

May 6, 2019

**TO:** Planning Commission Members

**FROM:** Andrea M. Campisi, Senior Planner, Building & Planning Department

**SUBJECT:** TENTATIVE SKETCH PLAN – 1319 Wendover Avenue, 1315 Wendover Avenue, 1309 Wendover Avenue, 1301 Wendover Avenue, 1291 Wendover Avenue, 1295 Wendover Avenue, 1320 W. Montgomery Avenue and 1326 W. Montgomery Avenue, Bryn Mawr, Holy Child School at Rosemont, LD# 3818, Ward 6.

### **Proposal**

The applicant, George Broseman, Esquire, is seeking Tentative Sketch Plan approval on behalf of the Holy Child School at Rosemont, for the following:

- Demolition of eight residential structures located at 1319 Wendover Avenue, 1315 Wendover Avenue, 1309 Wendover Avenue, 1301 Wendover Avenue, 1291 Wendover Avenue, 1295 Wendover Avenue, 1320 W. Montgomery Avenue and 1326 W. Montgomery Avenue;
- Consolidation of the eight properties into the existing school property;
- Construction of a new academic building with a 15,000 sq. ft. footprint;
- Construction of a carriage house with a 2,500 sq. ft. footprint for storage;
- Construction of a 7,700 sq. ft. addition to the existing gymnasium/multi-purpose building;
- Construction of an addition with a 1,500 sq. ft. footprint to the Clarke Lobby;
- Creation of a 58-space surface parking lot;
- Outdoor play area/auxiliary parking area with 26 spaces;
- Outdoor plazas and patio areas;
- An artificial turf field with a scoreboard and bleachers;
- Stormwater management systems beneath the artificial turf field and new parking area; and
- Various pedestrian walkways.

Associated with these site improvements, the applicant proposes to increase the number of full time staff from 60 to 75. There will be no increase in enrollment from the current permitted limit of 400 students. Enrollment is currently approximately 310 students.

The proposal is illustrated on the attached set of plans that includes nine (9) sheets prepared by Site Engineering Concepts, LLC dated October 15, 2018, last revised April 12, 2019. A Historic Resource Impact Study prepared by Emily T. Cooperman, Ph.D. dated October 15, 2018 was also submitted.

### **Project Background**

The project is intended to modernize the campus and accommodate the existing students on campus. Students currently go off campus to Rosemont and Bryn Mawr Colleges to use their athletic fields, the availability of which has diminished over time. Additional space is also needed because the existing multipurpose building is inadequate to support the number of sports and extracurricular activities at the school. The new hard-surfaced play area next to the multipurpose building will provide a space for older students to enjoy recreation separate from the younger students. Finally, the proposed new carriage house will provide storage space for sports equipment.

## Property Descriptions

The existing campus is improved with several buildings, including the academic “Tudor Building,” which is listed on the Township’s Historic Resource Inventory as a Class II resource. The campus also contains a small artificial turf field, various parking areas, driveways and walkways. Brief descriptions of the buildings on the properties that are the subject of this application are below.

- 1344 W. Montgomery Avenue is a 286,934 sq. ft. (6.6 acre) lot improved with the existing school facility which is a Class II Historic Resource. According to the Lower Merion Historical Society, the building was constructed between 1900-1908 from a design likely by F. Hopkinson Evans and Frank G. Caldwell for Lancelot F. Sims. It is a large 2 ½ story Tudor Revival building.
- 1320 W. Montgomery Avenue is a 67,406 sq. ft. (1.5 acre) lot improved with a single family residence and detached garage/carriage house. The property is a Class II Historic Resource. According to the Historic Resource Inventory the dwelling was constructed ca. 1900 for Mary and Henry Stokes Williams from a design by Baily & Truscott. The dwelling is a Queen Anne/Arts and Crafts style home.
- 1309 Wendover Avenue is a 40,278 sq. ft. (.92 acre) lot improved with a single-family detached dwelling and a detached garage/carriage house. The property is a Class II Historic Resource. The dwelling, a Queen Anne/Shingle style building, was constructed ca. 1894.
- 1319 Wendover Avenue is a 31,244 sq. ft. (.72 acre) lot improved with a single-family detached dwelling designed by Kneedler, Mirick & Zantzing in 1940 for Harley Rankin, Esq.
- 1315 Wendover Avenue is a 24,078 sq. ft. (.55 acre) lot improved with a single-family detached dwelling built in 1968.
- 1301 Wendover Avenue is a 20,604 sq. ft. (.47 acre) lot improved with a single-family detached dwelling built ca. 1881-1887 for K. Kochersperger.
- 1291 Wendover Avenue is an 18,196 sq. ft. (.42 acre) vacant lot.
- 1295 Wendover Avenue is an 18,063 sq. ft. (.41 acre) vacant lot.
- 1326 W. Montgomery Avenue is a 22,106 sq. ft. (.51 acre) lot improved with a single-family detached dwelling built in 1962.

## Zoning Summary and Approvals

On February 15, 2019 the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) granted the following relief for the project:

1. A special exception to expand an accredited educational institution.
2. A variance to allow a portion of a driveway in the front yard setback of Wendover Avenue.

The following conditions were imposed on the project:

1. The basketball court assembly space and the proposed addition to the multipurpose building described at the hearing not being used simultaneously for public assembly; and
2. The “proposed future academic building” being used only for educational purposes.

## Environmental Advisory Council

The EAC reviewed the plan at their April 23, 2019 meeting. The EAC recommended the applicant provide the following additional information:

1. An index of existing trees, especially those over 24” caliper
2. A list of trees to be removed

3. A narrative describing the environmental impact of the project as well as the anticipated environmental benefits of the proposed improvements.

The EAC recommended the applicant consider vegetated surface expression of stormwater as an educational feature and to minimize underground disturbance of the soil mantle.

**Historical Commission Review (HC)**

The applicant appeared before the HC on April 22, 2019. The HC expressed concern with the great loss of historic fabric, though they understand the balance between preservation and the growth of the school. The HC also disagreed with the suggestion in the applicant’s Historic Resource Impact Study that the two historic resources do not merit listing on the Historic Resource Inventory, and further suggested the following mitigation measures to counter the loss of the historic resources:

1. Proper landscape buffering to adjacent resources or residential areas (as shown in the application);
2. An educational component to be defined by the school that would reflect upon the loss and changes on these properties in our community over time;
3. The serious salvage, re-use, or sale of materials from all of the lost properties, including the two historic resources, and the possible re-use of some of those materials including stone or other architectural details for use in the proposed carriage house on Wendover Road;
4. Documentation of the two historic resources in photographs and drawings, as allowed by the ordinance.

**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-2 Requirements	Maximum Permitted/Required	Proposed Consolidated Lots
Minimum Net Lot Area	18,000 sq. ft.	11 acres 480,690 sq. ft.
Minimum Lot Width	95’	<95’
Maximum Building Area	18%	13.1% (63,050 sq. ft.)
Minimum Front Yard	40’	40’
Minimum Side Yard	12’/35’ aggregate	25’*
Rear Yard	25’	N/A**
Maximum Impervious Surface	24% (115,365 sq. ft.)***	33.1% (158,883 sq. ft.)***
Landscape Buffer	20’ minimum along side/rear yard setbacks-50’ maximum	50’
Parking	78	154
Building Height	65’****	

\* For any building other than a single-family detached dwelling or a building accessory thereto, there shall be two side yards, one on each side of the principal building, neither of which shall be less than 25 feet wide.

\*\*Because of the way that the property is configured, there is no rear yard.

\*\*\*The allowable impervious surface in the R2 zoning district is 24%. Several of the existing lots exceed the underlying impervious surface and are therefore nonconforming. In addition, their nonconforming status enables the applicant to take advantage of the 1% impervious surface increase. The nonconforming impervious surface may continue as determined by the Zoning Officer.

\*\*\*\*Subject to setback and impervious surface penalties.

## **Issues**

### **1. Encroachment into the Residential Neighborhood**

This application is an example of institutional expansion into an existing residential neighborhood. Under the current Zoning Code, an institution such as this is able to purchase adjacent properties and expand onto them. Under the proposed zoning, the boundary of existing institutions will be defined on the zoning map and to expand beyond that boundary the institution must seek an amendment to the zoning map from the Board of Commissioners.

The current draft of the new zoning map includes the properties that are the subject of this application and proposes to rezone them to IE, Institutional Education use.

### **2. Parking**

The applicant proposes to add a significant number of new parking spaces to the site which is well in excess of what is required under the Zoning Code. Where an additional 15 spaces are required for the expansion for the new staff/faculty members, the applicant proposes to add 76 spaces. Staff recommends the applicant consider not constructing the row of 27 spaces closest to Wendover Avenue until such time as the proposed academic building is constructed. Staff notes that on-street parking is permitted along Wendover Road and could be used to serve the needs of the school. In addition, since these spaces are not required, the applicant does not need to seek approval to hold them in reserve via conditional use.

### **3. Proposed Academic Building**

The applicant has not identified a specific use for this building yet but stated that it will serve as a future academic learning space. The Zoning Hearing Board imposed a condition requiring the building to only be used for educational purposes.

To the school's credit, they have planned ahead and attempted to anticipate their future needs which many institutions have been hesitant to do. Under the draft Zoning Code this is the purpose of a Campus Plan. The applicant has stated that the building might not be constructed for decades and therefore requests that the Board of Commissioners allow the project to be constructed in phases as permitted in the Municipalities Planning Code. The academic building will be the last improvement on the plan to be constructed. The applicant should provide the proposed height of the building as well as an estimated time frame within which they expect that the building might be constructed.

### **4. Sidewalks**

While sidewalks exist along the Montgomery Avenue frontage of the site, the existing frontage of the property along Wendover Avenue does not contain sidewalks. The plan shows a new four foot wide sidewalk and an eight foot wide verge along the newly acquired properties on Wendover Avenue where the Code requires a five foot wide sidewalk. Staff has included a condition requiring this sidewalk to be increased to five feet wide.

Regarding sidewalks on the remaining portion of Wendover Avenue, the Subdivision and Land Development Code, Section 135-28 states "Sidewalks shall be provided along heavily traveled streets and at any location where the Board of Commissioners shall determine that sidewalks are necessary for public safety or convenience. All sidewalks shall be a minimum of five feet wide, except as otherwise provided in Chapter 155, Zoning." The Board must determine if they wish to require the applicant to install sidewalks

along the remaining portion of Wendover Avenue. Staff notes that there are existing mature trees and sloped areas in the location that a sidewalk would be installed along Wendover Avenue.

Staff supports the applicant providing an alternative pedestrian route through their campus in lieu of adding a sidewalk in this area but believes a portion of sidewalk could be installed between the northern most site driveway on Wendover Avenue and Montgomery Avenue as it is flat and only a few trees exist in this area. Staff recommends the applicant show the alternate pedestrian route through the site on their Preliminary Plan. In addition, staff recommends the applicant demonstrate how a pedestrian would safely access the internal portions of the site from the existing and proposed public sidewalks.

## **5. Landscape Plan**

A focus of the Tentative Sketch Plan review should be ensuring that the institutional edge/transitional area is designed to mitigate off-site externalities of the proposed expansion on the surrounding residential neighborhood through landscaping, fencing and sensitive design of the improvements. The landscaped edges of the property should be designed as a naturalized ecosystem and should incorporate existing mature trees into the required buffer where possible.

In addition, five planted islands are required in the new parking lot added along Wendover Avenue but only four are provided. Two areas on the plan are labeled as proposed access islands with impervious surface within them. At a minimum, two additional islands are required.

## **6. Action**

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

1. A recommendation on the Tentative Sketch Plan.