

**Victory Farms Environmental Study**  
**Norton# 18-071**  
**August-September, 2018**

**Purpose**

As part of the studies for a new elementary school in Gaithersburg, MD, Norton Land Design, LLC, (NORTON) has been contracted to review the middle school property at 651 Saybrooke Boulevard along with two adjacent City of Gaithersburg properties immediately to the south of the property for potential construction of an elementary school. NORTON staff field walked the outlined property areas (exhibit 1 shows the study area outlined in blue) and utilized available GIS information from public agencies to get a general understanding of the environmental conditions.

**General Property Description and Findings**

The school property is bound by City of Gaithersburg Property to the north, west and south. Residential properties are to the west. There is an access drive immediately to the south of Saybrooke Boulevard that bisects the City properties and leads to potential stormwater controls (this was not investigated). Further to the south, through City property, is Girard Street.

**Streams, Floodplains, Buffers**

The conditions that make up streams, floodplains and associated buffers typically referred to as environmentally sensitive areas. Whetstone Run, tributary to Lake Whetstone, is directly to the north within the City property along with a tributary running along the east property and through the City property to the south. The perennial streams have associated mapped FEMA floodplains (exhibit 1 outlined in red) that cover large portions of the properties and restrict access to Girard Street to the south. Floodplains have an associated 25-foot building restriction line, not shown on the exhibits.

City of Gaithersburg regulates buffers on streams depending on the adjacent slopes. Use-I streams have an associated minimum 100 foot buffer on both sides for slopes up to 15% and increases to a buffer of 150 feet for steeper slopes over 25%. Further explanation on slopes and buffers is below but note, on properties such as the ones studied, there are adjacent steep slopes that if exceed 25%, will require the buffer to extend to the top of slope. This is important for the City properties to the south of Saybrooke Boulevard. There is a small portion of land to the south of the access road that is not encumbered by floodplains or stream buffers. A formal stream buffer analysis is not included in this study.

**Forest, Trees Slopes**

The area of forest within the floodplain and stream buffers considered high priority forest due to sensitive features, mentioned above, and not typically permitted for impacts. The sensitive areas also include steep slopes and forested areas within the buffers. Exhibit 2, depicts the forest and contours of the properties, however, a slope analysis is not included in this study. Slopes are treated differently with respect to stream buffers depending on their proximity to the stream. Slopes are either considered "hydraulically adjacent" (within 200 feet of the stream) or "hydraulically remote" (outside the stream buffer or at least 200 feet from the stream). If the stream buffer encompasses the toe of a steep slope, the buffer must be expanded beyond the width required buffer to include the entire slope. Where the

toe of the slope exists outside the stream buffer or is at least 200 feet from the stream, it is considered "hydraulically remote" and is not included in buffers. The property areas surrounding the school and City properties are fully wooded. The forest to the south of Saybrooke and west of the access drive contains numerous large specimen trees (30"+ diameter) that would require variances to impact or remove. There is limited area (likely less than 5 acres) to the east of the access drive that is flatter, with fewer specimen trees but still fully forested.

**Summary**

The study area contains numerous sensitive environmental features that are regulated and encumber the properties. Development would be restricted to areas that do not have floodplains and stream buffers. If MCPS were to move forward, development would likely include forest conservation fee-in-lieu for forest clearing along with justification and mitigation for removal of specimen trees. Floodplain and stream buffer impacts and permitting would also be likely for stormwater outfalls.

Please call if there are any questions or additional information is needed.

Sincerely,  
Norton Land Design LLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. A. Norton", written in a cursive style.

Michael A. Norton, PLA