



March 11, 2005

MEMORANDUM- MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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

FROM: Kristin O'Connor for the Department of Park and Planning *KO*
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REVIEW TYPE: Mandatory Referral No. 05201-MCPS-1; Six Classroom Addition for Garrett Park Elementary School; Intersection of Kenilworth Avenue and Oxford Street, R-60 Zone, 1992 North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan

FILING DATE: February 9, 2005

RECOMMENDATION: Approval to transmit comments to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

1. Limit the mandatory referral for this elementary school addition to:
 - a. Meet current MCPS's guidelines by adding six permanent classrooms and two ESOL rooms, while removing six temporary learning cottages.
 - b. Relocate the paved play area from the southeast to the southwest side of the elementary school.
2. Coordinate on-site construction activities and delivery times to ensure safe on-site pedestrian, passenger vehicle, and bus access and circulation that should be physically separated from construction activities; especially during the arrival and departure times of the school, the child day care facility, the Garrett Park Cooperative Nursery School, and the M-NCPPC park. Designate a representative from each user to be involved in the coordination.
3. Enter into an agreement between the M-NCPPC and MCPS for the use of the southern portion of Garrett Part Estates Park, as a staging area for construction equipment. The condition of the parkland will be restored to its original, pre-construction condition at the end of the project. Provide off-site parking for

construction-related vehicles in order not to occupy the existing on-site parking spaces.

4. Implement a "maintenance of traffic" plan to prevent conflicting movements of construction-related traffic with pedestrians and vehicles.
5. Provide a 6'-6" board-on-board fence along the northern and western sides of the site to provide visual screening of construction activities from the adjacent Nursery school and Holy Cross Church.
6. Construct a fenced walkway between the elementary school and the nursery school.
7. Comply with the Montgomery County Noise Ordinance. During construction, work activities will be contractually limited to the hours established by the ordinance.
8. The final Tree Save Plan prepared by an ISA certified arborist should be approved by the M-NCPPC prior to approval of the sediment and erosion control plan or any clearing, grading or land disturbance of the site.
9. A Storm Water Management Plan approved by MCDPS should be submitted to the M-NCPPC-Park, Planning and Development (PPD) and the Environmental Unit prior to issuance of a sediment and erosion control permit.
10. Provide cut-off fixtures at the western corner of the site to minimize the light that trespasses into the side and rear yard of Holy Cross School and church.
11. Protect the remaining Liquidambar Styraciflua (American Sweetgum) with a fence until the modernization is complete. The fruit can be dangerous as the brown seeds are sharp, winged, and persist in the winter.
12. Pursue sustainable design features (including LEED standards) in the plans in accordance with MCPS policies and design guidelines.
13. All appropriate comments should be included in the park construction permit.

THE PROPOSAL

Garrett Park Elementary School (GPES) is located in the Walter Johnson cluster. The existing school has capacity for 338 students and the current student enrollment is 458 students in Grades Kindergarten through Grade 5. Currently, seven learning cottages are on site to accommodate the needed teaching spaces for the current student enrollment. When the proposed addition is complete, Garrett Park Elementary School will accommodate the current enrollment. A modernization project has been approved for the school with a completion date of January 2012 to accommodate the projected enrollment of 507 students by September of 2010.

In this phase, the project scope is to construct six (6) classrooms, two (2) ESOL classrooms, an elevator, and support spaces in a two-story, freestanding classroom addition. The existing school building will remain until the future modernization. The proposed addition has been located such that it will remain and become a part of the overall future modernization. The classroom addition is slated to start in the summer of 2005 and be completed in August 2006. The existing school facilities will remain in operation throughout the construction. The construction will be divided into three phases.

- Phase A: interim playground facilities will be constructed on MCPS property at the rear of the school. Additionally, temporary facilities to support construction will be provided. This may include temporary barriers such as demountable chain link fence panels to secure the project site, toilet facilities, storage trailers, and construction offices.
- Phase B: the addition will be constructed.
- Phase C: six of the re-locatable classrooms will be removed.

THE SITE

Garrett Park Elementary School was originally constructed in 1952 with major additions completed in 1956, 1961, 1975, and 1992. The school property consists of four (4) separate parcels of land, all of which are owned by Montgomery County Board of Education. The property is bounded on the north and west by Holy Cross Catholic Church and Academy, on the west by a daycare center operated on a parcel of land owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), on the east by single-family residential development, and on the south by a park also owned by the M-NCPPC. The school site currently consists of an existing single-story school building, a historic former school building that houses a child-care facility managed by Montgomery Childcare Association, paved driveways and parking, seven (7) re-locatable classrooms, and playground areas. The adjacent park is improved with a softball/soccer field that is shared by the school and community.

The site design locates the proposed addition on the paved playground area to the west of the existing school building and adjacent to the daycare center. This location minimizes the project's impact upon current site improvements while providing for its eventual integration into the future modernization. The playground will be demolished, and its functions relocated to the rear of the existing school where some existing play equipment and surfaces are located and future play areas are indicated in the master plan for the modernization.

The school building generally is open from the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays. The hours of operation are the normal school day (8:40 am - 3:05 pm), with after school activities scheduled as needed. These typically end by 5:00 p.m. Evening and weekend events are scheduled on a case-by-case basis. Access to the school grounds is not restricted, and community use of the playgrounds is allowed after school hours.

PARK IMPACTS

During construction, temporary easements on portions of the adjacent M-NCPPC properties will be needed for staging and access. The parkland will be restored by MCPS to its original, pre-construction condition at the end of the project.

A permanent easement will be required to provide emergency vehicle access to the proposed addition and eventual modernization through the M-NCCPC parcel containing the day-care center. The easement will reflect an existing paved driveway that currently provides emergency vehicle access to the existing school building.

Temporary easements on portions of the adjacent park properties will be needed for staging and construction access. The specifics of the use of these portions of the site will need to be coordinated between MCPS and the M-NCPPC and will need to be formally documented in coordination with this Mandatory Referral. Site utilization by the contractor during construction will be identified in construction documents along with a detailed construction permit issued by the M-NCPPC. Each document will reflect the specifics of the final agreements.

ANALYSIS

Master Plan

The subject site is located in the North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan area. While not specifically addressing the addition or modernization, the Master Plan does, however, acknowledge, "public schools are an essential component of community life and should be an integral part of community structure" (p. 239). An objective of the Plan is to "provide for services and facilities that meet the present and future needs of the community" (p. 227).

The Plan also acknowledges "public parkland and recreational facilities play an important role in the well-being of a community" (p. 229). The Master Plan confirms that Garrett Park Estates Local Park, adjacent to the GPES, is 3.6 acres and has two (2) playground areas and a community building to the west of the GPES and a softball field and a soccer overlay field to the south. It is important to keep the Garrett Park Estates Park in operation during the construction of the addition as it serves the Garrett Park Nursery School, GPES, Department of Recreation, and local residents.

The proposed school addition meets the setbacks, the height limits, and the coverage of the R-60 zone.

Historic Structures

The original Garret Park School building, constructed in 1928, is located to the east of the existing Garrett Park Elementary School. It houses a child-care facility managed by Montgomery Childcare Association. Though it is not listed as a historic structure of interest in the North Bethesda Garrett Park Master Plan, it is listed in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties as number M:30-13-4. It is not impacted by the project.

TRANSPORTATION

The existing elementary school site is located in the southwest quadrant of Strathmore Avenue (MD 547) and Kenilworth Avenue. The site access point is from Oxford Street that connects to Kenilworth Avenue. Oxford Street, between the school site and Kenilworth Avenue, is a residential street on land that is owned by the City of Garrett Park, but is not identified as a public right-of-way on the tax map.

Vehicular Circulation

There are four considerations when reviewing the vehicular circulation and parking for the elementary school and they are as follows: school buses, parent drop-off and pick-up, service and park maintenance vehicles, and special events traffic. They are all accommodated within the existing circulation pattern during and post-construction of the classroom addition.

In addition to the elementary school use, four other users utilize the site and they include: the Montgomery Childcare Association, the Garret Park Cooperative Nursing School, M-NCPPC Parks, and the Academy of the Holy Cross School and Church. All adjacent users except Holy Cross take their access from Oxford Street. The Academy of Holy Cross School and Holy Cross Church have access points from driveways along Strathmore Avenue.

The elementary school has 50 parking spaces currently on the site with no proposed increase until the modernization. As part of the initial building addition project, no significant site work such as parking reconfiguration, bus loop, and parent drop-off improvements are proposed.

APF/Local Area Transportation Review (LATR)

The LATR component of the APF review for the classroom addition was based on the following changes:

1. Adding six more permanent standard-sized classrooms while removing an equal number of temporary learning cottages. The same six teaching stations are to remain.
2. Adding two ESOL rooms for dedicated learning areas that are now occurring in existing jointly used space.

The changes above to the elementary school would not generate any additional peak-hour trips during the weekday morning peak period (7:30 to 9:30 a.m.) and evening peak period (4:00 to 7:00 p.m.). Thus, a traffic study would not be required to satisfy LATR.

Under the current *FY 2005 Annual Growth Policy*, Policy Area Transportation Review is no longer applicable (i.e., no review of the remaining transportation staging ceilings in the North Bethesda Policy Area).

Modernization Considerations

Based on the currently available information, the future planned modernization of the elementary school includes an additional wing on the south side of the elementary school and relocated parent drop-off and pick-up area. At that time, MCPS should consider developing the following plans to prevent adverse impacts to the operations of the elementary school and other land uses including:

1. A "maintenance of traffic" plan to prevent conflicting movements of construction-related traffic with pedestrians and vehicles generated by the on-site land uses.
2. An on-site parking and vehicular circulation plan and any pedestrian improvements to provide safe pedestrian movement.
3. A parking and vehicular circulation plan to prevent overflow parking and parent's vehicles queued to drop-off and pick-up children from parking and backing up off-site onto Oxford Street.
4. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to include a series of agreements between the M-NCPPC, MCPS, and the Nursery School at the planned modernization stage to assure long-term access and circulation for the existing land uses on the site that include:
 - a. Use of the cul-de-sac located on the eastern portion of the M-NCPPC parcel as a queuing area for parent's dropping-off and picking-up elementary school students until the completion of the modernization.
 - b. Emergency vehicle access to the southeastern corner of the Garrett Park Estates Park for emergency vehicle access to the western side of the elementary school.
 - c. Use by the Garrett Park Cooperative Nursing School (i.e., operating from the M-NCPPC Garrett Park Estates Park) of the existing parking spaces located across the east-west property line.
 - d. Access from Oxford Street to the M-NCPPC two landlocked Parcels P900 (through MCPS Parcel N992) and N073 (through MCPS Parcels N992 and N020).
 - e. Access from the Town of Garrett Park to the landlocked MCPS and the M-NCPPC parcels from Kenilworth Avenue through the Town of Garrett Park's Lot 11, Block 50.
 - f. Shared use of the recreational facilities on the M-NCPPC adjoining parcel, along the elementary school's southern property line.
 - g. Use of the existing asphalt basketball court that crosses the southern property line between MCPS and the M-NCPPC.

ENVIRONMENT

This proposal sites the new classroom addition over an existing playground. The playground will be relocated to the south side of the existing school building in an area that supports one specimen tree and three significant trees. These trees will be

removed to provide space for the relocated playground. Mitigation for the specimen tree will be provided with 12 new 3-inch caliper canopy trees planted around the periphery of the site in areas where future construction is unlikely. Three trees (26" and 27" American Sweetgums) will remain protected by a fence until the modernization when the existing building is removed and the new building constructed.

The storm water management concept plan is conditionally approved. The stormwater concept consists of on-site channel protection measures using underground storage and on-site water quality control using a Storm filter. Approval is conditioned on MCPS obtaining an easement from the adjacent property owner to be able to discharge runoff onto an existing asphalt driveway and on MCPS verifying safe conveyance of all storm flows. The conduits draining the underground facility will cause removal of a 29" Box Elder located on Maryland National Capital Park and Planning property. MCPS is working with the Department of Permitting Services to reroute the conduit to preserve the tree and extend the conduit directing the runoff to an existing curb inlet. The Tree Save Plan will show the 29" Box Elder saved and tree preservation measures in the critical root zone.

Forest Conservation

This site has an approved Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD). A Forest Conservation Plan exemption has been granted because this is a modification of existing developed property with no more than a total of 5,000 square feet of forest cleared; no forest clearing within a stream buffer or on property subject to SPA WQP requirements; and no requirement for a new subdivision plan. A Tree Save Plan shall be approved prior to issuance of building and sedimentation and erosion control permits.

Water Quality

This site is located in the Lower Mainstem Ken-Gar subwatershed of the Lower Rock Creek watershed. The Countywide Stream Protection Strategy (CSPS) classifies the stream and habitat conditions as fair. It is categorized as a Watershed Restoration Area. Every effort should be made to protect and improve water quality in this watershed.

Environmental Design

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) submitted to the County Council a strategic plan entitled *Green Schools Focus* as required by the County Environmental Policy. MCPS pledged, in the strategic plan, to "Improve system design through introducing latest high performance green building technologies (LEED) to improve sustainability and performance of buildings and reduce operating costs." MCPS will not apply for LEED certification in this project, but will incorporate at a minimum features and materials to enhance energy efficiency, indoor air quality, and on-site stormwater management in the new building.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The Garrett Park Civic Association, the Town of Garrett Park, The Academy of the Holy Cross, Holy Cross Elementary School, and the adjacent neighbors were notified of the March 17, 2005, hearing by Planning Board staff. MCPS staff held several Design Advisory Committee work sessions, chaired by the principal, which began in September 2004 and continued through December 2004. Those who participated in the process included: the M-NCPPC park manager and community planner; PTA representatives; adjacent neighbors that included Holy Cross, the Nursery School and Garrett Park residents; design architects; and MCPS staff. The concerns expressed by GPES and the PTA relate to the existing sweetgum trees on the southern property line and how the seeds pose a nuisance for school children and staff. Holy Cross had concerns about stormwater management on the site. The nursery school expressed pedestrian and vehicular circulation, noise, and safety concerns during construction. The M-NCPPC has expressed the need to continue to maintain the fields to the rear of the school, keep the ballfields in operation, and continue to keep the nursery school at the local park in operation, including the northern playground, during construction.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information provided by the applicant and the analysis in this report, staff concludes that the proposed project would provide an essential new classroom addition, in line with today's standards. MCPS staff attended many meetings with school staff and local residents and worked to resolve the environmental, transportation, recreational, park and community impacts of the proposed project.

Attachments:

- A. Vicinity Map
- B. Existing Site Plan
- C. Existing Conditions and Demolition Plan
- D. Proposed Site Plan with Addition
- E. Proposed First Floor Plan
- F. Proposed Second Floor Plan
- G. Elevations
- H. Master Plan for Future Modernization
- I. Memorandum from Transportation Planning
- J. Memorandum from Environmental Planning
- K. Letter from Principal of GPES
- L. PTA Emails
- M. Letter from GP Nursery School