

MANDATORY REFERRAL NO. MR2025016 HIGHLAND VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Description

Mandatory Referral review for a three story addition to the existing Highland View Elementary School and associated site upgrades to support the removal of existing relocatable classrooms and projected increases in enrollment.

COMPLETED: 6/16/2025

PLANNING BOARD HEARING DATE: 6/26/2025

MCPB ITEM NO. 7

Planning Staff



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LOCATION

Located at 9010 Providence Ave,
125 feet southeast of Oldham Road

MASTER PLAN, ZONE

2000 *East Silver Spring Master Plan*
R-60 zone

PROPERTY SIZE

6.61 acres

APPLICATION

Mandatory Referral No. MR2024007

ACCEPTANCE DATE

April 30, 2025

REVIEW BASIS

Md. Land Use Article, Section 20-301, et seq.

Summary:

- Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral with recommendations and transmittal of comments to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).
- The Planning Board review of a Mandatory Referral is pursuant to the Land Use Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, Sections 20-301 et seq.
- MCPS proposes to construct a three-story addition at Highland View Elementary School in Silver Spring. The addition will add eight classrooms, increasing the building from 336 to 528 seats. The Site currently holds relocatable classrooms which will be removed following completion of the project.

SECTION 1 - RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends approval and the transmittal of the following comments to Montgomery County Public Schools (the Applicant):

1. The Applicant should comply with the approval conditions for Forest Conservation Exemption 42025017E.
2. The Applicant should address tree canopy shading requirements for new/expanded parking areas per section 59.6.2.9.C.2 of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance.
3. The Planning Board accepts the recommendations of the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (MCDPS) Water Resources Section in its stormwater management concept letter dated March 21, 2025. The Applicant should comply with each of the recommendations in the letter, which the MCDPS Water Resources Section may amend if the amendments do not conflict with other comments included as part of this Mandatory Referral.
4. The Planning Board accepts the recommendations of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), in its letter dated May 22, 2025. The Applicant should comply with each of the recommendations in the letter, which MCDOT may amend if the amendment does not conflict with other comments included as part of this Mandatory Referral.
5. The Applicant must finalize approval of the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Service (MCDPS) Fire Department Access at time of building permit. The Applicant should comply with each of the recommendations in the final approval letter, which the MCDPS may amend if the amendments do not conflict with other comments included as part of this Mandatory Referral.

SECTION 2 - INTRODUCTION

Review Process

The subject Mandatory Referral was accepted for review on April 30, 2025, and scheduled for a public hearing with the Planning Board on June 26, 2025. The Planning Department mailed notices on May 2, 2025 pursuant to the requirements noted in the Montgomery County Uniform Standards for Mandatory Referral Review. The review process followed the protocols and timeline defined in the current Montgomery Planning Mandatory Referral Review Uniform Standards (updated December 2022).

The Applicant team conducted community engagement sessions on May 6, 2024, May 7, 2024, and May 23, 2024, to collect input, answer questions, and have discussions to inform the proposed addition to Highland View Elementary School. The required pre-submission meeting with the Applicant team and staff from the Planning Department and Parks Department was held on October 16, 2024.

SECTION 3 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

Highland View Elementary School is a public elementary school located in East Silver Spring. The school serves grades K through 5 and is operated by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The school was first opened in 1953 and has undergone several additions/renovations to the facility over the years. Overall, the additions added over 35,000 square feet to the original structure to support additional classrooms, a gymnasium, a media center, and support spaces.

Today, the school is at capacity and has been supported by relocatable classrooms adjacent to the parking lot at the northeast of the building. The Applicant is proposing a three-story addition as part of the MCPS Capital Improvement Program to provide ample space within the school building for all current and projected students and to improve accessibility within the school and throughout the school campus.



Figure 1: Highland View Elementary School Main Entrance

Surrounding Neighborhood

The Subject Property (Subject Property, or Property) is located in East Silver Spring within the area encompassed by the 2000 *East Silver Spring Master Plan* (Master Plan). The School is situated on a

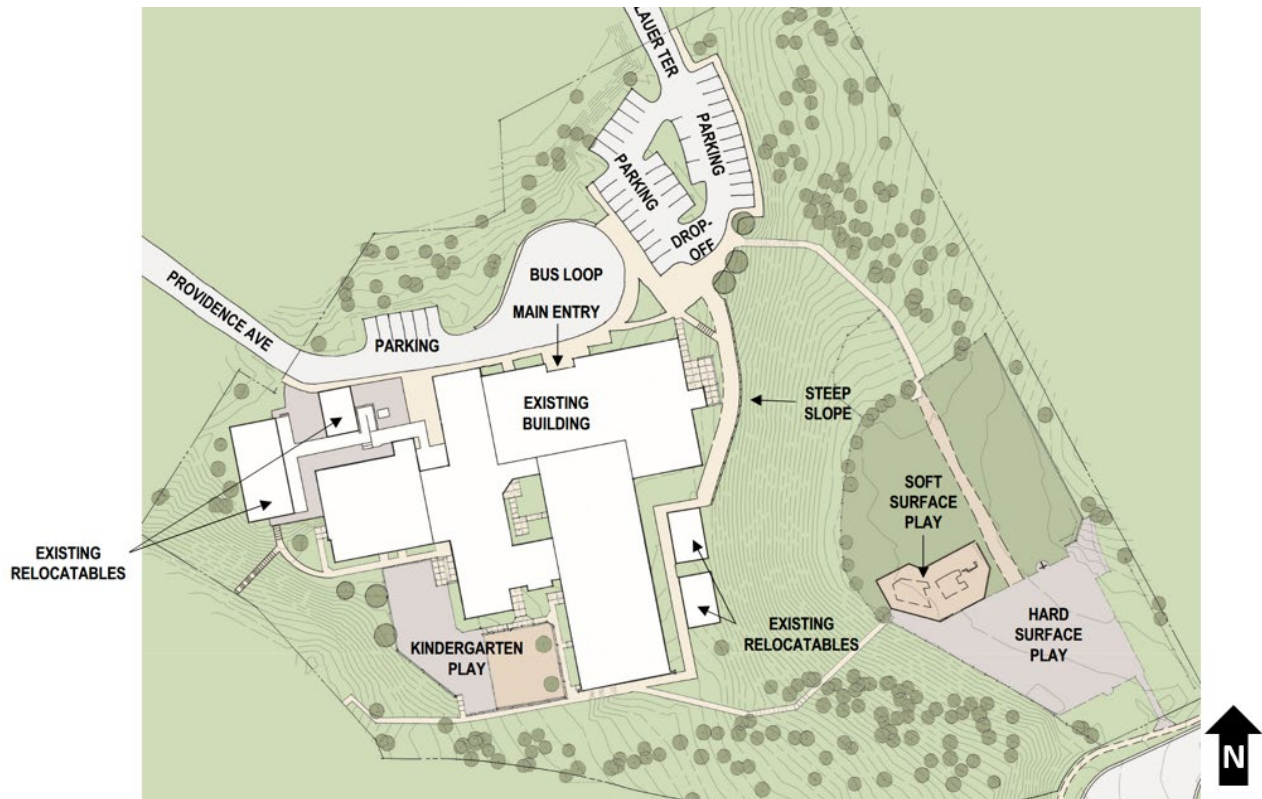
6.61-acre parcel located at 9010 Providence Avenue. The Property is zoned R-60 and is neighbored on the north and east by established single-family detached residential neighborhoods. Along the southern and western property lines, the Property borders apartment complexes and a homeowners association facility.



Figure 1: Neighborhood Context

Site Description

The Highland View Elementary School (School) site occupies a 6.11-acre site with numerous steep grades. Vehicular access to the school is from Providence Avenue for buses and staff, and from Lauer Terrace for parent drop-off and additional staff parking. The Site is bordered on the northwest and east by single-family residential properties, on the southwest by a multi-family residential property, and on the south by an HOA property for a townhome development. Highland View Elementary School is a two-story split-level structure that includes a main entrance level, located below grade at the east side of the building, and a two-story classroom wing, which is offset by a half-story from the



main level. Beyond the building, the Property continues to slope steeply upward toward the east and southeast. The site slopes downward away from the building toward the west and southwest.

Figure 2: Existing Site Plan

Project Description

The objective of the proposed project is to construct a three-story classroom addition to increase the program capacity of Highland View Elementary School building from 336 to 528 students. The Property currently holds relocatable classrooms, which will be removed following completion of the proposed project. The addition will include eight standard classrooms and two music classrooms. It will also contain instructional support rooms, support staff offices, staff development areas, and a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) storage room.

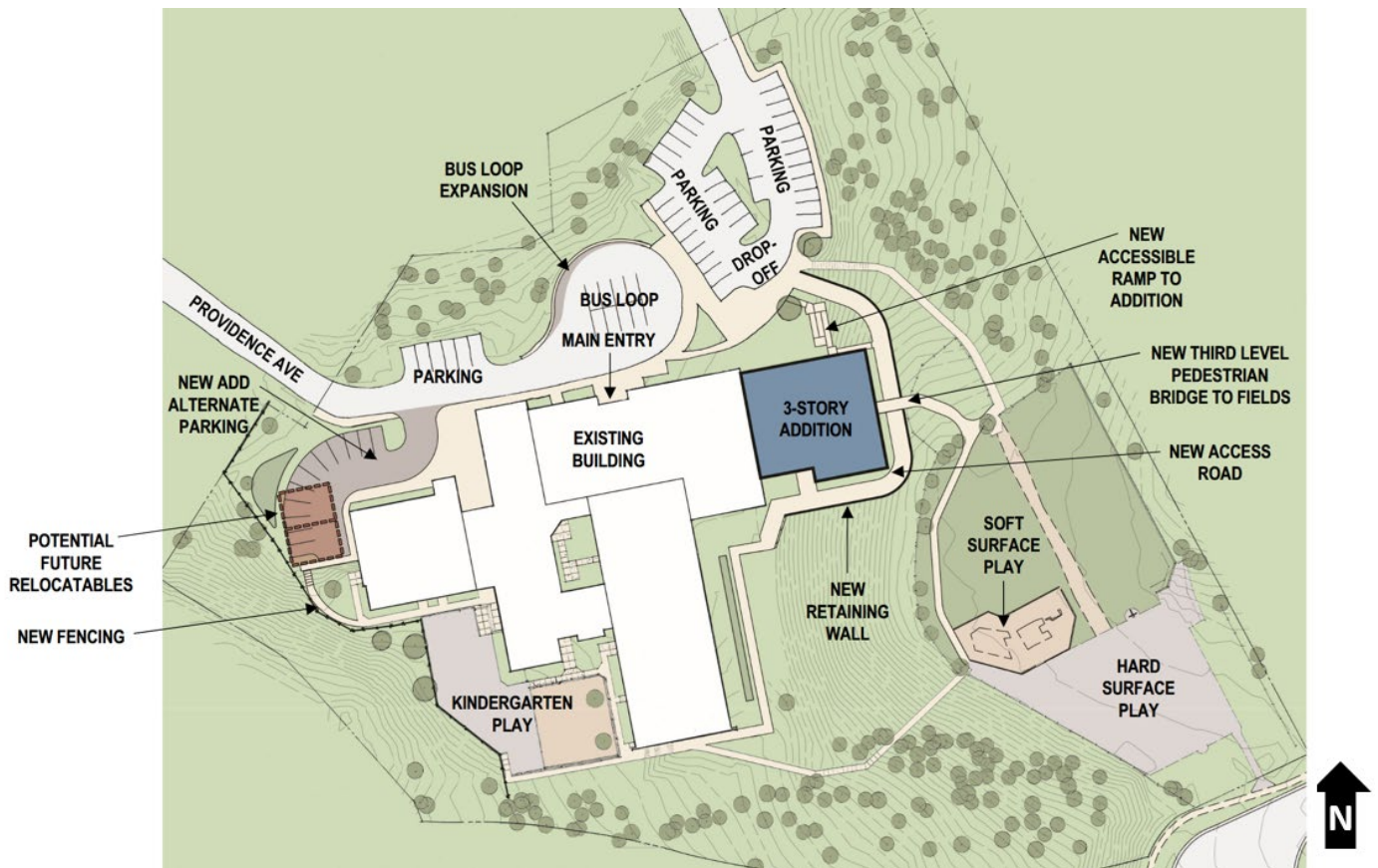


Figure 3: Proposed Site Plan

BUILDING/ARCHITECTURE

Designed to meet the MCPS educational specifications, the three-story addition will be constructed into the hillside with its lowest level aligned with the main entrance finished floor, its second floor aligned with the existing second floor media center level, and its third floor as a stand-alone upper story; a three-story elevator and stair tower will be provided. The top floor will have a pedestrian bridge connection, providing an accessible route to the hilltop play area. Through working with the steep grade of the site, the top floor will outlet across a pedestrian bridge at grade with the upper play area on the southeast side of the Property. The third story does not rise above the existing elevation of the surrounding hillside, which also prevents the building from conflicting with the surrounding

residential buildings. A new retaining wall will be required to wrap around the addition to allow for a pathway for emergency and maintenance access to the rear of the Property.

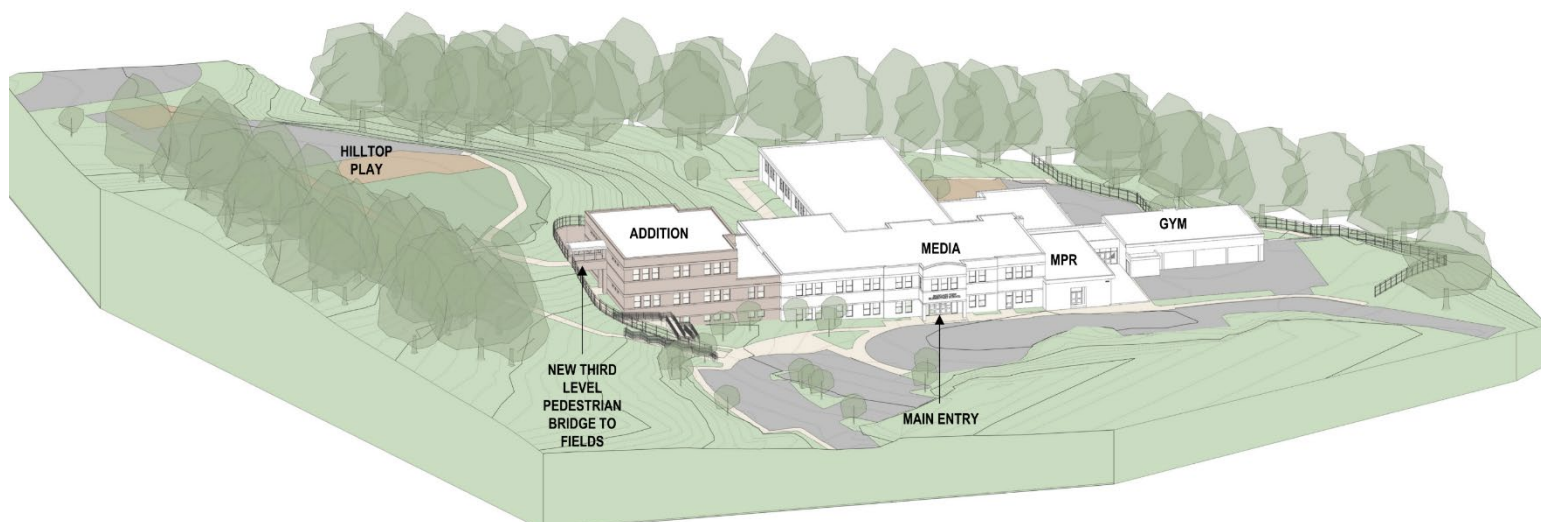


Figure 4: Proposed Site Perspective

OPEN SPACE

The existing open space consists of an existing kindergarten play area to the south of the school building and additional play areas located atop the hill to the southeast of the site. These features are proposed to remain. However, the site design goals include improved accessibility for the hilltop play area via the proposed addition and pedestrian bridge.

TRANSPORTATION

There are currently two vehicular access points for the Site. Providence Avenue provides access for buses and school staff, and Lauer Terrace provides access to parent pick-up/drop-off and parking. There is no proposed change to the current vehicular access. Some additional parking and internal pedestrian paths will be added.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

A Forest Conservation Exemption Plan was approved for the Subject Property on March 19, 2025. This plan showed that, within the site, there is approximately 1.45 acres of forest, which is generally located in the northeast corner of the Property (0.66 acres) and the southern edge of the Property (0.79 acres). These forest stands are dominated by mature yellow poplar as well as red oak and beech trees. There is a heavy presence of invasive bamboo, Japanese honeysuckle, and poison ivy; however, due to the presence of specimen trees and steep slopes, the stand is considered high priority for retention.

The Site is located within the Sligo Creek Watershed and is not within a Special Protection Area (SPA). There are no rare, threatened, or endangered species within or near the Property. The majority of the Site was graded for the development of the school. However, there are significant steep slopes on the eastern portion of the Site that extend north to south between the School building and the play areas. Additionally, there are steep slopes on the west side of the Site sloping from the School to the adjacent residential buildings.

While the Project proposes to build the addition to the School within the hillside, the plans show that the Applicant will work with the existing grade and provide stabilizing structures. Additionally, the limits of disturbance will not extend into any areas of forest, though some mature trees will be impacted/removed. The incorporation of modern stormwater management devices and careful placement of mitigation trees will improve the environmental condition of the Property and enable the proposed addition to become an overall benefit to the Site.

SECTION 4 – MANDATORY REFERRAL ANALYSIS

Mandatory Referral review is guided by the Montgomery Planning Mandatory Referral Review Uniform Standards (December 2022), and the authority granted through the Maryland Land Use Article, Section 20-301, et.seq. As set forth in Sections 20-301 and -302, the Montgomery County Planning Board has jurisdiction over mandatory referral projects presented by Montgomery County government, municipal corporation or special taxing district, and Montgomery County Board of Education/Montgomery County Public Schools, for (i) acquiring or selling land; (ii) locating, constructing or authorizing a road, park, public way or ground, public building or structure, or publicly owned or privately owned public utility; or (iii) changing the use of or widening, narrowing, extending, relocating, vacating or abandoning any of the previously mentioned facilities. The Planning Board, or its Staff pursuant to the adopted Uniform Guidelines, must review such projects and transmit comments on the proposed location, character, grade, and extent of the activity.

As described in the Uniform Standards, the Planning Board, or its Staff, considers all relevant land use and planning aspects of the proposal including, but not limited to, the following:

- 1. whether the proposal is consistent with the County's General Plan, functional plans such as the master plan of highways, environmental guidelines, the approved and adopted area master plan or sector plan, and other public plans, guidance documents, or programs for the area;***

The Property is within the area subject to the 2000 *East Silver Spring Master Plan*. The Plan shows the existing school site as being retained for this use and reaffirms the Site's R-60 zoning. The Plan does not include other site-specific recommendations, but does include the following general recommendations that apply to this Application:

- a) ***Land Use and Neighborhood Preservation – Revitalization and Diversity***
- i. ***Restore, maintain and improve the infrastructure of older neighborhoods by providing sidewalks, curbs, lighting, landscaping, and other improvements as needed. Consider both pedestrian access and safety when planning improvements.***

Many of the students enrolled at Highland View walk to the school from nearby neighborhoods. Consideration for pedestrian access, improved ADA access, and safety is reflected in the updated Site Design. In conjunction with the creation of the proposed addition, the redevelopment proposal will improve access throughout the Property. This will allow for safer pedestrian access and circulation on-site to the new addition and at connection points to the play area.

- b) ***Environmental Resources***
- i. ***Air Quality - Design new development and redevelopment to prevent conditions that may create local air pollution nuisances.***

Although MCPS does not pursue official certification such as LEED or Green Globes for additions, the proposed addition will aim to meet the standards of “1 Green Globe.”

During the construction phase of the Project, the Applicant will be required to follow applicable County and State regulations regarding dust, odor, and other temporary air quality control issues. Additionally, the retention of forest and planting of mitigation trees provide further air quality benefits.

- ii. ***Noise – Design new development and redevelopment to prevent conditions that may create local noise pollution problems.***

This is a redevelopment proposal to provide an addition to an existing public elementary school. The new addition will work with the existing grade onsite to maintain a physical buffer from nearby neighborhoods. Play areas at the perimeter of the Site will be unchanged from the existing conditions, which have been acceptable for both the school and nearby residences.

- iii. ***Water Quality/Stormwater Management – Continue to provide on-site stormwater treatment with effective technologies, where feasible.***

The Proposal provides for a modern site-wide stormwater management system that will result in a significant improvement in the control and treatment of stormwater runoff on-site, as compared to existing conditions. The Department of Permitting Services, in a letter dated March 21, 2025,

determined that the proposed stormwater concept plan, which proposes the use of dry-wells onsite, is acceptable. This letter is included as Attachment D to this Staff Report.

2. *whether the proposal is consistent with the intent and the requirements of the zone in which it is located;*

The Subject Site is within the R-60 zone and is in general conformance with the development standards of the zone as follows:

Table 1: Highland View Elementary School – R-60 Zone Standard Method Development Standards

Development Standards	Permitted/ Required	Proposed
R-60 Zone Standard Method Development		
Minimum Lot Area	6,000 sf	287,931 sf (6.6 acres)
Minimum Lot Width at Front Building Line	60 ft	500 ft
Minimum Lot Width at Front Lot Line	25 ft	390 ft
Frontage on Street or Open Space	Required	Provided
Maximum Density (units per acre)	7.26	n/a
Maximum Lot Coverage	35%	< 35%
Minimum Front Setback	25 ft	≥ 25 ft
Minimum Side Setback	8 ft	≥ 8 ft
Minimum Sum of Side Setbacks	18 ft	≥ 18 ft
Minimum Rear Setback	20 ft	≥ 20 ft
Maximum Height	35 ft	35 ft

3. *whether the nature of the proposed site and development, including but not limited to its size, shape, scale, height, arrangement, design of structure(s), massing, setback(s), site layout, and location(s) of parking is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and properties;*

The nature of the Proposal is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood as it continues the long-standing public-school use of the Property. The Proposal provides an addition to the existing school, eliminating the need for relocatable classrooms and improving access throughout the site. The proposal is generally consistent with the existing use of the site. The overall size, shape, height, arrangement, and layout of site elements of the school building will remain compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and properties.

4. ***whether the locations of buildings and structures, open spaces, landscaping, recreation facilities, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems are adequate, safe, and efficient;***

The site design will remain largely unchanged with the proposed addition. The proposed addition will be at the rear of the building and will be built at a lower grade than the nearest adjacent hilltop. Circulation onsite will be improved through the realignment of access roads, construction of a new accessible ramp, and provision of a new pedestrian bridge, allowing for better flow throughout the Site.

TRANSPORTATION VEHICULAR ACCESS

There are currently two vehicular access points for the Site: Providence Avenue provides access for buses and staff, and Lauer Terrace provides access to parent pick-up/drop-off and parking. There is no proposed change to the current vehicular access.

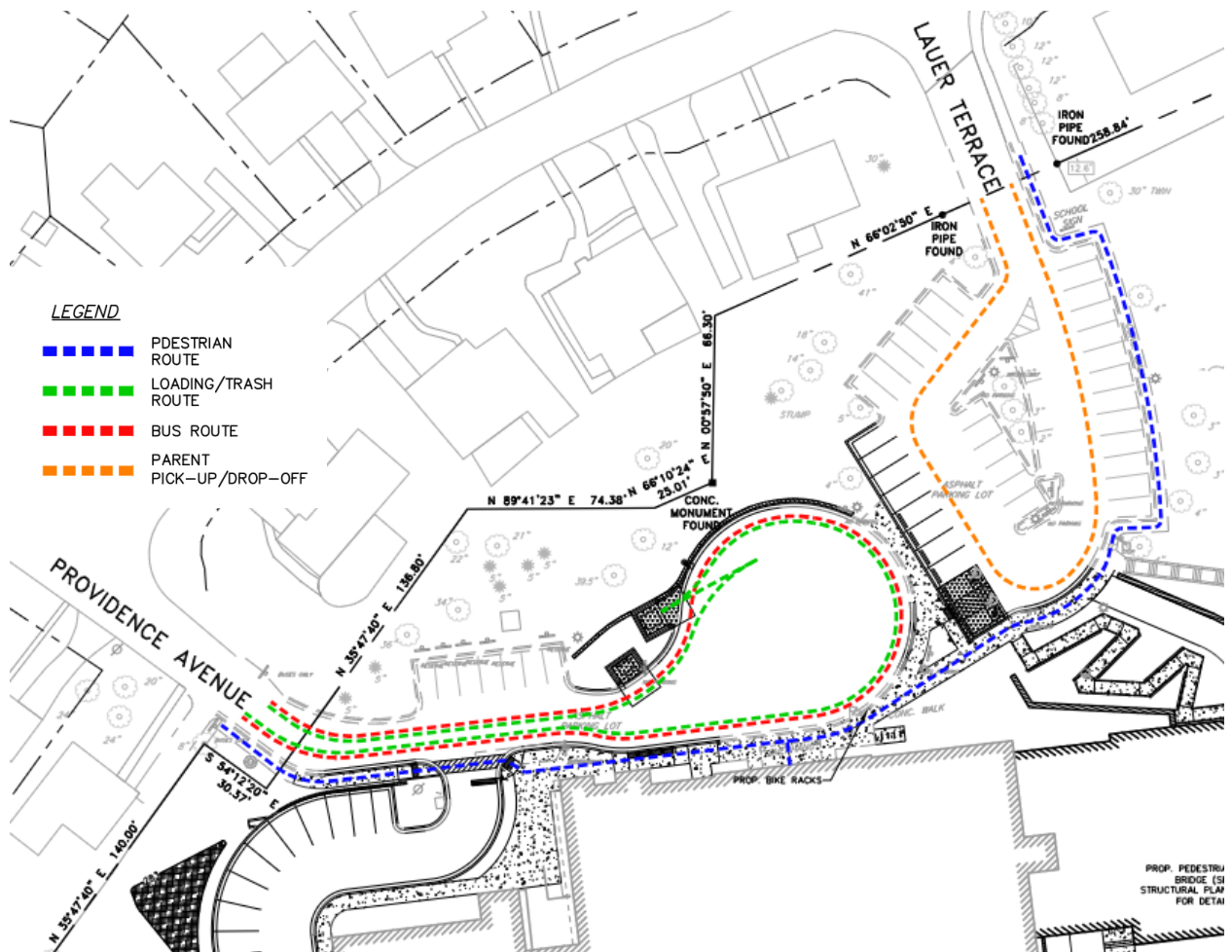


Figure 5: Site Circulation

LOCAL AREA TRANSPORTATION REVIEW

The proposed increase of 148 students to Highland View Elementary School is expected to generate 97 new vehicle trips in the AM peak hour and 21 new vehicle trips in the PM peak hour. Since the Project is expected to generate more than 30 new vehicle trips in the peak hour a Local Area Transportation Review is required. The Site is located in a Red Policy Area, so it is exempt from Motor Vehicle Adequacy Review.

		ITE Trip Generation Vehicle Rates		Adjusted Vehicle Rates East Purple Line Policy Area		Total Vehicle Trips	
		AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Proposed	Elementary School (148 students)	110	24	97	21	97	21

Pedestrian and Bicycle System Adequacy

Per the LATR Guidelines, since the Project is anticipated to generate between 65-124 max net new peak-hour weekday motor vehicle trips, the pedestrian level of comfort and illuminance tests must be conducted based on a 400-foot network distance study area from all points on the site frontage, and the ADA compliance must be conducted based on a 200-foot network distance study area. Although roadways classified as local roads are not required to be studied as part of the LATR study, the Applicant did analyze some of these roadways. The Applicant also exceeded the network distance requirement by studying a 750-foot network distance for Pedestrian Level of Comfort (PLOC) analysis. Within this expanded study area, three road segments were found to have undesirable or uncomfortable PLOC scores. These include portions of Flower Avenue, Manchester Road, and East Wayne Avenue. The deficiencies are due to sidewalks adjacent to the roadway without any separation, and for Flower Avenue, a portion of the roadway that is lacking a sidewalk. For the illuminance test, the Applicant found the lighting to be inadequate along Manchester Road.

Again, the applicant went above the requirements for ADA compliance analysis and studied a 750-foot network distance. Within this study area, they observed some deficiencies that included narrow sidewalks, discontinuous sidewalks, missing or faded crosswalks, and missing detectable warning surfaces.

Per the LATR Guidelines, since the Project is anticipated to generate between 65-124 max net new peak-hour weekday motor vehicle trips, the bicycle system adequacy test must be conducted based on a 750-foot network distance study area from all points on the site

frontage. Within this study area, moderate and high levels of bicycle stress are found along Flower Avenue due to narrow shoulders and no signing for shared bicycle use.

Figure 6 below shows the pedestrian and bicycle deficiencies combined with their locations on the map.

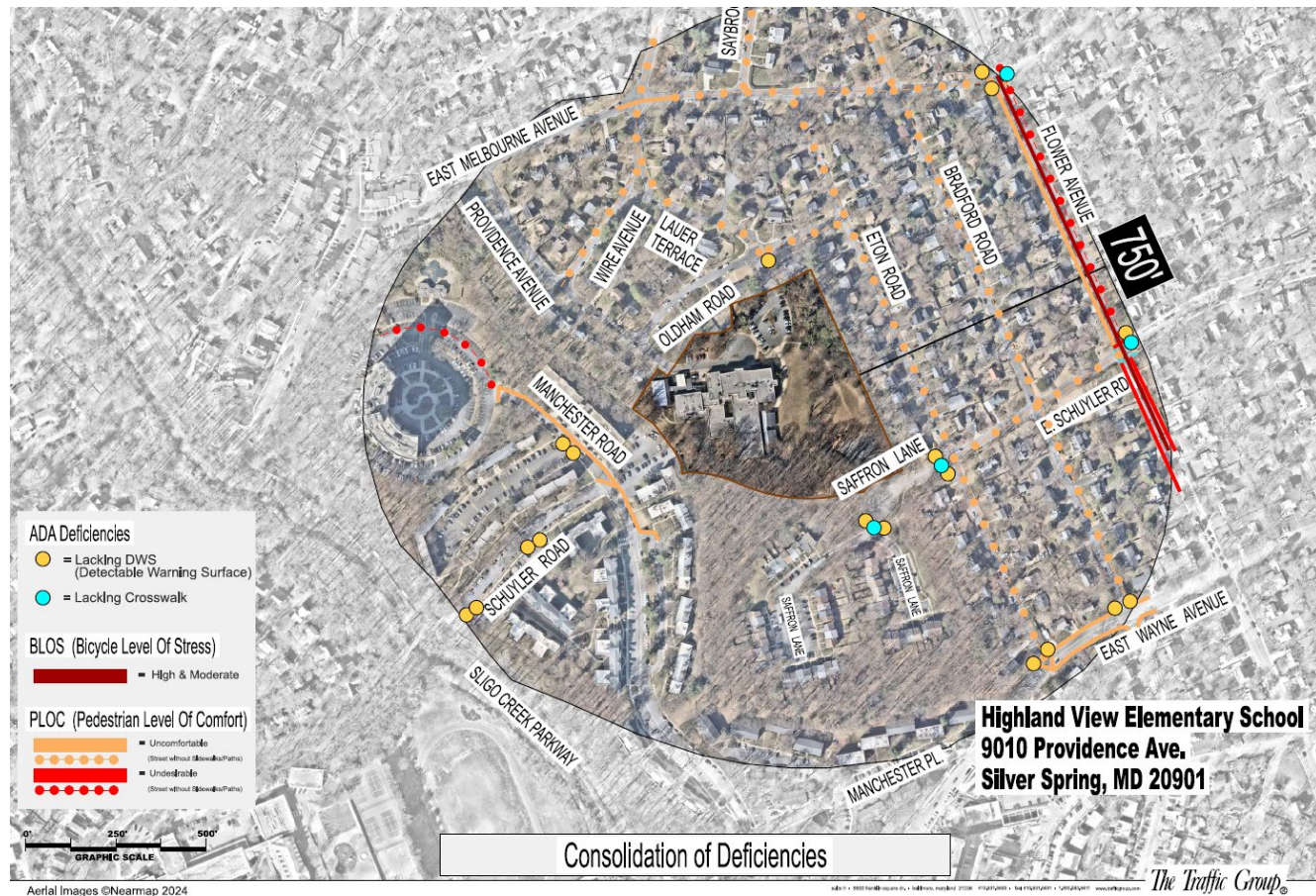


Figure 6: Pedestrian and Bicycle Deficiencies Map provided by The Traffic Group

Transit System Adequacy

Per the LATR Guidelines, since the Project is anticipated to generate between 65-124 max net new peak-hour weekday motor vehicle trips, the transit system adequacy test must be conducted based on a 1000-foot network distance study area from all points on the site frontage. Within the study area, there are nineteen bus stops. All but one stop are missing shelters and real-time travel information displays and thus are inadequate.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

Pedestrian access to the school is available from Providence Avenue, Lauer Terrace, and Ken Mill Apartments. The east side of Lauer Terrace has a continuous sidewalk into the elementary school, and there is a continuous sidewalk along school property to a staircase to the Ken Mill

apartments. The third story of the proposed addition will connect to a pedestrian bridge that leads to the upper play area; this will allow the play area to have ADA access from the school.

PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE

The area is served by Montgomery County Ride-On Bus Routes 12, 13, 15, and 19. Within the study area, these routes have stops along Manchester Road, Flower Avenue, and East Wayne Avenue.

PARKING

There is no minimum parking requirement for public schools in the zoning code. The Site currently has 46 parking spaces, two of which are ADA spaces. With this proposed expansion there will be an addition of 11 parking spaces (one of which will be an ADA space) to total 57 spaces.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

A Stormwater Management Concept Plan was approved by the Department of Permitting Services on January 16, 2025, in accordance with Chapter 19 of the County Code. The SWM Concept Plan illustrates that stormwater will be managed onsite using gravel dry wells.

SUSTAINABILITY

The project will include sustainability features including bicycle racks; replacement of existing stormwater infrastructure to reduce surface runoff quantity and improve quality; highly reflective roof surfaces to reduce heat gain in the building; water conserving and low flow plumbing fixtures; and a highly energy efficient building envelope, lighting system, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.

- 5. *whether a Preliminary or a Final Water Quality Plan has been reviewed by the Planning Board if the project is located in a Special Protection Area. In addition, for a Water Quality Plan for a project on public property, the Board must determine if the plan meets any additional applicable standards for Special Protection areas, including the standards of Article V. WATER QUALITY REVIEW IN SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS, of the County Code (pursuant to Section 19-65(d)(4));***

The proposal is not located in a Special Protection Area. Therefore, this requirement is not applicable.

- 6. *whether or not the site would be needed for park use if the proposal is for disposition of a surplus school or other publicly-owned property.***

This requirement is not applicable as the Proposal does not involve disposition of surplus school land.

7. *whether alternatives or mitigation measures have been considered for the project if the proposal is inconsistent with the General Plan or other plans and policies for the area, or has discernible negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, the transportation network, the environment, historic resources (including burial sites) or other resources.*

The Proposal is generally consistent with Thrive 2050, the 2000 *East Silver Spring Master Plan*, and other plans and policies for the area. The Proposal will provide an at-capacity elementary school building with functional and spatial improvements while maintaining the core of the existing school building which has been previously renovated over time. The overall Site Plan, while offering adjusted circulation patterns, will largely remain unchanged, which minimizes impact with regard to transportation and the environment. There are no known historic resources proximate to this Proposal.

SECTION 5 - COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As mentioned above, the Applicant team conducted three community meetings (on May 6, 2024, May 7, 2024, and May 23, 2024) in addition to the Preliminary Plans Presentation held for the Montgomery County Board of Education on September 26, 2024. The required pre-submission meeting with the Applicant team and staff from the Planning Department and Parks Department was held on October 16, 2024.

After Planning staff accepted the Mandatory Referral for review, Montgomery Planning notified local civic and homeowners' associations and other interested parties of this proposal. As of the date of this report, Staff has only received requests for information/clarification of proposed plans; no specific feedback or comments have been submitted in response to the proposed plans.

SECTION 6 - CONCLUSION

Staff recommends approval of Mandatory Referral 2024007 for the addition to Highland View Elementary School, with recommendations and the transmittal of comments to Montgomery County Public Schools.

SECTION 9 - ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Mandatory Referral Plan

Attachment B: Statement of Justification

Attachment C: Transportation Impact Statement

Attachment D: Agency Letters