

M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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September 22, 2005

MEMORANDUM—MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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

Glenn Kreger, Team Leader, Silver Spring/Takoma Park Team *GK*
Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Margaret K. Rifkin, Planner Coordinator/Urban Designer *MKR*
Community-Based Planning Division (301/495-4583)

SUBJECT 1: Forest Conservation Plan for Mandatory Referral No. 05104-DPW&T-1: Takoma Park Fire Station No. 2, Permanent and Interim Stations – Intersection of Carroll Avenue and Philadelphia Avenue (MD 410), C-1 and C-2 Zones both within the Takoma Park/East Silver Spring Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone (CROZ), R-60 and R-20, Takoma Park Master Plan

SUBJECT 2: Mandatory Referral No. 05104-DPW&T-1: Takoma Park Fire Station No. 2, Permanent and Interim Stations – Intersection of Carroll Avenue and Philadelphia Avenue (MD 410), C-1 and C-2 Zones both within the Takoma Park/East Silver Spring Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone (CROZ), R-60 and R-20, Takoma Park Master Plan

This combined staff report provides recommendations for the site selections and site plans for the Takoma Park Fire Station No. 2 Permanent and Interim Stations.

SUBJECT 1: Forest Conservation Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION – Approval with the following condition: Submit a final Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) prepared by a qualified professional to the Environmental Staff of the M-NCPPC prior to approval of the Sediment and Erosion Control Plan by the Department of Permitting Services, and any clearing, grading or land disturbance of the site. This plan shall demonstrate full compliance with the Forest Conservation Law Section 22A-12. The FCP shall be consistent with tree preservation and stormwater management requirements of the City of Takoma Park.

SUBJECT 2: Mandatory Referral No. 05104-DPW&T-1: Takoma Park Fire Station No. 2, Permanent and Interim Stations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION – Approval to transmit the following comments:

1. For the Permanent Fire Station:
 - a. Coordinate with the City of Takoma Park concerning the streetscape on Carroll Avenue and final crosswalk location.
 - b. Provide street trees to replace those removed.
 - c. Provide a tree panel at the curb with additional street trees located a minimum of 30 feet from the fire station driveway apron.
 - d. Demarcate the pedestrian path across the driveway apron.
 - e. Remove the lot line that will otherwise run through the new fire station. Coordinate with the Department of Permitting Services and the Development Review Division of the M-NCPPC to identify and address any other desirable lot line revisions as well as recordation of newly configured lot(s).
 - f. Reduce the parking aisle in the side lot to 20 feet to increase the setback. Convert the back corner of the parking lot to green space. Provide four shade trees along the edge of the parking lot.
 - g. Plant the area within the limit of disturbance around the parking terrace with one shade tree for every 40 feet of perimeter.
 - h. Submit to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) for approval, any design and material changes made since the December 9, 2004 approval of the Historic Area Work Permit, before submitting a building permit application to the Department of Permitting Services.
 - i. Limit the height of the tower to under 40 feet per the Historic Preservation Commission condition of approval.
 - j. Consider revising the design of the bioretention area so that it is completely on County property.
2. For the Interim Fire Station:
 - a. Provide a final site plan and landscape plan for the restored city parking lot after the interim station is removed, and the curb cut and access drive are relocated.
 - b. Coordinate further with the Traffic Engineering and Operations Division (DPWT), and with the State Highway Administration (SHA) to confirm the means by which the temporary fire station access will be integrated into the signal operations on Carroll Avenue at MD 410 and Grant Avenue.

- c. Confirm and document the shared access agreement(s) allowing for private vehicle access to adjacent properties during the operation of the interim fire station. Avoid private access crossing the fire station drive.

Previous Planning Board Actions – None.

Previous Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Actions – The HPC approved with conditions, a Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) on December 9, 2004. The approval allows for the demolition of an existing single-family structure at 7135 Carroll Avenue.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this project is to replace the existing substandard and deteriorating fire station in the City of Takoma Park, with a modern facility. The reconstruction and expansion of the Takoma Park Fire Station in the City of Takoma Park will be located on its existing site and on adjacent property. The existing station will be demolished except for one wall.

The existing site is approximately 0.2 acres. Through a combination of land acquisition and easements, the fire station site will expand to approximately one acre.

The site slopes from Carroll Avenue to the back of the site with a total change in elevation of approximately 30 feet.

To accommodate the expansion, two properties are being acquired. One is an existing single-family structure at 7135 Carroll Avenue, containing three dwelling units, which will be demolished. The owner and tenants will be relocated to 7133 Carroll Avenue. Another piece of property of approximately 0.2 acres to the north will also be acquired. It is currently a wooded slope owned by the City of Takoma Park.

The site is zoned C-1 and C-2 both within the Takoma Park/East Silver Spring Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone, R-60, and R-20.

The site is bounded on the northeast by an auto repair business (The Healy Surgeon) in the C-2 Zone, and also to the north by another auto repair business, Takoma Park Auto, and by the City parking lot. The site is bounded on the south by city-owned property, which is sloped woodland, and by single-family residential uses in the R-60 Zone. To the west the site is bounded by residential uses in the R-20 Zone. To the north the site is bounded by Carroll Avenue, a state road. On the opposite side of Carroll Avenue are residential uses in the R-20 Zone and commercial uses in the C-1 Zone. All above-mentioned properties in the C-1 or C-2 Zones are also within the Takoma Park/East Silver Spring Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone. The site is also within the Takoma Park Historic District.

The expanded fire station will have three bays for fire apparatus and 27 parking spaces along with accommodations for fire fighters and office personnel. There will be an easement on the newly configured lot for 7133 Carroll Avenue to accommodate fire station parking and also stormwater management.

Temporary relocation of personnel and apparatus will be provided 60 feet to the northeast on the nearby city property and on a portion of the Takoma Park Auto property. The interim station will consist of a tent for fire apparatus, a trailer for personnel and 13 designated parking spaces.

The fire station will be in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week with shift changes occurring at 7:00 a.m. All funding is from Montgomery County.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Community outreach has spanned several years. The staff of the DPWT has attended eighteen evening meetings between 2001 and 2003. Most were with the Takoma Park City Council. The City Council meetings are open to the public and televised. The most recent public meetings were in October 2004; at the time the Historic Preservation Commission conducted its public review of the project.

No oral or written comments from citizens have been received by the M-NCPPC as of September 23, 2005. The City of Takoma Park continues to work with DPWT on detailed coordination as reflected in the attached letter from the City.

PROJECT ANALYSIS – FINDINGS

Finding #1 – The project will be consistent with the Takoma Park Master Plan when street trees are incorporated into the final site and landscape plans.

The Master Plan recommends (page 71) in the section on Community Facilities: *“Support reconstruction of the Takoma Park Fire Station in Takoma Junction.”* The Master Plan further recommends (page 45) *“Support maintenance of the low scale, small town, historic character of the area.”* Review by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) ensures consistency of the station’s architectural character with the historic neighborhood. The HPC has determined that the tower should be less than 40 feet. The tower height currently shown at 42+ feet will be reduced. The low scale created by the height, varied massing of the building and the varied roofline, successfully responds to the Master Plan recommendations.

“Support streetscape improvements along Carroll Avenue from Takoma Junction to Takoma Old Town” (pages 45 and 93-95). To address this Master Plan recommendation, the site and landscape plan should be revised to include street trees in a tree panel along the curb as described in Comment “1.c”. Trees should be placed consistent with the Carroll Avenue streetscape design prepared by the City of Takoma Park. This streetscape design is used for the length of Carroll Avenue to the west of this site to connect Takoma Junction with Takoma Old Town. The streetscape design includes installation of a tree panel at the curb, wherever possible. The street tree species and placement at the fire station should be coordinated with both the City of Takoma Park and the State Highway Administration. Adequate sight distance for fire apparatus is an important consideration and for this reason, street trees should be no closer to the driveway than 30 feet. This is the standard used at street intersections in the Silver Spring and Bethesda CBDs.

In addition, when a final landscape plan is submitted for the restored city lot, after the temporary station is removed, street trees should be included to contribute to the continuation of the Carroll Avenue Streetscape.

Finding #2 – The project will be consistent with the Forest Conservation Law and Environmental Guidelines.

When the final Forest Conservation Plan is submitted and approved, the project will be consistent with the Forest Conservation Law and Environmental Guidelines. This is discussed in the attached memorandum from Environmental Planning in the Countywide Planning Division.

Finding #3 – The permanent fire station site plan is not consistent with all the development standards in the applicable zones. The interim station is consistent.

In most cases the inconsistencies are acceptable in order to achieve important and overriding public benefits. In other instances revisions are recommended. These public benefits include:

- Keeping the fire station in Takoma Junction where it will reinforce and enhance community identity, and provide services from a central location within the City of Takoma Park.
- Creatively integrating a modern expanded station into an existing neighborhood in a historic district, with minimal negative impacts on the physical, economic and social structure of the established neighborhood.

There are five zones applicable to the site. The zones follow various existing property lines or lot lines, which are internal to the expanded site. A graphic analysis is attached. Findings concerning the development standards that are not currently met are as follows:

- Building setback from public right-of-way (Carroll Avenue). The proposed 8-foot, 8- inch setback is created by part of the wall of the existing station, which will be preserved. Elsewhere the proposed setback for the new station is comparable to the setback of the existing fire station.
- The parking lot adjacent to the street right-of-way of Carroll Avenue should have a 10-foot wide landscaped strip with a shade or ornamental tree, plus a hedge, wall or fence to reduce the visual impact. The proposal shows a five-foot strip which should be shifted to serve as a tree panel at the curb for street trees. There is little or no space for the required strip along the parking lot. Therefore, consideration should be given to adding a low wall or fence. It should be located to accommodate the access needs of users of the adjacent handicapped space.

- Separation of the fire station parking lot from 7133 Carroll Avenue. The development standards in the R-20 Zone call for a 10-foot residential side yard setback, to be matched by a parking lot setback, for a total of 20 feet. The proposed residential side yard setback is approximately 5 feet with 1-foot parking lot setback for a total of approximately 6 feet. The proposed 6-foot tall board on board fence will provide screening. However, the 22-foot wide parking aisle should be reduced to 20 feet in width in order to increase the parking lot setback by 2 feet. In addition, the corner of the parking lot should be converted to green space. Four shade trees should be provided along the edge of the parking lot.
- The lot at 7133 Carroll Avenue is not consistent with development standards for the front yard setback, minimum lot width at front building line, lot size, setback from adjoining lot, and amount of green area. Consideration should be given to revising the design of the bioretention area so that it is completely on County property and is not in an easement on the lot at 7133 Carroll Avenue. This will create more green space on the residential lot for the use of the three households. The lot size is approximately 9,000 square feet instead of the 16,000 minimum in the zone. According to the Department of Permitting Services, 2,000 square feet of lot area is needed for each dwelling unit. That is achieved.
- The parking lots do not meet the five percent internal landscaping standards. Consideration should be given to incorporating an appropriate amount of green space into the parking lots to meet the standard if possible.
- The parking terrace does not have a perimeter landscape strip at terrace level. The area within the limit of disturbance around the parking terrace should be planted with one shade tree for every 40 feet of perimeter.
- The building height is 31 feet. This is consistent with the development standards in the R-60 Zone, which is the primary zone. It is one foot taller than the maximum building height in the R-20 Zone.
- The tower height is shown at 42 feet; however, the applicant has agreed to reduce it to 40 feet as conditioned by the Historic Preservation Commission. The tower can be considered comparable to a "belfry" (Sec. 59-B-1.1) and be exempt from the height limit.

Even though all development standards are not met, none of the proposed conditions are "non-conforming." This is because they are the result of government action and therefore exempt from such classification.

The following are the development tables with the proposed features that are not consistent with the development standards in the zone, shown **in bold and underlined**.

R-60 Zoning Analysis
Permanent Station

	Required for Private Development	Proposed for Permanent Fire Station
Width at front of building	60 feet	>100 feet
Min. lot width at street	25 feet	>100 feet
Min. setback from street	25 feet	<u>8 feet 8 inches</u>
Setback from adjoining lot	Side 8 feet one side Sum of both sides 18 feet Rear 20 feet	<u>0 feet</u> Rear 47 feet
Height	35 feet PB can approve up to 40 feet	31 feet
Height tower	None	42 feet
Coverage-max.	35%	<u>> 35% within R-60 area</u>

R-20 Zoning Analysis
Permanent Station and 7133 Carroll Avenue

	Required for Private Development	Proposed for Permanent Fire Station	Proposed for new lot at 7133 Carroll Avenue
Min. lot area	16,000 SF	> 16,000 SF	<u>9,000 SF</u>
Min. lot width at front building line	85 feet	131 feet	<u>43 feet</u>
Min. setback from street	30 feet from street	<u>20 feet</u>	<u>20 feet</u>
From adjoining lot	One side 10 feet Sum - 30 feet Rear 30 feet	23 feet NA Rear 47 feet	<u>5 feet</u> <u>Sum - 10 feet</u> Rear 110 feet
Max. building height	30 feet	<u>31 feet</u>	Existing
Coverage - percent of area of lot	18%	<u>Over 18%</u>	14%
Green area	Not less than 60%	<u>Less than 60%</u>	<u>~ 24%</u>

C-2 with Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone Zoning Analysis
Parking Terrace and Northern Edge of Permanent Station

	Required for Private Development	Proposed for Parking Terrace
Setback	Front lot line 10 feet No setback	Front lot line - NA 4 feet min.
Green area	10% = 850 SF	> 10%
Height	30 feet Up to 42 feet with approval	31 feet

**C-1 with Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone Zoning Analysis
Parking Terrace and Interim Station**

	Required for Private Development	Proposed for Permanent Fire Station - Parking Terrace	Proposed for Interim Station
Height	30 feet Up to 42 feet with approval	NA	25 feet
Setback - street ROW	10 feet	NA	40 feet
Setback from R-60	Side 8 feet one side Sum 18 feet	15 feet	NA
Setback in other cases	Not required	Vary	Vary
Green area	10%	> 10%	None

Parking

	Required for Private Development	Proposed
Permanent Fire Station	Not applicable	26 spaces + 2 handicapped
Interim Fire Station	Not applicable	13 spaces
7133 Carroll Avenue - 3 dwelling units	6 spaces	6 spaces 2 in front driveway, 4 in back

Parking Facility Standards for Permanent Facility

	Required for Private Development	Side Lot	Parking Terrace
Access driveway	20 feet	22 feet	24 feet
Width of landscape strip adjacent to street	10 feet	5 feet	NA
Width of perimeter landscape strip	10 feet	1 foot	4-15 feet
Internal landscaping with shade trees	5%	<5%	None

Finding #4 – The project will be compatible with existing and proposed adjacent uses and structures.

The permanent fire station will achieve compatibility when comments are addressed concerning screening plantings along the easement on 7133 Carroll Avenue. The Historic Preservation Commission, as discussed earlier, has reviewed this project for architectural design consistent with the historic district. The materials, massing and scale of the station are compatible.

The most sensitive issue concerns the residential property to the west at 7133 Carroll Avenue. This is the house where the three households displaced from demolished 7135 Carroll Avenue will move. The fire station parking area actually extends onto the residential property in an easement, as does the bioretention area that is part of the stormwater management for the fire station site.

To ensure compatibility, the plan shows a six-foot tall board on board fence set back one foot from the parking lot. Plantings should be added to provide additional screening and include shade trees for consistency with the development standards for parking lots. The final landscape design should be coordinated with the owner of the adjoining property and will be subject to review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission staff.

Finding #5 – The locations of the structure, open space, and circulation will be adequate, safe and efficient when fire truck access for the interim fire station is no longer shared with that for the auto repair shop.

The structure is located in the front of the site along Carroll Avenue in the same relationship to the street as the existing station it is replacing. This is an appropriate location and helps to create a continuous building wall along Carroll Avenue in Takoma Junction. The location also is highly visible to the community and to motorists and provides adequate sight lines for fire vehicles accessing the bays. The recommended street trees on Carroll Avenue should be placed no closer than 30 feet from the driveway to maintain the sight lines.

The circulation for private vehicles is separate from that for the fire apparatus. There is one access point for the 27 parking spaces, which are in three successive groups: a side lot, bays under the building, and a parking terrace. Pedestrian access is provided directly from the street and from the parking areas. Steps are included along the side of the building.

Landscaped open space is provided in the front and is about 500 square feet. Consideration should be given to providing seating in that area for both fire station staff and others.

The interim station is in an appropriate location just 60 feet away from the existing fire station site. The access to the bays is adequate; however, the design currently allows access across the fire station drive to a private auto repair business. Different access for the auto repair business is recommended to avoid conflicts and delays in emergencies.

There are 13 parking spaces provided for the interim station, with some provided in a "valet" configuration. During shift changes, which are at 7:00 a.m., staff will temporarily use additional parking spaces in the city lot. When the interim station is removed, the city parking lot will be restriped and the temporary curb cut removed and replaced with one further north. A site/landscape plan for the restored lot should be provided and street trees should be incorporated along Carroll Avenue. At that time, the City of Takoma Park should consider improvements to the city lot to increase landscaping and ensure compliance with development standards for parking facilities.

Finding #6 – The proposed project satisfies the Adequate Public Facilities Test for transportation requirements.

This is discussed in the attached memo from Transportation Planning in the Countywide Planning Division.

MR:ha: j:\2005 staff reports\team 1\Takoma Park Fire Station

Attachments

1. Location Map
2. Existing Conditions with Zoning
3. Proposal with Zoning
4. Landscape Plan
5. Elevations - Permanent Station
6. Memorandum - Transportation Planning
7. Memorandum - Environmental Planning
8. Memorandum - Historic Preservation
9. City of Takoma Park - Letter