

March 1, 2019

TO: Planning Commission Members

FROM: Jillian Dierks, Planner, Department of Building & Planning

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN – 900, 908, 920, 922 Youngs Ford Road and 941 Black Rock Road, Gladwyne, Gladwyne Montessori School, LD# 3814, Ward 2.

Proposal

The applicant, Fred Fromhold, is seeking Preliminary Land Development Plan approval on behalf of Gladwyne Montessori School to:

- Demolish the single-family dwellings and all associated improvements located at 941 Black Rock Road and 908 Youngs Ford Road;
- Consolidate 941 Black Rock Road and 908 Youngs Ford Road with 920 and 922 Youngs Ford Road and a portion of 900 Youngs Ford Road for school use;
- Install a playground, natural play areas, a play field, a campus trail and an orchard;
- Construct an addition with a 1,666 sq. ft. footprint on the Savett Building;
- Construct a 400 sq. ft. welcome gazebo/kiosk at the rear of the main school building;
- Construct a 392 sq. ft. greenhouse at the rear of the existing property at 900 Youngs Ford Road;
- Install 35 additional parking spaces;
- Install five underground stormwater management basins; and
- Reconfigure existing driveways and parking areas.

The proposal is illustrated on the attached set of plans that includes twenty-one (21) sheets prepared by Site Engineering Concepts, LLC dated December 3, 2018, last revised February 15, 2019. The applicant also submitted architectural elevations prepared by CuetoKearney Design Architects, dated November 11, 2018.

Property Descriptions & Institutional History

Gladwyne Montessori School, originally called The Children's House, was established in 1962 in a carriage house at the Mildred Sullivan School in Rosemont before finding their permanent home in 1968 at the then abandoned Merion Square School in Gladwyne.



- 922 Youngs Ford Road (Lot 5) is a .13-acre property improved with a detached single-family dwelling and is a Class I Historic Resource. According to the Historic Resource Inventory, the residence was built in 1840. During the time the public school was in service, the residence was used as the caretaker's home. This property is a contributing resource in the Gladwyne Historic District.
- 920 Youngs Ford Road (Lot 1) is a 3.17-acre property, improved with school buildings, play areas, driveway and parking areas, encompassing the Gladwyne Montessori School. The property is a Class I Historic Resource. The former Merion Square School was built in the 1880s from a design by notable Philadelphia architect Frank Furness. Mainly constructed from stone, it exemplifies the "Stick" style of architecture popular in the late-Victorian era. An addition to the building was made in 1900 and a gymnasium was added in 1929. Left vacant after the public school moved to the present Gladwyne Elementary School building in 1958, Gladwyne Montessori (then called "Children's House") refurbished the historic building and began to occupy it in 1968. Various modifications and modernizations have kept the original stone school house intact. This property is a contributing resource in the Gladwyne Historic District.

- 908 Youngs Ford Road (Lot 2) is a rear lot improved with a single-family detached dwelling (c. 1977). This property is not located within the Gladwyne Historic District.
- 900 Youngs Ford Road (Lot 3) is a rectangular shaped lot with frontages along Youngs Ford Road and Merion Square Road, improved with a single-family detached dwelling. The residence was likely built in the early 20th century from a Mediterranean-inspired design. The architect and exact construction date are unknown. A house is shown on the property as far back as the 1880s, though the present home's architecture suggests construction (or an extensive modification) of a later time. This property is not located within the Gladwyne Historic District.
- 941 Black Rock Road (Lot 4) is a rear lot improved with a single-family detached dwelling (c. 1976). This property is a noncontributing resource in the Gladwyne Historic District.



Application Summary and Approvals

- Zoning Hearing Board: On July 26, 2018 the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) granted a special exception under Code §155-11.X to expand the educational use on the subject properties. The zoning hearing process consisted of several meetings over several months. At the outset of the hearings, neighbors contested the project; however mid-way through the process the applicant and some of the neighbors engaged in productive discussions that led to a private agreement. The land development plan reflects some of the discussion/compromise between the applicant and the neighbors during the process. Since the agreement is private, staff is not privy to the details.

The relief was conditioned on the applicant adhering to the limitations on enrollment and programs set forth in paragraphs a-d and f in Exhibit A-36 (with the reference to “Exhibit D” in paragraph f); paragraph i) being understood to refer to Exhibit A-35 introduced at the hearings).

- Tentative Sketch Plan: On October 17, 2018 the Board of Commissioner's approved the Tentative Sketch Plan. Relief of the Natural Features Code Section 101-5.C.2.b to disturb man-made slopes exceeding 25% was also granted.

Programmatic Changes Proposed

Gladwyne Montessori School is an accredited educational institution use and currently includes educational programming for nursery, preschool and kindergarten through sixth grades. While the applicant does not propose an increase in student enrollment from the cap of 310 that the ZHB approved in 1999, it does propose to increase the number of faculty and staff from 50 to 63, and to add five student teachers (which will be considered faculty/staff). The Applicant also proposes to host a nursery program for up to 10 infants, aged six weeks to 23 months, and a teacher education program for up to 30 participants, which would occur during the summer months, with occasional seminars on weekends during the school year.

Additionally, the applicant proposes to move the school's administrative offices to the existing dwelling at 922 Youngs Ford Road, which is currently owned by the School and is used as a single-family dwelling.

Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)

The EAC reviewed the plan at their February 26, 2019 meeting. The EAC reiterates their comments made on the Tentative Sketch Plan that the applicant should incorporate an element of green stormwater infrastructure into the proposed surface parking lot to provide primary treatment of runoff such as adding cuts to the curbing around all planted islands, so runoff can infiltrate into the ground. This is discussed in further detail below.

Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB)

All but two of the properties are located within the Gladwyne Historic District. The applicant appeared before the HARB on September 11, 2018, to present the application. Because HARB's purview only affects what is visible from the public way, and the residences proposed for demolition are non-contributing resources to the Gladwyne Historic District, HARB's comments were limited to street improvements and general comments about the plan. HARB voted to recommend approval of the application as submitted, citing Secretary of the Interior's Standards 2, 6, and 9. In their official motion, HARB encouraged the School to submit an application to the Historical Commission to add the property at 900 Youngs Ford Road (Lot #3) to the Historic Resource Inventory as a Class II historic resource.

Montgomery County Planning Commission

The County's review is attached, and their comments have been incorporated into the issues discussed below or have been included as recommended conditions of approval.

Bulk & Setback Requirements

The following table details the bulk, area and setback requirements for the proposed conditions:

R-1 Requirements	Required	Proposed Consolidated Lots	Proposed Lot 3 (900 Youngs Ford Road)
Minimum Net Lot Area	.68 acres 30,000 sq. ft.	5.4 acres 233,233 sq. ft.	.7 acres 30,398 sq. ft.
Minimum Lot Width	125'	216'	387'
Maximum Building Area	15%	9.1% (21,330 sq. ft.)	7.5% (2,285 sq. ft.)
Minimum Front Yard	50'	9.9'*	6'*** & 31'**
Minimum Side Yard	15'/40' aggregate	1.8'*	9'*
Rear Yard	25'	25'	138'
Maximum Impervious Surface	Consolidated Lots: 35%*** (81,388 sq. ft.) Lot 3: 21% (6,383 sq. ft.)	34.7% (80,930 sq. ft.) (458 sq. ft. remaining)	20.9% (6,379 sq. ft.) (5 sq. ft. remaining)
Landscape Buffer	Consolidated Lots: 22' Lot 3: Not Required	22'	N/A
Parking	Consolidated Lots: 66**** Lot 3: 2	83	2

* Existing non-conforming condition.

** This property has two front yards (The existing non-conforming conditions include a 6' Front Yard Setback along Youngs Ford Road & a 31' Front Yard Setback along Merion Square Road).

***Lots 1, 2, 4 & 5 are existing non-conforming to impervious surface. The properties will maintain their existing non-conforming impervious surface and are eligible for the 1% impervious surface expansion permitted by Zoning Code Section 155-141.5.

****GMS is currently non-conforming to the parking requirement of Zoning Code Section 155-95.AA.1. The property contains 48 parking spaces, the proposal includes the addition of 18 faculty/staff, which increased the required parking to 66 spaces. The proposal increases the number of parking spaces to 83 and 18 overflow spaces that can be accommodated in the hard surface play area.

Phasing

The applicant intends to construct the proposed improvements in two phases, as follows:

Phase 1:

- Subdividing 900 Youngs Ford Road (Lot 3), demolishing all improvements on 908 Youngs Ford Road (Lot 2), and consolidate the rear portion of 900 Youngs Ford Road (Lot 3) with 908 & 920 Youngs Ford Road (Lots 1 and 2) to create an approximately 4.5 acre lot;
- Construct a 1,666 sq. ft. addition and enclose an existing porch to create an additional 210 of interior space on the Savett Building;
- Constructing the 392 sq. ft. green house;
- Constructing a nature play area, an open play area, and an orchard garden with greenhouse, and a five-foot wide nature trail.
- Installing stormwater infiltration beds 4 and 5 to manage the proposed improvements of this Phase 1.

Phase 2:

- Removing the improvements (house/driveway/etc.) on 941 Black Rock Road (Lot 4);
- Consolidating the merged 4.5 acre lot parcel from Phase 1 with 941 Black Rock Road (Lot 4) and 922 Black Rock Road (Lot 5) to create an approximately 5.35 acre lot.
- Reconstructing and enlarging the existing parking area;
- Modifying the vehicular driveway onto Youngs Ford Road,
- Constructing additional playground space and a continuation of the nature trail;
- Installation of stormwater infiltration beds 1, 2, and 3 to manage the proposed improvements of this Phase 2.

The applicant has stated that it is their intention for Phase I to commence following the end of this school year (Summer of 2019) and Phase II to commence after the end of the next school year (Summer of 2020). According to the Township Solicitor, the phasing must be self-sustaining and independently comply with the Zoning Code and ZHB order, the required infrastructure (i.e. Stormwater management) must be installed in Phase 1, and the escrow guarantee for the entire project must be posted prior to the commencement of Phase 1. These have been included as conditions of approval.

Issues

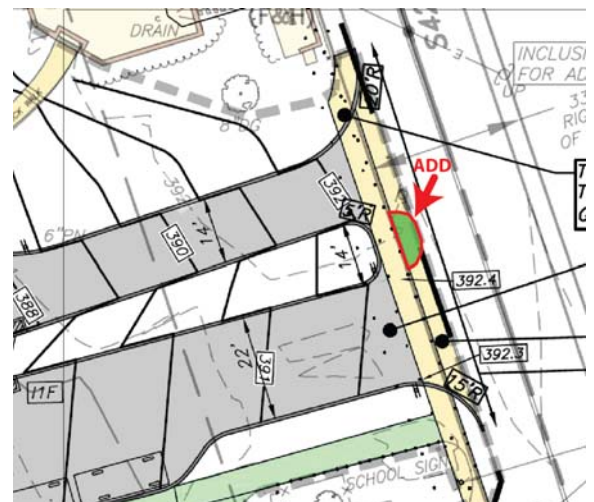
1. Historic Resource

As recommended by the HARB, the Board of Commissioners imposed a condition on the Tentative Sketch Plan requiring the applicant to consider submitting an application to the Historical Commission to include the property at 900 Youngs Ford Road (Lot #3) on the Historic Resource Inventory as a Class II historic resource. In response to this requirement the applicant stated that they felt it would not be eligible for inclusion in the Gladwyne Historic District.

While it may not be eligible for inclusion in the Gladwyne Historic District, which is focused around houses and commercial properties dating to an earlier era, the house at 900 Youngs Ford Road appears to retain architectural and historical integrity. As a result, the house is likely individually eligible for Class II status on the Township's Historic Resource Inventory.

2. Access Driveway

The proposal includes a widened landscape island that further separates access driveway lanes and increases the curb cut at Youngs Ford Road from 55' feet to 84' feet. Staff recommends that the applicant investigate extending the island and providing a sidewalk through it at grade. This would minimize the visual appearance of the expanded curb cut, which is inappropriate for a village setting, and will provide additional pedestrian security.



3. Stormwater Best Management Practices

In their review, the EAC recommended that the curbing for the landscape islands in the parking lot include cuts to allow for stormwater absorption. Staff has included this as a recommended condition of approval.

4. Action

The Planning Commission must take the following actions for this application:

- A. A recommendation on the Preliminary Land Development Plan.

