

Edgewood Middle School Site Improvements

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Updated in red following the Plan & Design Commission meeting, 4/5/2017

4-13-2013B

North Shore School District #112 (“D112” or “the District”) has proposed a number of improvements at Edgewood Middle School namely a Loop Drive (Ring Road) and an Emergency Access Drive. Project highlights as well as questions and responses from neighborhood and City commission meetings can be found in this report.

The District’s Budget Deficit Reduction III (BDR3) will not be implemented for the 2017-18 school year, although the Edgewood Middle School Ring Road and other capital projects will move forward. This work has been on hold for several years pending the coordination of projects throughout the District under BDR3. These proposed traffic and safety improvements have been identified for the last five years based on a study of the District’s school properties as a critical need regardless of the student/teacher/staff population at Edgewood Middle School.

Improvements to the Edgewood Middle School site are designed to improve overall traffic flow and safety around the school during the drop off / pick up times. The improvements will also create an important emergency access to the surrounding area.

If individuals have questions about the planning, design and construction of the project, please contact City Manager Ghida Neukirch at gneukirch@cityhpil.com or School District 112 Director of Operations, Facilities & Transportation John Fuhrer at jfuhrer@nssd112.org. If individuals have questions about the project budget, please contact Mr. Fuhrer, School District 112.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Ring Road Construction

- Maximize on-site car stacking, which alleviates traffic back up on Edgewood Road and feeder roads.
- Will not divide the play field with the road, which is safer for students/faculty/staff.
- This road will also minimize potential future conflict if there is a need to expand the school building. Expansion of the school is not contemplated.

Ring Road Features

- Street width of the drive is 25’;
- 5’ sidewalk on the inner drive;
- Two lane drive; the inner lane will be used for pick up and drop off;
- One way road would operate clockwise in the AM and PM; it is not anticipated to use the road for two way purposes or in counter clockwise fashion;
- Set back on the north is between 35’ and 40’; this will continue to be a landscape buffer. Additional

landscaping is proposed;

- Planting to fill in gaps will include Emerald Arborvitae, Spartan Juniper, Eastern Red Cedar, Blue Holly, Witchhazel, Swamp White Oak, Red Maple, Serviceberry and Hackberry. A landscape plan has been drafted showing additional evergreen and deciduous plantings along the north and east property lines to provide additional screening. The Plan & Design Commission approved the landscape plan with following conditions:
 - The location and mix of trees can be adjusted as needed and revisions are eligible for administrative approval by City Staff with the goal of achieving maximum screening
 - Plantings must be installed at the following minimum heights:
 - 8' for Evergreens and multi-stem shade trees
 - 3 caliper inches for single-stem shade trees ; and
 - 24" for shrubs
- Building setback required by Highland Park zoning code on the east is 9'.

Emergency Drive

- The road will be 20' wide as required by code for emergency vehicle access; this is narrower than a two-lane public road.
- This road will not be open to the public at any time; the road would not be designed or constructed for public vehicular use. Understanding the importance of ensuring that this road will not be considered for public use, City staff will work with its Corporation Counsel to prepare a legal document that would be presented for City Council consideration that reinforces the use of the access road for emergency vehicles only and not for public use. Any change would require the District to go through zoning approval for an alternate, public use.
- The proposed access road from Chaucer Lane will require the removal of one Heritage Tree. D112 received a variation from Highland Park's Zoning Board of Appeals to remove the tree to ensure the survival of the remaining three Heritage Trees. The District will ensure that the roots of the other Heritage Trees are not damaged as part of the construction. The District team is working with their contract engineer and will work with the City on this matter.
- The road will be maintained in order to be used for emergency purposes; the District will comply with the City's noise and all other applicable laws and regulations.
- The pedestrian pathway by the emergency drive shall be covered with wood chips. Wood chips were selected to keep the natural environment while providing a safe path of travel for pedestrian and bike travel. The pathway will also be maintained and accessible year-round.
- The Gate for the emergency drive at Chaucer Lane will be constructed of a high quality material and will complement the natural environment to the greatest extent possible.

Gate Usage on the Ring Road and Emergency Access

- Lift or swing gates will be at both ends of the emergency access drive and only operated by emergency personnel and for maintenance.
- A separate swing gate would be placed by the Ring Road stopping short of the emergency access drive; this would prohibit cars while the Ring Road is open and swing the other way to prohibit

access around the Ring Road. It would create a car queue along the road so vehicles do not queue in front of the residences on Edgewood Rd.

Stormwater Detention

- Underground storage will collect runoff water generated on the site and manage it on site; The District will work with a civil engineer to ensure draining patterns are not interrupted. In addition, the existing storm sewer along north property line will be connected to the improvements to assist in water flow management.

Traffic Study Recommendations

- Student parent drop off would be available on the south side of the school;
- Bus drop off would occur along the ring road in the morning when stacking is not as great as the afternoon;
- Parents will stack on the Ring Road in the afternoon;
- 20 buses would be able to be stacked on the newly designed single drive on the south side of the school (right off Edgewood);
- Three access drives will be eliminated based on the new plan; and traffic aides or traffic monitors, signage and extensive literature for public education will be implemented.
- Buses not serving Edgewood students would not be staged on site; no idling would be permitted or viable along the Ring Road adjoining the residential homes.
- The City will review the site plan and assess appropriate locations for a fire lane.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why is this being constructed if Budget Deficit Reduction III was voted to not be implemented?

For a number of years, the District has held off on large capital projects as the referendum and budget reduction plan were pursued. To ensure the District functions in an effective manner, the loop drive and other capital projects must move forward to mitigate traffic and ensure the safety of our students, faculty and staff.

2. What will prevent the District from making the road open to the public in future years?

The road will not be designed or constructed for public access. Understanding the importance of ensuring that this road will not be considered for public use, City staff will work with its Corporation Counsel to prepare a legal document that would be presented for City Council consideration that reinforces the use of the access road for emergency vehicles only and not for public use.

An Intergovernmental Agreement between the City and District will, in part, set forth that the emergency access road will be used for emergency purposes only and maintenance by authorized vehicles. The Intergovernmental Agreement will be presented to the School Board and City Council for formal consideration. The Agreement is anticipated in May, 2016.

3. How will decisions be made that impact the aesthetic value of the surrounding area?

A committee will be formed to include School District elected officials and staff, City of Highland Park officials

and staff representative, and residents from the surrounding neighborhood. [See #16 for further info.](#)

4. Will there be a detailed landscape plan prior to construction?

The District presented a landscaping plan to the City as a part of the zoning process. [The landscape plan will be reviewed and discussed with the Advisory Group.](#)

5. What is the width of the proposed Ring Road?

The width of the loop drive will be 25 ft. It is a two-lane drive with the inner lane designated for pickup and drop off and the outer lane for bypass. The Ring Road will have a sidewalk on the side of the road closest to the school. Vehicles will be oriented so that students can enter the cars from the passenger side.

6. Where will students be entering and exiting the school?

The front doors will continue to be a major access point to the school. Work will also be done to create an additional entrance on the east side of the school. The school gym exit northeast corner of the school may also be used during pickup and drop off.

7. What is the purpose of the swing gate that will be on the Loop Drive?

This swing gate will allow “early bird” drivers to begin to line-up to pick up students while school is still in session. The swing gate will stop the traffic just shy of the emergency access road so that cars do not interfere with school activities on the field. When the drivers can proceed, the swing gate will open for maximum queuing and student pickup.

8. How will students walking to and from Edgewood Middle School cross over the Ring Road?

There will be designated cross points along the Ring Road. These cross points will be manned twice a day with traffic aides, employed or contracted by D112. The final road configuration will help determine where the designated cross points will be placed. The District will have traffic aides to help ensure safety of the children crossing the road.

9. How many gates will the emergency road have?

There will be two gates: one on each end. Public safety personnel will only access the property for maintenance or open the gates during an emergency. The emergency access road will be controlled by a transponder that allows emergency response vehicles to have 24-hour access.

10. Will Highland Park Police officers be involved with traffic management each day?

Police officers conduct periodic traffic monitoring at all D112 schools and work with the District to review their traffic management plans. Monitoring the loop drive will be established, there may not be police presence all of the time, but traffic monitors contracted by D112 and trained by the police will always be present while the road is in use. Approximately six to seven traffic monitors will be on site. The District will work with the City to review and implement the traffic management plan, make enhancements, promote, and enforce. The District will begin training traffic monitors immediately.

11. What will prevent parents from dropping students off on the surrounding areas such as Thackeray?

The Ring Road and bus lane improvements are intended to make the designated drop off / pick locations much more efficient so parents will be less inclined to use alternate drop off and pick up points. Much like the new parking lot at Highland Park High School, D112 and the City of Highland Park will work with the District to educate and encourage parents to drive appropriately and adhere to local road laws. This effort will include signage, strategically placed traffic monitors, and outreach to further educate the public and change behavior.

12. In light of the increase of vehicles, how will air quality be addressed?

A major driver of vehicle exhaust on the Edgewood Middle School site is idling buses that currently warm-up in the west parking lot. Once the improvements are in place, buses will be relocated to another site.

13. Would the Ring Road be used for evening and weekend events?

The Ring Road will not be used during after-school events or on weekends. In addition, no lighting systems will be installed on the Ring Road.

14. Where will faculty and staff park as part of the new ring road plan?

Faculty and staff will continue to park along the east and west side of the school in the parking lots. Generally, these professionals arrive before students and leave after the school day so their vehicular movements do not conflict with peak periods.

15. Are changes being made to the soccer fields?

There are currently two soccer fields at Edgewood School. Part of the District site improvements include making the two fields into full size soccer fields.

16. How will individuals with special needs be accommodated for drop off and pick up?

The District will establish the west parking lot along the east curb line for drop off and pick up for individuals with special needs. There will be individuals at this area to assist students. The front drop off can also be used. The District will provide a dedicated location to ensure a safe area for individuals.

17. Will the site improvements create flooding in the residential area?

It was reported by a resident that there is standing water along the north fence line after every rainfall. The District reported that drainage would be remediated as much as possible by the site improvements. Currently, approximately 3.55 acres drain toward the north property line. This includes most of the paved play areas northeast of the school. The majority of this drainage is not captured by any drainage structures (2 existing structures), and as such, seeks its lowest level. When there are constant rains, these areas grow in capturing rainfall and the water flows downhill to the west and south.

The proposed design seeks to substantially reduce the area that drains unimpeded toward the fence line. Only the area that is north of the ring road will continue to drain to this area. The total area will be 0.79 acres or just over 1/5 the area that drains there currently. No pavement areas will drain to the north property line.

Therefore there will actually be less than 1/5 the total volume of water draining there when compared to the existing (pavement increases the volume of water). The District does not propose regrading this area in an effort to keep as much of the landscape buffer as possible; regrading and installing drainage structures would require the removal of more trees.

There are a total of 2 existing drainage structures to pick up the 3.55 acres that is draining toward the north currently. In the proposed condition, there will be 16 drainage structures picking up drainage from the site, including 10 within the ring road itself. Any water that comes off the fields and drains onto the ring road will be captured. The sewers are designed to handle flows well in excess of what is typically required for the municipal system. All of this water is captured and conveyed to the detention system. There it is stored and released slowly into the municipal sewer system through a pair of 4-inch diameter restrictors in keeping with county requirements. The water leaving the site in a given time period will be much less than what leaves currently over that same period. None of this captured water drains to the north property line.

The District will submit an engineering plan proposing their storm water management plan and the Plan will be reviewed by the City's Engineering Division for approval.

18. How and by whom will the site changes be monitored?

The Intergovernmental Agreement as referenced herein will set forth the formation of an Advisory Group to review traffic, parking, landscaping and public safety concerns relating to the development and use of the Edgewood Middle School Property. The Advisory Group will solicit citizen input and monitor the impact of school activities at the property. All property owners within 400' of the subject site will be notified about the Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group will consist of residents and representatives of the City and SD112. The Advisory Group will meet no less than four times and the term of the Advisory Group shall be one year from the first meeting. The Advisory Group will furthermore provide a status report following every meeting to the City Council and the School Board regarding any recommendations it has relating to the development and use of the property.

The first meeting of the Advisory Group will be held in May, 2017 to discuss pre-construction preparations by the District, the construction schedule, and staging.

19. Will there be a parking restriction along Chaucer and Thackeray to restrict parking in this residential area?

In consideration of the resident concerns with drivers dropping off and picking-up students, the City may consider a parking, standing and stopping restriction on school days only along southern half of Chaucer Lane and Thackeray Drive. The parking restriction regulation would be discussed with the Advisory Group with a recommendation to be presented to the City's Transportation Commission meeting. A notice of the Transportation Committee public meeting would be mailed to impacted property owners and owners within 400' of the subject site in advance of the meeting.

If individuals have questions about the planning, design and operations pertaining to the site changes, please contact City Manager Ghida Neukirch at gneukirch@cityhpil.com or School District 112 Director of Operations, Facilities & Transportation John Fuhrer at jfuhrer@nssd112.org. If there are questions about the project budget, please contact Mr. Fuhrer, School District 112.

