

Staff Recommendation

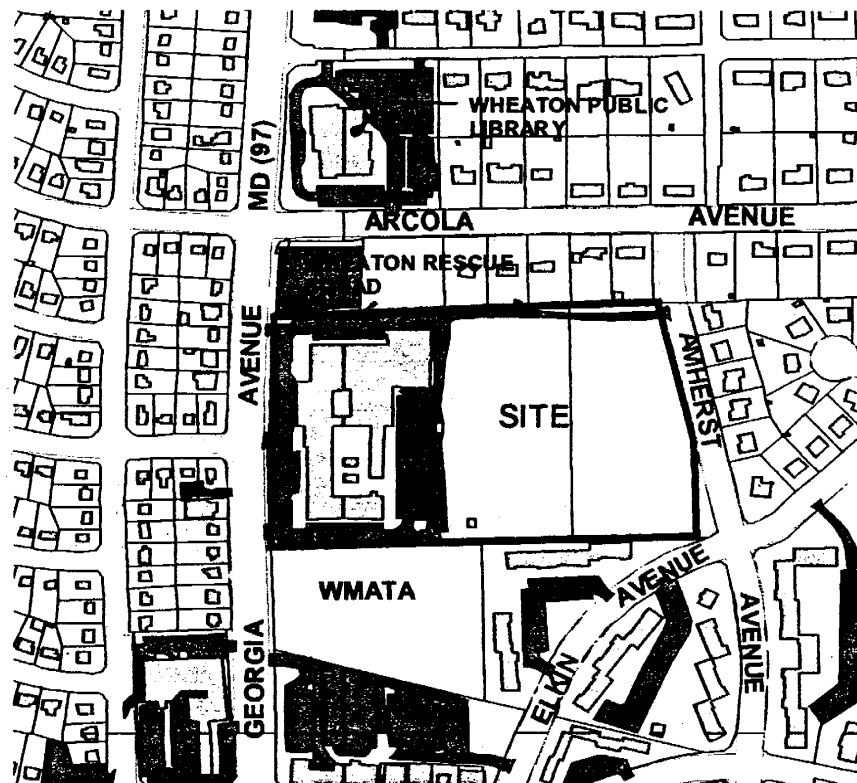
The M-NCPPC staff met with the development team and Montgomery County on numerous occasions to discuss the retention of the Rafferty Center and area that is to be placed in reservation. Staff supports the County's willingness to retain the Rafferty Center and enter into negotiations with the applicant for the area surrounding the building, however, Staff has a concern over the recreation amenities that need to be provided for the proposed community while the applicant and county are in negotiations within the reservation period. Staff has placed conditions on the site plan to limit the number of building permits that can be issued before recreation facilities need to be provided. Additionally, staff is requiring that an alternate site plan be presented to show how recreation requirements are being satisfied in the event the Rafferty Center is demolished.

The process for reservation allows for the Rafferty Center, open space and surrounding buildings to be recorded on a plat for a period to not exceed beyond September 30, 2004. It is anticipated that within this time period the County can negotiate with the applicant to secure the land area for additional open space, parking and access as required in the binding elements of application No. G-796. If the County acquired the area in reservation, the applicant would be required to submit a revised Site Plan to address open space, recreation, parking and access. No preliminary plan revisions would be required.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Surrounding Vicinity

The site is located south of the intersection of Arcola Avenue, directly fronting on Georgia Avenue to the west and Amherst Avenue to the east in Wheaton, Maryland. The present site is the location of the Good Counsel High School, which is in the process of relocating to the Olney area. The property at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Arcola Avenue is the new location of the Wheaton Rescue Squad (Plat book 609 page 89). An overflow gravel parking lot for the school is directly east of the Wheaton Rescue Squad site. Directly across Arcola Avenue, at the intersection of Georgia Avenue is the Wheaton Regional Library and it's associated parking, and directly north of the Library is the Montgomery County Recreational Center containing the Wheaton Community Center and the Wheaton Youth Center.

The residential properties surrounding the subject site are all part of different blocks in the Blueridge Manor subdivision. The section to the north of the property is Block 5 (Plat Book A-5) contains one-family detached units, while the section across Amherst Avenue is Block 1 (Plat Book 179 page 39), contains one-family residential properties and zoned R-90. The residential subdivision across Georgia Avenue is known as Wheaton Hills and is zoned R-60. Southeast of the subject site is the Blueridge Manor apartment complex, a 2.5-3 -story brick building, (Plat book 176, page 18) that is zoned R-20. The vacant WMATA site (Plat book 530, Page 28 [Parcel 920]) directly to the south is zoned R-90/TDR. The properties across Georgia Avenue are zoned R-90.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Site Description

The 13.86-acre site is situated south of Arcola Avenue between Georgia Avenue and Amherst Avenue and is the present location of Good Counsel High School. The front of the site on Georgia Avenue contains the High School and parking which wraps completely around the entire building. There are three entrances into the school site from Georgia Avenue and an additional entrance from Amherst Avenue behind the one-family detached units that back up to the site. In the center of the site, east of the main building, is the lighted running track and ball field. The field is terraced approximately twenty feet lower than the existing building and is separated by bleachers. The site levels off for about 160 feet and then drops off sharply 25-30 feet toward Amherst Avenue. The overall site changes in elevation by approximately 50 feet from Georgia Avenue to Amherst Avenue.

The parking areas contain shade trees and shrubs in the island areas and there is foundation planting around the existing building. Larger shade trees, forming a hedgerow on the northern property line, provide a buffer to the existing residential homes that front on Arcola Avenue and back to the site. Additional buffers of primarily shade trees exist at the northeastern property line along Amherst Avenue and along the back of the apartment building in the southeast corner of the site.

