side at this location.

Currently, Metrobus routes Y8, Y9 and Ride-On bus routes 52 and 53 provide service along Georgia Avenue, and have a bus stop near Batchellors Forest Road. Ride-On bus routes 52 and 53 also serve local communities in the area. The area has a Park and Ride Lot within the northeastern quadrant of MD 97 and MD 28. Georgia Avenue is proposed to have a future express two-lane, bi-directional, bus-only roadway within its median that will connect Olney and Aspen Hill communities to the north with Glenmont Metro Station to the south.

### Proposed Intercounty Connector

As part of its preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed ICC, SHA is currently developing detailed engineering mapping for the roadway. The road is proposed as a limited-access east-west highway intended to link areas between I-270 and I-95/US 1, through central/eastern Montgomery and western Prince George's Counties, including an interchange with Georgia Avenue in the vicinity of the property.

The ICC planning process has concurrence on two alternative alignments, selected through the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study or ARDS, called Corridor 1 and Corridor 2. Corridor 1 is the southern alignment that generally follows the ICC alignment incorporated in the area master plans, and the Corridor 2 alignment diverts to the north on the east side of Georgia Avenue. The ICC Corridor 2 alignment is not represented in any area master plans.

Based on the current information available in the ICC DEIS, the Corridor 1 alignment (Attachment D) has minimal right-of-way and grading impacts on the property. The Corridor 2 alignment options in the area (the southern Norbeck Option A and the northern Norbeck Option B) would physically impact the subject development as shown on Attachment E. The Norbeck Option A alignment impacts the southeastern corner of the property, and the Norbeck Option B alignment splits the property in two.

Following guidelines mandated by Federal agencies that require evaluation of more than one "build" alternative, the ICC study process is continuing, and the Norbeck Options along Corridor 2 are among those alternatives retained within the ARDS and included in the DEIS. The Planning Board, when it previously deliberated on the issue of reservation of property along the non-master planned ICC Corridor 2 alignment (in an unrelated plan), elected to require the applicant to send SHA written notification 90 days in advance of filing for building permits. SHA has expressed concerns about this notification approach to staff, and is requesting reservation of the subject property (Attachment C).

Staff is of the opinion that by preventing the applicant from filing record plat(s) until September 1, 2005 (or until a final Record of Decision is issued, if issued before September 1, 2005), development within the Norbeck Options can be effectively limited while permitting clearing and grading to occur. It is the opinion of Transportation Planning staff that this limitation, therefore, fully protects the ICC alignments pending the DEIS review process and the

ensuing final Record of Decision.

### Site-Generated Traffic

Peak-hour trips estimated for the proposed school during weekday morning (6:30 am to 9:30 am) and evening (4:00 pm to 7:00 pm) peak-periods were included in the traffic study. The trip generation estimate assumed 100 percent student busing, and arrival of all faculty/staff within the peak hour as single-occupant vehicles. The school buses were assumed to be stored on-site and not contribute to the peak hour trip generation while departing in the morning. All the faculty/staff were also conservatively assumed to arrive within the peak hour as single-occupant vehicles even though the school is providing 12 dwelling units on the property for faculty/staff to live in. Slightly more than half the students were assumed to depart the school prior to the evening peak period

The applicant has proposed installation/implementation of certain non-automobile transportation amenities within the Olney Policy Area (through coordination with MCDPWT and SHA) to offset impact of up to 60 weekday peak hour trips within the policy area. The plan also caps the weekday morning, and evening peak hour trips to/from the school within the respective peak periods at 189 and 91 "total" trips. This will ultimately provide the school some flexibility with its peak-hour trip generation and will permit some students to drive to the school instead of taking the school bus.

Though staff finds the overall trip generation estimate to be feasible, it is recognized that adhering to the overall trip management plan and trip limit goal for the school (including 100 percent student busing) may not be realistic. Staff therefore recommends that a peak-hour vehicle trip cap for the property be documented in the TMA as a practical approach to achieve the required LATR trip limit goals.

### Congestion Levels at Nearby Intersections

The preliminary plan has been reviewed under the FY 2004 AGP under which a traffic study is required for those developments that generated 50 or more total peak hour trips during the weekday morning and evening peak-periods. Based on the above finding, the consultant for the applicant submitted a traffic study (dated January 2004; Revised October 2004) that assessed congestion levels at local area intersections, and investigated the need for any off-site improvements at these intersections.

Critical Lane Volume (CLV) analysis results for the study intersections for the weekday morning and evening peak hours during the respective peak periods were studied in the traffic analysis. The weekday morning and evening peak-hour CLV analysis presented in the traffic study indicated that under Total traffic conditions, CLV values at the study intersections were either below the FY 2004 Olney and Aspen Hill congestion standards of 1,525 and 1,550, respectively, or; with an applicant identified/funded roadway improvement (extension of existing south bound Muncaster Mill Road to east bound Norbeck Road left-turn lane by 100 feet) did not exceed the respective CLV under Background traffic conditions by more than four CLV (as



provided for by the AGP, that permitted a four CLV impact at other study intersections where the policy area congestion standard is exceeded under Background traffic conditions).

#### Traffic Mitigation Agreement Review

As part of the subject Preliminary Plan for the school, the applicant is proposing to enter into a Traffic Mitigation Agreement (TMA) with the Planning Board to sponsor, develop, implement, and operate a monitored trip reduction/mitigation program (for the implementation of a comprehensive student-busing program). The TMA proposes to limit peak-hour trips to and from the school during the morning and evening peak-periods. Staff is currently reviewing a draft of the TMA. Staff is currently reviewing a draft of the TMA, and recommends that the agreement should be in effect as long as WCA occupies the property.

#### Policy Area Transportation Review/Transportation Staging Ceiling Test

The proposed use for the property, as a preliminary plan filed prior to July 1, 2004, under the FY 2004 AGP, was estimated to generate more than five weekday peak hour trips during the morning and evening peak periods, and therefore, was required to satisfy the PATR test for the adequacy of transportation staging ceiling.

The property is located within the Olney Policy Area, which had net remaining staging ceiling capacity of 1,914 jobs and two housing units as of June 30, 2004. With an estimate of approximately 100 faculty/staff for the WCA, the proposed use satisfies the jobs element of the PATR/staging ceiling test. (It is noted that typically, 50 jobs are assigned to elementary schools, 70 to middle schools, and 110 to high schools for staging ceiling calculations.) The policy area, however, has a net negative staging ceiling capacity for housing since there are several housing development approvals that are already in the "development queue" ahead of the proposed WCA preliminary plan with approved housing density far exceeding the currently available capacity. Regardless of the above, staff is of the opinion that the proposed on-site faculty/staff housing component of the development would specifically reduce peak hour vehicle trips to and from the site, and any vehicle trips generated by the housing (i.e., by another resident family member not employed by the school) are incorporated into the peak hour vehicle trip cap established for the site by the TMA. Staff, therefore, finds that the application satisfies the intent of PATR for housing units as well.

Staff concludes that the subject preliminary plan will provide safe and adequate access for vehicles and pedestrians, and satisfies the APF requirements (Transportation memo included as Attachment F).

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL:**

The subject site contains 54.5 acres of forest, 4.3 acres of wetlands, and 15 acres of environmental buffers. The forest conservation plan indicates that the proposed plan exceeds the "break-even" point for forest retention onsite and meets all forest conservation requirements through the retention of existing forest. Environmental buffers on the property were identified on the approved Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation. Environmental buffers

include wetlands and their buffers, floodplains, and streams and their buffers. The plan includes protection of all environmental buffers and forest retention areas in Category I conservation easements.

Staff concludes that the preliminary plan satisfies the *Environmental Guidelines* and complies with the requirements of the Forest Conservation Law (Montgomery County Code Chapter 22A).

#### Water and Sewer Service

The subject property is currently in water and sewer categories W-6 and S-6, respectively, which would not be served by public water or sewer. The applicant has applied for a Water and Sewer Map Amendment (WSCCR 03A-OLN-03) under the county Water and Sewer Plan's Private Institutional Facility (PIF) policy. Both County Executive and MNCPPC staff have reviewed the category change request and are recommending approval. Staff concluded that water service is consistent with the Water and Sewer Plan's general policies for public water service with regard to development in large lot areas. They also concluded that provision of public sewer service is consistent with the Plan's policies for service to private institutional facilities. Sewer service can be provided to the property via a low-pressure sewer main extension which will be dedicated only to the school's use. The extension would, therefore, only serve the school and not any other nearby properties which would generally be ineligible for service. Staff is recommending approval of the preliminary plan conditioned on the County Council's final action to approve the pending category change request.

#### **CITIZEN CORRESPONDENCE**

As of the date of this report, the only correspondence received regarding the preliminary plan was a letter dated March 31, 2004 from representatives of the adjacent Norbeck Memorial Park (Attachment G). The letter raises concerns about traffic impacts on the existing cemetery, noise from the school, and the location of the proposed public use easement and bike path.

The concern regarding traffic from the school is that cars queuing to pick up or drop off students will block the cemetery entrance. Staff believes this concern is addressed by the school's plan to bus 100% of the students to the school, and provide necessary space for queuing of the school buses within the school grounds.

The letter requests fencing of the school property's boundary, and maintenance of a natural screen between the fence and proposed bike path, to address concerns about noise, vandalism and unlawful access to cemetery grounds. Staff is recommending the applicant install a fence and either retain, or plant, a natural screen within the proposed public use easement as a condition of approval of the preliminary plan (Condition #9 above).

#### **Attachments:**

Attachment A – Site Vicinity Map

Attachment B – Preliminary Plan

Attachment C – SHA letter

Attachment D – Proposed Corridor 1 (Master Plan) ICC Alignment

Attachment E – Proposed Corridor 2 ICC Alternative Alignments

Attachment F – Transportation Planning Staff Memo

Attachment G – Correspondence