

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

April 22, 2005

**MEMORANDUM—MANDATORY REFERRAL**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

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

Khalid Afzal, Team Leader *KA*  
Georgia Avenue Planning Team  
Community-Based Planning Division

**FROM:** Frederick Vernon Boyd, Community Planner (301/495-4654) *FVB*  
Georgia Avenue Planning Team  
Community-Based Planning Division

**SUBJECT:** Mandatory Referral 05501-MCPS-1: Montgomery County Public Schools  
Infants and Toddlers Program Modular Facility, Rosa Parks Middle School  
19200 Olney Mill Road, RE-1 Zone, Olney

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval to transmit the following comments:

1. Consider designing and building a permanent structure for this program at Rosa Parks Middle School.
2. Enhance existing landscaping along the property line by planting additional evergreen trees or shrubs that will shield the new structure from adjoining properties.

**PROJECT SUMMARY**

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) proposes to construct a modular building for long-term use by its Infants and Toddlers Program at Rosa Parks Middle School in Olney. The building will offer more than 7,000 square feet of office, classroom and support space for the Infants and Toddlers Program, an interagency provider of assistance to parents of children with developmental delays. The proposed new facility would be one of four serving Montgomery County.

## **THE SITE**

Rosa Parks Middle School is located at 19200 Olney Mill Road, in the Olney Mill community. It is north and west of the Olney town center and is adjacent to Reddy Branch Stream Valley Park. The 24-acre site houses the middle school, which totals about 130,000 square feet, and its athletic fields, which include tennis and basketball courts directly behind the school, and softball and soccer fields to the west of the school. Attachment 1 shows the site and its vicinity.

While the school property itself is in the RE-1 Zone, the immediately adjacent portion of the Olney Mill neighborhood is in the R-200 Zone. There are single-family detached houses to the southwest, southeast and northeast of the site. Reddy Branch Stream Valley Park is to the northwest. The park is largely undeveloped.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Montgomery County Public Schools, the county's Department of Health and Human Services and private agencies jointly administer and operate the Infants and Toddlers Program. The program focuses on early intervention to provide services ranging from family counseling and health services to occupational, physical or speech/language therapy to pre-school aged children and their parents. About 1,700 families are currently part of the program, which is housed at four locations—Rocky Hill Middle School in Clarksburg, the Northlake Center in Aspen Hill, Sligo Middle School in Silver Spring and the Children's Resource Center in Rockville. The MCPS plans to move the upcounty center from Rocky Hill to Neelsville Middle School in Germantown and is proposing the Rosa Parks facility to replace the Northlake Center facility.

To house the program, MCPS is proposing a single-story building created by combining 10 prefabricated modular units of the type used for portable classrooms. (Attachment 2 and Attachment 3 show the school site and the new facility's location.) The building will total 7,129 square feet of office, classroom and support space, which will be used by the teachers, therapists, social workers and nurses who comprise the Infants and Toddlers Program staff. Some therapy and counseling sessions will occur at the Rosa Parks facility; Infants and Toddlers staff will visit other clients in their homes.

About 25 full-time and 20 part-time staff will work at the Rosa Parks facility. It will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. A number of staff members will work from their homes, and come to the Infants and Toddlers building only for meetings or to prepare paperwork. The MCPS expects no more than eight staffers to arrive at or leave the facility during peak hours. Once a week, an afternoon staff meeting will occur, requiring all staffers' presence. Small group sessions for clients will occur on weekday mornings, and a twice-weekly class for about five children is scheduled as well.

MCPS has decided to construct the modular facility over a portion of one of the school's two designated parking areas, which is located southwest of the school's main building and adjacent to homes on Charley Forest Street. The Infants and Toddlers building will not be connected to the middle school, and will be located about 120 feet from the school building. The school system plans to use a masonry foundation to give the

building a more permanent appearance and to use brick in the foundation wall that matches that used for the existing school and an accent brick that compliments accents on the existing building. It is also proposing a color for the building that compliments the color of the existing school.

The facility's location will reduce the amount of parking at the school from 177 spaces to 154. This number will serve the school's approximately 90 teachers and administrators as well as the staffers affiliated with the Infants and Toddlers Program. No changes to the school's existing circulation systems are proposed.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Master Plan**

The Olney Master Plan does not make specific recommendations for the school site. It recommends residential development for the portion of Olney in which the school is located. Schools and related educational activities like the Infants and Toddlers Program are consistent with the Plan's recommendations.

### **Development Standards for the Zone**

The Zoning Ordinance specifies development standards for accessory buildings on lots in the RE-1 Zone. Accessory buildings must be 80 feet from the street line; 10 feet from a rear lot line and 15 feet from a side lot line. The proposed building is located about 210 feet from Olney Mill Road; about 520 feet from the rear lot line; and approximately 30 feet from the side lot line. The proposed building meets the relevant development standards for the zone.

### **Environment**

Forest Conservation – This project qualifies for an exemption to the Forest Conservation Law because it is a modification of an existing developed property. No forest will be cleared as part of the project, and it does not require subdivision.

Stormwater Management – The project can be accommodated by the existing stormwater management systems.

### **Transportation**

Transportation Planning staff has reviewed the Infants and Toddlers Program proposal and recommends its approval, concluding that it will have no significant impact on the local transportation network. The unit's memorandum is included as Attachment 4.

Transportation Planning staff calculated the trip generation rate for general office space, and assumed that the Infants and Toddlers Program facility would generate its trips similarly. Staff determined that an office of the size and staffing of the MCPS program would generate 55 or fewer peak hour trips and determined further that the intersections that would be considered in any traffic study for the Rosa Parks site could accommodate those trips. The intersections—Olney Mill Road and Olney-Laytonsville Road (MD 108), and Georgia Avenue (MD 97) and Gold Mine Road—have critical lane volumes of fewer than 1,000, according to recent calculations. The congestion standard

for the Olney Policy Area is 1,475. Transportation Planning concluded that local intersections could accommodate trips generated by the Infants and Toddlers Program with no adverse impact on the local road network.

Transportation Planning staff determined that a maximum of 114 spaces would accommodate the school and the proposed facility. The 154 spaces that will remain following construction of the Infants and Toddlers facility are adequate to accommodate existing and proposed activities.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Neighbors, civic representatives and other interested citizens had an opportunity to review the proposal at a public meeting organized by MCPS in January 2005. No issues arose at that meeting. Local civic associations were notified of this Mandatory Referral hearing.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

In reviewing the Infants and Toddlers Program proposal for Rosa Parks, staff raised with MCPS and its design consultants several concerns about the design and location of the proposed facility. These concerns centered on MCPS' decision to use modular construction for a long-term structure and its decision to locate the building away from the main school building. MCPS project staff indicated that several sites on the Rosa Parks campus had been evaluated, but that alternate sites would have required eliminating existing courts or locating the building too close to an existing house. The proposed location, MCPS pointed out, is shielded from adjoining houses by mature trees, does not have any impact on existing recreational facilities and can be located without significant loss of available parking for school administrators, teachers and staff.

The MCPS project staff also defended the decision to locate the Infants and Toddlers Program facility away from the school itself, pointing out that the program, while educational in nature, is distinctly different from a middle school, and should not use space inside the school itself. The design of Rosa Parks can accommodate future expansion, but MCPS staff felt strongly that areas designated for potential middle school use should not be used for separate educational programs. As noted earlier in this staff report, MCPS plans to add design features and details that it believes will enable the new building to "look" like the existing school.

Finally, MCPS project staff explained that, while modular construction had been chosen for the proposed Infants and Toddlers Program facility, the program should be considered long-term. MCPS staff stated that the program would be housed at Rosa Parks for an extended period, possibly as long as 10 years, in the proposed building, and indicated that the program would have to leave its current home at the Northlake Center this summer. The need to maintain continuity, in their view, necessitated use of a modular facility.

Long-term use of a modular building continues to concern Department of Park and Planning staff. Such buildings are widely perceived to be temporary solutions to overcrowding at individual schools. Staff acknowledges MCPS efforts to add details designed to make the building look like the existing school, but believes that a truly permanent structure, built of materials that are in harmony with the existing school building and located in a way that creates an integrated appearance for the two facilities is the most appropriate solution for the program. In any event, additional evergreen plantings are warranted to further shield adjacent residences from the new building.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed facility is consistent with the Olney Master Plan, meets the development standards for the applicable zone, adheres to environmental standards and creates no significant traffic impacts. Department of Park and Planning staff acknowledges the efforts of MCPS to design a modular facility with details designed to be similar to those on the existing structure. Department staff also acknowledges the need to house the Infants and Toddlers Program quickly. Staff nonetheless believes that long-term programs should have permanent homes, and recommends that MCPS design a permanent home for the program that uses materials similar to those used in building Rosa Parks Middle School.

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### **Attachments**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Plan
3. Site Plan Detail
4. Transportation Planning Memo