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MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760 301-495-4500, www.mncppc.org

May 24, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO:

Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA:

John A. Carter, Chief

Community-Based Planning Division

Glenn Kreger, Silver Spring/Takoma Park Team Leader ¥≮

Community-Based Planning Division

FROM:

Malaika Abernathy, Senior Planner (301.495.1336)

Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. 06102-MCPS-1: New Hampshire Estates

Elementary School (Access and Safety Improvements) - 8720 Carroll

Avenue, R-60 Zone, East Silver Spring Master Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval with the following comments.

- 1. Prohibit outbound left turns during peak arrival and departure times (8:00-9:00 a.m.) from the parent/staff access driveway.
- 2. Widen the sidewalk along Carroll Avenue at the school's northern driveway to accommodate student pick-up/drop-off activities.
- Relocate and reconfigure the proposed auxiliary boarding area for Oakview Elementary students to the front of the school along Carroll Avenue north of the parent/staff access driveway. Connect boarding area with sidewalk along Carroll Avenue.
- 4. Eliminate the proposed pedestrian crosswalk across the parent/staff access driveway.
- 5. Develop and distribute informational packets for parents and teachers in advance of proposed changes in on-site traffic access and circulation.
- 6. Coordinate with the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) regarding the following operational issues:
 - a. Review the operations of the new circulation patterns during autumn 2006 and provide additional traffic control personnel if needed.
 - b. Repair and maintain school zone flashers located along Carroll Avenue.
 - c. Review on-street parking prohibitions and determine with DPWT whether current restrictions are adequately enforced and appropriate for school related activities.

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Location – New Hampshire Estates Elementary School is located on 8720 Carroll Avenue, north of University Boulevard within the East Silver Spring Planning Area. Located on a fairly flat 3.29-acre site, the school is bounded by single-family detached units to the east, townhouses to the north, and multi-family units to the south. New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park adjoins the school to the northwest and Casa de Maryland to the west. The current enrollment is 409 students in Pre-K through Grade 6, with 45 staff members. Enrollment is projected to be 484 by the year 2007.

Zoning – The school property is zoned R-60. Surrounding properties are zoned R-10 and R-30.

New Hampshire Elementary School and Vicinity



Background — The community surrounding New Hampshire Estates Elementary School is made up of older single-family detached homes in the R-60 Zone and multifamily residences in the R-10 and R-30 zones. Many young families with school-age children are moving back into the neighborhood. The school serves the function of a community park where residents meet and children play.

New Hampshire Estates Elementary School will be operated during regular school hours, but the facility will also serve its community beyond the school day. The school will be regularly operated from 8:50 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, nearly all year round. The following school activities occur at the site: Focused Academic Support, Head Start, MCPS Preschool, Full-Day Kindergarten, Reading/Language Arts Program, Linkages to Learning, Language Disabilities, and Program of Assessment Classes.

The New Hampshire Elementary School project is part of a County-wide effort to address vehicular and pedestrian safety on aging school sites. MCPS staff considered the following factors prior to the submission of this proposal:

- Improved pedestrian access and safety to the site
- Improved lighting of the parking lot
- Separation of bus and parent access areas
- Landscaping and shading as recommended by the Zoning Ordinance.

According to MCPS staff, the existing parking lot operation for the school creates serious safety hazards due to conflicting movements of buses and cars during the peak morning and afternoon periods when students are picked-up or dropped-off. The existing parking lot on the southern portion of the site is accessed from Carroll Avenue. The northern driveway offers one-way access to the front of the school for both buses and cars as indicated and the southern driveway offers one-way access for staff and parents.

The existing parking lot provides 77 parking spaces (including two disabled parking spaces). Staff and visitors currently park on site and along Carroll Avenue. Current parking restrictions along Carroll Avenue prohibit on street parking between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. in front of the school. Parents waiting for afternoon dismissal, typically queue up on Carroll Avenue since private vehicles are prohibited from accessing the site during that time.

Students arrive at school on foot, in MCPS school buses, and in private vehicles. Buses and parents are directed to enter the site from the northern driveway and circulate counterclockwise along two different pathways: buses queue up on the outer loop of the existing parking lot in front of the school entrance, and parents use the inner loop of the parking lot to drop students off in a designated pedestrian crosswalk area. Staff then escorts the students between parked cars and across the bus aisle to the front doors. Parents use both aisles to pick-up and drop-off students, but are discouraged from entering the designated bus loop when buses queue up. Parents often have to drop-off or pick-up students on Carroll Avenue. The current bus loop accommodates 4 buses servicing the school. An additional bus picks up students attending Oakview Elementary School.

A crossing guard is located at the northern driveway to assist with bus, parent and pedestrian traffic associated with the school. Students living in the neighborhood that walk to school are directed by the crossing guard to enter the site using the northern entrance to the site.

Service vehicles access a small loading dock on the southwest side of the school. This area is currently fenced off and away from the main parking lot.

Project Description

MCPS proposes to separate the bus loop from the parent pick-up/drop-off area by physically creating two different loading/unloading areas. A reconfigured bus drop-off/pick-up area on the northern portion of the site would be accessed from the existing northern driveway on Carroll Avenue, and would provide 35 staff only parking spaces. An additional 46-space parent/staff parking area would be accessed from the southern driveway on Carroll Avenue. It would be located at the southern corner of the site and provide a separate parent pick-up/drop-off area. In total, there will be 81 parking spaces (including 4 handicapped accessible spaces).

The proposed design increases the number of on-site parking spaces by four. Additional on-street parking is currently provided during specific times on Carroll Avenue. Service vehicles will continue to access the loading dock and trash receptacle from the southern parking area.

Pedestrian access to the site will remain unchanged. The crossing guard will need to control inbound and outbound buses, and direct staff and parent vehicles to the parent/staff parking area. Staff will be encouraged to arrive before the start of classes to minimize the conflicts with morning arrivals of students and parents.

In addition, the following parking lot objectives are also addressed:

Improved pedestrian access to site – A proposed fence will screen the front of
the bus/staff parking area and encourage pedestrians to access the site via
proposed improvements to the existing pedestrian walkways as indicated on the
attached site plan map. The northern entrance walkway to the school proposes
to widen the sidewalk that follows the perimeter of the bus/staff parking area.

According to MCPS, the bus for the Oak View elementary students loads and unloads the students at the southern sidewalk of the existing parking lot. The location of this waiting area was proposed by school officials to be located away from the school entrance to isolate any disruptive noise and activity that may occur from the older students. The proposed site plan recommends a concrete waiting pad on the southern end of the south driveway. Transportation Planning staff recommends relocating and reconfiguring this proposed waiting pad to the northern part of the south driveway and extend it to the sidewalk along Carroll Avenue. This new location is intended to provide an easier access point for a bus to unload and load students. This new location is still physically isolated from the

- Improve existing driveways Both existing driveways will be widened to improve inbound and outbound traffic to the site. Outbound traffic from the parent/staff parking lot will be restricted to right turns to prevent conflicting movements when buses are accessing the bus/staff parking lot.
- Improve security at the school The East Silver Spring Master Plan recommends that added security measures should be considered when redevelopment occurs. The applicant proposes improving the lighting of both parking lots by increasing the amount of surface lighting. Full cut-off fixtures will be used and are intended to provide adequate lighting for evening activities without light trespass affecting the adjacent residential neighborhood.
- Improve landscaping of the parking lot New trees and under story plantings will be provided to screen the parking areas from residential homes adjacent to the site. Some trees will be removed to make way for the construction.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

MCPS staff held several meetings with the faculty, the parents, and the residents of the community in the summer of 2005 through early 2006.

Staff has discussed the proposed project with the administrative staff of the school. To this date no community comments have been received.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

FINDING #1: The proposed project is consistent with the December 2000 East Silver Spring Master Plan:

The East Silver Spring Master Plan does not recommend changes to the land uses, the roads, or the zoning for the subject site. It does recommend neighborhood-friendly circulation systems that provide safe vehicular, pedestrian and bike access to destinations within the community.

FINDING #2: The proposed project is generally consistent with the standards of the R-60 Zone:

The setbacks for parking facilities within and adjoining residential zones are as follows:

Existing Zone	Minimum Setback Required in the Zone	Proposed Setback
R-30	10'	<10 on the side adjacent to the proposed parent/staff parking lot
R-10	10'	10'
R-60	20'	30'

The multi-family units adjacent to the proposed parent/staff parking lot are currently zoned R-30. The standards of the R-30 Zone indicate that the proposed parking lot must have a minimum setback of 10 feet. The southwestern portion of the proposed parent/staff parking lot does not meet this requirement. This portion of the proposed lot does follow the same footprint as the existing parking lot, which also did not meet this setback requirement. Because this parking setback is located on the southwestern portion of the site, physically away from the existing apartment building, staff finds this issue to have minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

The Zoning Ordinance requires that off-street parking facilities have a perimeter landscape strip at least 4 feet wide adjoining property other than a right-of-way. The proposed landscaping strip adjacent to the R-10 Zoned residential property is approximately 20 feet wide and meets this requirement.

Additionally, the Ordinance requires at least 5 percent of parking facilities to be landscaped with shade trees. Currently, eleven shade trees of two varieties (Red Maple and Dogwood) are recommended and the proposed facility meets this requirement.

FINDING #3: The proposed circulation systems, landscaping and lighting, with the recommended staff modifications will be adequate, safe and efficient.

Staff concluded that the safety improvements proposed for the school would not increase vehicle trips during the peak hour of the weekday morning peak period (see Transportation Planning memo). Staff believes that the proposed project satisfies the requirements of the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) study.

Transportation Planning staff finds the proposed changes to the existing operation to be complicated and conflicting and recommends the following improvements to the proposal:

- Prohibit left-hand turns from the parent/staff access driveway during morning drop-off periods to reduce the potential for conflict – In creating two full-service driveways within close proximity of each other (240 feet), the amount of conflicting vehicle movements increases and provides the crossing guard with more responsibilities than she currently possesses.
- Require Oakview Elementary school students to be picked-up/dropped-off on the northern side of the parent/staff driveway and reconfigure waiting pad The MCPS proposal recommends that the Oakview Elementary School students be picked up/dropped off in the southeast corner of the parent/staff parking lot, away from the general student pedestrian crosswalk area. Staff finds that moving the loading area to the northern side of the driveway and extending the waiting area to the existing sidewalk on Carroll Avenue, would provide the buses with an easier access point to load and unload students than at the previously proposed location.
- Remove the proposed angled crosswalk in the driveway of the parent/staff parking area Staff finds that the presence of two crosswalks approximately 100 feet apart within the parent/staff parking area is confusing and redundant. Staff recommends eliminating the angled crosswalk and maintaining the existing single crosswalk at the entrance of the parent/staff parking area. This single location for pedestrians to cross the driveway is suitable.

- Extend proposed sidewalk on the northern approach of the entrance to the bus/staff parking lot Staff noticed considerable pedestrian activity concentrated at the northernmost corner of the entrance driveway (near the crossing guard station). Additional sidewalk width and maneuvering space would be beneficial.
- Educate staff, parents, and students on appropriate traffic/pedestrian activities during arrival and departure times Staff recommends that all users of the site be informed, in writing, about the new circulation patterns anticipated in this proposal.

Staff finds that with the conditions noted above, general traffic circulation around the site will be adequately improved by this proposal.

FINDING #4: The proposed project is consistent with Environmental guidelines and requirements

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 (see Environmental staff memo). No forest clearing is proposed within a stream buffer or on property subject to Special Protection Area Water Quality Plan requirements. This project is not subject to the requirements for a Tree Save Plan.

A Stormwater Management Concept Plan is approved for this project. Full water quality and quantity control shall be expected to protect the integrity of the Northwest Branch subwatershed.

MCPS will not apply for green building technologies (LEED) for certification of this project.

CONCLUSION

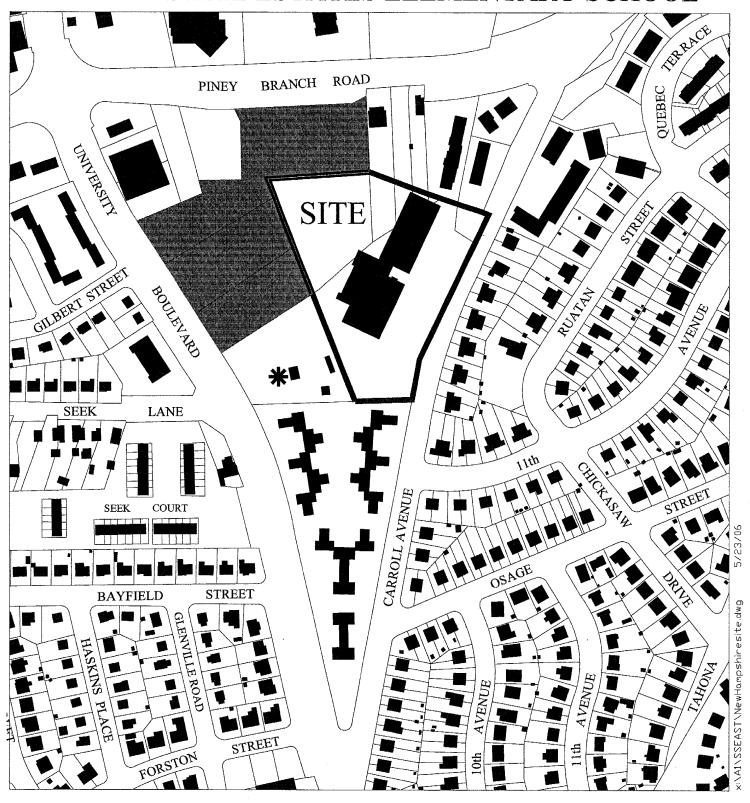
Based on the information provided by the applicant and the analysis in this report, staff concludes that the proposed project would adequately improve circulation and parking at the elementary school. The recommendations of the Transportation Planning staff would improve the proposal submitted by MCPS. Staff recommends that the Planning Board transmit the comments listed above.

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Attachments:

- Vicinity Map
- 2. Zoning Map
- 3. Existing Conditions
- 4. Proposed Site Plan
- 5. Lighting Plan
- 6. Landscape Plan
- 7. Memorandum from Transportation Planning
- 8. Memorandum from Environmental Planning

NEW HAMPSHIRE ESTATES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



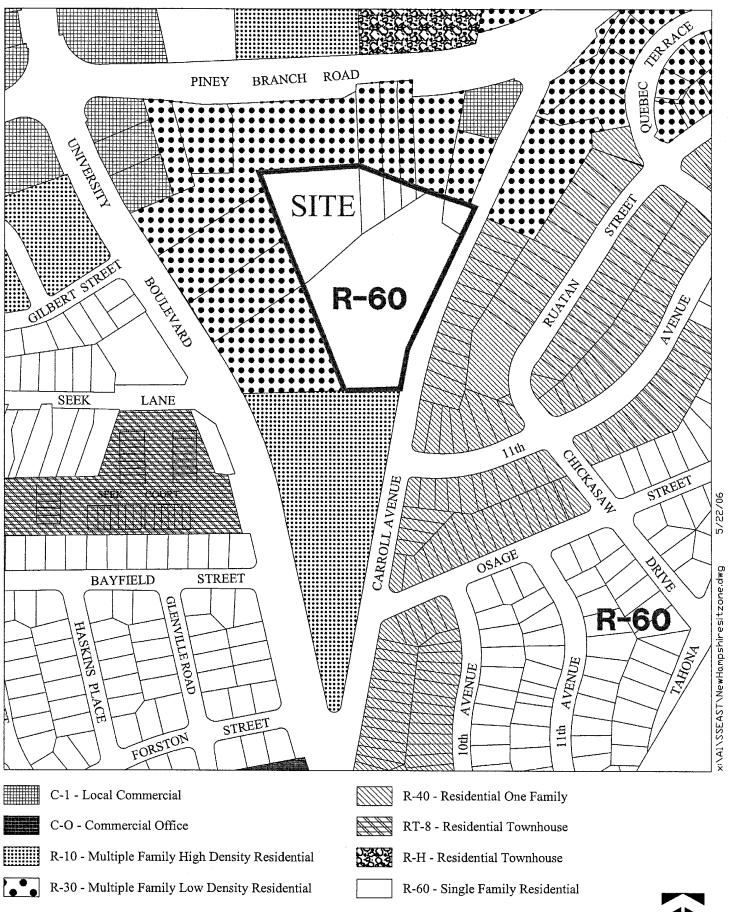


New Hampshire Estates Neighborhood Park

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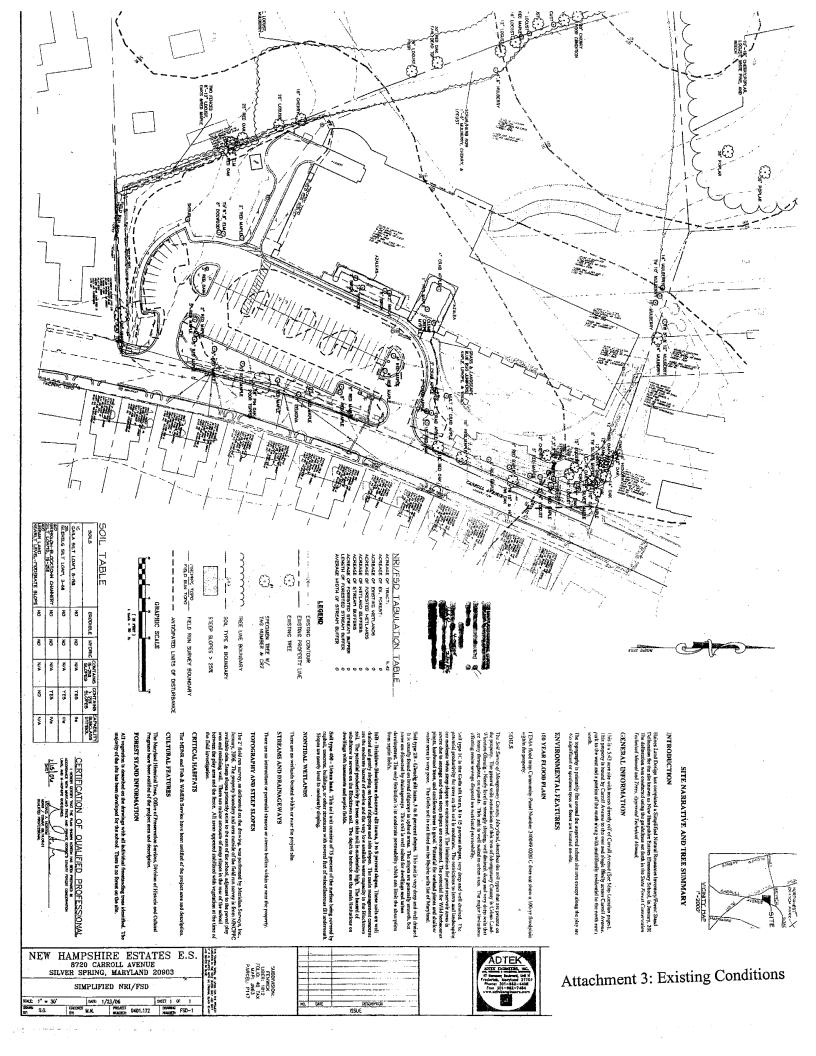
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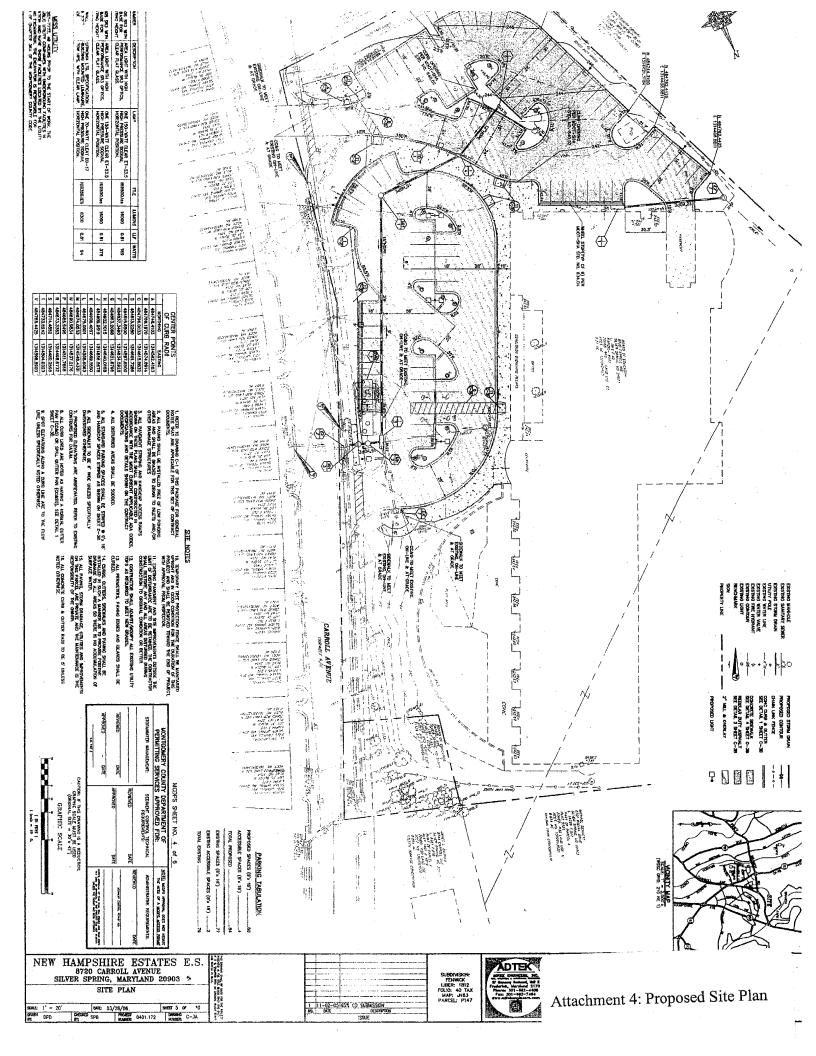
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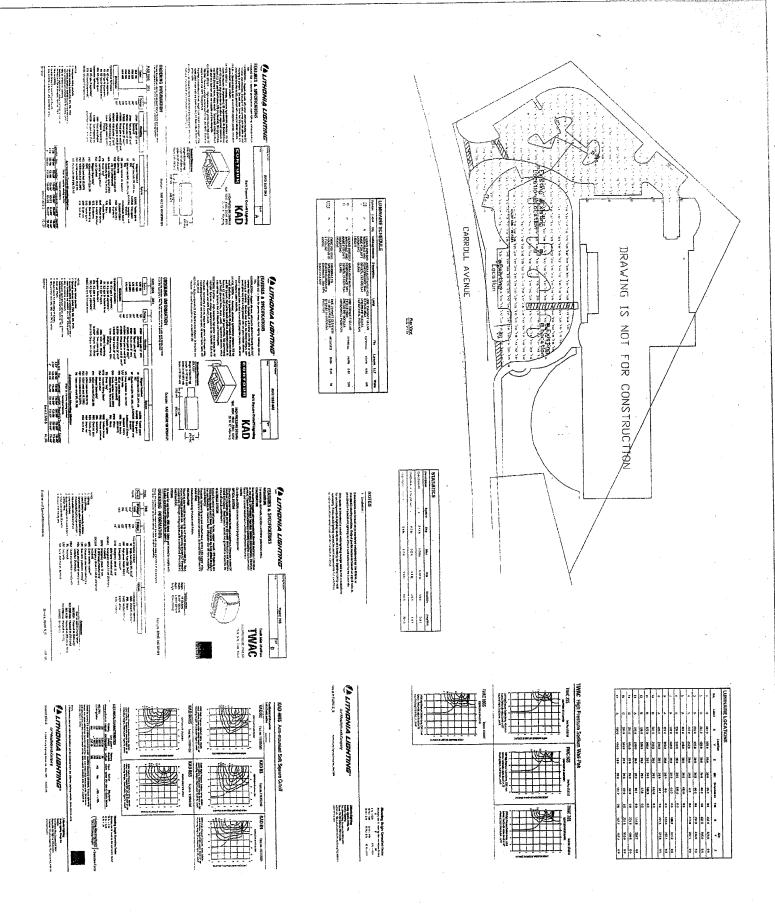


Not To Scale









Attachment 5: Lighting Plan

