

MR2022022 – SILVER SPRING INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL



Description

Mandatory Referral submitted by Montgomery County Public Schools to demolish the existing auditorium of the Silver Spring International Middle School and rebuild in its place a gymnasium and associated athletic facilities, totaling 22,523 square feet, for a maximum density of 240,473 square feet (net decrease in gross floor area of 10,877).



NO. MR2022022

COMPLETED: 08-29-2022

MCPB
Item No. 5
9-8-2022

2425 Reddie Drive
Floor 13
Wheaton, MD 20902

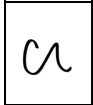




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LOCATION:

313 Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring

MASTER PLAN, ZONE

2000 North and West Silver Spring Master Plan

PROPERTY SIZE

16.5 acres

APPLICATION

Mandatory Referral

ACCEPTANCE DATE:

June 16, 2022

REVIEW BASIS:

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



Summary

- Staff recommends approval and transmittal of comments to Montgomery County Public Schools.
- The Mandatory Referral proposes demolishing the existing abandoned auditorium and replacing it with rebuild that will occupy roughly the same footprint.
- Due to the relatively small change in size (fewer than 44,000 square feet) the Project is exempt from Article II of the Montgomery County Code, Chapter 22A, Section 22A-5(t)(1).
- The purpose of this Project is to solve accessibility and remoteness issues of the existing physical education program located in the detached field house, improve security and circulation, and improve the overall architectural experience of the facility.

SECTION 1

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Pedestrian Safety
 - a. The Applicant should ensure ADA accessible sidewalks on-site that are a minimum of five feet wide.
 - b. The Applicant should continue to coordinate with MCDOT as they finalize the design and begin construction on the master-planned sidepath along the Dale Drive frontage.
 - c. The Applicant should continue to coordinate MTA on the sidepath improvements planned on Site's Wayne Avenue frontage, in support of the Purple Line.

2. Bicycle Facilities
 - a. Bicycle Parking: The Applicant should provide 60 short-term bicycle spaces (one rack per 20 students) near the main entrances to the building in accordance with the 2020 *Bicycle Parking Guidelines*.

3. Montgomery County Department of Transportation

The Planning Board accepts the recommendations of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) in their letter dated August 29, 2022, and incorporates them as conditions of approval. The Applicant should comply with each of the recommendations as set forth in the letters, which MCDOT may amend if the amendments do not conflict with other conditions of Mandatory Referral approval.

SECTION 2

INTRODUCTION

Review Process

Concept Plan 520220020

The Silver Spring International Middle School submitted a concept plan for review (Plan No. 520220020), which was accepted September 2, 2021. A memo consisting of a consolidated list of comments from the reviewing agencies was transmitted to the Applicant on October 4, 2021. Staff was largely in support of the proposed demolition of the abandoned auditorium to make room for new a new indoor athletic space and locker rooms. Staff recommended that the Applicant explore opportunities to improve all street frontages (specifically the installation of tree buffers along Dale

Drive and Schuyler Road), to provide enhanced landscaping, green spaces, and managed stormwater runoff on-site (especially within the existing parking lots), and to install solar panels on the roof of the rebuild. There was also encouragement from staff to create a more pronounced entrance for the rebuild to distinguish it from the remainder of the existing arcade.

Mandatory Referral MR2022022

The Applicant submitted a Mandatory Referral Application, which was accepted June 16, 2022. The Project is largely similar to what was proposed with the Concept Plan. The Application was accepted in June, and staff requested the review period be extended until September to accommodate the Board's August recess¹. For this reason, this item was added to the Board's first available agenda in September of 2022.

The Planning Board will review the Mandatory Referral Application and make a recommendation with comments applying the guidance of the Montgomery Planning Mandatory Referral Review Uniform Standards (June 2020). The recommended approval and comments are advisory only.

¹ The review period for Mandatory Referrals is 60 days. An acceptance date in June requires the Board to provide comments in August, during their recess.

SECTION 3

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

The Silver Spring International Middle School is located at 313 Wayne Avenue (School Site), in Silver Spring, west of the Silver Spring Downtown and is currently in operation. The School Site is currently occupied by the middle school, Sligo Creek Elementary School, and Sligo Cabin Neighborhood Park.

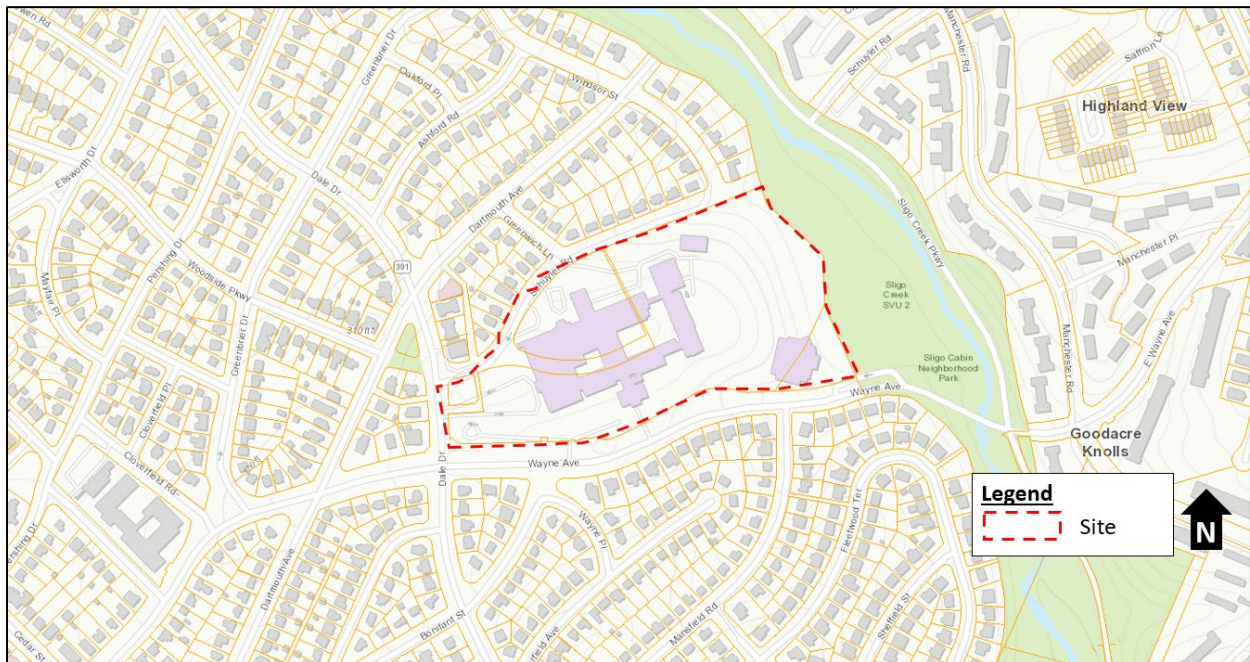


Figure 1: Site Vicinity Map

Surrounding Neighborhood

The School Site, zoned R-60, is surrounded by R-60 zoned, single family homes and a small area zoned CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35. The Site is bounded by Wayne Avenue to the south, Dale Drive to the west, Schuyler Road to the north, and the Sligo Cabin Neighborhood Park to the east. The future Purple Line will be at street-level along the Wayne Avenue frontage. The Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) will be making improvements within the Wayne Avenue right-of-way for both the light rail and pedestrian access. The Purple Line will also make changes elsewhere on the school Site to support the infrastructure needs of the light-rail train line. The Purple Line recently renovated the parking lots accessed from Dale Drive and Wayne Avenue as part of their project.

square feet and the rebuild will be 22,523 square feet². The rebuild will occupy nearly the same footprint of the auditorium and will be slightly taller (47 feet, instead of 43.5 feet) but will result in technically less occupiable space. Therefore, after construction the size of the building will be 240,473 square feet (a net loss of 10,877 square feet from the 251,530 square foot building that exists today). The purpose of the rebuild is to better serve the existing student population; however, according to the Montgomery County Public Schools, the middle school capacity will increase by 14 students. The school will remain open during the demo-rebuild and the hours of operation on the Site are not proposed to change. The project will be completed in one phase.

The rebuild will include gymnasiums, staff offices, bathrooms, and locker rooms. Currently, the gymnasiums and locker rooms are located in a separate, unconnected building on the Site, which is located down a steep hill. This presents challenges to students and staff with mobility challenges, especially during inclement weather.

The overall mandatory referral site plan is included in Figure 3. Figures 4 and 5 show the first and second floor plans of the rebuild. Architectural renderings of the rebuild are shown in Figures 6 and 7.

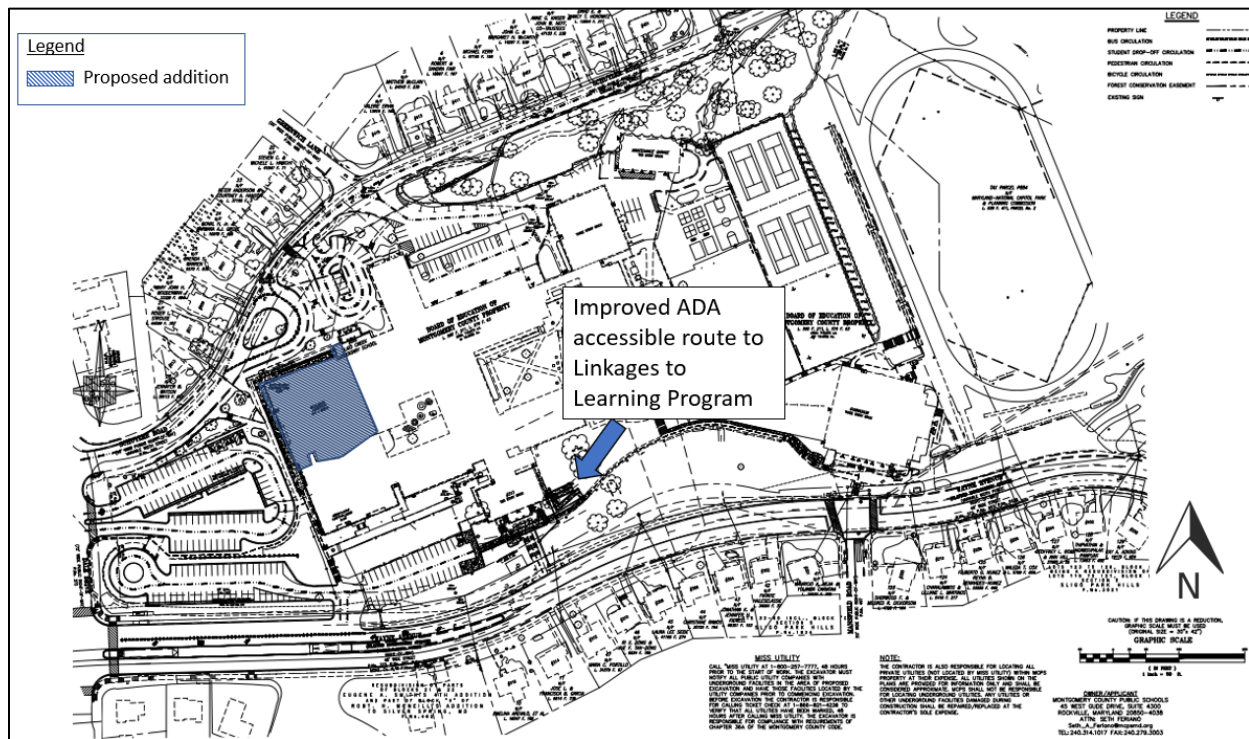
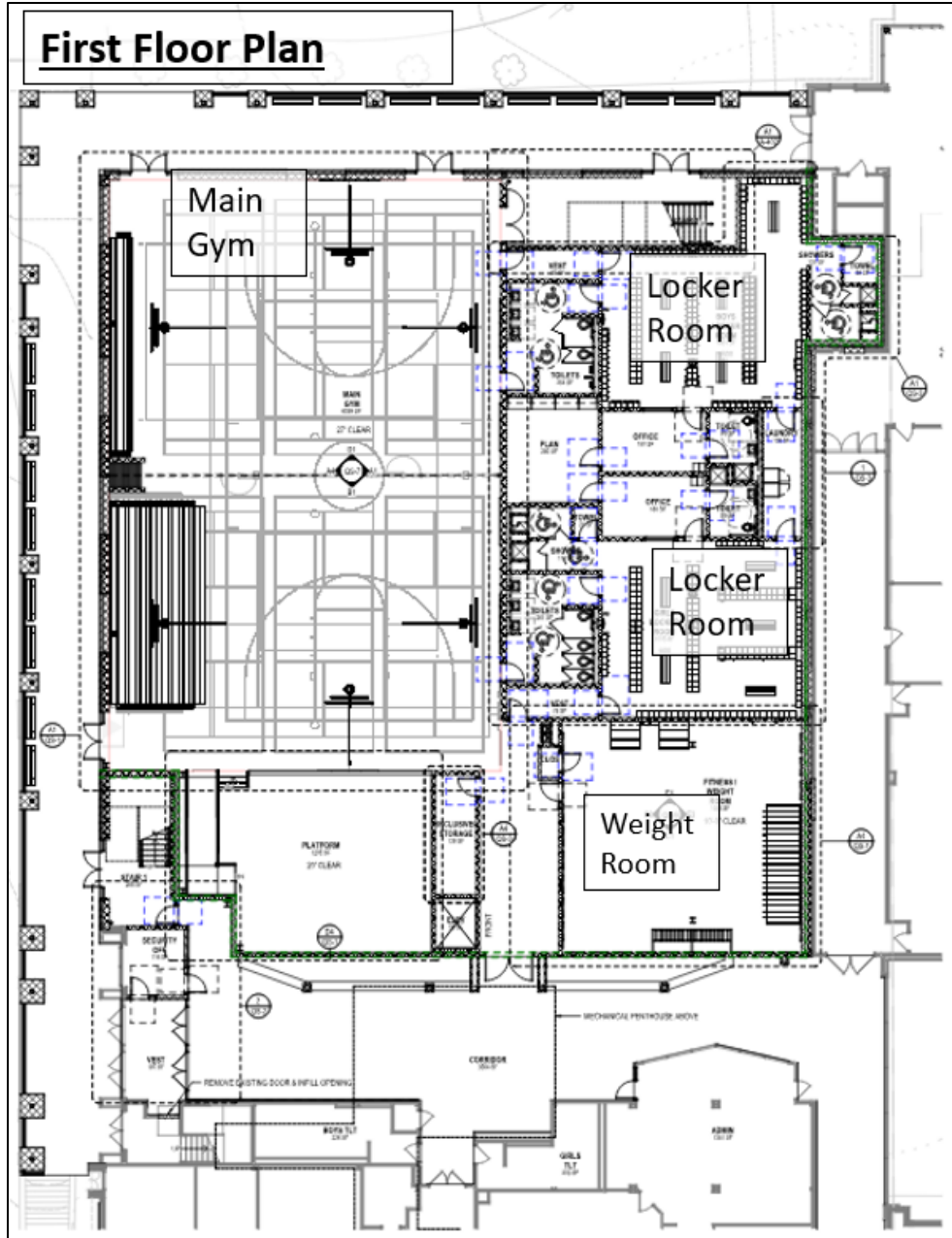
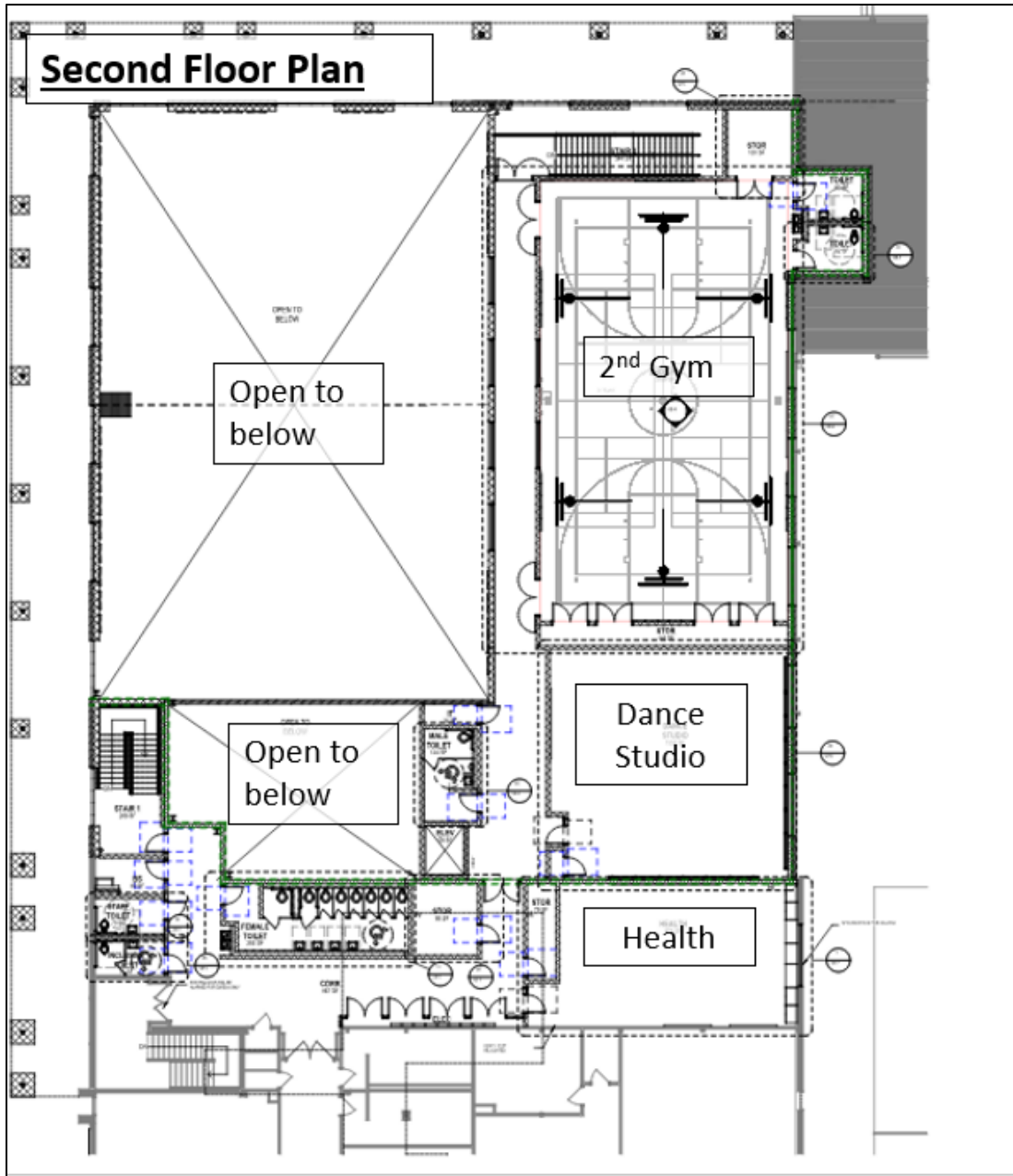


Figure 3: Mandatory Referral Site Plan

² The footprint of the new athletic facility is 241 square feet larger, but because many spaces within the building are two-stories tall, the rebuild results in a net decrease of 10,877 feet.



Figures 4 First floor plan of the rebuild



Figures 5 Second floor plan of the rebuild

The objective of the proposed interior renovations is to create a space for the Linkages to Learning program to the school that is ADA Accessible. The program is a school-based collaboration among the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Public Schools, and non-profit, community-based service providers. The program provides accessible services to at-risk children and their families to improve adjustment to and performance in school, home, and community. Prevention and early intervention services include health, mental health, social services, and educational support. The Linkages to Learning suite will have its own exterior entrance separate from the middle school.

No additional parking is proposed with this project. However, some of the parking spaces in the lower parking lot will be converted to ADA accessible spaces. There will continue to be a total of 187 total spaces on site.



Figure 6: North elevation (Schuyler Road) of the proposed rebuild



Figure 7: West elevation (Dale Drive) of the proposed rebuild

In an effort to improve bicycle and pedestrian access to the Site, the Project includes adding 30 new bicycle parking spaces on-site, near the proposed rebuild. Staff recommends increasing the available bicycle parking on-site to 60, which would result in a ratio of roughly 1 space for every twenty students enrolled.

SECTION 4

MANDATORY REFERRAL ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Mandatory Referral review is guided by the Montgomery Planning Mandatory Referral Review Uniform Standards (June 2020), 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 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 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 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 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 subject to the Approved and Adopted 2000 *North and West Silver Spring Master Plan* (Master Plan). The Site is located in the area designated “North Silver Spring” (Master Plan, page 10) and is specifically within the Woodside Park Neighborhood. The Site is shown as existing and proposed for “public/institutional use” in the Proposed Land Uses Map (page 19).

The 2000 *North and West Silver Spring Master Plan* does mention this Site on page 88, where it recommends improving utilization of the fields and track at the former Montgomery Blair High School (Subject Site). The Master Plan also recommends improving pedestrian access to all public use sites, including schools. The Project proposes adding bicycle parking, and as included in the comments, the Applicant is encouraged to dedicate additional right-of-way and/or easements to facilitate the future construction of those facilities by MCDOT and MTA.

The proposed rebuild and modernization upholds to the Montgomery County General Plan. This Site has operated as an elementary/middle school following an extensive interior renovation and addition project in 1990s, and there are no plans to deviate from this use at the Site. The 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* recommends dedicated facilities along Wayne Avenue and Dale Drive. This project will not preclude those proposed improvements.

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

Public Uses (including public schools) are permitted uses within the R-60 Zone (Section 59-3.1.6). The following Data Table shows the Application’s conformance to the development standards of the zone.

Table 1: Mandatory Referral Data Table			
Section 59.4	Development Standard	Minimum	Proposed
	Lot Area R60	6,000 sf	718, 575 square feet (16.5 acres)
	Residential Density (units/acre)	7.26	n/a
	Total Maximum (GFA/ FAR)	n/a	240,473 square feet
	Building Height (max)	35 feet	47 feet (43.5 feet existing)
	Minimum Setbacks		
	Front	25 feet	75 feet
	Side	8'/18 feet	177 feet/198 feet
	Rear	20 feet	436 feet
	Lot Coverage	35%	21%
Section 59.6.2	Parking	Permitted/ Required	Proposed
	Vehicle Parking 65 faculty and staff	N/A	187
	Bicycle Parking	N/A	30

The tallest roofline of the school is over the abandoned auditorium (the area which is proposed for demo-rebuild). It measures 43.5 feet in height, which exceeds the maximum height for the R-60 zone. This portion of the building is proposed to increase by 3.5 feet, which would make the tallest point of the building 47 feet. The majority of the school is two (2) stories tall and meets the maximum height requirement of 35 feet. The portion of the building that exceeds the maximum height limit is set back approximately 300 feet from Dale Drive and over 60 feet from Schuyler Road. Although the school exceeds the maximum height for the R-60 zone, public buildings are exempt from development standards of the Zoning Code. Given the position of the school relative to the adjacent properties and topography, the school maintains compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood.

There are no vehicle or bicycle parking minimum or maximum capacity requirements for public schools per the Zoning Ordinance. The Applicant proposes to install 30 short-term bicycle parking spaces for students. As included in the comments, Staff recommends MCPS increase that number to 60 (just over one (1) per 20 students). The Site also includes 187 total vehicle parking spaces: 11 ADA accessible spaces and three (3) ADA van accessible spaces.

i. Division 6.1. Site Access

The existing Site access and circulation will not change. Buses will continue to access the Site on Schuyler Road. Parents and guardians will continue to drop-off and pick-up middle school students

on Dale Drive and Schuyler Road³, and staff will continue to park in the existing lots accessed from Wayne Avenue and Dale Drive. Pedestrian access will continue to be provided from the sidewalks on Wayne Avenue, Dale Drive, and Schuyler Road. The 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* envisions a sidepath along the school’s frontage on Dale Drive. A portion of the Dale Drive sidepath (between Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road) is currently under design and funded for construction (P502109), but the segments west of that project are not yet programmed for design or construction. The Subject Application will not preclude the future construction of sidepath on Dale Drive or the sidepath to be constructed by the MTA via the Purple Line along Wayne Avenue.

LATR

The purpose of the project is to serve the existing student population and no changes to enrollment are anticipated at the completion of the project. However, Montgomery County Public Schools does indicate that once constructed, the capacity of the school will increase by 14 students. The net increase of 14 students results in 12 additional peak hour person trips (see Table 2).

Table 2: Net New Peak Hour Person Trip Generation					
	Total ¹	Vehicle	Transit	Pedestrian ²	Bicycle
14 students					
AM	12	8	2	1	3
PM	2	2	0	1	0

Source: Staff analysis based on 2022 LATR Trip Generation Methodology

¹ The sum of the modes is larger than the total because pedestrians are estimated as both non-motorized and transit trips.

² As stated in Table Note 1, pedestrian trips are the sum of motorized trips and transit trips.

With 12 net new person trips in the peak hour, a transportation impact study is not required, and adequate public facilities exist to support the project.

3. whether the nature of the proposed site and development, including its size, shape, scale, height, arrangement, design of structure, massing, setback(s), site layout, and location(s) of parking is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and properties;

The existing school building is larger, but compatible in shape, size scale and height to the surrounding single-family and commercial uses. The proposed rebuild will occupy roughly the same footprint of the abandoned auditorium to be demolished. The height will increase from 43.5 feet to 47 feet when the construction is finished. The change in square footage is an overall net decrease of 10,877 square feet.

³ Elementary school students are dropped off and picked up on Schuyler Road.

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

There are no changes to the existing access and circulation which includes two bus loops accessed from Schuyler Road; parent drop-off, visitor and staff parking accessed from Dale Drive, and staff parking accessed from Wayne Avenue. Pedestrian access is provided from the existing sidewalks on those same frontages, and via the Sligo Creek Trail to the east of the Site. As the Site exists today, it is safe, adequate, and efficient.

- 5. whether the proposal has an approved NRI/FSD and a preliminary SWM concept plan, and meets the requirements of the Forest Conservation Law (Chapter 22A of the County Code). Forest Conservation Plan, if applicable, must be approved by the Planning Board, either before or at the time of the Board's mandatory referral review and action on the project. Unlike the mandatory referral review by the Board, the conditions of the Forest Conservation Plan are binding on all county projects and require a Resolution of Approval.**

A letter from the Department of Permitting Services, Water Resource Section, dated April 29, 2022, indicates that the Stormwater Management Concept for the Site is acceptable.

A Forest Conservation Exemption designated No. 42022171E, was approved for the Subject Property on March 14, 2020. The memo from Planning Department staff confirms that the Project is exempt from Article II of the Montgomery County Code, Chapter 22 A, Section 22A-5(t)(1) because the activity is a modification to an existing nonresidential development property that does not exceed any of the thresholds that would otherwise require Forest Conservation.

- 6. 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 the standards of Article V. WATER QUALITY REVIEW IN SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS, of the County Code (pursuant to Section 19-65(d)(4));**

The Site is not located in a special protection area, and therefore a water quality plan is not needed for the Project.

- 7. whether or not the site would be needed for park use if the proposal is for disposition of a surplus school.**

The Site is currently occupied by two public schools and a public park. The Project does not propose changes to those existing uses on the Site.

- 8. 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 properties or neighborhood, the transportation network, the environment, historic resources (including burial sites) or other resources.

With the recommended conditions, the Mandatory Referral is consistent with the General Plan, 2000 North and West Silver Spring Master Plan, the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan, and other plans and policies for the area. As a result, the Project does not have negative impacts on surrounding properties or neighborhood, the transportation network, the environment, or other resources.

SECTION 5

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE

Given the limited scope of the Subject Application it is understandable that there is insufficient budget and time to consider additional improvements to the landscaping and design of the structures on-site. However, it is the Planning Department's mission to consider the long-term vision for sites as prominent and important to the surrounding communities as public schools. It is understood that a great deal of planning, budgeting, and cost-benefit analysis occurs before mandatory referrals are filed. With that in mind, it seems that improvements could be factored into future projects if they were explored earlier in the project's development.

The following additional considerations are provided below with the intent that they be incorporated into future, larger improvement opportunities on this Site:

1. Increasing the vegetation and tree canopy within the parking lots has the potential to reduce flooding and significantly cool what are commonly very hot areas during extreme heat days. Future redevelopment should incorporate planting a dense line of trees around the parking lots along Dale and Schuyler Road as well as trees to the central garden areas, circular islands, and terraces as well.
2. The Site, which includes the Silver Spring International Middle School and Sligo Creek Elementary School is well-situated for pedestrian access from the surrounding neighborhoods. Children and their families have the opportunity to walk to school and to the abutting park. While there are sidewalks present along Dale Drive and Schuyler Road, they lack a very critical street buffer that would improve safety and comfort for pedestrians of all ages accessing the Site. MCPS is strongly requested to budget for the reconstruction the sidewalks (or sidepaths, as master planned) such that they are buffered from the travel lanes by a row of street trees along Dale Drive and Schuyler Road.
3. Should MCPS embark on façade improvements to the school in the future the following suggestions are listed with the intention of enhancing the pronounced massing of the main entrance, while lightening the top of the entry portal:

- a. Consider sculpting the top parapet or making the columns supporting the entry portal taller than the arcade columns. The arcade and the portal will create a new prominent face for the middle school on to Dale Drive.
- b. Perhaps a finer level of detail could be achieved by using two shades of brick or metal panel cladding in select locations to delineate the various components of columns, the supported entablature and entry portal.
- c. Providing a datum level with a base detail at the base of the columns could make them appear more uniform and would then tie the composition of the portal and arcade into a unified façade elevation.

SECTION 6

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Applicant held several virtual meetings for the public and school communities including:

- June 15, 2021, Work Session 1
- July 8, 2021, Work Session 2
- October 5, 2021, Board of Education

As of the date of this Staff Report, Staff has not received any correspondence on the Subject Application.

After Staff accepted the Mandatory Referral for review, Montgomery Planning notified local civic and homeowners' associations and other interested parties of this proposal.

SECTION 7

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends approval and the transmittal of comments to Montgomery County Public Schools.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Site Plan

Attachment B: Agency Letters