North Shore School District 112 (SD112) presented the Edgewood site improvements to the City’s Plan & Design Commission at the meeting on March 7, 2017. This project is separate and apart from the proposed SD112 reconfiguration project.

Construction of the proposed improvements is planned for the summer of 2017.  The two primary objectives for the site improvements are to enhance the emergency access capabilities and School District traffic management.  The emergency access will provide a secondary and critical access to Edgewood Middle School for public safety vehicles (and will not be open to public vehicular traffic). The traffic management is intended to move the school traffic off of Edgewood Road and onto the school property to minimize traffic congestion on the public streets and help address pedestrian safety during the drop off and pick up peak periods.

Installation of the ring road represents construction of a new structure on the Edgewood Middle School property and the arrangement of site improvements associated with the ring road, including landscaping and site circulation, represent an Exterior Design Feature that is subject to design review approval by the Plan & Design Commission.

Chapter 176 of the City Code establishes the authority and intent of design review. Section 176.040(A) states: “Prior to the issuance of any permit required under the ordinances of the City for the erection, construction, alteration or repair of any structure, a Certificate of Design Review Approval is required if the requested permit (i) is for a non-single-family residential use, and (ii) involves an Exterior Design Feature.” The Plan & Design Commission has final approval authority on design review applications, which means the Edgewood improvements will not be forwarded to the City Council for consideration or final approval.

As part of the review and feedback from the Plan & Design Commission (PDC), SD112 will follow-up as noted for presentation at the next meeting (date TBD):

* Evaluate the proposed landscape plan, explore opportunities to add additional screening such as Evergreens to provide year-round screening and provide a comprehensive plan for approval. The Commission appreciated ongoing efforts to fill gaps in the screening as they’re identified, but recognized the need to review a plan that anticipated where gaps may appear and showed efforts to provide additional screening now;
* Provide additional detail on the pedestrian path by the emergency access, including: ground cover material, year-round maintenance plan, and accessibility;
* Submit information on the gate options, specifically at the end of Chaucer Road, adjoining the residential area. This should include specific makes / models that may be used, as well as photo simulations/illustrations showing how the different models would appear if used. The Commission indicated they were willing to defer final approval of the gate to members of the Neighborhood Advisory Group that includes the neighbors with liaisons/participation from the City and SD112.
* Provide details on bicycle advocacy/plans to increase bicycle use by students; and
* Submit the SD112’s sign proposal, such as number, location, and size.
* A Traffic Management and Emergency Access Plan will be prepared by SD112 and reviewed by the City’s Police and Fire Departments.

The School District along with our architects and engineers will be working with the City staff to address the requests of the PDC.

The School District will also attend and work with the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) regarding the request to remove one heritage tree.

In addition, a Neighborhood Advisory Group will be considered that will include neighbors and City and School District representatives to conduct on-going review and assessment of the proposed improvements at Edgewood Middle School. The Advisory Group will be formed after the School District has gone through the official City process for the PDC and the ZBA and plans for the improvements have been finalized.  The Advisory Group will have input on the gate design at Chaucer Road as well as additional plantings to supplement the approved landscape plan in the future.

A Special Meeting of the Plan & Design Commission will be set up in April to follow-up on the March 7th meeting. SD112 and the City will issue communication to the neighborhood and public when the meeting date is set.

If individuals have questions, they may contact City Manager Ghida Neukirch at gneukirch@cityhpil.com or SD112 Director of Facilities and Operations John Fuhrer at jfuhrer@nssd112.org.