



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

December 5, 2013

REQUEST: Multiple Structures on a Single Lot /Maryland School for the Blind - 3501 Taylor Avenue

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Anthony Cataldo

PETITIONER: Maryland School for the Blind

OWNER: Same

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: The subject property known as 3501 Taylor Avenue is zoned R-3 and is approximately 95 acres in size. Approximately 2 acres of the 95 acres is located in Baltimore County. The site is currently improved with several buildings, parking lots, athletic field, and open green areas. The site is heavily buffered by mature trees on its eastern border and scattered trees throughout the remaining of the site.

General Area: The subject property is located in Northeast Baltimore in the Overlea neighborhood. It is bordered by Taylor Avenue to the north, Moyer Avenue to the west, and Walnut Avenue to the south.

HISTORY

On April 19, 2012 the Planning Commission approved the request for Multiple Structures on a Single Lot for the Maryland School for the Blind- LIFE project.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

This project is in conformance with the Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan with respect to Learn Goal #1 Improve Public School Facilities, Objective #1: Develop Facilities Master Plan to Better Utilize School Facilities.

ANALYSIS

Structuring for Optimal Learning and Acquiring Real Life Skills (SOLAR), is the Autism-blind program at the Maryland School for the Blind. It is designed to meet the highly unique and complex needs of students, ages 6-22, who have two profound disabilities – autism and blindness. The program may also include other academic students who have similar issues of

communicating and relating but not necessarily a diagnosis of autism. These students often have extreme sensitivities to light, noise, and change in temperature. As such, measures were taken to locate the new facilities for these students away from the active area of campus and provide a sense of security and enclosure in the site design and positioning of the buildings. The buildings will partially enclose a quad that will serve as the outdoor living room for the students. It will be lined on the south side by the three similar, but distinct residences and on the north side by the academic building.

The entire site is accessible, as full site accessibility is a key goal of the school. All student spaces egress on grade for ease of mobility and enhanced student safety. Parking, vehicular access, and building services are confined to the outer ring of the project, limiting the negative impacts of vehicular interaction with the students as well as providing direct connections between the new buildings and the existing campus.

Existing buildings Beasten Hall, Fisher Hall, Purcell-Tannar Hall, and Wolf East will be demolished with this projects. Demolition of the existing buildings will be phased to compensate for the client's need to keep Wolf East open and operating as the other buildings are being constructed. After Cottages A, B, and C have been completed, Wolf East will be demolished and the remaining site infrastructure built.

The required Planning Commission action is from Section 3-301 of the Baltimore City Zoning Code, pertaining to "Multiple Structures on a Lot", and stipulates that no more than one detached structure may be located on any Residential-zoned lot, or on any Office-Residential, Commercial, or Industrial-zoned lot that is adjacent to a residential lot. However, there is an exception that the Zoning Administrator can approve multiple principal structures on a single lot if "(1) the development otherwise would conform to the requirements of this article; and (2) the Planning Commission approves the design of the development."


Design approval includes the site plan for the project, the landscape plan, and building elevations. All uses, height (determined through floor area ratio calculations) for the project are governed by the underlying zoning of the property. The applicant has submitted the following materials for staff's review:

- **Site Plan**: The site plan was approved on November 18, 2013. The main vehicular entrance to the project site is in the southwestern quadrant through Campus Drive which is proposed to wrap east around the proposed buildings to a traffic circle located east of the existing Campbell Hall. There is also a small access drive at the northeast corner of the project site and connects to Taylor Avenue, but is gated and not used for regular access. Pedestrian access is achieved by a system of sidewalks which connect to the sidewalks of Newcomer Hall and Campbell Hall on the west boundary of the site. Wide concrete sidewalks provide pedestrian access to the new quad area which is located between the Cottages and the Learning Activity Center. Pedestrian circulation is provided around all sides of each of the buildings via sidewalks and ramps.
- **Forest Stand Delineation/Forest Conservation**: The applicant has submitted a forest stand delineation plan and it has been reviewed and approved by staff. Since this development

exceeds 20,000 square feet of disturbed area, it triggers Forest Conservation requirements. Maryland School of the Blind is working closely with Planning staff to satisfy their forest conservation requirements through the dedication of conservation easement area on campus.

- **Stormwater Management:** Since this proposal disturbs more than 5,000 square feet, it triggers stormwater management review. The applicant is proposing to address this issue by providing a submerged gravel wetlands based on Chapter 5 Environmental Site Design by Maryland Department of the Environments Design Manual Regulations. The micro-scaled practice will be located centrally along the northern border of the side between the new Campus Drive and Taylor Avenue.
- **Architecture:** The massing of the building is intended to break down the scale and create buildings that feel 'home-like' and welcoming. The forms are recognizable and the material palette is familiar to the campus. Red brick with dark accents define each building. Brick panels with different bonding patterns and textures will be located around the façade to help differentiate the residences from one another. Similar to the treatment of historic Newcomer Hall, the entries to all of the buildings will have an appropriately scaled interpretation of the portico, a trellis in off-white metal which contrasts with the brick mass of the building, providing contrast so that the students, from afar, can identify the entry of each of the buildings.
- **Green Building Requirements:** This building will need to comply with the Baltimore City Green Building Standards (BCGBS). The applicant will work closely with the Plans/Permits office to fulfill the requirements for this program.

Staff has notified Harbel Community Organization, Inc. and the Overlea Community Association of this action.



Thomas J. Stosur
Director