

May 15, 2006

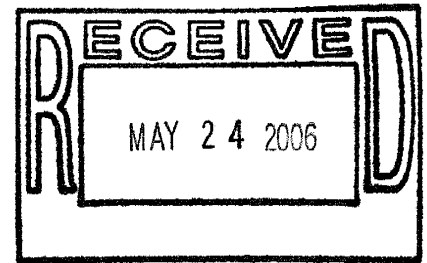
MEMORANDUM

TO: Malaika Abernathy, Senior Planner
Community Based Planning

VIA: Daniel K. Hardy, Supervisor *DKH*
Transportation Planning

FROM: Scott A. James, Planner/Coordinator *Saj*
Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral Petition 05105-MCPS-1
New Hampshire Estates Elementary School campus renovation
8720 Carroll Avenue
Silver Spring Policy Area



This memorandum is Transportation Planning staff's adequate public facilities (APF) review of the subject mandatory referral petition to permit the renovation of the New Hampshire Estates Elementary School parking lot.

RECOMMENDATION

Transportation Planning staff recommend transmittal of the following comments to the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS):

1. Prohibit outbound left turns during peak arrival and departure times (8-9 AM) from the parent/staff access driveway.
2. Widen the sidewalk along Carroll Avenue at the school's northern driveway to facilitate student pick-up activities.
3. Relocate the proposed auxiliary boarding area for Oakview Elementary students from within the parent/staff parking lot to the front of the school along Carroll Avenue north of the parent/staff access driveway.

4. Extend the sidewalk abutting the parent drop off area to connect with the sidewalk along Carroll Avenue.
5. Eliminate the proposed pedestrian crosswalk across the parent/staff access driveway.
6. Develop and distribute informational packets for parents and teachers in advance of proposed changes in on-site traffic access and circulation.
7. Coordinate with 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.

DISCUSSION

The school campus is located at 8720 Carroll Avenue in Silver Spring and it is zoned R60/R90. The school grounds occupy land owned by the MCPS and a portion of an adjacent lot owned by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). A negotiated agreement between MCPS and M-NCPPC has allowed for the shared-use of recreational facilities on the site.

School Location, Access, Circulation, and Parking

New Hampshire Estates Elementary School is located in the East Silver Spring Master Plan Area. The school currently serves up to 400 students in grades pre-K through second grade. The majority of the students are less than seven years of age. There is no anticipated expansion of the school facilities or student population.

Presently, the school is accessed from Carroll Avenue by means of a circular loop driveway. The driveway offers one-way access to the front of the school for both buses and private vehicles as shown in Exhibit 1. Staff parking is incorporated into the design of the front lot, with additional parking located to the southern side of the campus. Current staff parking demand exceeds the on-site capacity and visitors and part-time staff often park along Carroll Avenue.

Students arrive to school on foot, in MCPS school buses or in private vehicles. All vehicles are required to enter the main driveway and circulate counterclockwise along two aisles in front of the school. School buses are given curbside access for loading and unloading. Private vehicles use the second drive aisle for dropping off students where they are met by campus staff and escorted across the bus aisle to the front doors.

Private vehicles yield to buses when exiting. The majority of exiting vehicles (both buses and cars) turn right onto Carroll Avenue, although outbound left turns are permitted. A MCPS trained crossing guard is stationed at the crosswalk located on Carroll Avenue directly north and east of the ingress driveway. The guard controls both pedestrian and vehicular access to the campus. A significant number of students walk to and from school, often in the company of parents or older siblings. Afternoon dismissal does not allow private vehicles on campus. The majority of students depart on foot, after having been met by a parent or family member identified by school staff.

Current parking restrictions along Carroll Avenue prohibit on street parking between 8:30 AM and 4:00 PM in front of the school. On several occasions staff observed private vehicles parked illegally while awaiting the afternoon dismissal. In addition, anecdotal comments by school staff indicate a lack of parking enforcement.

Proposed Changes to On-Site Circulation and Access

MCPS proposes to create two separate loading/unloading areas in front of the school: one for bus access and one for private vehicles. Staff parking will be allowed within both areas, although the number and location of parking spaces are subordinate to providing vehicular access. Each area will have full service driveways along Carroll Avenue, allowing for entering buses on the northernmost section of campus and directing private vehicles to the parent only drop off area located on the southern portion of campus. Staff will be encouraged to arrive before the start of classes to minimize the conflict between arriving school buses, parents and staff.

The current location for pedestrians crossing Carroll Avenue will remain unchanged. The proposed circulation plan will use the school crossing guard to control inbound and outbound movements of school buses onto Carroll Avenue. Private vehicle access (parents and most staff vehicles) will be diverted to the adjacent parking area. The MCPS proposal is shown conceptually in Exhibit 2.

The proposed parking lot design is a substantial departure from the current operations. Staff opinion is that, while separation of the two principal vehicle populations (school buses and private cars) is a desirable policy objective, the physical constraints of the site are problematic. The staff recommendations include several changes to the proposed design that are summarized in Exhibit 3 and described in greater detail below.

Access and Circulation

During on-site visits, staff observed queues of private vehicles of up to twelve cars during the morning drop off period.¹ The proposed parent drop off area is shorter in length than the current one (140 feet compared with 210 feet). During times of peak traffic, the revised parent drop off area may accommodate too few cars, causing the queue to 'spill back' onto Carroll Avenue, disrupting through traffic. In addition, there will likely be a need for additional staff to help keep the parent drop off orderly as the entering vehicles will no longer use the entrance

¹ No such vehicular queues were observed during the afternoon pick up, as private vehicles are not allowed on campus and the majority of students leave campus on foot.

driveway monitored by the crossing guard. Lastly, the internal circulation paths for entering and exiting vehicles within the staff parking lot may complicate parent drop off maneuvers unless school personnel can arrive and park before student arrivals commence.

Transportation Planning staff considers the proposed changes a complication to the traffic operations along Carroll Avenue, and especially to the duties of the crossing guard with respect to controlling vehicular traffic. The proposed design with two, full-movement, driveways results in more conflict points (although the number of turning vehicles onto and from Carroll Avenue will not increase). By creating two distinct full service driveways (ingress and egress) within close proximity of each other (240 feet), the potential for the operation of one driveway to affect the other is greater than the current configuration of one entrance driveway and one exit driveway were maintained. This concern is augmented by the lack of supplemental traffic controls proposed for the parent and staff access driveway. **Staff recommends prohibiting left turns from the parent/staff access driveway during morning drop-off periods to reduce the potential for conflict.**

Staff observed considerable pedestrian activity concentrated at the northernmost corner of the entrance driveway (near the crossing guard station), so additional sidewalk width and maneuvering space would be beneficial. **Staff recommends widening the sidewalk/staging area at this location** to improve pedestrian access, including widening up to 50 feet of the sidewalk along the west side of Carroll Avenue north of the school's northern driveway.

Oakview Bus Operations

The site is also designed to accommodate a transfer bus loading point for older students who travel on a daily basis to Oakview Elementary School. The design submitted by MCPS included a loading area in the southeast corner of the campus with an angled crosswalk connection across the parent/staff access driveway throat. The design was intended to potentially accommodate bus loading from the parent/staff driveway itself. MCPS has subsequently confirmed that the Oakview Elementary School transfer bus will use the Carroll Avenue curbside for loading and unloading. Staff recommends three design changes related to the Oakview Elementary School bus loading/unloading area:

- Relocate the loading/unloading area to the north side of the parent/staff driveway.
- Remove the angled driveway crosswalk; it would not be needed after relocation of the Oakview bus loading area, and the presence of two crosswalks less than 100 feet apart will be confusing, particularly within the parent drop off area.
- Extend the sidewalk abutting the parent drop off area to connect with the sidewalk along Carroll Avenue.

Operational Concerns

The proposed changes will require all current school users to become informed about new circulation patterns and adjust their behavior accordingly. Staff recommends that MCPS develop an informational brochure (with a diagram) for distribution to parents, staff, bus drivers, and traffic safety personnel in order to ease the transition. After the transition occurs, staff recommends that MCPS and DPWT review the operations to determine whether or not additional traffic control personnel (whether MCPS or Montgomery County Police) are warranted.

Staff also noted several concerns related to traffic operations that should be addressed through additional MCPS, DPWT, and Montgomery County Police coordination: Staff recommends a review of existing parking restrictions and the posted school zone reduced speed limits along Carroll Avenue to assist students' safe access to the campus. Finally, staff observed that the flashing beacons associated with the posted school speed zone along Carroll Avenue appear to be inoperable; these should be repaired and maintained.

Summary

During discussions with personnel from MCPS (including school administrators), staff found that most parties viewed the proposal as an improvement upon current conditions. Transportation Planning staff is of the opinion a more efficient parking lot layout with less complicated traffic circulation patterns could be implemented. The complex system proposed by MCPS is required to meet the policy objective of separating travel modes to the degree that both parent and bus loading areas have a direct sidewalk connection to the school building. In support of this proposal to achieve that policy objective, staff has made the recommendations described above.

Local Area Transportation Review

Staff determined no need for a traffic study to meet Local Area Transportation Review requirements, as the proposed school improvements are not expected to increase peak hour trips at the site. The total number of students is to remain the same (currently 400 enrolled with facilities designed to accommodate 550 students). Staff opinion holds that the proposed design option will substantially alter the traffic operations on-site, however, the overall number of vehicle trips to and from the site should remain unchanged. A traffic study would be requested if future expansion and/or renovation plans increase student enrollment or the number of anticipated peak hour trips.

Master Plan Roadways and Bikeways

Carroll Avenue is classified as a primary residential street according to the East Silver Spring Master Plan. Carroll Avenue is shown as an important pedestrian and bicycle connection across East Silver Spring. Montgomery County offers transit service (Ride-On #15) along Carroll Avenue.

SAJ:gw

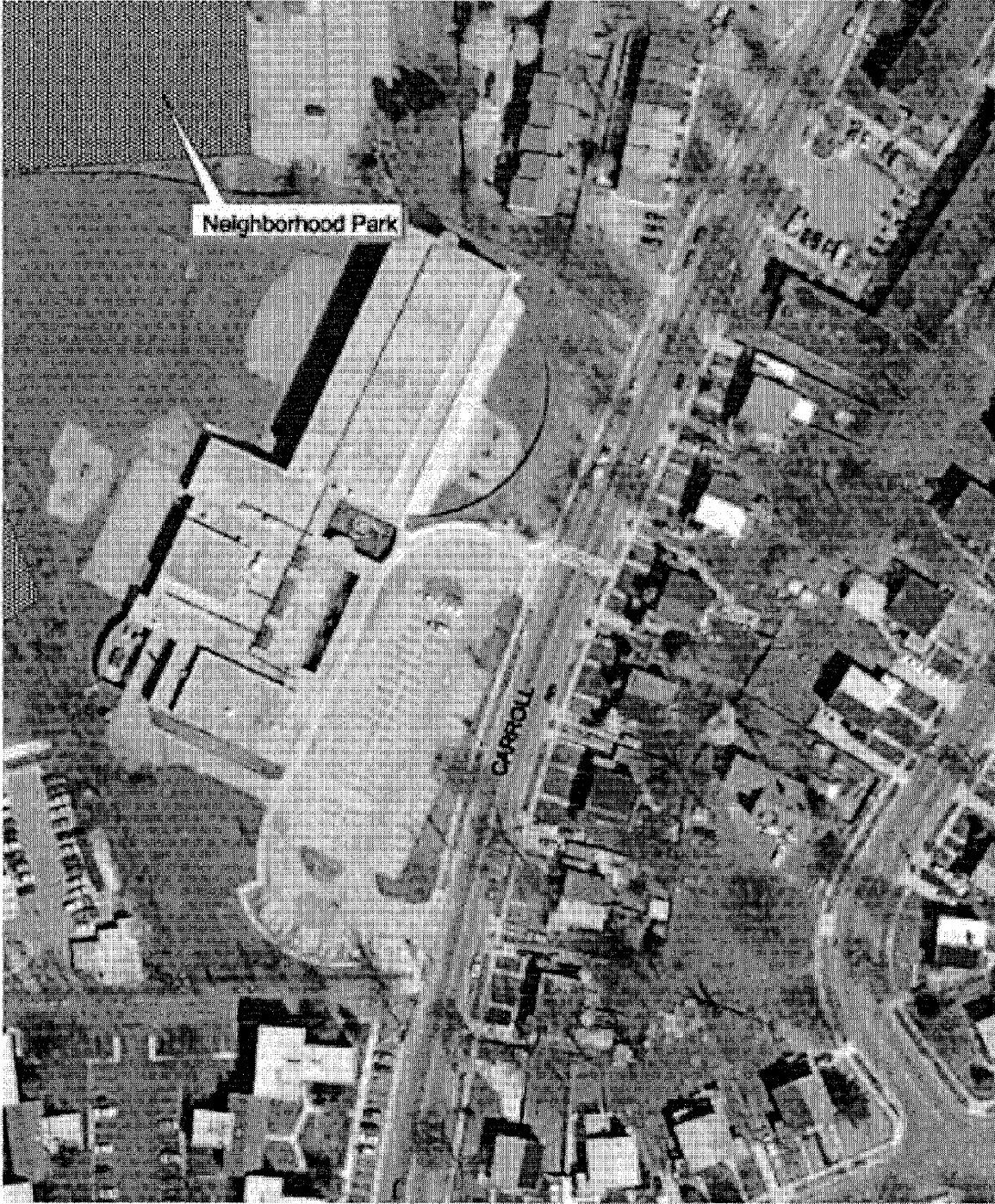
Attachments

cc: Jane Litchko, Principal, New Hampshire Estates Elementary School
Jacquelyn Davidson, Assistant. Principal, New Hampshire Estates Elementary School
Ray Trout, MCPS

mmo to abernathy re New Hampshire Estate ES

Exhibit 1: Current conditions

New Hampshire Estates Elementary School

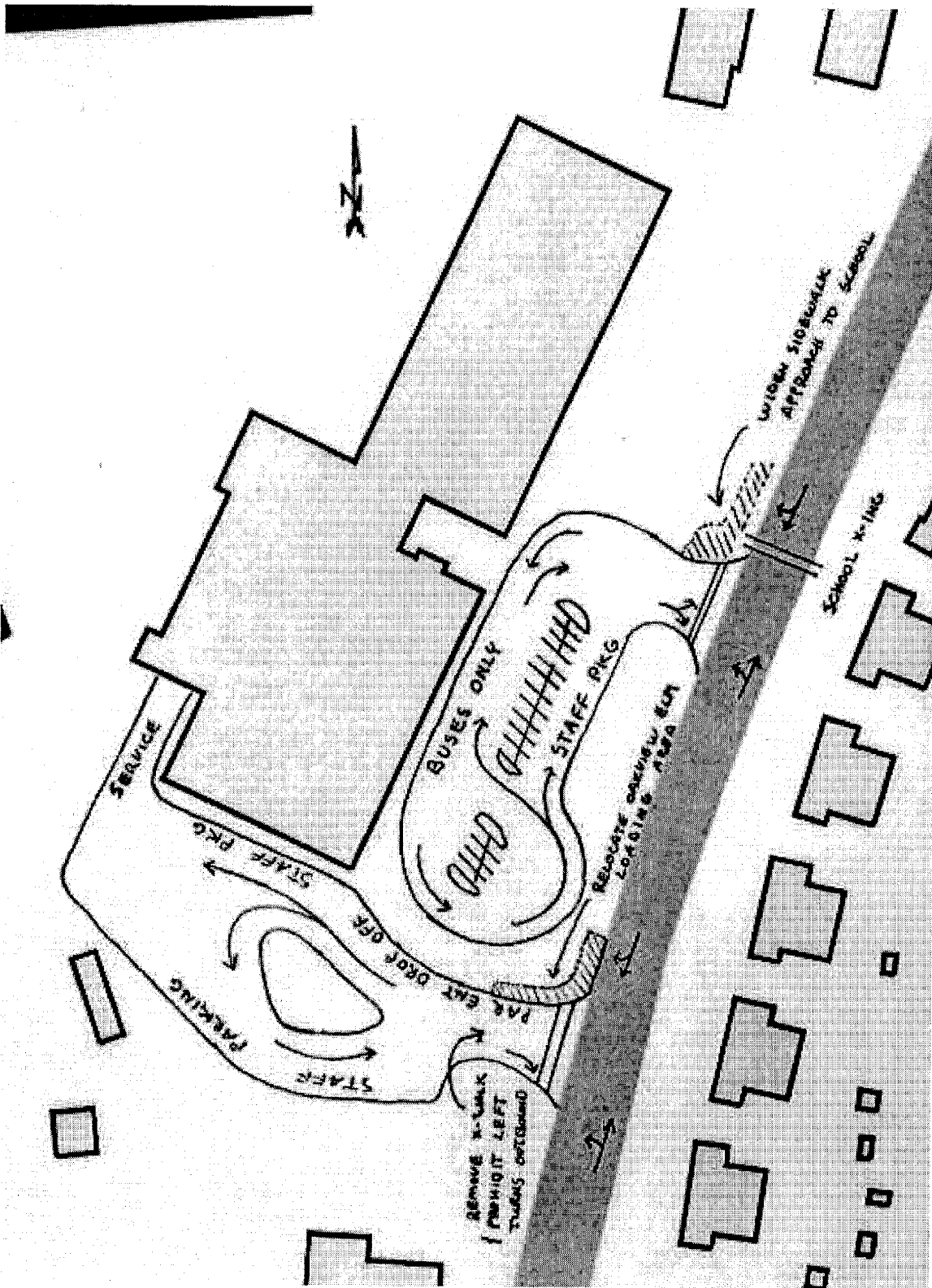


The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Metropolitan Planning Department of Parks and Planning
Administration (Planning Unit)
3737 George Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
301.496.6226 voice | 301.496.1327 fax | info@mnppc.org

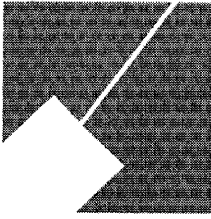
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Exhibit 3: MCPS proposal with staff comments



M-NCPPC



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

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 22, 2006

TO: Malaika Abernathy, Community Based Planning Division

VIA: Mary Dolan, Countywide Planning Division, Environmental  For MD

FROM: Marion Clark, Countywide Planning Division, Environmental 

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. MR-06102-MCPS-1
Weller Road Elementary School

Environmental Planning staff recommends **approval** of this mandatory referral.

Forest Conservation

A Forest Conservation Plan exemption was issued because this is a modification of an existing developed property with no more than a total of 5000 square feet of forest cleared; no forest clearing within a stream buffer or on property subject to Special Protection Area Water Quality Plan requirements; and it does not require a new subdivision plan. The plan is not subject to the requirements for a Tree Save Plan.

Environmental Guidelines

There are no streams, steep slopes, wetlands, erodible soils, or any other environmental encumbrances on this highly urban, pre-developed site.

Stormwater Management

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 Lower Mainstem of the Northwest Branch subwatershed.

Green Building Design

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) submitted a strategic plan entitled *Green Schools Focus* to the County Council, as required by the County Environmental Policy. MCPS pledged in the strategic plan, to "improve system design through introducing the 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 of this project.