



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

January 9, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *AC*
Sue Edwards, Team Leader, I-270 Team *SE*

FROM: Nancy Sturgeon, Planner (301-495-1308) *NS*
Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT 1: Mandatory Referral No. MR-03301-F&S-1, Montgomery County Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility at the Public Service Training Academy, 9710 Great Seneca Highway, Rockville, R-90/TDR 4 Zone

SUBJECT 2: Forest Conservation Plan for Mandatory Referral No. 03301-F&S-1, Montgomery County Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility at the Public Service Training Academy, 9710 Great Seneca Highway, Rockville

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL with the following comments:

1. Comply with the conditions of approval for the preliminary forest conservation plan. Provide a final forest conservation plan prior to Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services issuance of sediment and erosion control permits.
2. Conduct a rare species survey in the spring of 2004.
3. Provide a hiker-biker trail along the western edge of the site to connect Key West Avenue to Darnestown Road. Two proposed stations for the Corridor Cities Transitway are planned just north of the Public Service Training Academy site.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Public Service Training Academy (PSTA) is on a portion of a triangular parcel bounded by Great Seneca Highway, Key West Avenue, and Darnestown Road. (See Attachment 1.) The PSTA was established in 1973 for the purpose of providing a centralized location for specialized training of public safety employees, particularly police officers and fire fighters. The facility provides classroom space as well as an outdoor course for driver training as well as apparatus and props for training fire fighters.

The PSTA site is in need of reconfiguration and expansion to meet current and projected training needs, which have changed significantly since the facility opened 30 years ago. The Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility involves the reconstruction and expansion of the existing driver training facility in order to conduct basic, advanced, and specialized driver training and retraining on a regular basis for vehicle operators of various county agencies, including the Montgomery County Police Department, Department of Fire and Rescue Service, Division of Transit Services, Division of Highway Services, and the Department of Liquor Control. (See Attachment 4.) The expanded facility will provide a realistic city street network that includes school zones, railroad crossings, controlled intersections, and varying street configurations for vehicle placement and skill development exercises. The expanded skid pad will allow training on skid avoidance, recovery, and control techniques. Approximately 10 acres of forest to the east of the existing driver training track will be removed to accommodate this expansion. A tree buffer and stormwater management basin along Great Seneca Highway will remain.

The project also includes a new classroom building of 6,640 gross square feet that will replace a trailer that has been used as a classroom. Two new handicapped parking spaces will be added adjacent to the new classroom building. Part of the driver training includes classroom instruction, including the use of high-tech simulators. The project also includes the redesign of the existing stormwater management facility to accommodate both this project and the future PSTA academic building expansion, which will be the subject of a separate Mandatory Referral.

Background

There have been no major upgrades or renovations to the PSTA since it was completed in 1973. The idea for an expanded driver training facility that can serve multiple agencies has been in the planning stages for at least six years. The Division of Capital Development (formerly the Division of Facilities and Services), in conjunction with the Division of Risk Management, established a multi-agency work group of interested County Agencies to review driver-training requirements and to identify the need for a centralized driver training facility. A *Program of Requirements for the Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility* was prepared by several agencies in December 1997. This report reviewed the training practices, needs, and future requirements for driver training and classroom space needs for a number of County agencies. The report supported an expansion of the existing driver training facility at the PSTA site to accommodate the driver training needs of the various agencies.

The existing driver training area at the PSTA was not designed to train operators of large vehicles (buses, trucks, fire apparatus). Makeshift training arrangements have been made by several County agencies to provide driver training to their employees. For example, Ride-On has used a park and ride lot in Burtonsville to train bus drivers. The Department of Liquor Control, which is responsible for the delivery of all alcoholic beverages within the County, does not have a facility to train their drivers, who are limited to "on-the-job" training while on public roads. Many public vehicle operators are required to obtain a Commercial Drivers License from the Motor Vehicle Administration, but have difficulty acquiring the necessary skills.

This project was first included in the CIP in FY99, but was delayed due to additional information requested by the County Council. It was delayed again in FY01 and FY02 for fiscal reasons. The current approved schedule calls for design to begin in FY03, construction to begin in FY04, and the project to be completed in FY06. According to information on the PDF, in FY99 the Council requested that the County Executive examine whether additional land near the PSTA site should be acquired to ensure this location as the long-term site for public safety training in Montgomery County. The Council's Public Safety Committee received confirmation from the County Executive that there is sufficient buffering to adjacent property and that the PSTA master plan indicates that the current site can adequately support public service training needs for the County for the next 20 years.

Neighborhood Context

The PSTA occupies two-thirds of the triangular parcel bounded by Great Seneca Highway, Darnestown Road, and Key West Avenue on the west side of I-270. Other uses within the triangle-shaped area include the Maryland Technology Development Center (at the corner of Great Seneca Highway and Darnestown Road), about one dozen single-family homes along Darnestown Road, the Shady Grove Children's Medical Center, and a small retail center at the corner of Key West Avenue and Darnestown Road. (See Attachment 2.) The PSTA site occupies a prominent location within an area designated as the Research and Development Village, a world-class biotech and high-tech research center with a number of private businesses, two major universities, a hospital, as well as several adjacent federal agencies.

Just across Great Seneca Highway to the east is the area designated by the County as the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center. The Life Sciences Center includes a health services core, anchored by Shady Grove Adventist Hospital with the Johns Hopkins University complex to the north and the University of Maryland Shady Grove campus to the south. On numerous sites surrounding the hospital and the universities are private biotech and research and development businesses. The federal agency, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which has a Biotechnology Division to advance the commercialization of biotechnology, is located to the north off Muddy Branch Road.

West of the PSTA site, across Key West Avenue, is the Banks Farm/Belward property, which is owned by Johns Hopkins University. The site is developed with one business, Human Genome Sciences, at the eastern edge of the property, as well as one single-family dwelling. The remainder of the site is currently developed with a single-family dwelling, but has an approved preliminary plan for 1.8 million square feet of research and development uses related to Johns Hopkins University.

The following summarizes the uses that surround the PSTA site:

- To the east, across Great Seneca Highway, is a child care center, the Learning Center, the Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICA), the State of Maryland's Noyes Children's Center, as well as two buildings for BioReliance, a private company.

- To the north, across the intersection of Key West Avenue and Great Seneca Highway, is DANAC, a biotechnology company.
- To the northwest, across Key West Avenue, is the Human Genome Sciences building and the Banks Farm/Belward property.
- To the southwest, between the PSTA site and Darnestown Road are single-family homes (which face on Darnestown Road) as well as the Shady Grove Children's Medical and a small retail center.
- Southeast of the PSTA academic building, across the access road, is the Maryland Technology Development Center.

Subject Site

The Public Service Training Academy occupies 45 acres of County-owned land. The site has some natural features, including some wetlands and a stream on the northeast side of the site along Great Seneca Highway, which has an existing in-stream stormwater management pond. (See Attachment 3.) This area is forested. There is also a forested area on the west side of the site, which provides a buffer between the PSTA and the single-family homes that front on Darnestown Road.

The PSTA site is currently developed with an academic building at the southern portion of the site near the entrance off Great Seneca Highway across from Medical Center Drive. The academic building is 120,000 square feet and is surrounded by parking for staff, students, and visitors with a total of 109 spaces. Behind the academic building are a number of facilities related to driver training as well as fire and rescue training: fire skills props, a car fire simulator, flammable liquids training, overturned tanker, trench rescue, vehicle extraction as well as a burn building and a collapse building. The site also includes a canine facility and a running track that surrounds the training areas.

Hours of Operation

The agencies that use the existing Driver Training Facility conduct instructional classes and vehicular practice sessions at varying times. The Montgomery County Police Department holds approximately 10 training sessions a year, each averaging 30 students. The four-week sessions are held from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with one evening class per week.

The Department of Fire and Rescue Services conducts approximately eight, two-week training sessions per year, averaging 35-40 students per session. Classes are held from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., seven days a week. Saturday classes are generally from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and are targeted for career employees. Evening classes of varying size are also held for volunteer Fire and Rescue personnel.

The Division of Transit Services conducts three-week training sessions every month, averaging 10-15 students. Class times are 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday during the winter months and 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. during the summer months.

ANALYSIS

Master Plan Conformance

The Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility is part of the 45-acre County-owned Public Service Training Academy located in the southwest quadrant of Key West Avenue and Great Seneca Boulevard north of Darnestown Road. The project is consistent with the 1990 *Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan*. The 1990 Master Plan envisioned the continued operation of the PSTA for the foreseeable future and noted that no change to the existing uses was proposed for the area. The Plan states that any expansion of the facilities at the PSTA should take into account this site's important location within the Research and Development Village.

Landscaping and Lighting

The landscape plan and lighting plan will provide compatibility with adjacent development. The site plan includes preliminary lighting of the training facilities. The lighting is provided for night use, but will be switched off following completion of evening classes. The facility will not be open for use by the general public. Landscape plans will be developed during the design process of the academic building expansion, which will be submitted as a separate Mandatory Referral.

Environmental Guidelines

The PSTA site is located within the Muddy Branch watershed and sits atop a large serpentinite outcrop that extends from just north on this site down to Glen Road in Potomac. This surface rock generally has thin soils, stunted vegetation and supports rare species in certain locations. There is a stream with an existing in-stream stormwater management pond on the east side of the site along Great Seneca Road. This riparian area is forested. Other upland forest occurs adjacent to this riparian forest and on the west side of the property.

The proposed plan respects the environmental and wetland buffers with the exception of the existing in-stream stormwater management pond. Although new in-stream ponds are not generally approved under the current standards, those that exist are allowed to be maintained and retrofitted for expansion of the existing use. A survey for rare, threatened and endangered species was conducted in the fall of 2003 yielding no results. A follow-up survey will be conducted in the spring of 2004 in locations likely to support certain rare species. The canine facility may have to be relocated if rare species are found and the spur of the track would not be built if rare species are found in this area.

Forest Conservation

A Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) Plan for the PSTA site was updated, resubmitted, and approved on October 17, 2003. Although currently developed, the site still contains approximately 14 acres of forest, much of this located along the stream on the northeast side of the property. In order to expand and improve

the driver training area, 10 acres of forest will be removed. As required by the Forest Conservation Law, the planting of approximately 3.5 acres of forest will mitigate the on-site tree removal. This replanting will be done at an off-site location, the WSSC Tridelphia Reservoir, a tree bank established by the County for this purpose.

Water Quality and Stormwater Management

This facility is located in the Decoverly tributary of Muddy Branch. The water quality in this tributary is fair. Stormwater is managed in a facility on the east side of the property. The Department of Permitting Services approved the new stormwater management concept on September 11, 2003. As part of this concept, the older existing pond will be retrofitted for the increased development and to meet current standards. Also another dry pond will be added on the north side of the property. In addition, two new sand filters, a biofiltration structure and a recharge facility are planned to address water quality.

Noise

The proposed plan for this site should not increase the current noise levels associated with the training academy. The facility has been in existence for a number of years and the proposed renovations will not significantly change the methods of operation. The driver-training track is low speed and the enlarged skid pan will include water flooding to reduce friction and minimize noise. The Department of Environmental Protection administers the Montgomery County Code, Chapter 31B Noise Control and may require a noise study to test noise disturbance and determine if mitigation is needed.

Dust and Air Quality

Operations at this site currently include controlled burning to train fire-fighters. This will continue under the current plan. There should be no increased dust levels associated with the proposed plan.

Transportation and Access

The roads that surround the PSTA site are all major highways – Key West Avenue, Great Seneca Highway, and Darnestown Road. The Multi-Agency Driver Training project has been undertaken to upgrade the existing facilities and provide better training services. This project is not intended to increase the class size or number of students, but to enhance the existing training facilities. Construction of the expanded facility should not adversely affect existing traffic patterns on Great Seneca Highway. No work is proposed at existing entrances or intersections.

Travel trips to the site are not expected to increase. Currently, many students car pool from their permanent workplace (i.e., fire station, police station, etc.). Public transportation is available to the PSTA site, but is not always an option for students who may be carrying training equipment with them. There is a sidewalk on Great Seneca Highway and a newly constructed sidewalk on Key West Avenue.

Staff requested that the applicant show a desire line for a future hiker-biker trail along the western edge of the property. This potential trail would provide a connection between Key West Avenue and Darnestown Road. A station for the Corridor Cities Transitway is proposed on the Banks Farm/Belward property, northwest of the PSTA site. A trail connection through the PSTA site would provide the most direct link from the transit stop to the training academy as well as the University of Maryland Shady Grove campus, which is located to the southeast.

CONCLUSION

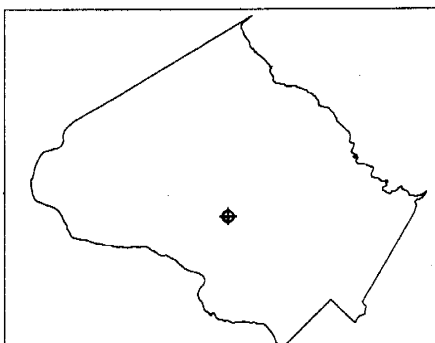
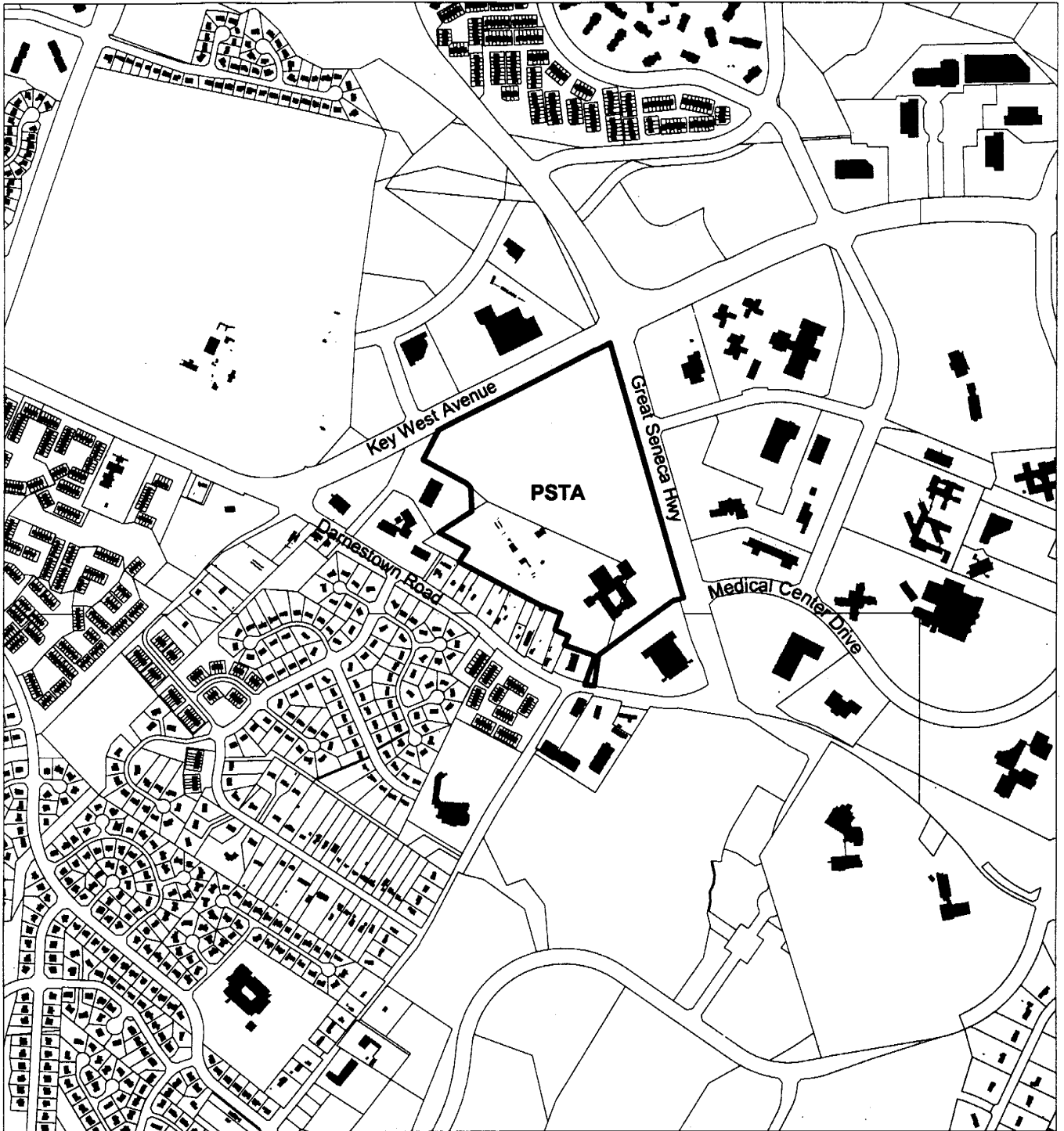
Staff recommends approval of the expanded Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility at the Public Service Training Academy. The project is consistent with the 1990 *Shady Grove Study Area Master Plan*. Staff looks forward to working with the applicant on Phase 2 of the project, which will involve an expansion to the academic building.

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Attachments

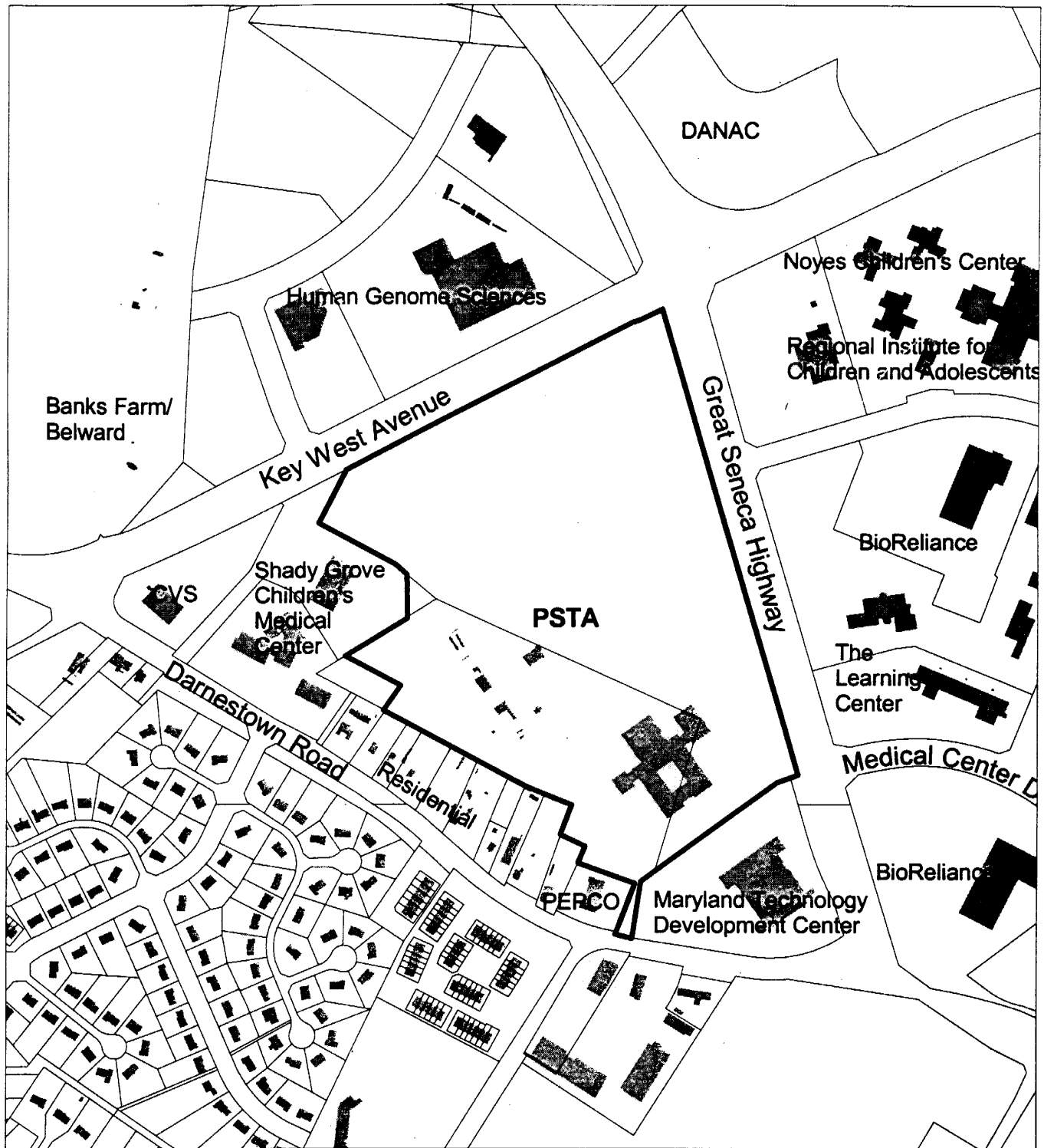
1. Vicinity Map
2. Neighborhood Context
3. Aerial Photo
4. PSTA Long Range Master Plan and Driver Training Expansion

Vicinity Map
Public Service Training Academy

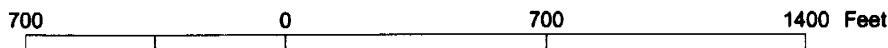


**Mandatory Referral
Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility**





**Mandatory Referral
Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility**





2002 photo

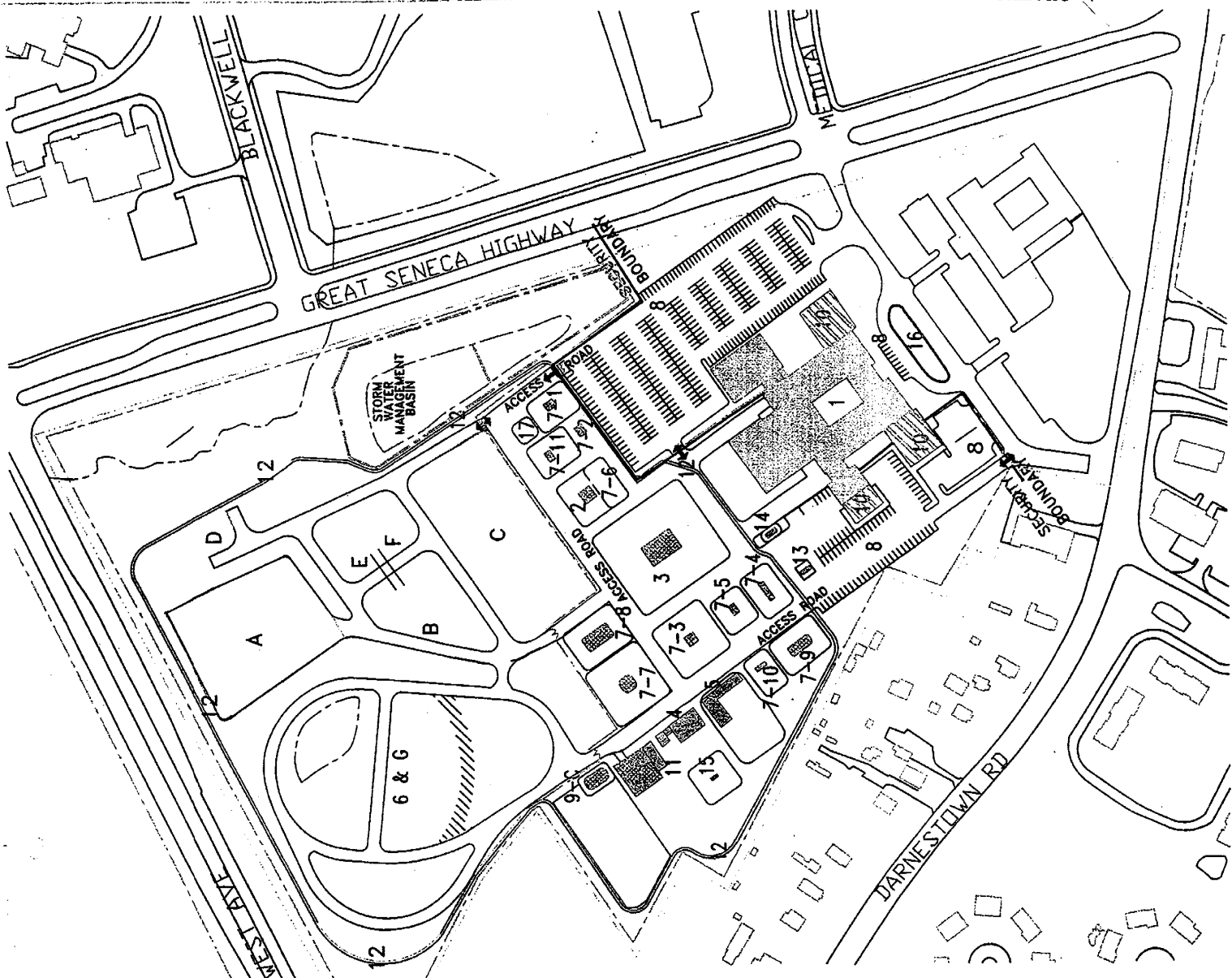
Legend

- Property
- Sensitive areas
- Topography
- Streams

**Mandatory Referral
Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility**

1000 0 1000 2000 Feet





MULTI-AGENCY DRIVER TRAINING TRACK

NOTATION KEY

- A. SKID PAN
- B. DRIVING TRACK
- C. SKILL PAD
- D. LOADING DOCK
- E. TRAFFIC SIGNAL
- F. RAIL ROAD CROSSING
- G. DRIVER'S TRAINING TRACK

PSTA - LONG RANGE MASTER PLAN

- LEGEND**
- 1 PSTA Academic Building (Exist.)
 - 2 Training Tower (New)
 - 3 Burn Building (New)
 - 4 DFRS Stg./Shop Bldg. (Exist.)
 - 5 Collapse Building (Exist.)
 - 6 Driver's Training Track (EVOC)
 - 7 Fire Skills Props As Follows
 - 7-1 Drafting/Pumper Test Area
 - 7-2 Oil-Water Separator
 - 7-3 Gas Dragon
 - 7-4 Car Fire Propane Simulator
 - 7-5 LPG Tank
 - 7-6 Multipurpose Pad
 - 7-7 Flammable Liquids Training
 - 7-8 Overturned Tanker
 - 7-9 Railroad Tanker
 - 7-10 Trench Rescue
 - 7-11 Vehicle Extraction & Stg.
 - 8 Visitor Parking: 10 Spaces
 - Staff Parking: 105 Spaces
 - Student Parking: 332 Spaces
 - 9-E Multi-Agency Driver Training Facility (Not in Scope of POR)
 - 9-C Canine Facilities
 - 10 Academic Bldg. Expansion
 - 11 Vehicle Maintenance
 - 12 Running Track
 - 13 Vehicle Fueling Station
 - 14 Propane Storage Tank
 - 15 Bunker
 - 16 Memorial
 - 17 Drafting Reservoir
- SYMBOL LEGEND**
- Property Line
 - Security Boundary
 - Fence Line
 - Site Access/Egress