



MCPB

Item No. 10

Date: 06-17-21

Clarksburg Elementary School #9, Mandatory Referral, MR2021006



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Description

Request to build new elementary school at 22215 Dunlin Street, Clarksburg, Maryland.

Staff Recommendation: **Denial**

Mandatory Referral MR2021006

Location: Intersection of Clarksburg Road (State Route 121) and Dunlin Street

Acreage: 9.87 acres

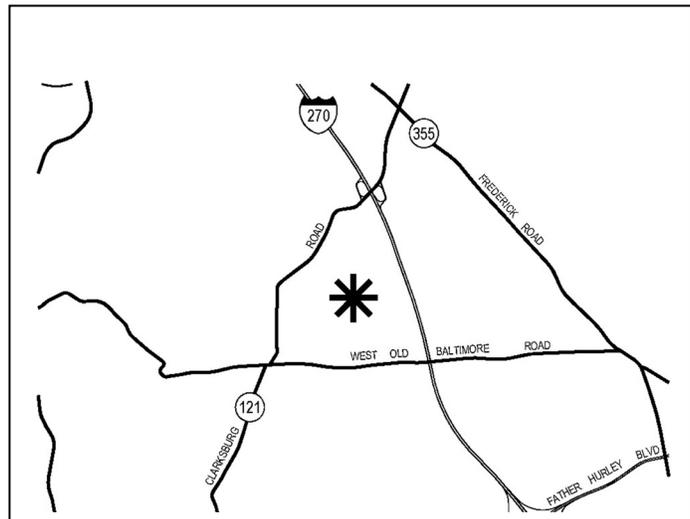
Zone: CRT-0.5, C-0.25, R-0.25, H-65T

Master Plan: 1994 Clarksburg Area Master Plan

Applicant: Montgomery County Public Schools

Accepted Date: April 21, 2021

Review Basis 20-301 et seq. of the Land Use Article, Mandatory Referral



Summary

- Staff recommends **Denial** of the Mandatory Referral MR2021006
 - The Application is not in substantial conformance with the 1994 Clarksburg Area Master Plan
 - While not applicable, this project would not meet the criteria of the Cabin Branch Design Guidelines.
- There are three items for Planning Board review for this project: The Final Forest Conservation Plan Amendment, the Preliminary/Final Water Quality Plan for the Clarksburg Special Protection Area (SPA), and the Mandatory Referral.
- This memorandum covers Staff review and recommendations for the Mandatory Referral. The review and recommendations for the Forest Conservation Plan Amendment and the SPA Water Quality Plan are covered in a separate memorandum.

Staff recommends transmitting the recommendation of **Denial** to the Montgomery County Public Schools:

As a primary civic building within the greater Cabin Branch Neighborhood, this building should be iconic and oriented towards Clarksburg Road, and should be fronted by a very open and civic plaza facing onto a street connecting to the primary entry of the school. The urban design with building orientation, parking location, relationship to the streets and adjacent residential communities and to the main neighborhood street of Clarksburg Road. Parking should be out of the way and to the side or rear of the building. A primary driveway to the parking and services along the edge of the park would create a "public" edge to the park that could feature a well-designed, tree-lined pathway along its outer edge. All in all, this building should be defining streets, supporting the public realm, framing open spaces and a very important iconic element of the greater community. The urban design choices by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) eliminates any sense of community building and community framing, does not support the Master Plan objectives, and reduces all the other design elements that have been created by the overall Cabin Branch Neighborhood.

INTRODUCTION

Site Description

The Clarksburg Elementary School #9 Site consists of 9.87 acres, Parcel A, on Plat 24911 at 22215 Dunlin Street, Clarksburg ("Site") and zoned CRT. The Site is generally flat. The Site contains some individual street trees, but no forest or other environmental features. The Site was mass graded with the development of the Cabin Branch Neighborhood under Site Plan #820050150. The neighboring properties are residential. The Site is bounded on the northwest by Clarksburg Road (MD 121), to the northeast by Byrne Park Drive, and southwest by Dunlin Street. The Site is within the boundaries of the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan.

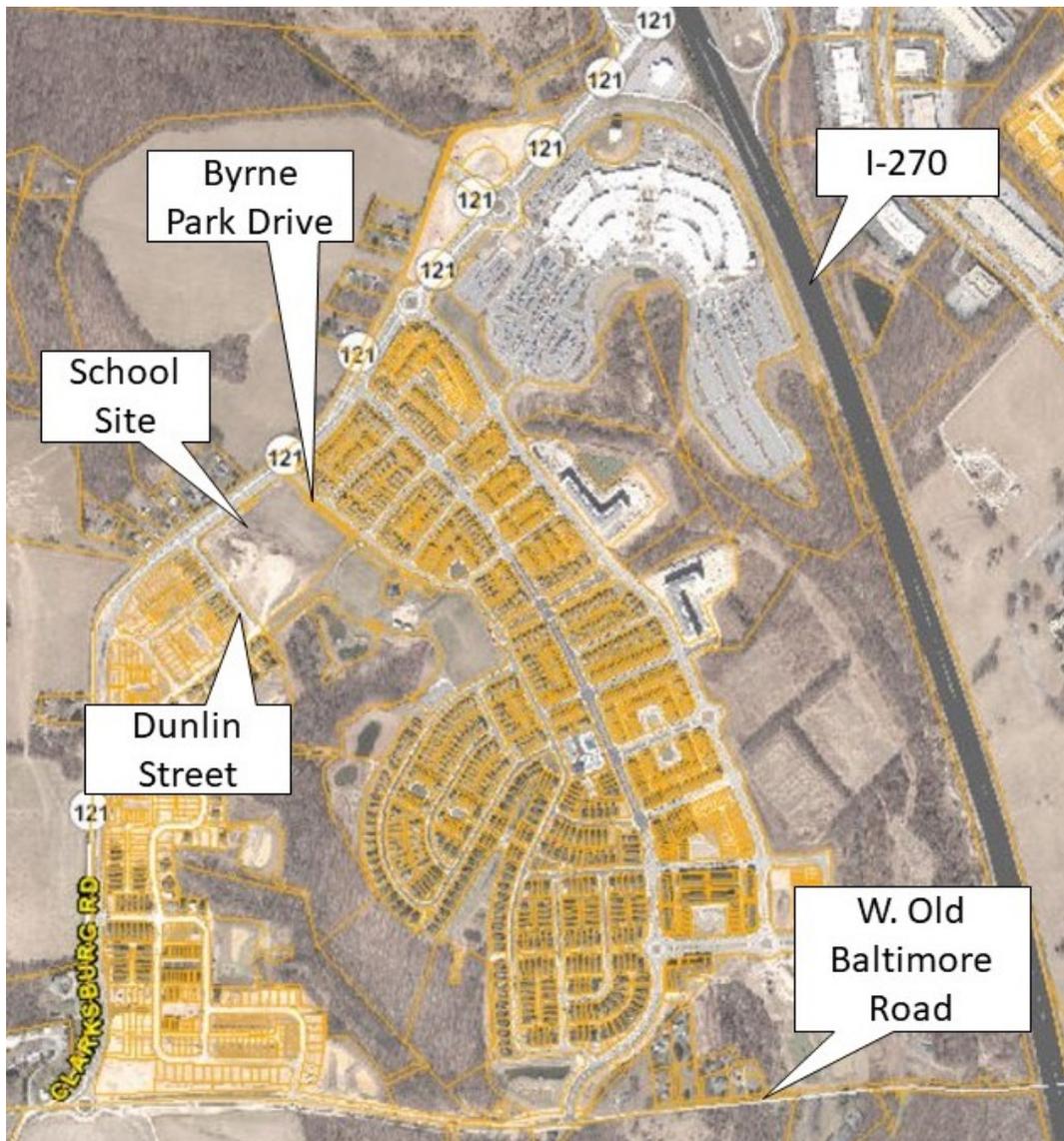


Figure 1: Aerial Photograph of Vicinity



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph of the Site

Project Description

Montgomery County Public School (“Applicant”) is proposing to build the new Clarksburg Cluster Elementary School #9. The project is proposed to be completed in August of 2023. The school will provide program spaces for Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Grades 1 through 5 when completed. The proposed building plan is a repeat design of the prototype elementary school that was utilized for Great Seneca, Little Bennett, William B. Gibbs, Wilson Wims, and Snowden Farm Elementary Schools.

The proposed site plan situates the new building near the center of the site, the parking, bus loop and student drop-off loop are located on the western side of the site along Dunlin Street, and the ballfields and play areas are located on the eastern portion of the site along Byrne Park Drive.

All vehicular access is proposed from Dunlin Street. On-site vehicular traffic circulation is designed to provide access to the school for pedestrians while providing approximately 90 parking spaces. Parking is also available along the surrounding streets. The student drop-off and the separate bus loop are designed to provide maximum queuing spaces on site to minimize the traffic backup on to the streets.

A new stormwater management system will be provided for quality control measures on site. Stormwater quantity control will be provided by the existing storm water management pond located to the southeast of the site. Micro-scale water quality practices will be provided to comply with the environmental site design regulations. The proposed storm water management will include the use of a full vegetated roof and environmental site design elements required by the State of Maryland and Montgomery County.

New utilities, including water, sewer, gas, and electric services will support the needs of the new facility.

SITE DESIGN

Applicant's Proposal

The proposed site plan situates the new building near the center of the site, the parking, bus loop and student drop-off loop are located on the western side of the site along Dunlin Street, and the ballfields and play areas are located on the eastern portion of the site along Byrne Park Drive. All vehicular entry and exit will be accessed from Dunlin Street. On-site vehicular traffic circulation is designed to provide access to the school for pedestrians while providing approximately 90 parking spaces. Parking is also available along the surrounding streets. The student drop-off and the separate bus loop are designed to provide maximum queuing spaces on site to minimize the traffic backup on to the streets.

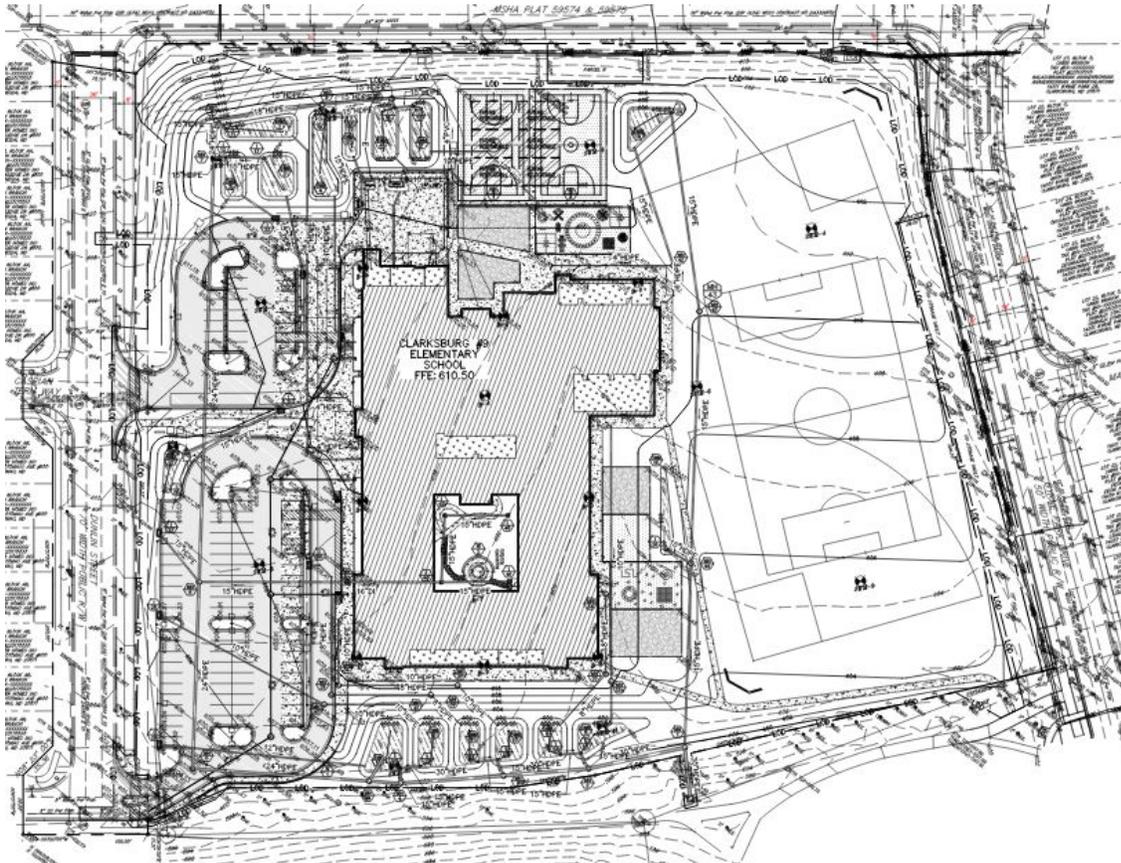


Figure 3: Proposed Site Layout

Staff's Recommendations

New school buildings should be sited in a manner that addresses adjacent streets, promotes safe walking and biking to school, and provides a civic presence to their communities. An inviting plaza should lead from the main street frontage to the school entry. This is especially important in a new community, like Cabin Branch.

Two-thirds of the Cabin Branch residences are located northeast of Byrne Park Drive and the school site. However, the Clarksburg Elementary School is proposed to be located in the middle of the site southwest of Byrne Park Drive, approximately 14 feet below the Clarksburg Road street grade. Storm water management facilities, two basketball courts, and portions of the baseball/soccer field sit between Clarksburg Road and the side of the school. The primary school entrance is accessed from a narrow sidewalk sandwiched between two school parking lots on Dunlin Street. The rear of the school faces Byrne Park Drive and is separated from the street by the school's ball fields. There is limited pedestrian access to the school from this side of the site.

Byrne Park Drive is a main street into the heart of the Cabin Branch neighborhood where most of the residences are located. It is also the primary point to Clarkmont Local Park, which is located south of the school site.

In order to achieve a better design relationship between the proposed Clarksburg Elementary School site and the surrounding community, the new school should be sited near the intersection of Clarksburg Road and Byrne Park Drive to engage the public realm and create a civic presence and gateway into the community. The main entrance to the school should be on Byrne Park Drive. A large plaza with shade trees would provide a welcoming pedestrian experience to the school. School parking and drop-off areas should not be the prominent feature in front of the school, but should be placed south of school between the school and Clarkmont Local Park. This will allow for shared-parking opportunities during non-school hours between the school and the park. Instead of scattering the play courts and ball fields around the perimeter of the school, a larger and cohesive activity area would be created with the school placed along the prominent corner of the site.



Figure 4: Staff Illustrative Concept 1



Figure 5: Staff Illustrative Concept 2

Cabin Branch Design Guidelines

While the design guidelines do not apply the MCPS school site because this is a portion of the property dedicated or conveyed to Montgomery County or other governmental entities. It is important that we consider them for the context of what all private development within the Cabin Branch Neighborhood has strived to achieve and further supports Staff's recommendation the proposed site design is not in substantial conformance with the Master Plan and the surrounding community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES - The vision for Cabin Branch is to create an active, vibrant, pedestrian-oriented community that supports a broad range of uses and activities. The Development Plan, Preliminary Plan, Infrastructure Site Plan, and detailed, individual Site Plans depict a community with short, walkable blocks, streets lined by buildings, and sidewalks with areas conducive to walking. They also recognize the community's placement at a major transportation interchange with uses appropriate for that location. The scale of streets and blocks, the network of streets, and the street frontage are important in achieving this vision. The Design Guidelines provide development standards that promote this vision.

Cabin Branch is master planned as a beautiful mixed-use community. It relies on a mix of uses and building types to create a vibrant, varied, and successful community. The streetscape treatments will provide a cohesive legato that connects the neighborhoods and various uses together. Repeating community elements and the evocative use of the stone, heavy timbers and ironworks, recalling elements will further enhance the sense of place, scale, theme and connectivity of the various neighborhoods in Cabin Branch. The community's entrance feature and special features throughout the community adopt this compelling and evocative theme.

The commercial and institutional uses will acknowledge the transition between smaller buildings and massing of residential areas and the larger massing of the commercial and institutional uses. The pedestrian character should extend into these areas. Parking lots and/or parking structures should be designed and/or screened so that exposure to public areas is minimized as much as possible. High visibility retaining walls and SWM structures will be visually enhanced through design of wall, landscaping and selection of materials.

MCPS's site design not only does not meet the standards set for the rest of the community it is the opposite of what has been carefully planned over almost two decades.

Applicant's Response: There are two parcels internal to the school site that are separately owned by Tri-Pointe Homes DC Metro Inc. that would preclude the fronting of the building on either Byrne Park Drive or Clarksburg Road (MD 121). This combined with elevation changes at this intersection and concerns of regrading the site might cause site specific concerns of soil stability and the ability to meet MCPS's timeline and budget constraints.

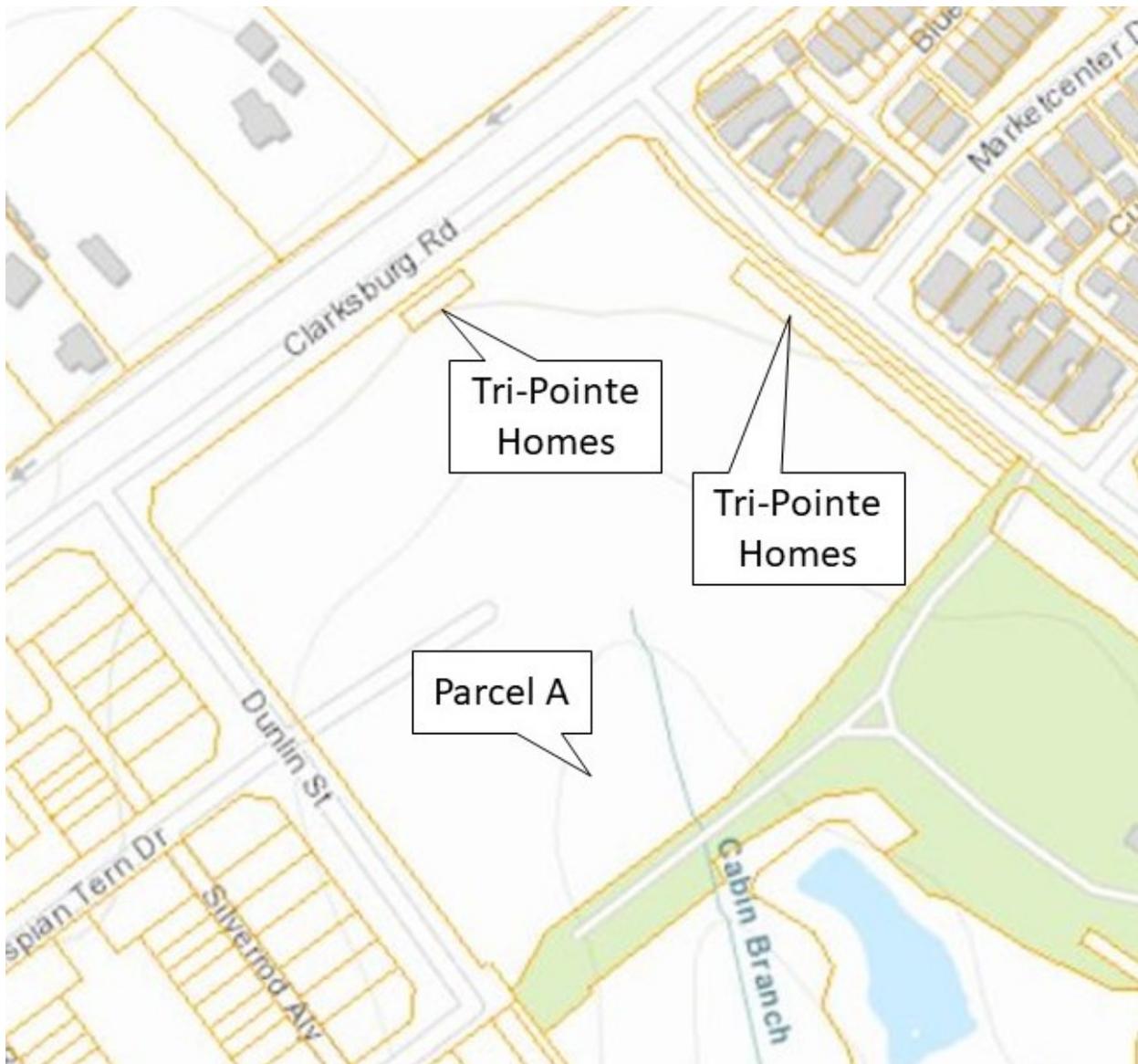


Figure 6: Parcel Ownership

Building Design

Staff generally supports the building design, sustainability, and landscape and lighting. However, it is hard to properly evaluate it when the site design is out of context with the surrounding neighborhood.

Sections and Elevations

The proposed building exterior features a contrasting stone veneer pattern that articulates and reduces the apparent massing and identifies the functional spaces of the interior. Well-placed window openings establish the façade rhythm and bringing natural lighting into the internal circulation areas.

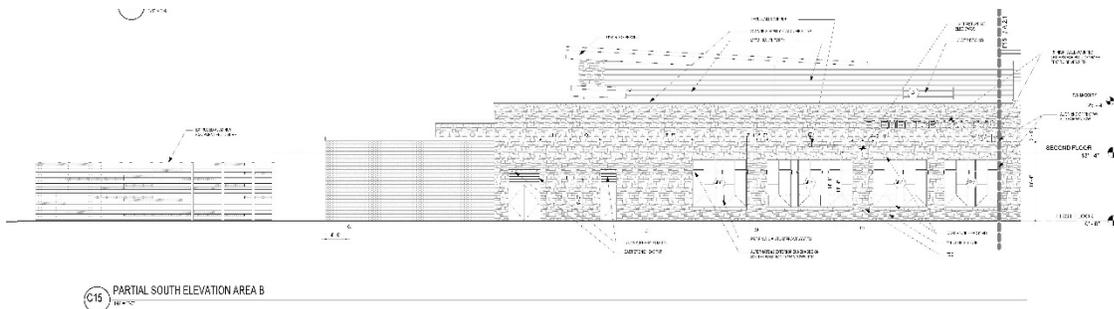


Figure 7: Front Elevation Drawing (partial)

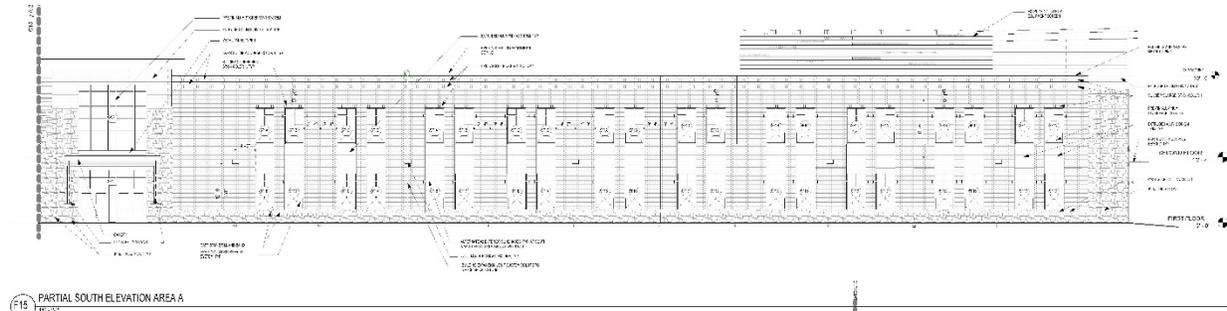


Figure 8: Front Elevation Drawing (partial)

Sustainability

The project will be designed and constructed with an emphasis on the environmental sustainability. The architecture and engineering systems will align with Montgomery County Public Schools facility management sustainability principles to ensure long term operational effectiveness. The project will comply with the Montgomery County Amendments to the International Green Construction Code (IgCC). The school will be designed and constructed to meet requirements of the Maryland High Performance Building Program by conforming with Green Globes through its survey process.

Landscape and Lighting

The submitted Landscape Plan (Attachment D) proposes tree and ornamental shrub plantings throughout the Site, ornamental trees bounding the stormwater filtration areas, and foundation planting along the building line. Shade trees and ornamental trees are proposed for the surface parking areas. The lighting plan proposes a mixture of lighting types including fixtures on poles and various wall mounted lighting. The lighting plan shows no light spill at the Site boundaries; however, it is recommended that any lighting fixtures near the right-of-way at the entrance be equipped with cut-off shields to limit spill beyond the Site boundaries.

Operating Hours

The school's hours of operation vary and comply with the standard MCPS school schedule. The school also has a year-round program and is operated throughout the summer as well as the general school year. On typical school days, the hours of operation are 8:50 am to 3:05pm.

Parking

Staff and visitor parking along with a student drop-off loop will be accessed from Dunlin Street along the south side of the Site and will provide access to the main entrance of the building. The proposed site

design provides on-site staging areas for buses, 90 parking spaces, and on-site student drop-off queuing. There are no standard parking rates for elementary schools and final determination of parking adequacy is at the discretion of MCPS. The proposed parking, while adequate for faculty and staff, may cause limited visitor parking.

ANALYSIS

Neighborhood Compatibility

The Site is currently un-occupied and has been rough graded for an Elementary School. The character of the proposed building will create an attractive and inviting school building for the community, however the siting of the building detracts from its form and function within the neighborhood.

While the proposed building is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood MCPS has missed an opportunity to engage the neighborhood and create a civic presence and gateway into the community.

Master Plan Conformance

The subject property is located within the Cabin Branch Neighborhood of the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan area. It is located west of I-270, directly east and facing Clarksburg Road (MD 121), and north of West Old Baltimore Road adjacent to the Ten Mile Creek Area

The Master Plan describes the characteristics of Cabin Branch which have led to its designation as a mixed-use neighborhood center including: proximity to the Boyds MARC commuter rail station; roadway access from MD 121, I-270 and a future I-270 interchange at Newcut Road; land ownership consolidated among several large parcels; proximity to Black Hill Regional Park; and property frontage and visibility from I-270.

The Master Plan states that the opportunity to provide a transit-oriented residential neighborhood is one of the most important public policy objectives.

During the Clarksburg Master Plan process, the Planning Board and County Council devoted considerable discussion to the appropriate land use for the subject property. The Cabin Branch Neighborhood is the only portion on the western side of I-270 that is proposed for significant residential development. Most of the development in the Cabin Branch Neighborhood is recommended to occur on the Cabin Branch property.

The Master Plan states the recommended mix of uses for this neighborhood as follows:

Residential	1,950 dwelling units plus MPDU units
Employment	2.4 million square feet
Public Uses	Places of worship, childcare, community building, <u>elementary school</u> , and park

A major Master Plan concern is that the employment uses become an integral part of the overall Cabin Branch Neighborhood and that strong interrelationships be established among residential, employment,

retail, and public facility uses. To encourage this, proposals for development should include a discussion of how individual plans will relate to the Master Plan's overall vision for the Cabin Branch Neighborhood.

A local park, an elementary school, and other civic spaces are all proposed to be located in close proximity to each other as well as to the stream valley to provide a contiguous system of public open spaces.

Policy 1 Town Scale of Development (Pg. 16)

Strives to maintain an identity for Clarksburg separate from Germantown or Damascus.

Recognizes the importance of civic spaces and public uses to the development of a town concept.

Policy 7 Transit- and Pedestrian-Oriented Neighborhoods (Pg. 28)

One of the major Plan challenges is how to channel and direct future development in a way that will allow future residents to feel part of a larger community. The neighborhood is the basic building block in establishing that sense of community. In these types of neighborhoods, buildings frame streets and their sidewalks creating a network of public spaces where neighbors can be engaged with the greater community. In this type of neighborhood, students, teachers, and community members should be encouraged to walk to school without having to traverse expansive parking lots. Buildings, their entrances, and prominent pedestrian-engaging facades should face directly, or near directly onto the streets with parking and services located to the sides or behind buildings, away from pedestrians and passing automobiles.

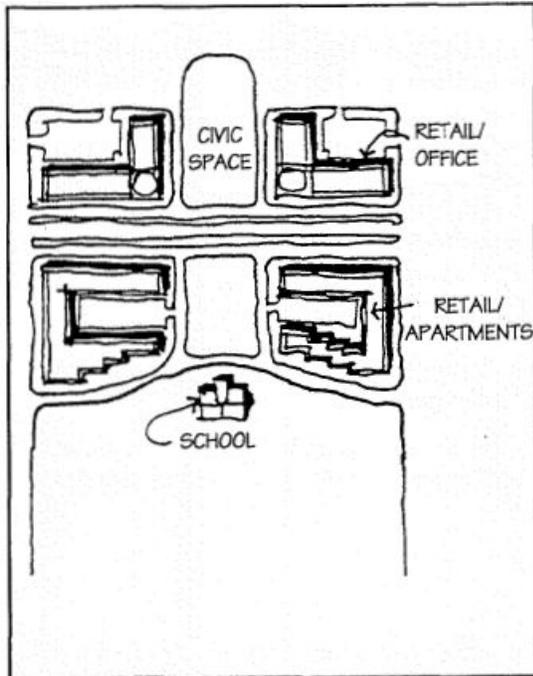
Mix of Uses

Establishes a mix of uses in each neighborhood to encourage pedestrian travel and reduce dependency on the automobile.

Discourages separation of uses.

Provides a pattern of development that provides for retail uses, employment opportunities, open spaces, schools, and housing units. Each of these uses and their buildings frame streets and create a thriving public realm which helps strengthen community and brings value to the community and property owners.

Proposes retail and employment uses at a pedestrian scale and oriented to the needs of residents.



1. Mix of Uses

Figure 9: Master Plan Illustration on Mix of Uses (note the location of the school, fronted on major roadways and adjacent civic space)

Interconnected Streets

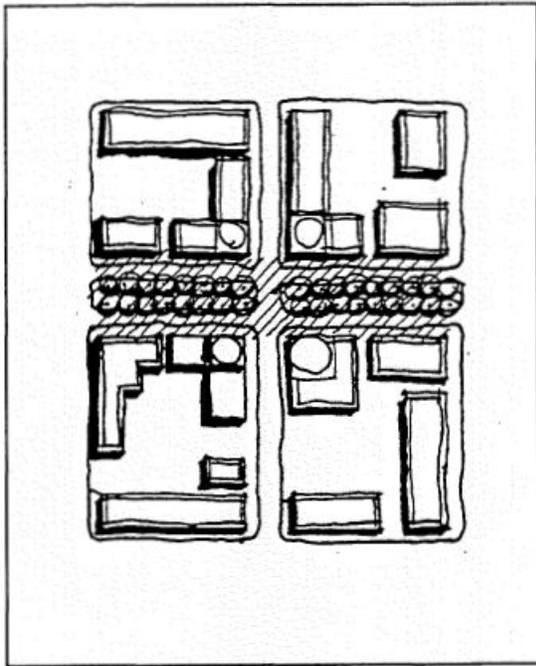
Provides more direct access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles to all areas of the neighborhood, including transit stations, retail stores, civic buildings and spaces, and residences.

Street-Oriented Buildings

Fosters the creation of transit- and pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods by proposing that buildings be clustered along streets and frame those streets. Likewise, buildings should also frame public spaces in a way that frames and defines the space and creates greater safety through “eyes on the park”.

While the use is consistent with the Master Plan, the design choices made by MCPS make this application not in substantial conformance with the Master Plan. In this plan, the school is set back from the street in the middle of the larger site with expansive parking lots separating the school entrance from the public realm of the street. This separation degrades the public realm of the adjacent neighborhood and diminishes the safety of pedestrians and bikers coming to the school. Likewise, the intimate civic nature of the school is diminished in favor of a more suburban commercial building behind expansive parking lots. A thin walkway and entry plaza is created to try to mitigate the created problem. Also, in this plan, services including the garbage collection area are located along, and facing onto Clarksburg Road, one of the most prominent streets within this community. Although these uses are screened, they are still below the street elevation which possibly allows views into them from above. These uses must be located away from the public realm of streets, especially this most important street.

Again, in urban environments, buildings should frame streets and public spaces rather than float within sites surrounded by parking lots and services uses.



4. Streets Oriented Buildings

Figure 10: Master Plan Illustration for Street Oriented Design within the Cabin Branch Neighborhood

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Master-Planned Roadway and Bikeways

The proposed site for Clarksburg Elementary School #9 is located along Clarksburg Road (MD 121) in Clarksburg, identified by the *2018 Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* as a 2-lane Arterial Road with a 90 ft. right-of-way (ROW). The proposed site also has frontage along Dunlin Street, classified as a Primary Residential street, with a 70 ft. ROW and Byrne Park Drive, classified as a Tertiary Residential street, with a 50 ft. ROW.

Per the *2018 Bicycle Master Plan* an existing on-road conventional bike lane and 8.5 ft. wide sidepath is currently present on Clarksburg Road (MD 121). Byrne Park Drive has an existing 8 ft. wide asphalt sidepath consistent with the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan. Dunlin Street also has an existing 8 ft. wide asphalt sidepath.

Access, Circulation, Queueing, and Parking

Vehicular access to the site is proposed via two one-way loop driveways on Dunlin Street. One driveway will accommodate busses for pickup and drop off operations and one driveway will accommodate passenger vehicles for staff parking and parent pick-up and drop-off operations. The separation of bus and staff/parent access will reduce conflicts and create separate queueing areas for each group of vehicles. The proposed driveways are located on the west side of the building adjacent to the main

entrance to the school and are designed to provide maximum queuing space on site to minimize traffic backup on to the streets. See Figure XX for vehicular access circulation.

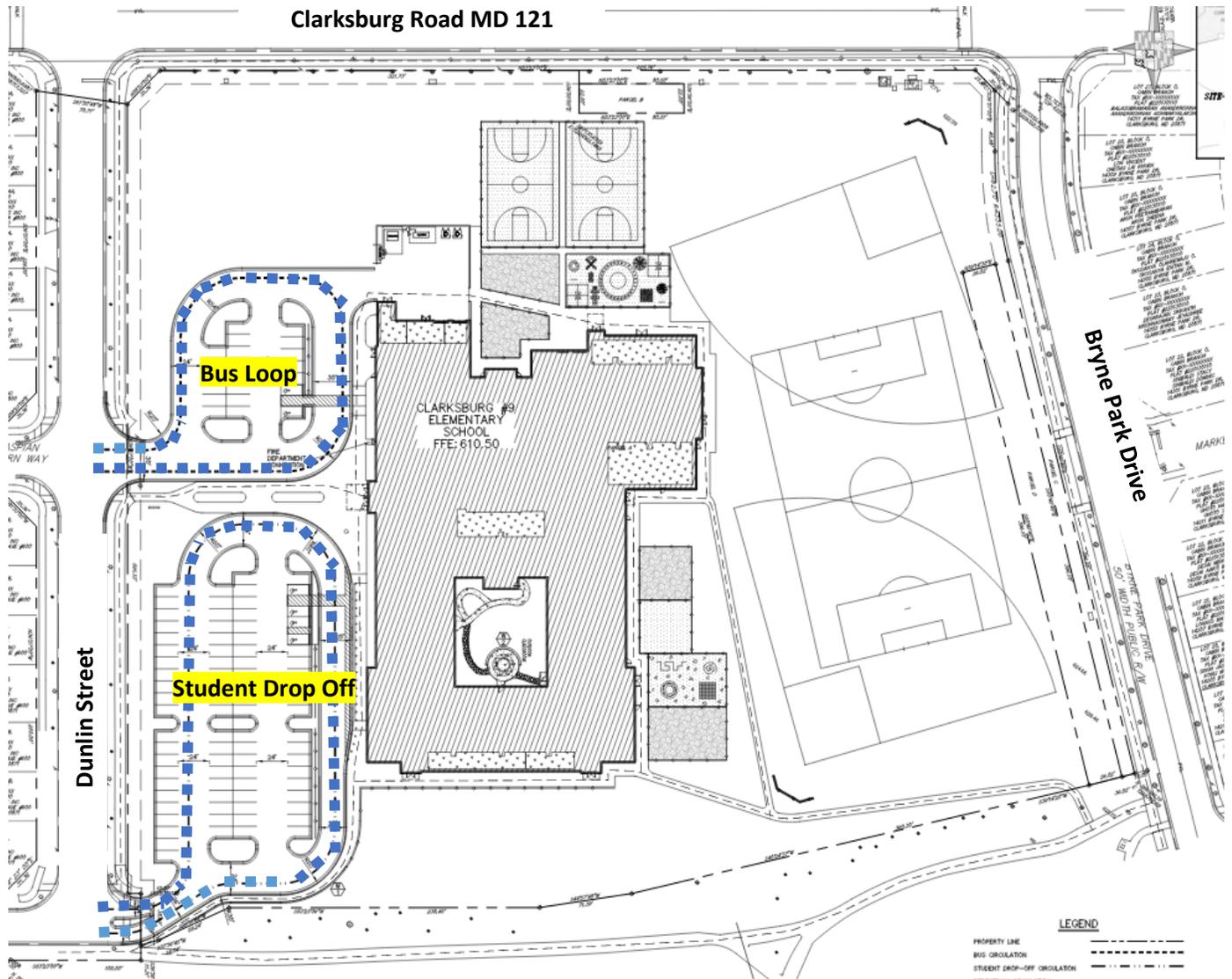


Figure 11: Vehicular Access Circulation

Staff parking along with a student drop-off loop will be accessed from Dunlin Street along the southwest side of the Site and will provide access to the main entrance of the building. Visitor parking along with a bus drop-off loop will also be accessed from Dunlin Street along the northwest side of the Site. Parking for the proposed site will be provided via surface parking to accommodate 90 vehicles including 4 ADA parking spaces. The proposed circulation and parking does not support the public realm and the current bicycle infrastructure it has to offer. The proposed configuration of the school site also does not define the streets as well as provide a sense of safety and urban design appeal to the public.

Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Facilities

The current school Site has side path connections along the property frontage, to include an 8 ft. sidepath along the frontage of Dunlin Street and Byrne Park Drive and an 8.5 ft. sidepath along Clarksburg Road.

Pedestrian circulation within the proposed site is adequate and efficient. Lead walks and sidewalks provide pedestrian connections from the existing sidepath connections to the building entrances, between the building and on-site amenities. All pedestrian sidewalks will be ADA compliant.

Montgomery County Ride-On Bus service, Route 73, is provided in the area, within 600 ft. of the subject property. Route 73 provides service between Shady Grove and Cabin Branch.

Local Area Transportation Review

The Application for a public elementary school facility with capacity for up to 740 students is predicted to generate 811 and 208 total person trips during the AM and PM peak-hours respectively. As the Application generates more than 50 peak-hour person trips, a full traffic study was required to satisfy the LATR Mandatory Referral guidelines. Based on information provided by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), the Cabin Branch development is expected to generate 603 of the total 740 elementary school students, therefore 81% of the school trips are expected to come from within the Cabin Branch development. The study followed the 2016-2020 Subdivision Staging Policy (SSP) and related Local Area Transportation Review Guidelines.

Table 1: Trip Generation Table

Use	No. of Units	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
		In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Proposed: Elementary School (ITE 520)	740 students	268	228	496	60	66	126
Total Peak Hour Person Trips				811			208

The Traffic Study was submitted on March 1, 2021. The following intersections and driveways were included in the study to determine whether they met LATR congestion standards. The traffic study analyzed the following intersections and driveway to determine if they met LATR congestion standards:

1. Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/ Cabin Branch Avenue (Roundabout)
2. Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/ Broadway Avenue
3. Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/ Byrne Park Drive
4. Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/ Dunlin Street
5. Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/ W. Old Baltimore Road (Roundabout)
6. Broadway Avenue/ Byrne Park Drive
7. Broadway Avenue/ W. Old Baltimore Road

8. Site Driveway (Buses)/ Dunlin Street
9. Site Driveway (Vehicles)/Dunlin Street

The traffic study analyzed the existing and proposed school driveways at the following intersections:

Table 2: Critical Intersection Capacity Analysis

Intersection	Traffic Conditions					
	Existing		Background		Total Future	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
<i>Clarksburg Policy Area (CLV 1,425)</i>						
Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/Broadway Avenue	233	275	427	536	509	571
Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/ Byrne Park Drive	208	294	435	426	609	471
Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/ Dunlin Street	164	240	393	417	833	484
Broadway Avenue/ Byrne Park Drive	56	68	79	79	95	84
Broadway Avenue/ W. Old Baltimore Road	89	87	427	324	468	334
Site Driveway (Buses)/ Dunlin Street	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	283	90
Site Driveway (Vehicles)/Dunlin Street	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	478	147

Table 3: Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) Congestion Levels

Roundabouts	Traffic Conditions					
	Existing		Background		Total Future	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/Cabin Branch Ave.						
<i>Congestion Standard Delay: 51.0 sec/veh</i>	4.8	5.1	14.8	14.5	17.6	9.7
<i>Congestion Standard V/C: 0.89</i>	0.156	0.223	0.655	0.825	0.741	0.547
Clarksburg Road (MD 121)/ W. Old Baltimore						
<i>Congestion Standard Delay: 51.0 sec/veh</i>	4.4	5.1	7.8	8.2	8.2	8.7
<i>Congestion Standard V/C: 0.89</i>	0.124	0.217	0.459	0.448	0.478	0.450

All intersections are located in the Clarksburg Policy Area, which has a Critical Lane Volume (“CLV”) standard of 1,425 and a HCM Congestion Standard Delay of 51.0 seconds/vehicle and volume/capacity ratio of 0.89. All intersections and roundabouts operate below congestion standards and no improvements are necessary.

This plan is consistent with the 2018 *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways*, the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* and the Clarksburg Master Plan.

ENVIRONMENT

Final Forest Conservation Plan

A Final Forest Conservation Plan (FFCP) for the Property was approved by the Planning Board on May 2, 2013 as part of Site Plan Application 820050150 Cabin Branch. An Application to amend the FFCP was submitted as part of this Mandatory Referral (Attachment C). The proposed amendment addresses the new Limits of Disturbance (LOD) and proposed construction in accordance with 22A.00.01.09 of the Forest Conservation Regulations.

There are no additional requirements that are generated by this amendment. The amended FFCP varies from the approved FFCP in that the new plan proposes the construction of a elementary school and the previous approval was for mass grading only.

The Application meets the requirements of Chapter 22A of the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law. See the Forest Conservation staff report (Part A) for a complete analysis.

Special Protection Area Preliminary/Final Water Quality Plan

The Application meets the Water Quality Plan requirements of Chapter 19 of the Montgomery County Code and the requirements of the Clarksburg Special Protection Area. The property included in the WQP Application is 9.62 acres in size and includes Parcel A.

See the Forest Conservation staff report (Part A) for a complete analysis.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND NOTIFICATION

Representatives from Montgomery County Public Schools held public meetings at Snowden Farm Elementary School to discuss the impact of the project with the surrounding community.

CONCLUSION

Based on information provided by the Applicant and the analysis contained in this report, Staff concludes that the proposed Mandatory Referral for the Clarksburg Elementary School will not be compatible within its Site context or in substantial conformance with the Master Plan. However, the application meets the applicable regulatory standards and guidelines for the environment.

Staff recommends **denial** of the Mandatory Referral and recommends this be transmitted to the Montgomery County Public Schools.

Attachments:

- A. Proposed site plans
- B. Traffic Study
- C. Elevations