

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This document is a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed demolition of the Main Building and Ellis Hall at St. Paul's School to provide additional open space. To ensure comprehensive environmental review in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and its implementing regulations at 6NYCRR Part 617, the potential environmental impacts associated with implementation of the Proposed Action are evaluated in the DEIS.

On April 9, 2009, the Village Board of Trustees (the "Village Board") of the Incorporated Village of Garden City ("the Village"), as lead agency, issued a Positive Declaration, or intent to prepare a DEIS. The Proposed Action was determined to be a Type 1 action, as it involves the demolition of a structure listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. There are no other involved agencies.

On May 7, 2009, the Village Board adopted a Draft DEIS Scope, and held a public scoping meeting on June 5, 2009. All relevant comments received during the comment period were incorporated into the Final DEIS Scope, which was adopted by the Village Board in August 2009.

**Figure 1-1** presents a regional location map of the project. **Figure 1-2** presents a local village map.

### 1.1.1 PROJECT AREA HISTORY

In 1881, Mrs. Cornelia Stewart, widow of Alexander T. Stewart, founder of the Village of Garden City, entrusted the 48.6-acre St. Paul's campus to the Cathedral of the Incarnation for use as an educational facility. Construction of the Main Building began in 1879, and was completed in 1887. The Main Building operated as a school for over 100 years, during which time several additional buildings, including Ellis Hall, a field house and gymnasium were added. In 1991, the school closed and remained vacant until 1993, when the entire property was acquired by the Village. According to the Village Board resolution approving acquisition of the property, the acquisition was for Village purposes, including recreational purposes. The Village's petition in the eminent domain proceeding to acquire the property stated that the public benefit to be gained by the acquisition of a 48.6 acre site as a significant green space and the prevention of an undesirable use of the property. The Main Building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and is considered part of the late nineteenth century A. T. Stewart Era Buildings district. Since acquisition by the Village, the majority of the property has been used for a variety of Village purposes, including field and indoor recreation, special events, exhibitions, and other general recreational and cultural community uses.

Shortly before its acquisition by the Village, the Mayor empanelled a citizens committee, the Mayor's Committee on St. Paul's (the "Committee"), to evaluate the campus' structures and

## St. Paul's School Demolition for Additional Open Space

grounds and to study potential uses for the property. In the ensuing several years, the Committee studied numerous options for adaptive reuse of the various buildings, including the historic Main Building.

The Committee first considered municipal use for the Main Building and Ellis Hall, including a Village Hall, Police and Fire Departments, Village Justice Court, High School, Garden City School District administrative offices, library and rooms for community activities. As part of that effort, a structural engineering firm was hired to analyze the physical condition of the buildings, to identify and prioritize construction work necessary to rehabilitate the buildings, and to estimate the cost of conversion. In 1994, the Mayor's Committee issued a report based on the advice of the engineering firm, finding that it would cost more than \$18 million to convert the Main Building for municipal uses. Because of the high cost, the Committee recommended that the Main Building and Ellis Hall be sold or leased to a suitable third party, and that the field house, Cluett Hall, and a minimum of 38 acres of the campus property be retained by the Village.

Numerous parties initially approached the Committee with interest in reusing the Main Building and Ellis Hall for commercial, educational, and institutional uses. However, after further study of the building conditions, the only parties with continued interest were developers of senior residence and health care facilities. Therefore, in 1995 the Committee issued a Request for proposals from such developers. Responses were submitted in 1996, and in 1998 a developer was designated as the potential future long-term lessee of the property including the Main Building and Ellis Hall, the latter of which was proposed for demolition, while the Main Building would be adaptively reused. This developer, however, abandoned the project and filed for bankruptcy in 2000. During this time, a group of citizens brought a lawsuit challenging the Village's proposal to lease the property to a private developer. The basis for the suit was that the St. Paul's School property had been acquired by the Village for public use, was therefore held in public trust, and could not be converted to private use without approval by the State legislature. This lawsuit was ultimately successful.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee was reconstituted in 2000 and began to once again investigate the potential reuse of the Main Building for municipal space. Again, an architectural and engineering firm was engaged to estimate the cost of doing so. The estimate was presented to the Village Board and the public in 2002, and amounted to approximately \$23 million, not including the cost of demolishing Ellis Hall and eight small cottages formerly used for faculty housing. The firm subsequently prepared an estimate for the cost of relocating the Garden City Library to the Main Building, which was presented to the Village Board and the public in 2003 and amounted to approximately \$26.6 million. Ultimately, it was determined that any conversion to a municipal use is too expensive an endeavor.

The Committee, with the goal of preserving the Main Building, then explored various options for private, or mixed public and private, use, with the understanding that any such undertaking would require State legislative approval. In 2006, the Village issued a Request for Proposals to a number of developers. Seven proposals were submitted, which the Committee narrowed down to three viable ones, from the Albanese Organization, AvalonBay Communities, Inc., and a coalition of the Canus Corporation and the Committee to Save St. Paul's ("CSSP"). The

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<sup>1</sup> In 2004, the Village Board of Trustees also adopted a resolution designating the entire former St. Paul's School campus as dedicated parkland, which cannot be converted to private use without state legislation.

Albanese Organization subsequently withdrew its proposal. In a report issued in July, 2008, the Committee recommended that AvalonBay's proposal for conversion to apartments, along with construction of additional townhouses, be accepted by the Village. It recommended this proposal over the Canus/CSSP proposal for a mixed residential/public use development of the Main Building only, based on the relative financial viability of the two proposals, and the relative financial risk to the Village, as reflected in a report by the Village's independent consultant. The Committee's report also included estimates prepared by a construction consulting firm for the costs of demolishing the Main Building and Ellis Hall (approximately \$5.8 million in 2009 dollars) and for demolishing Ellis Hall and stabilizing the Main Building to the extent of securing its exterior from the elements and preventing further deterioration (approximately \$13.9 million 2009 year dollars). The cost estimates are in Appendix C hereto. A listing of engineering reports and proposals is in Appendix E.

As stated above, no private redevelopment of the Main Building can proceed without State legislation. Senator Kemp Hannon, in whose district Garden City is located, would have to propose such home rule legislation. Senator Hannon has stated unequivocally that he would do so only if there were a consensus of Village residents in favor of a specific proposal. In December 2008, the Village's four property owners' associations conducted a vote of Village residents, which indicated that a majority disfavored the AvalonBay proposal. This result effectively precluded moving forward with that proposal.

Since the acquisition of the property, the Village has expended significant costs to maintain the Main Building. Most notably, an extensive roof patching and repair was conducted in December 2002 and January 2003 to address ongoing deterioration and leaking issues. In addition, periodic inspections of the roof have been conducted, resulting in patching.

In order to prevent the building's plumbing from freezing, and to slow the further weathering and deterioration of the structure, the Village also maintained the oil and natural gas hot water heating systems in the building. The cost of heating oil and gas to the Village was \$74,000.00 per year, as averaged over the past five years. The Village's consultants have estimated that ongoing operating costs to just maintain the Main Building in its current condition (but with expected continued deterioration due to water infiltration) would be approximately \$200,000 per year.

### **1.1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED**

Given the Village's inability to facilitate the preservation of the building through adaptive reuse over the last 17 years,<sup>1</sup> the purposes of the Proposed Action, which is the subject of this DEIS, are to relieve the Village of a considerable financial cost and potential liability, while creating additional open space. Because of the restrictions on use of the property to park uses and the prohibitive cost of renovating the Main Building for municipal use, the Village has proposed demolition consistent with the purposes of initial acquisition of the property and consistent with its designation as parkland, i.e., public recreational space. Demolishing the Main Building and Ellis Hall would therefore allow this property to become part of the recreational amenity provided by the remainder of the former campus and would fulfill the public use objectives for which the property was originally acquired and designated as parkland.

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<sup>1</sup> Documents reflecting the efforts to reuse the building, engineering studies, and cost estimates are included in appendices to this DEIS and are in the Village's files.

## **St. Paul's School Demolition for Additional Open Space**

As stated above, the Village had expended an average of \$74,000.00 per year to keep the Main Building minimally heated. In 2009, the water was drained from the Main Building and the heating system was turned off as a cost-saving measure. It has expended considerable funds in "bandaid" roof repairs and other maintenance functions as well as maintaining building security. As discussed below, the Main Building is in a deteriorated condition and will continue to deteriorate with water infiltration if the roof and windows are not replaced, and the masonry repaired. This work alone, apart from any upgrades needed to comply with building code requirements and allow occupancy of the building, would cost the Village approximately \$13.9 million.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, operating costs would continue at approximately \$200,000 per year.

### **1.1.3 PROPOSED ACTION**

The Proposed Action is the demolition of the Main Building and Ellis Hall at the vacant St. Paul's School for additional open space where the building footprints currently are. The former main entrance driveway and parking would remain for park access parking.

The demolition is expected to occur in five phases. In phase one, historic elements of the buildings will be removed and preserved as mitigation (see Chapter 10). In phases two and three (order to be determined), all asbestos containing materials, lead paint, petroleum products, and other hazardous materials will be dealt with appropriately, in accordance with all Federal, State and County regulations and guidelines. Also in phases two and three, all non-structural recyclable materials will be removed and transported to recycling facilities. In phase four, the building structures themselves will be demolished. Additional recyclable materials will be salvaged as warranted, and the remaining debris will be removed to an approved construction and demolition debris disposal facility. Finally, in phase five, the site will be appropriately graded and landscaped for its intended use as additional public open space.

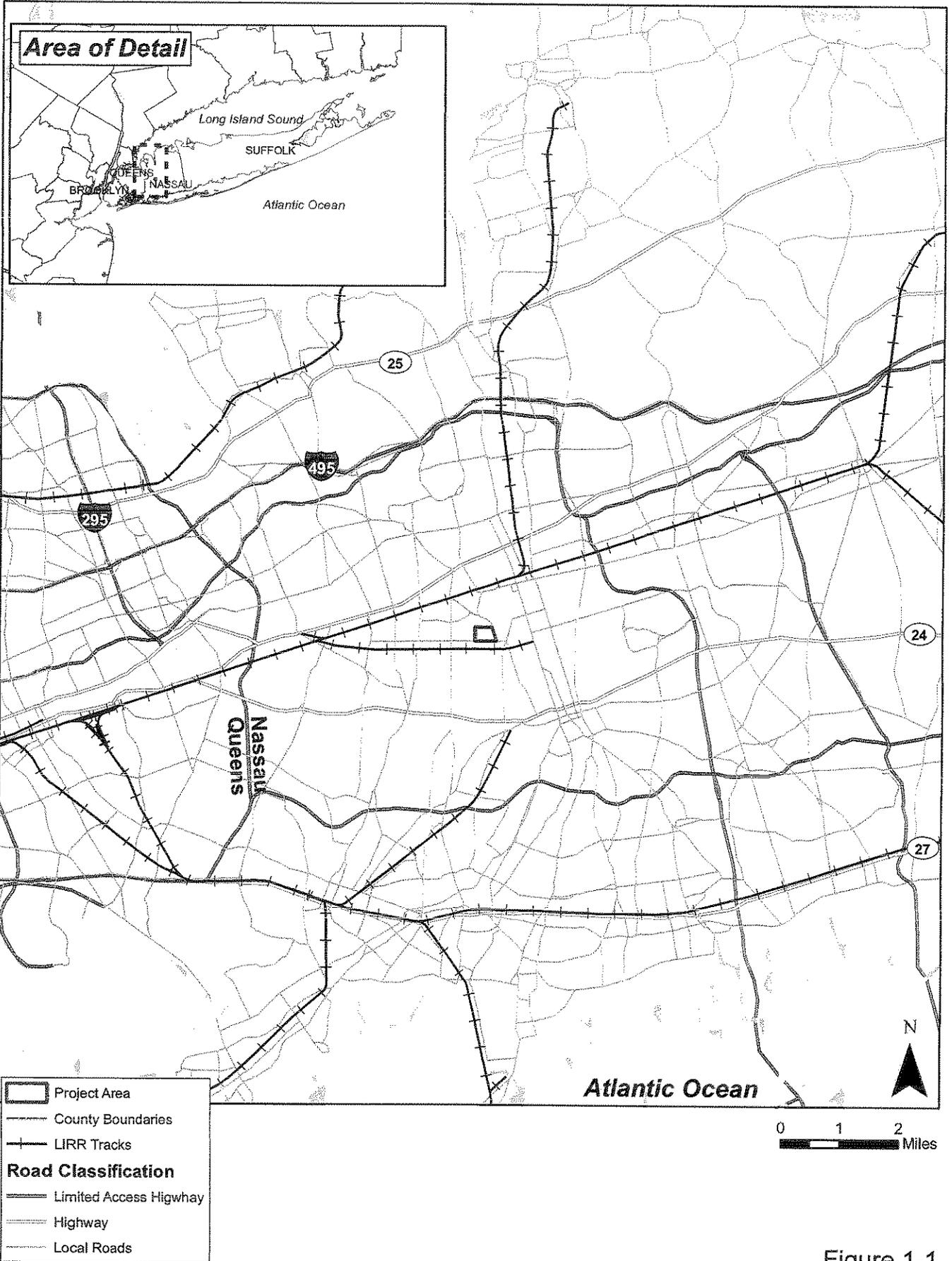
The estimated cost for the Proposed Action is approximately \$5.8 million (2009 year dollars) (see Appendix C).

### **1.1.4 REQUIRED PERMITS AND APPROVALS**

As a Village-owned property there are no other agencies, other than the Village Board, with the authority to fund, undertake, or approve the Proposed Action. As such, there are no discretionary permits or approvals required by other agencies, and therefore no involved agencies associated with this Proposed Action.

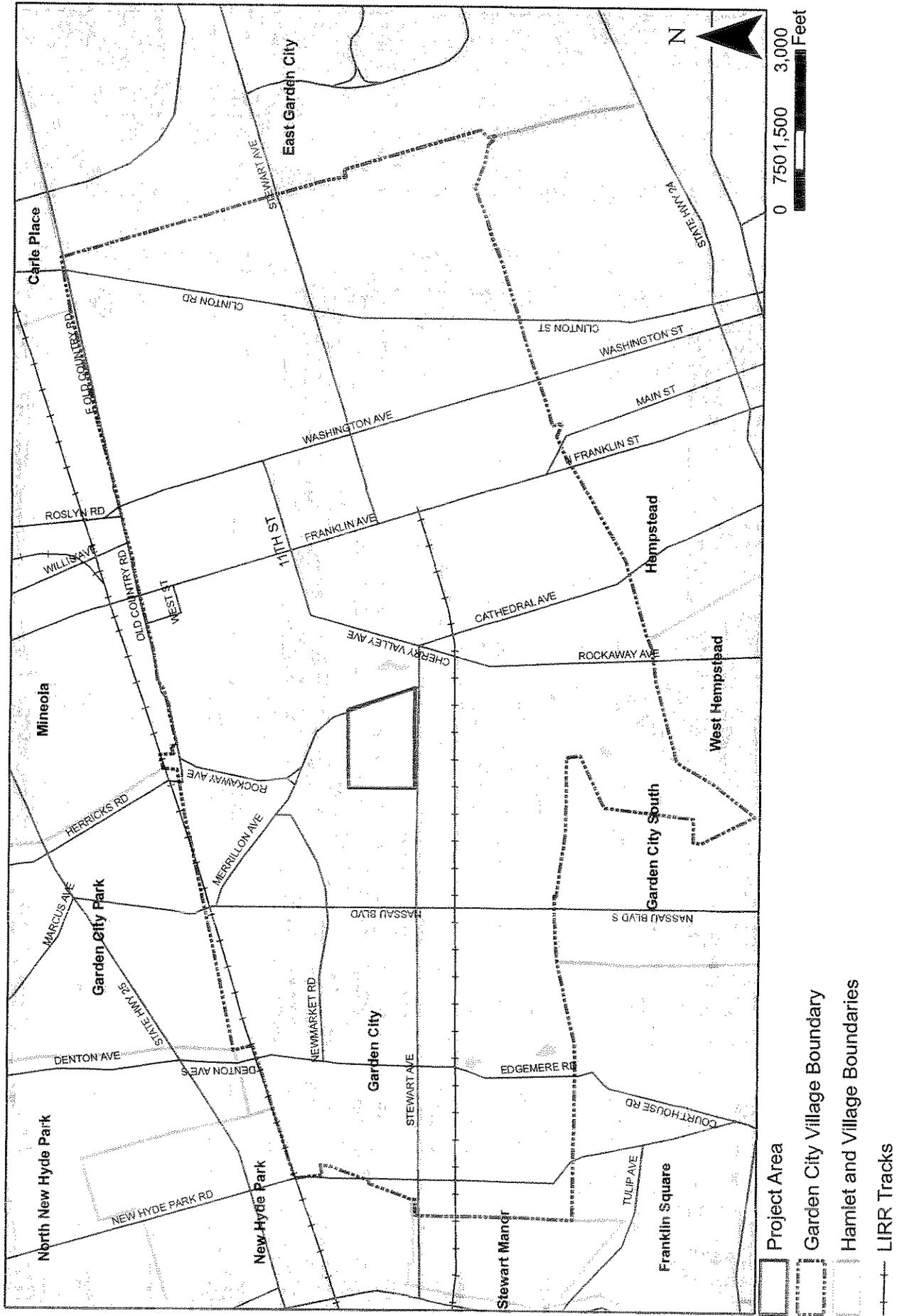
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<sup>1</sup> Figures in 2009 year dollars.



St. Paul's School Demolition for Additional Open Space

Figure 1-1  
Regional Location Map



St. Paul's School Demolition for Additional Open Space

Figure 1-2  
Village Location Map

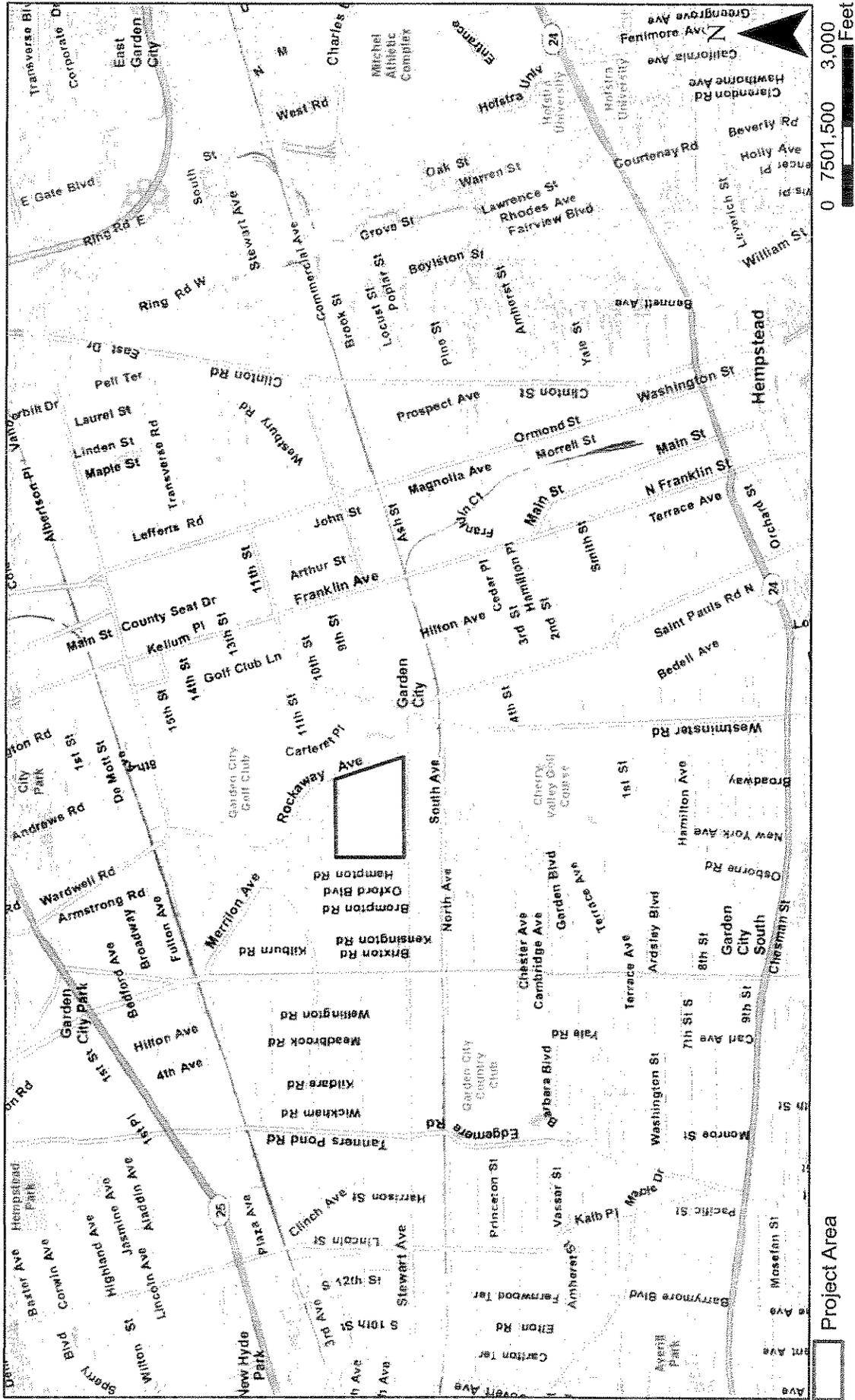


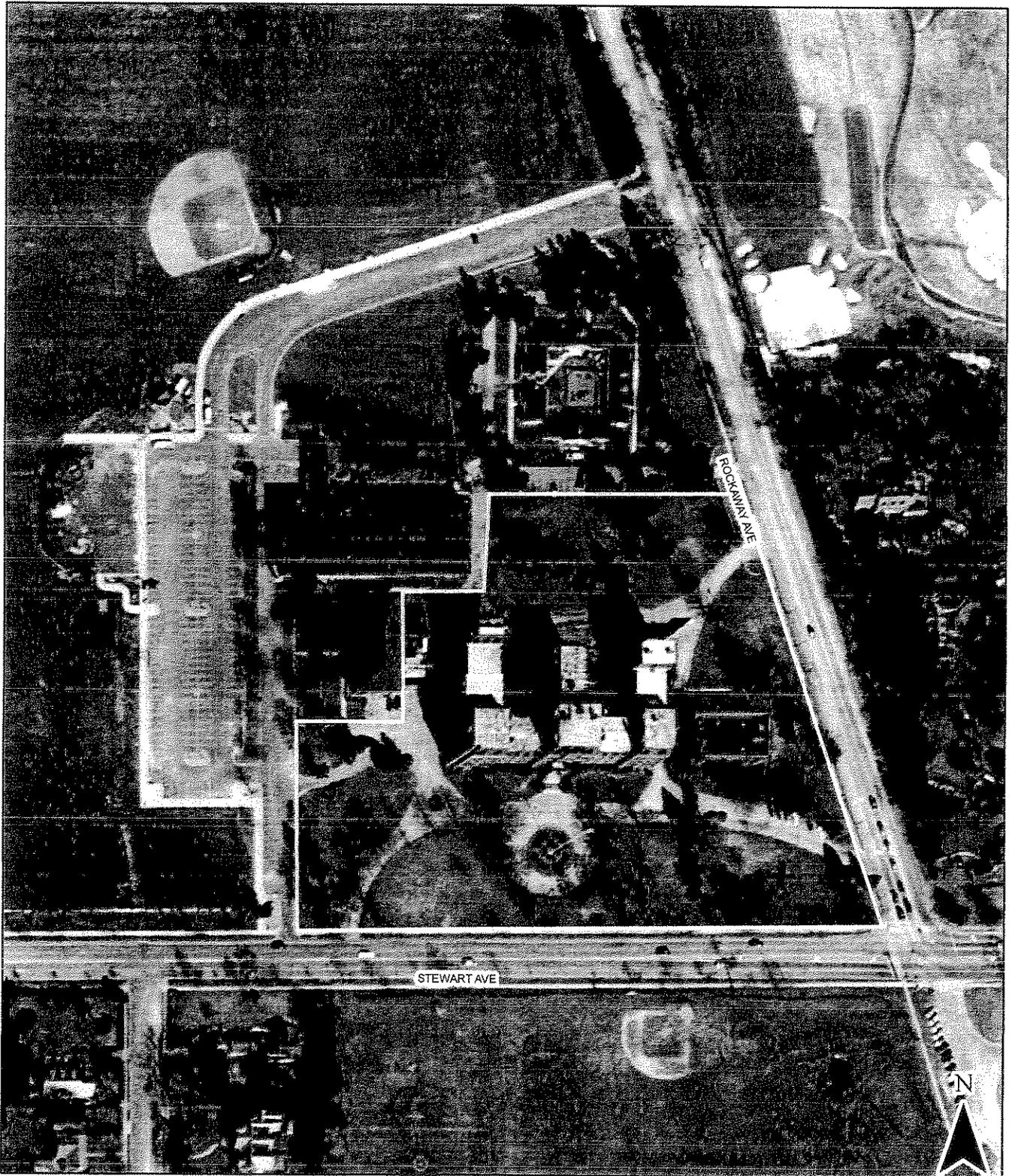
Figure 1-3  
Village Street Map

St. Paul's School Demolition for Additional Open Space



St. Paul's School Demolition for Additional Open Space

Figure 1-4  
Project Area



Project Site

0 50 100 200  
Feet

St. Paul's School Demolition for Additional Open Space

Figure 1-5  
Project Site

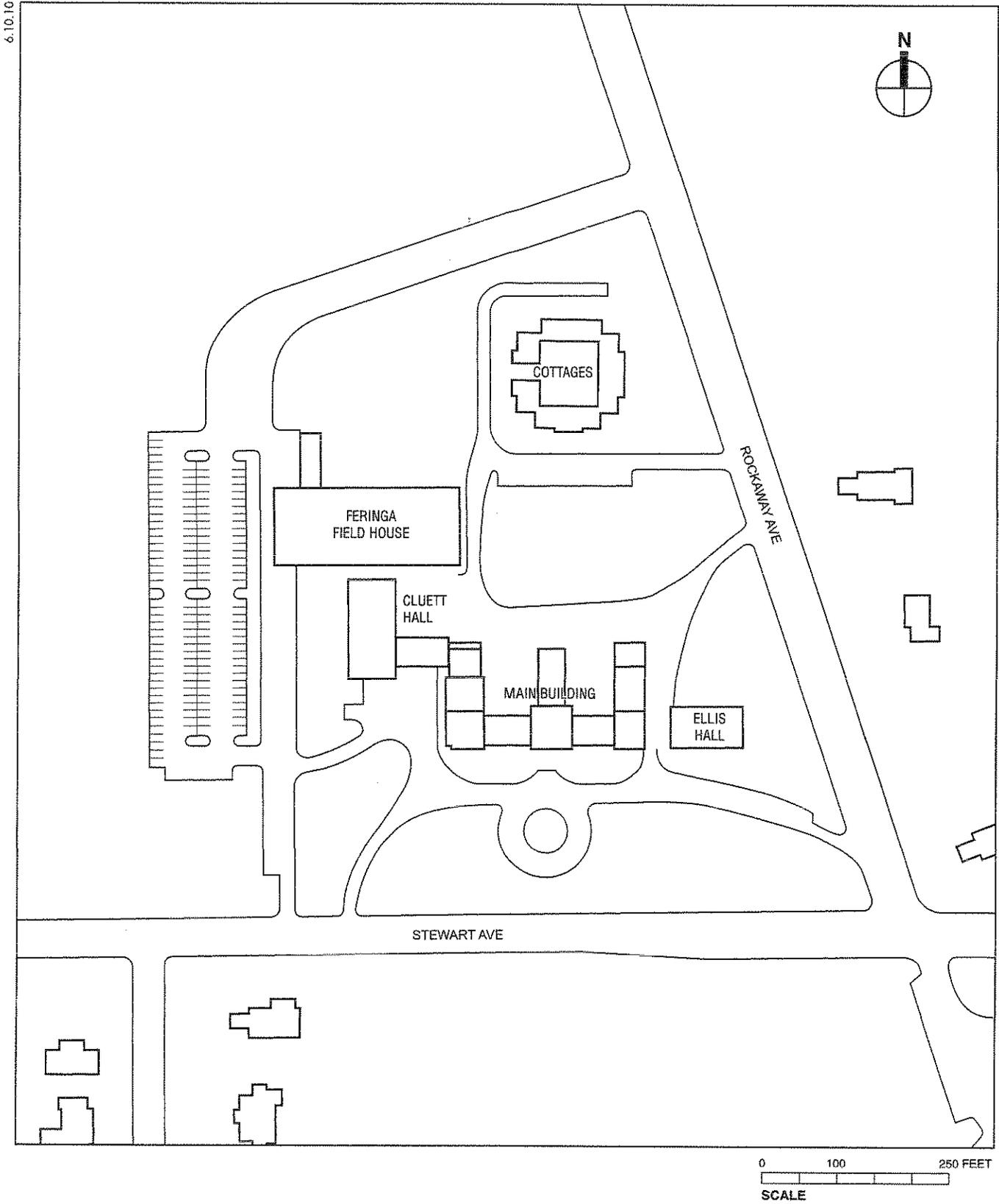
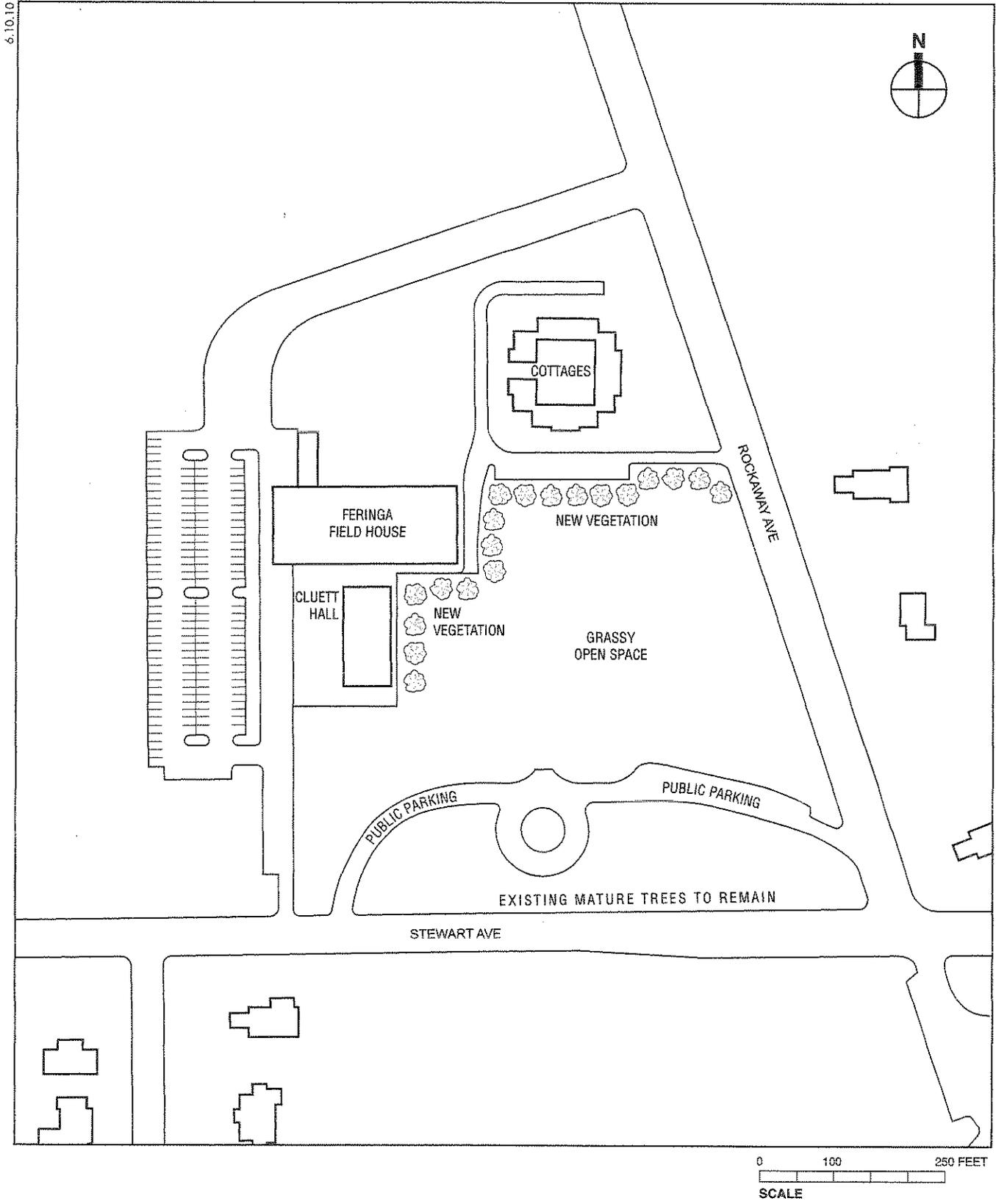


Figure 1-5a  
Existing Site Configuration



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Figure 1-6  
Proposed Action