MCPB
Item # 7
11/21/02

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

November 15, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Montgomery County Planning Board
VIA:	John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division JAC
FROM:	Kristin O'Connor for the Department of Park and Planning KO (301) 495-2172
REVIEW TYPE:	Mandatory Referral
APPLYING FOR:	Modernization of Somerset Elementary School
APPLICANT:	Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
CASE NUMBER:	02205-MCPS-1
REVIEW BASIS:	Article 28, Section 7-112 of the Annotated Code of Maryland
ZONE:	R-60
LOCATION:	5811 Warwick Place, Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815
MASTER PLAN:	1990 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan
FILING DATE:	October 11, 2002
PLANNING BOARD REVIEW:	November 21, 2002

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

1. A final Tree Save Plan must be approved by the M-NCPPC prior to approval of the sediment and erosion control plan for any clearing, grading or land disturbance of the site;
2. A Storm Water Management Plan approved by the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (MCDPS) must be submitted to the M-NCPPC prior to issuance of sediment and erosion control permit;
3. Provide additional protection for trees adjacent to the staff parking lot by shifting three (3) parking spaces and providing porous paving in the southeast portion of the parking lot; and
4. Provide cut-off fixtures at the northeast corner of the site to minimize the light that trespasses into the side and rear yard of adjacent neighbors.

MCPS accepted the comments as stated above in a meeting held prior to the Planning Board hearing.

THE PROPOSAL

Somerset Elementary School is in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School cluster. The original Somerset Elementary School was constructed in 1928. Located on a 3.76-acre site including playing fields on its western edge, the school has gone through several modifications over the years. After three additions--1949, 1952, and 1958--the original 1928 construction was demolished in 1972. The existing Somerset Elementary School is primarily a two-story masonry building. The current enrollment is 477 students in Kindergarten through Grade 5, with 53 staff. Enrollment is projected to be 500 by the year 2006.

Site size and other characteristics have largely driven the design of the proposed new school building. The existing building will be totally demolished and removed to make way for a new building with the capacity for 551 students. The proposed new building is approximately 78,000 square feet gross area (including the proposed gymnasium alternative), designed in three stories to minimize the footprint of the building on the site. The new facility will accommodate a new media center; computer instruction classroom; music classroom; art classroom; new special education classroom and resource areas; and a new multi-purpose room. Future construction of a gymnasium is designed to occur at the north end of the building. Future expansion of the building (if required) would occur in a dormered fourth story contained within the roof volume of the proposed building – no additional site area would be used for the expansion.

The large open northeast area of the site is maintained for playing fields, though all outside recreation areas are smaller than those normally required or provided at Montgomery County elementary schools. A new parking area on the southeast portion of the site, accessed from Deal Place, would provide 38 spaces for staff parking. An additional 5-space parking area would be located at the northwest corner of the site. Buses and emergency vehicles traverse a new one-way driveway connecting the two existing site entrances off Warwick Place. The school kitchen and the school trash room are serviced from the east parking area.

MCPS, the Somerset Design Advisory Committee, and the architects have sought to sensitively utilize every portion of the site. A stepped amphitheatre leads from the multi-purpose room to the south park-like area. That area, at an elevation somewhat lower than the rest of the site, is reachable by a proposed ADA-compliant accessible route. A landscaped "children's story area" is proposed among the trees in the area between the bus driveway and Warwick Place. Brick walls screen the staff parking area from the south neighbors, and step down further southward to contain elevated planting beds. New trees and under story plantings will be provided to screen the parking areas from neighbors. Great effort has been made to preserve healthy trees throughout the site. The building, paving, ramps, steps, and site walls have been shaped in response to many existing tree locations.

In the process of meeting with school faculty (principal and staff), and neighborhood representatives, MCPS agreed to address the following site goals and objectives: minimize visual impact of the expanded school on the neighboring residential

properties, improve the pedestrian and vehicle access to the school, provide a bus drop-off and pick-up area, and provide a covered outdoor area for bus loading.

In addition, the following building objectives were also addressed:

- Provide clear and identifiable entrance.
- The building interior will be well lit and airy.
- The administrative suite shall be located at the front of the building to insure administrative control of building access, and in view of the bus loop and front of school.
- The Media Center shall be centrally and prominently located.
- Reading and Language Arts shall be located in close proximity to the Media Center.
- Maximize size of Music Room, with an adjacency to the Multi-purpose Room.
- All primary and Kindergarten classrooms shall be located on floors with direct access to the exterior.
- All Kindergarten classrooms shall be located with a direct walkout to exterior play areas and a covered line-up area.
- Provide clear separation of quiet functions (i.e.; Media Center, Computer Room, and Reading) from noisy functions (i.e., Multi-purpose Room, Music Room, and Gymnasium).
- Provide a parent resource room adjacent to the main entry.
- Provide alcoves along the interior corridors with risers or benches for pulling out students for one-on-one instruction.
- Provide ADA compliant access throughout the building.
- Integrate Special Education classes and resources rooms into the body of other classroom groupings.

THE SITE

The school site (3.76 acres) is situated in the town of Somerset. The school is bounded by Warwick Place to the west, Deal Place to the east, and residential properties to the north and south. The existing property has 26 delineated parking spaces in a parking lot at the northwest corner of the site. Approximately 14 cars can be parked on a driveway accessed from Warwick Place at the south end of the site. The current bus loop, contiguous with the parking lot, does not adequately accommodate the four (4) buses that service the school.

The site area is less than required for an elementary school (the Somerset site is the third smallest school site in Montgomery County). The site is significantly smaller than model sites described in the Education Specifications. Existing topography varies significantly over the extent of the site. Furthermore, the partially wooded nature of the site, the location of a small community play park at the southwest portion of the site, and the close proximity to the site of many old homes generates conflicting neighborhood concerns to be address by the proposed design.

Storm Water Management

Storm water will be collected from area inlets and roof drains. The water will be piped to underground storm water quality control and quantity control facilities that will be located under the new pavement in the parking area.

Utilities

Existing public utilities are readily available to the site. Water and sewer mains of adequate size are located in Warwick Place. New water and sewer services will be provided from existing mains. Existing electric and telephone utilities are located on the school side of Warwick Place.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Neighborhood Context

The community surrounding Somerset Elementary School is made up of older single-family detached homes in an R-60 zone. 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.

Community Involvement

The Somerset Elementary School project has evolved through feasibility study and schematic design with the active participation of advisory committees composed of school staff, parents, and neighbors. In addition to meetings with advisory committee members, four community meetings were held during schematic design. At that time, the building and site improvements were presented and discussed at various stages of development.

During the design process, the building evolved to address community concerns, as well as applicable County codes, standards, and ordinances. The mechanical equipment yard, north of the Media Center wing, is sunken 12 feet below grade, and is surrounded by a wall that rises 4 feet above grade. The mechanical equipment yard will be acoustically lined, and the equipment there selected and acoustically shrouded to insure noise is always at least five (5) decibels less than that allowed by local noise ordinances, at all times of the day and night. A new storm management system will be installed during construction, including an extensive filtering system under the parking lot.

Somerset 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 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, nearly all year round. Additionally, special events, evening school activities, and other community, recreational, sports and entertainment events will occur at various times during evening

and weekend hours. Construction would begin in July of 2003 and continue through 2004, to allow for the school to open for operation in January of 2005.

Community Notification

The Somerset Civic Association, Drummond Civic Association, Chevy Chase West Neighborhood Association, and Citizens' Coordinating Committee for Friendship Heights were notified of the November 21, 2002 hearing. MCPS staff held several meetings with the faculty, the parents, and the residents of the community in the summer of 2001 through the fall of 2002.

ANALYSIS

Master Plan

The 1990 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan did not recommend changes to the land uses, the roads, or the zones of the eastern or southern portions of Bethesda-Chevy Chase.

Development Standards for the R-60 Zone

	Permitted	Proposed
Setbacks		
Front	25 feet	35 feet
Side	8/18 feet	33 feet
Rear	20 feet	210 feet
Height Limits	35 feet[1]	35 feet
Coverage	35 % max	25%

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

TRANSPORTATION

A memorandum from Transportation Planning is attached. Evaluating the material received regarding the number of students and faculty projected, staff concluded that the modernization would add only 34 more vehicle trips during the peak hour of the weekday morning peak period. Staff believes that the proposed project satisfies the requirements of their Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) study.

[1] Maximum height proposed exclusive of penthouse: 26 feet

General traffic circulation around the site will be substantially improved by creating a separate bus access and drop-off area on Warwick Place. In addition, the new faculty parking area (including new driveway off Deal Place) will provide staff parking in two (2) areas, including handicapped parking spaces.

Access and Circulation

Participants at several community meetings reached a consensus that queuing for drop-off and pick-up of students should remain on Warwick Place and that the proposed new parking lot on the east side of the campus should not be used for the future drop off and pick up of students. A queuing analysis was done to see how the traffic on Warwick Place would operate during the morning and evening school activities. The existing maximum observed queue on Warwick Place is 225 feet (eight vehicles and one bus). If the total queue length is increased proportionately to the increase in number of additional trips in the future; the queue will increase to 261 feet or 11 vehicles during the AM peak hour. The loop road proposed on the west side of the campus will contain a minimum of 6 buses. This will create more room for private automobiles to queue on Warwick Place. Staff finds that the loop road will improve the safety, efficiency, and queuing of traffic on Warwick Place, and the future traffic operation in this area will be improved. Additional parking on the east and north sides of the campus will improve the traffic operation in the area by separating faculty and visitor parking from student arrival and departure areas.

ENVIRONMENT

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 and WQP requirements; and does not require a new subdivision plan. A Tree Save Plan must be approved prior to issuance of building and sedimentation and erosion control permits (see attached Environmental Planning memorandum).

Where significant impacts occur, efforts should be made to minimize the impacts. Consideration shall be given to reducing driveway widths, reconfiguring parking and reducing grading. After disturbance has been minimized, stress reduction measures shall be identified on the plan, as recommended by the arborist. The plan shall identify demolition and construction techniques and schedules, in addition to specifying other appropriate stress reduction measures designed to minimize root destruction and to maximize root re-growth. Tree save measures shall include, but not be limited to, pre-construction watering and fertilizing, fencing, root pruning, and dead wood pruning of any trees impacted by construction activities. Where appropriate the plan should limit the use of heavy construction machinery and specify manual construction. Extraordinary measures such as grid aeration/hydration systems should be examined for specimen trees excessively affected by surrounding imperviousness.

Mitigation may be required for the removal of specimen trees if encroachment on the critical root zone is 30% or more.

Water Quality

This site is located in the Upper Mainstem subwatershed of the Little Falls watershed. The Countywide Stream Protection Strategy (CSPS) classifies the stream condition as poor and habitat condition as fair. The Upper Mainstem is categorized as a Watershed Restoration Area. Every effort should be made to protect and improve water quality in this watershed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information provided by the applicant and the analysis in this report, staff concludes that the proposed project would provide a much-needed new elementary school in line with today's standards. Staff of the MCPS attended many meetings with local residents, and they worked to resolve the environmental and community impacts of the proposed project.

Staff of the MCPS concluded that the site area is far less than often provided for an elementary school in the County. The Somerset site is the second smallest elementary school site in Montgomery County. In addition, the partially wooded nature of the site, the location of a small community playground at the southwest portion of the site and the close proximity to the site of many old homes generates conflicting neighborhood concerns.

The multi-story building and the sensitive site planning address the significant constraints of the site and neighborhood concerns. Mitigation on site for the loss of large trees through dense landscaping will help buffer existing residents from the new impacts of the expanded school, parking, and construction of storm water facilities. Saving significant trees along the school frontage and streets will help maintain neighborhood character and environmental quality.

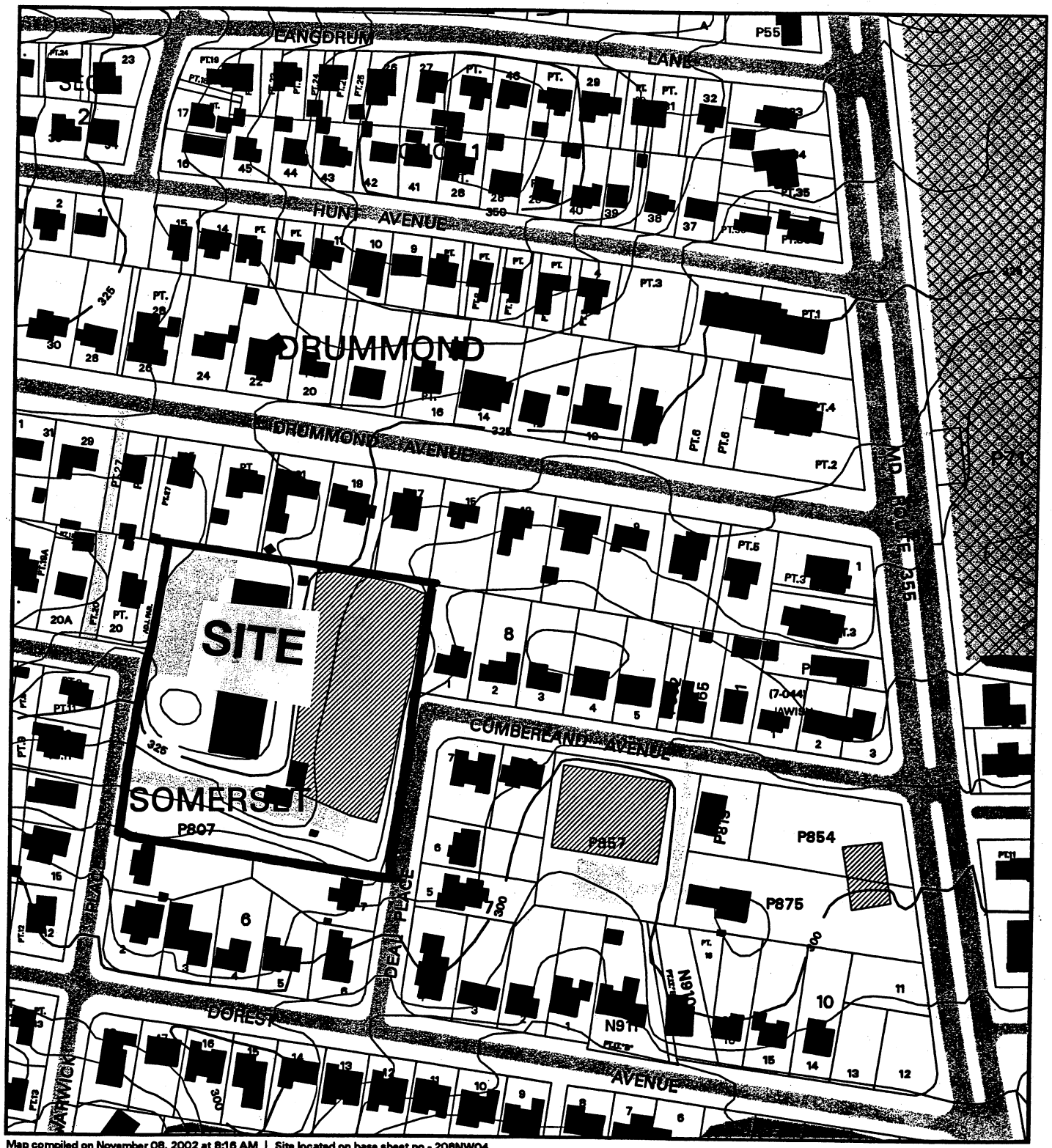
KO:ha: E:\Mandatory Referral 2002\Somerset_ES\Draft Staff Report.doc

Attachments:
A. Vicinity Map
B. Existing Site Plan
C. Proposed Site Plan
D. Proposed Floor Plans
E. Proposed Elevations
F. Memorandum from Transportation Planning
G. Memorandum from Environmental Planning

VICINITY MAP FOR

SOMERSET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A. Vicinity Map



Map compiled on November 08, 2002 at 8:16 AM | Site located on base sheet no - 208NW04

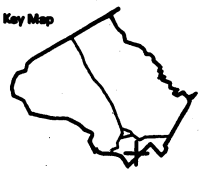
NOTICE

The planimetric, property, and topographic information shown on this map is based on copyrighted Map Products from the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning of the Maryland -National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and may not be copied or reproduced without written permission from M-NCPPC.

Property lines are compiled by adjusting the property lines to topography created from aerial photography and should not be interpreted as actual field surveys. Planimetric features were compiled from 1:14400 scale aerial photography using stereo photogrammetric methods.

This map is created from a variety of data sources, and may not reflect the most current conditions in any one location and may not be completely accurate or up to date. All map features are approximately within five feet of their true location. This map may not be the same as a map of the same area plotted at an earlier time as the data is continuously updated. Use of this map, other than for general planning purposes is not recommended. - Copyright 1998

Key Map



N

Research & Technology Center

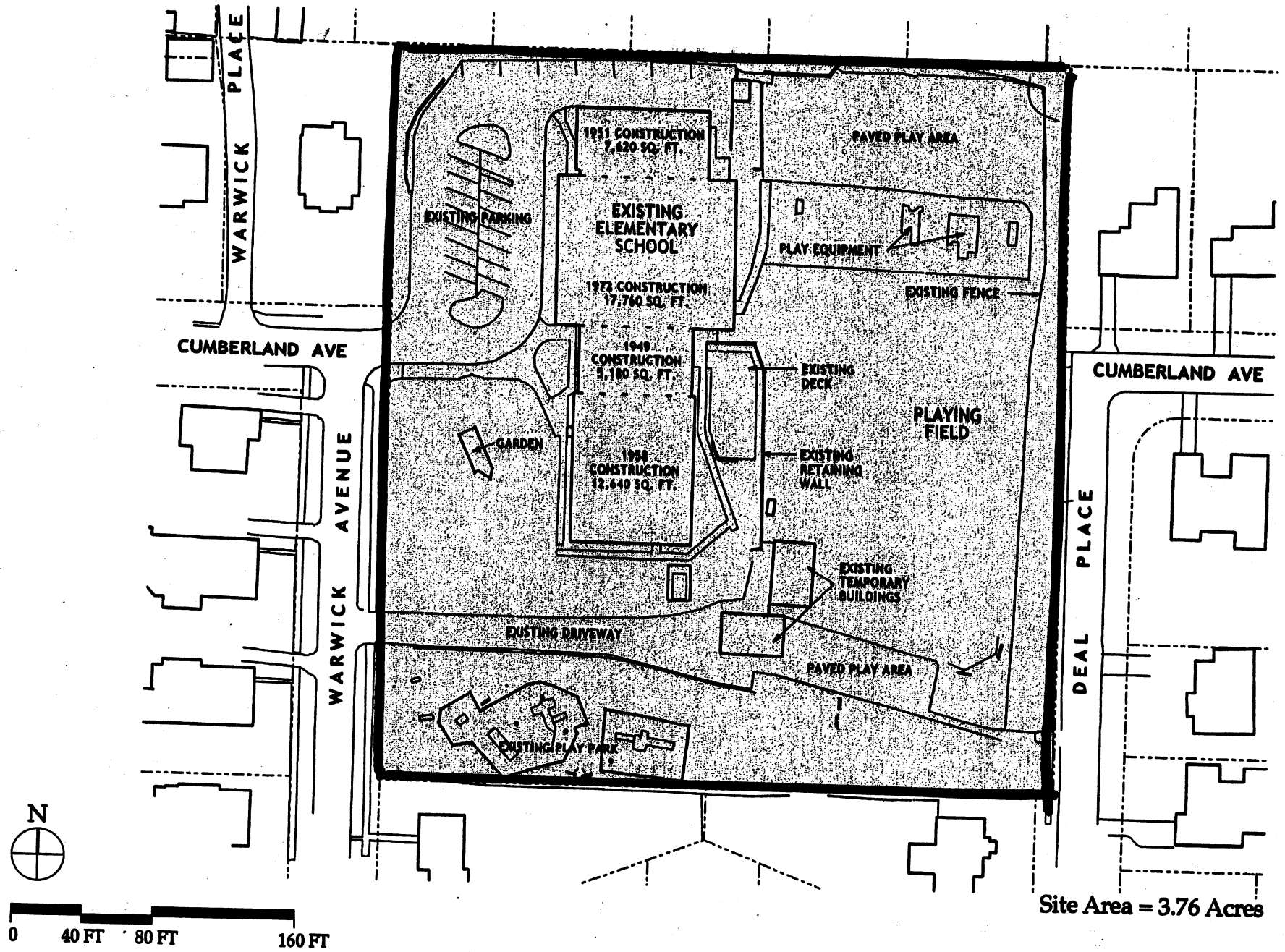
0 200

1 : 2400

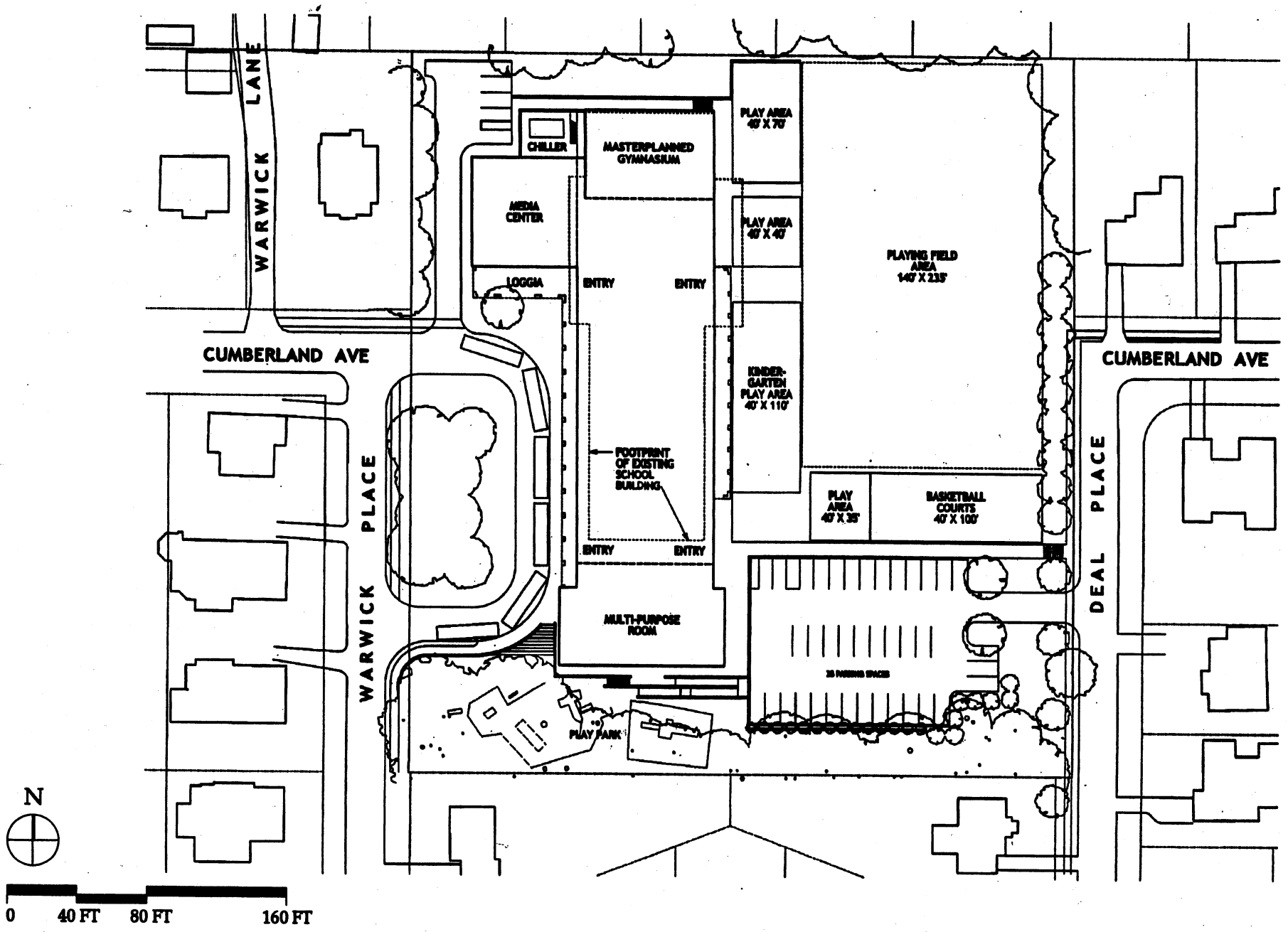
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
8787 Georgia Avenue - Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

B. Existing Site Plan

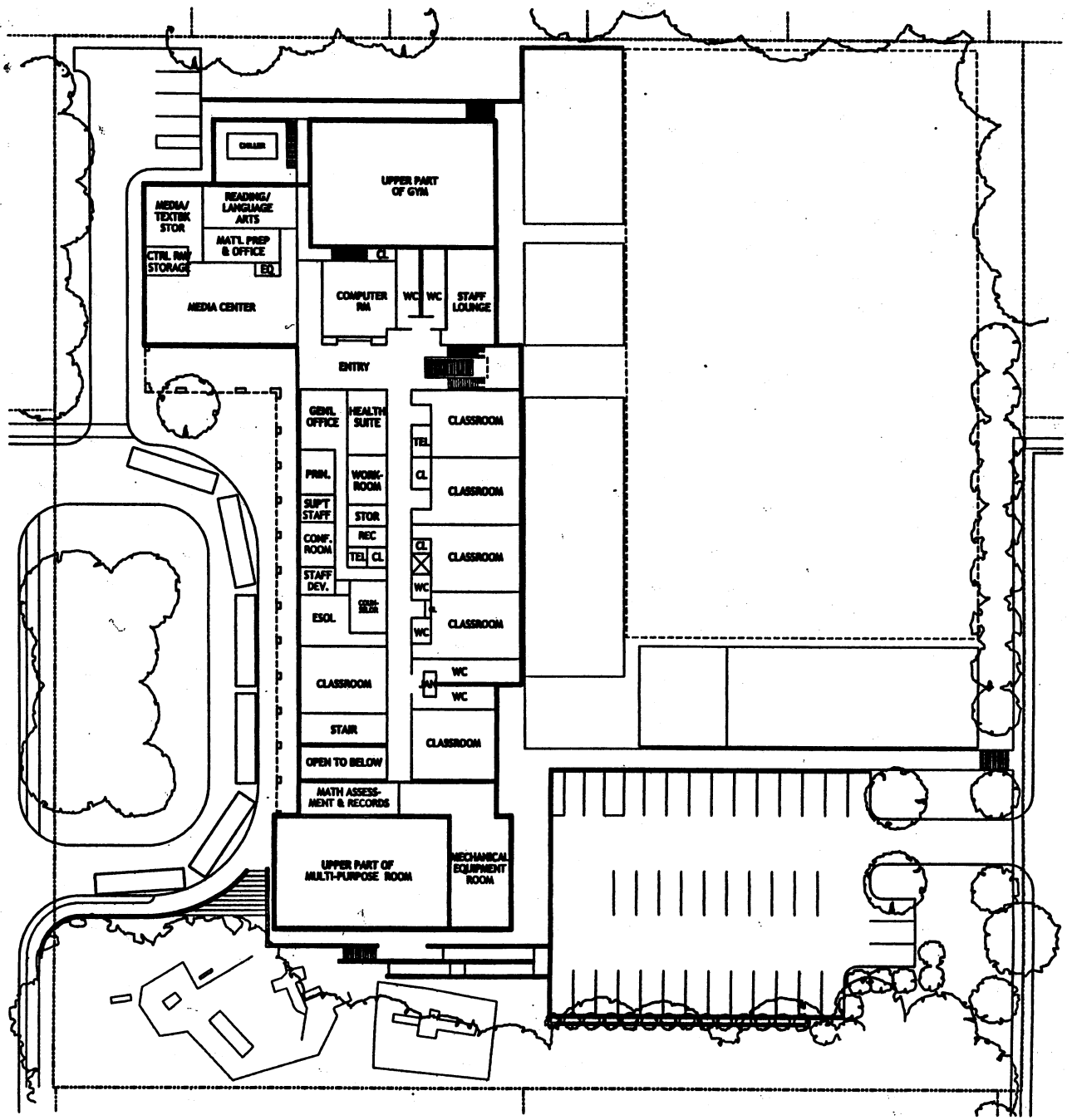
Existing Site Plan



Proposed Site Plan



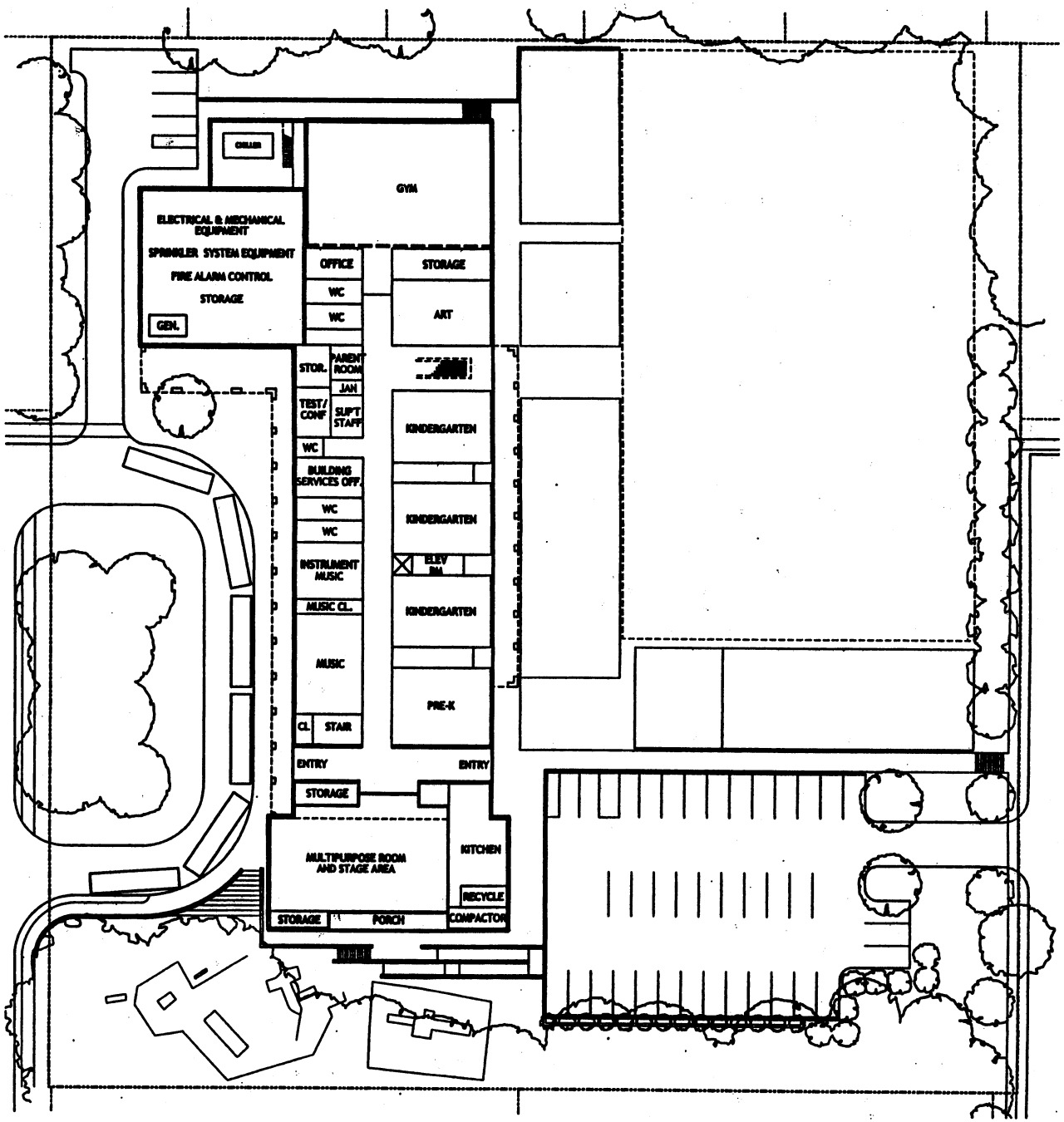
Proposed First Floor Plan



N

0 32 FT 64 FT 128 FT

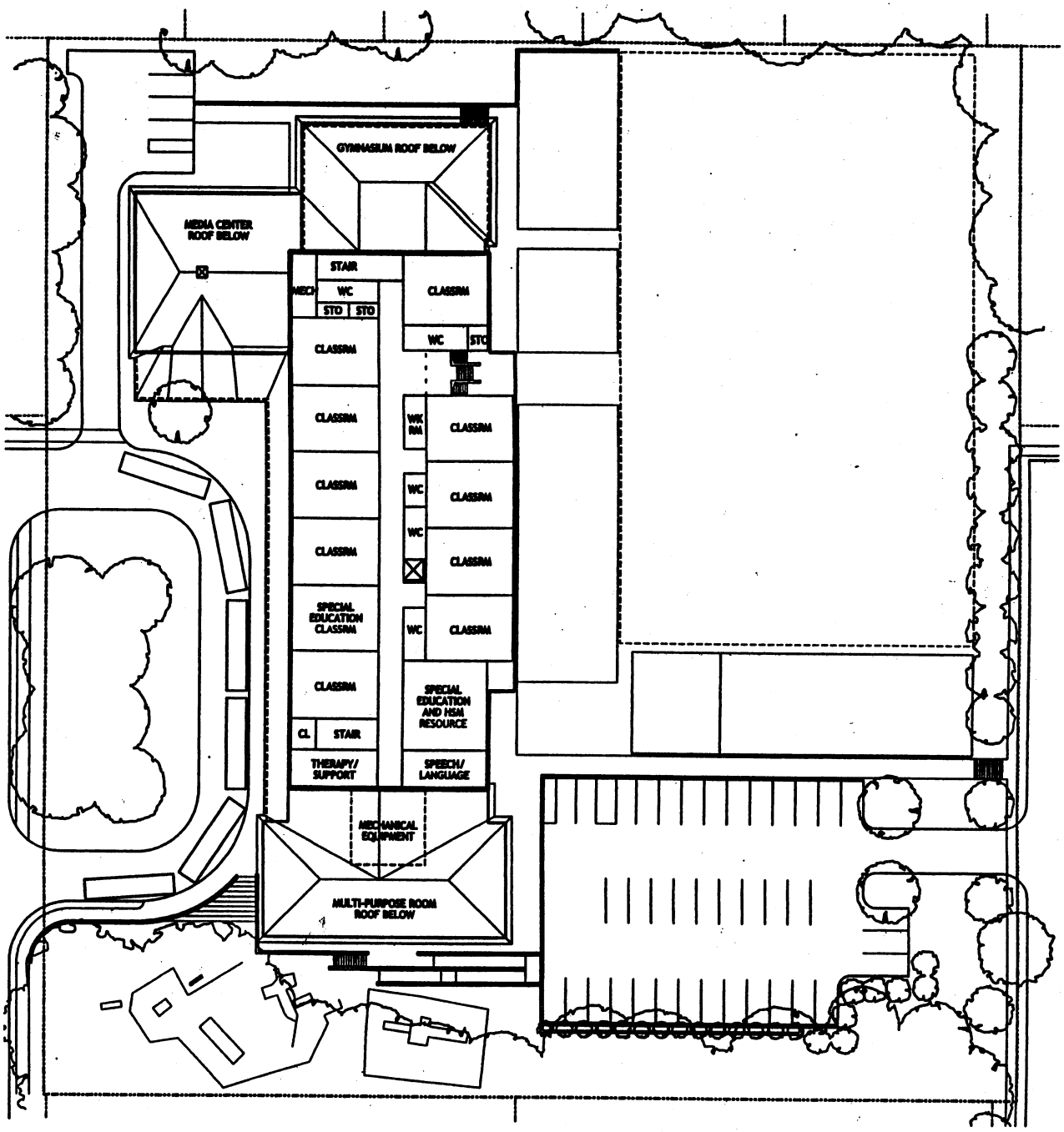
Proposed Lower Level Floor Plan



N

0 32 FT 64 FT 128 FT

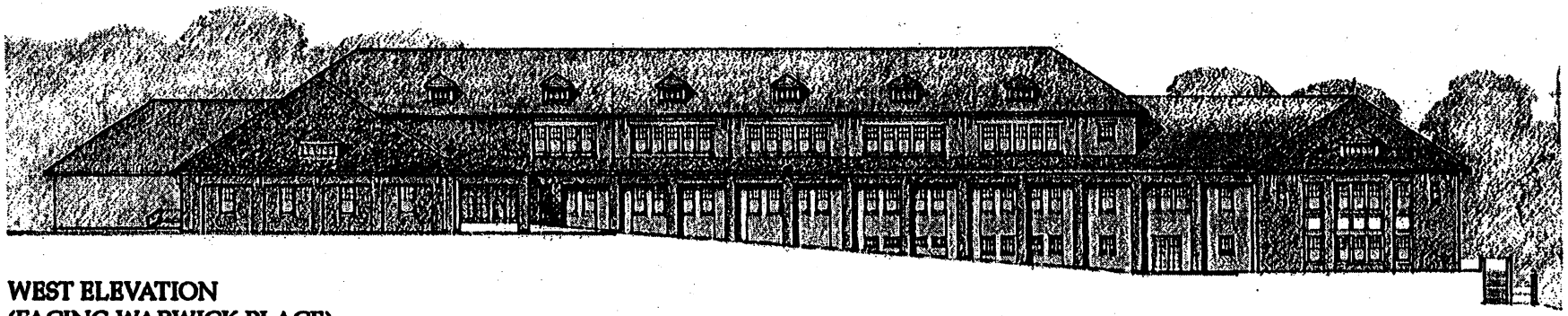
Proposed Second Floor Plan



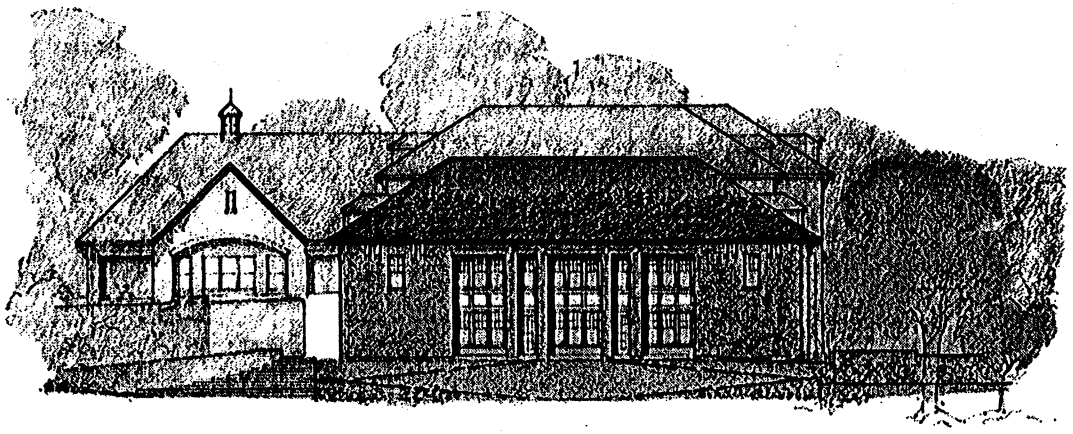
N

0 32 FT 64 FT 128 FT

Proposed Elevations



WEST ELEVATION
(FACING WARWICK PLACE)

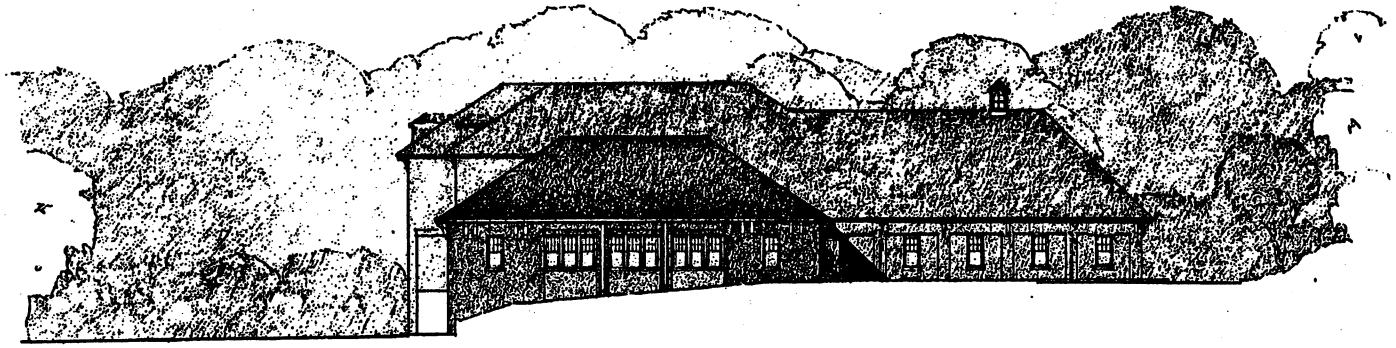


SOUTH ELEVATION

0 20 FT 40 FT 80 FT

Proposed Elevations

EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION

0 20 FT 40 FT 80 FT

F. Memorandum from Transportation Planning

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

November 8, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: Kristin O'Connor, Planner
Community-Based Planning Division

VIA: Daniel K. Hardy, Supervisor
Transportation Planning

FROM: Shahriar Etemadi, Coordinator
Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral # 02205-MCPS-1, Somerset Elementary School, 5811 Warwick Place, Chevy Chase

---

This memorandum is Transportation Planning staff's Adequate Public Facilities (APF) review of the subject application

RECOMMENDATION

Limit the enrollment to a maximum of 551 students.

Local Area Transportation Review (LATR)

The proposed development generates less than 50 trips during any peak hour of the weekday morning and evening peak periods and, therefore, it is not necessary to meet the requirements of the Local Area Transportation Review. However, a traffic study was prepared to determine the impact of this development on area roadways.

A total of 74 additional students are expected to enroll in the school after the proposed expansion at this site. The total future number of students is expected to be 551. The additional students are expected to generate 34 more vehicle trips during the peak hour of the weekday morning peak period. School dismissal occurs prior to the afternoon peak period. Therefore, the proposed expansion will not have any transportation impact on the weekday afternoon peak period. For that reason, a PM peak hour analysis was not necessary.

The total future traffic that consists of existing, background (traffic from approved but not built developments) and site trips were assigned to the key intersections in the vicinity of the school. A total of five intersections were evaluated and the results indicated that all intersections would operate within the congestion standard of 1650 Critical Lane Volume (CLV) for the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Policy Area. The following table shows the result of CLV analysis in the AM peak hour for all intersections.

Intersections	Existing	Background	Total Future
1. Warwick Place/Cumberland Ave/School Driveway	108	108	92
2. Warwick Place/Alley (Proposed Bus Route)	105	105	107
3. Warwick Place/Dorset Avenue	378	421	429
4. Deal Avenue/Parking Lot Entrance	N/A	N/A	102
5. Wisconsin Avenue/Dorset Avenue	976	1241	1250

The proposed development will not adversely impact the near-by intersections.

Access and Circulation

Participants at several community meetings reached a consensus that queuing for drop off and pick up of students should remain on Warwick Place and that the proposed new parking lot on the east side of the campus should not be used for the future drop off and pick up of students. Therefore, a queuing analysis was done to see how the traffic on Warwick Place would operate during the morning and evening school activities. The existing maximum observed queue on Warwick Place is 225 feet (eight vehicles and one bus). If the total queue length is increased proportionately to the increase in number of additional trips in the future; the queue will increase to 261 feet or 11 vehicles during the AM peak hour. The loop road proposed on the west side of the campus will contain a minimum of 6 buses. This will create more room for private automobiles to queue on Warwick Place. Staff finds that the loop road will improve the safety, efficiency and queuing of traffic on Warwick Place and, therefore, the future traffic operation in this area will be improved. Additional parking on the east and north sides of the campus will improve the traffic operation in the area by separating faculty and visitor parking from student arrival and departure areas.

Policy Area Review/Staging Ceiling Analysis

The site is located within the Bethesda-Chevy Chase policy area, which has a remaining capacity of 182 jobs and 5638 housing units as of September 30, 2002.

SE:cmd

MR #02205-MCPS-1 Somerset ES.DOC

G. Memorandum from Environmental Planning

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Office of the Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 13, 2002

TO: Kristin O'Connor, Community Based Planning

VIA: Mary Dolan, Environmental Planning Division

FROM: Marion Clark, Environmental Planning Division

SUBJECT: Mandatory Referral No. MR-02205-MCPS-1
Somerset Elementary School

The Environmental Planning staff has reviewed the mandatory referral referenced above. Staff recommends **approval** with the following condition:

- A final Tree Save Plan must be approved by M-NCPPC, CWP, Environmental Unit prior to approval of the sediment and erosion control plan or any clearing, grading or land disturbance of the site.

- That a Storm Water Management Plan approved by MCDPS be submitted to M-NCPPC, CWP, Environmental Unit prior to issuance of sediment and erosion control permit.

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 does not require a new subdivision plan. A Tree Save Plan must be approved prior to issuance of building and sedimentation and erosion control permits.

The final Tree Save Plan must be prepared by an ISA certified arborist and shall include a detailed evaluation of the condition of all significant trees (as defined on the NRI/FSD) and the delineation and determination of significant impact to their critical root zones (>30% impact), based on the proposed site plan and grading.

Where significant impacts occur, efforts should be made to minimize the impacts. Consideration shall be given to reducing driveway widths, reconfiguring parking and reducing grading. After disturbance has been minimized, stress reduction measures shall be identified on the plan, as recommended by the arborist. The plan shall identify demolition and construction techniques and schedules, in addition to specifying other appropriate stress reduction measures designed to

minimize root destruction and to maximize root regrowth. Tree save measures shall include, but not be limited to, pre-construction watering and fertilizing, fencing, root pruning, and dead wood pruning of any trees impacted by construction activities. Where appropriate the plan should limit the use of heavy construction machinery and specify manual construction. Extraordinary measures such as grid aeration/hydration systems should be examined for specimen trees excessively affected by surrounding imperviousness.

Mitigation may be required for the removal of specimen trees if encroachment on the critical root zone is 30% or more.

Water Quality

This site is located in the Upper Mainstem subwatershed of the Little Falls watershed. The Countywide Stream Protection Strategy (CSPS) classifies the stream condition as poor and habitat condition as fair. The Upper Mainstem is categorized as a Watershed Restoration Area. Every effort should be made to protect and improve water quality in this watershed.