

RESPONSES TO COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM
CONCEPT PLAN REVIEW FOR CHCCS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL #11
COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2008, 7:00 P.M.

Chairperson Jonathan Whitney called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Commission members present were Mark Broadwell, Mary Margaret Carroll, Augustus Cho, George Cianciolo, Chris Culbreth, Kathryn James, Glenn Parks, Amy Ryan, and Polly Van De Velde. Staff members present were Senior Planner Kay Pearlstein, and Planning Technician Kay Tapp.

CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO CITY SCHOOLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
#11
400 Caldwell Street, File No. 9788-18-1797

The Town has received a proposal from the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools for a Concept Plan Review for Elementary School #11, located at 400 Caldwell Street. The Concept Plan proposes to demolish four existing buildings and parking areas and construct 100,000 square feet of floor area for classrooms (pre-kindergarten through 5th grades), including a gymnasium, cafeteria, and media center. Parking for 84 vehicles is also proposed. The proposed development is located between Caldwell Street and McMasters Street in the Northside neighborhood. Access to the site is proposed from both McMasters Street and Caldwell Street. The 7.9-acre site is located in the Residential-3 (R-3) zoning district, the Resource Conservation District, and the Northside Neighborhood Conservation District. The site is identified as Orange County Parcel Identifier Number 9788-18-1797.

RESPONSES TO SUMMARY ISSUES FROM
COMMUNITY DESIGN COMMISSION COMMENTS:

The Commission's comments are summarized below at the bullet points with response to each listed directly below the item (in italics):

- The limited area designated for vehicular parking;
The site is 7.89 acres of which approximately 5 acres are usable space after the Resource Conservation District acreage is removed from the total. Development is extremely limited within that boundary. NC Department of Public Instruction recommends approximately 16 acres for a school of this student capacity. However, their architectural staff is excited about this project as a neighborhood school understanding some concessions must be made in the typical recommendations to support such an effort. The site area available for building has been carefully reviewed and a balance sought between all the elements that must be provided. The building footprint has been compacted by going to a three story design. The bus stacking area is shown along McMasters Street to limit its impact while providing safe access for students. Parking is provided at the front entry drive and along the existing parking area on the West side of the site.

- Stacking at drop-off and pick-up times and pedestrian traffic conflicts;
The design will be coordinated carefully to provide the maximum safety possible. In review of traffic flow into and around school projects, the design team has provided the maximum stacking area available and approach from adjoining streets. NCDPI is also concerned about the pedestrian circulation on and surrounding the site. Pedestrian crossings will be provided. The site and roadway improvements will comply with traffic study.

- Use Resource Conservation District for outdoor classroom;
The RCD will be cleaned up as part of the project and adjacent areas to the trail will be studied for use as curriculum enhancement opportunities. The School District is interested in the incorporation of this area of the site as outdoor area for use by classes.

- Security and safety;
Outdoor areas will be highly supervisable from the building as well as adjacent areas of the site. The design intention is to provide sight lines to all areas children will be occupying to maximize the supervision by staff.

The sloped nature of the site requires several changes in elevation, these will be addressed with the appropriate guardrails and safety measures, especially along the West edge of the lower parking area.

Traffic controls will be provided to encourage drop off only along the front sidewalk in the designated drop off area.

- Trail connections and pedestrian circulation in general – both internal and external to the site;
A pedestrian connection will be provided to the trail on the West side of the site. Sidewalks will be provided on both Caldwell and McMasters Streets as well as into and around the building. Student circulation around the site during the school day and approach to the site will all be carefully developed to allow logical pedestrian routes and minimize any pedestrian traffic overlap.

- Drop-off separate for Pre-K and Head Start students that need to be escorted to class;
The lower parking area to be reviewed for location of PreK drop off parking spaces which would allow parents to park and escort their children directly into those classrooms on the lower level.

- Supports Active Living design aspects of neighborhood school;
The site will offer play area in open field and play structures, community garden adjacent to the science room, and recreational use of the multipurpose room facility. Bike storage is provided on site. Access to the greenway trail within the RCD will also be available.

- Additional information on bus routes and bicycle networks and parking numbers;

Bus Routing adjacent to the school is being reviewed by the School District Transportation group and final determinations on those routes have not yet been made. The District will consider this issue as they review the approach to those bus routes. Bicycle parking will be available on site to support that as an alternative transportation means

- *Becomes a neighborhood focal point;
The school is planned to coordinate into the architecture of the neighborhood while bring a distinct character at its entry. The material and roof slope will coordinate with the area while the entry and media center design will be the focal point of the entry court. The building should be something the neighborhood can take pride in.*
- *School architecture to take cues from architecture of neighborhood – porches, roof pitch, walls, shapes, etc.
Building entrance court faces Caldwell Street with building access from the drop off loop in that location. The major building elements respond to this entry. The radius roof over the media center creates the focal point for the building with the classroom wing as a backdrop. This main design element of the radius roof form over the media and gym areas is in line with the access from Caldwell Street and acts to present the building to that approach. The window and porch detailing on the classroom building reflects elements of the surrounding neighborhood. The materials of the building are multiple colors of brick with horizontal paneling and colored metal and light tone concrete used as trim details.*
- *Sustainable design aspects to be included if possible – pervious pavers, green roof, solar tiles, rainwater cistern, community garden, and sun orientation;
Multiple sustainable features are being considered for the design including those listed above. The building is oriented to achieve the best daylighting within the academic spaces. The majority of those spaces being in the classroom wing have their window walls directly North or South. The roof form over the major public areas works to maximize the North light into those spaces. Rainwater collection will be provided and located such that it can be used to support the community garden as well as the facility. Solar power is being investigated for several areas of the roofing materials and in several forms. Solar panels and thin film applications are a couple approaches that may be incorporated in the design. Currently, solar hot water will be provided with the electrical engineer exploring additional uses such as powering fans and motors within the building. Parking and sidewalk surfaces materials are being reviewed, especially in the area of the drop off loop adjacent to the play fields.*

Landscaping plans will be developed to provide shade for some of the parking area; however, with limited parking available on site the planting locations will be provided while trying to maintain as many parking spaces as possible.

- General concern for safety of pedestrians involving vehicular circulation. *Pedestrian travel onto and within the site will be considered as the design is further refined. The existing trail in the Conservation District will be addressed and incorporated into the walk system on campus.*

RESPONSES TO NOTES TAKEN AT
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING FOR REVIEW OF CONCEPT PLAN
CHCCS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL #11
MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2008, 7:00 P.M.

Official comments and minutes have not been received for the meeting. The bullet points below were taken from the internet video record of the meeting for reference. The text following these points is our response to the noted comments of the Council.

- Concerned about design approach appearing too “suburban” due to automobile focus and building pulled back from street, with front entrance set back into site.
- Condense footprint more and stack more to increase available open play spaces.
- Could it respond more to the street edge (like Scroggs)?
- Concerned about too much car stacking space and stacking control, but also about event parking needs.
- Seems like a good opportunity for walkability rather than too much stacking space and idling vehicles.
- Guidelines and jurisdiction between North Carolina Department of Transportation, Department of Public Instruction, and town for stacking and parking issues?
- Design should respond to Council comments and previous Community Design Commission comments.
- Incorporate more visual design elements corresponding to the local community aesthetic.
- Pay particular attention to stormwater management due to difficult local soils
- Utilize educational value of a green building
- Consider geothermal system
- Maximize energy efficiency
- Stay committed to deconstruction rather than demolition
- Be careful to enforce tree protection areas

The design team has worked with the School District and their design advisory committee that consists of School Board members, Neighbors, school administrators and staff. During the initial meeting of the group, many building forms and site arrangements were explored with the understanding of the limited available site area. The group determined that stacking the building on three levels would help maintain as much area as possible for the playgrounds and fields.

The neighbors on the committee were very concerned with such a large facility overwhelming their homes particularly the houses along McMasters and Caldwell streets. The facility is set slightly into the site to reduce the perception of the facility's

scale given the desire to go vertical with the design. The Building is taking advantage of the grade changes across the site by placing a partial floor backed up into the site along the main grade change. The lower level will have daylighting and outdoor access from all academic areas. The building classroom area is stacked to the maximum allowed by code. The NC Building Code requires that kindergarten and first grader classroom be at grade with the second graders allowed to be one level above grade. The building achieves that as well as on grade exit from all the main public specialty functions, such as media, multi-purpose, and dining. The lower level all exits on grade as well as two-thirds of the main level. The upper level of the building houses the third through fifth grade classrooms and support areas. The vertical stacking of the building provides a compact building footprint and achieves the program space for a school of 585 student capacity on approximately five acres. As a comparison, the footprint of this facility is smaller than the footprint of Mary Scroggs Elementary School.

The District would like the facility to achieve the maximum sustainable features within the projects parameters. As one of these features, the committee desired the building achieve maximum daylighting. Therefore the main academic classroom wing was positioned on the site with the classrooms oriented directly North or South. This created the angled layout of the facility and helped with creation of the main play field area which is along McMasters Street. The facility will have other sustainable features which include but are not limited to rainwater collection cisterns, cool roof, community gardens, solar energy to heat water as well as run some mechanical fans. Energy modeling is being done to confirm the energy reduction percentage below ASHRAE standards. The mechanical system will be designed to achieve the maximum energy reduction possible within project parameters. The District is exploring geothermal by pursuing a thermal conductivity test for the site. Once data is received, the design team can better assess the impacts of pursuing such a system to support the mechanical loads of the facility. The existing buildings and site will be deconstructed in lieu of demolished to the greatest extent possible. The District is coordinating with a consultant to manage the deconstruction process and has had meetings with Habitat for Humanity to coordinate any use of existing items. Most of the existing facility components will be reused or recycled. The environmentally hazardous asbestos containing materials will be abated prior to the deconstruction activities. The deconstruction will be coordinated with the new work and any materials that can be reused in the new facility will be explored such as stone from site walls or bricks from the existing building. The design team will coordinate with Orange County Waste.

The facility is incorporating all measure of sustainable features and processes to meet Board of Education Policy 9040 and will pursue a LEED certification. The sustainable aspects of the building will be presented in such a way that they can be used as curriculum in the classrooms and visually presented in public areas of the building.

Parking would be limited and the bus stacking for pickup and drop off would be along McMasters street to limit the impact to the site layout. A drop off loop and visitor parking is occurring at the front of the building off of Caldwell Street Extension. The traffic study references the NC Department of Transportation recommendations for

stacking length based on the capacity of the school. NCDOT does not have direct jurisdiction over the local streets but many agencies associated with review of school projects reference their standards. The design team is coordinating the entry drive and driveways to the roads with those recommendations to achieve safe school access. Formerly, there was a separate entry drive from a departure at the student drop off area on Caldwell Street Extension which has now been combined into one driveway point to assist with safe vehicle maneuvering and reduce any potential interaction of pedestrians with car traffic. The design team has met with the agencies having jurisdiction, and they are all working to assist in achieving the neighborhood school. NC Department of Public Instruction is encouraging the neighborhood walkable school, as well. The facility will provide pedestrian access and travel to and from the site as well as accommodate bicycles with bicycle parking.

The Conservation District at the West side of the site will be maintained and the trail system within it will be cleaned up so the area could be used by the school as outdoor classroom space. Also, the plan will include a greenway trail through the area that could be utilized by the school and the community. The team will use tree protection measures for construction activities and is committed to maintaining as many existing trees as possible. The storm water management system design incorporates alternative paving types including consideration for impervious paving in the area of the drop off loop, rainwater collection and underground detention that will manage the quality and flow quantities exiting the site.

The District is currently studying the bus routing and potential for students walking to school. Additional information will be provided once available on the routes and the numbers of students anticipated as walkers.