

Olney Master Plan Thoughts

1. The 32-acre parcel is relatively far from the anticipated Georgia Avenue bus service. Transportation (car) costs is the second largest expense for most low-income families. Providing affordable and/or senior housing within walking distance of Georgia Avenue would be more beneficial than creating it on the 32-acre parcel. It looks like a third of a mile is about the limit of “walking distance” for transit.
 - a. The Washington Regional Network (WRN) believes that it makes more sense to maximize affordable housing around metro stations and other transit service hubs as opposed to relatively rural areas.
2. Given the current severe congestion of Olney area roads, the master plan must thoroughly examine every opportunity to accommodate growth in ways that minimizes single-occupancy commuting and maximizes use of transit services.
 - a. Sites located far from transit services and on particularly congested roads, such as the 32-acre parcel, should be reserved for uses which generate low-levels of peak-hour traffic, such as schools and parks.
3. The sensitivity of the site, given that it is bisected by streams and wetlands, makes it more conducive to low-intensity uses, such as parkland.
 - a. The 32-acre site could be part of a green corridor extending from Rock Creek Regional Park through Norbeck Country Club up to Cashell Park then the PEPCO powerlines then onto the North Branch Stream Valley Park along MD 108 which then connects to the Reddy Branch Stream Valley Park.
 - b. Corridor could be developed as a hiker/biker trail. There are several examples of trail systems including powerline right-of-ways as part of the corridor.
 - c. While a hiker/biker trail could be created even if the site were developed a paucity of ballfields exists in the Olney area. The 1998 MNCPPC *Park, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan* calls for three new ballfields in the Olney area by 2010. A portion of the site could be devoted to ballfields and other recreational uses.
4. A growing body of scientific research shows that students have a more rewarding experience in small schools. However, the research shows that schools can perform effectively if they exceed these ranges. But the probability of success may decline somewhat. Given this, the County should reconsider the decision to surplus a school site that may be unsuited to a conventional, larger school.
 - a. This research calls for elementary schools with a capacity of 300 to 600 students. The five elementary schools serving the Olney area will have a capacity of 377-632.

- b. The research also calls for middle and high school capacity of 900-1,200 students. Middle and high schools the serving Olney area have an enrollment of 705-2,249.
 - c. Magruder high school was built in 1970 on a 30-acre site. Sherwood high school was built in 1991 on a 49.3-acre site.
 - d. In 2002-03 Magruder high school had an average classroom size of 25.6 and 27 students, respectively, for english and other classes. No relocatable classrooms were reported to be on the campus now.
 - e. By 2006-07 Magruder HS capacity will decline from the current 2,043 students to 2,030 and enrollment will increase from the current 2,139 to 2,237 students. The 0.64% decline in capacity and 4.6% increase in enrollment combines into an overall increase in classroom size or number of 5.24%.
 - f. The five elementary schools listed in the table on page 121 of the Olney Master Plan are on sites ranging from 9.9- to 11.0- acres.
 - g. The two middle schools listed in the table on page 121 of the Olney Master Plan are on sites ranging from 20.0- to 24.1- acres.
 - h. The 32-acre site is within the acreage of elementary to middle schools and at the lower end for high schools.
 - i. To pursue this issue further we should engage a school facilities planning expert to assess the impact of projected Olnet area growth on school capacity.
5. MNCPPC staff have stated that the Planning Board may continue to receive public input after the October 17th cutoff, particularly reports addressing specific topics raised in public comment. The Planning Board should confirm this understanding and establish deadlines and format for these submissions.