

**STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION
for
SPECIAL USE PERMIT**

**CHAPEL HILL HIGHSCHOOL
CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO CITY SCHOOLS**

**Chapel Hill Township
PIN 9779-68-6385**

May 25, 2017

Introduction

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools requests a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the subject property, to allow re-development of the property for a new administrative and academic campus. The property consists of 92.62 acres situated between High School Road, Seawell School Road, and Homestead Road, in the northwestern portion of Chapel Hill.

The subject property currently functions as Chapel Hill High School, consisting of classrooms, office facilities, indoor and outdoor recreations facilities, and associated parking for students, staff, and buses. Re-development of the property for the intended purpose will be consistent with the historical and current educational and institutional use of the property. The Applicant proposes to redevelop the current school with a more neighborhood-oriented educational facility, which will reflect leadership in energy efficiency and environmental responsibility, and have relatively high-density urban characteristics for the campus.

Justification

The Applicant believes that the requested SUP modification is justified by all of the required findings prescribed in LUMO Sec. 4.5.2. Evidence in support of these findings is presented as follows:

Finding # 1: That the use or development is located, designed, and proposed to be operated so as to maintain or promote the public health, safety, and general welfare.

General

The proposed campus will promote the public's general welfare by providing high-quality public education for local children. The school building and grounds will be a safe and

healthy environment for students, workers, and visitors, in accordance with all applicable zoning, building, health, food-service, and life-safety codes.

Emergency Services

Fire protection and “first responder” emergency medical services will be provided by the Town of Carrboro. The Town’s Carrboro Fire Rescue Fire Station is located less than one-half mile from the site, as measured along the most likely approach route.

The new buildings will be equipped with a fire suppression sprinkler system, and will be designed using conventional fire-prevention and fire-management strategies. The site and building plans will be reviewed and approved by the Town’s Fire Department, to verify conformance to applicable regulations and standards.

Security Measures

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools operates its school facilities with a very strong emphasis on security for students, workers, and visitors. The facility will be designed and constructed with passive and active security features, and it will be operated with rigorous security protocols as appropriate for a high school.

The facility will be designed to provide very good visibility to outdoor areas from the building interior; and to achieve appropriate sight lines around the site and areas adjacent to the site. This design strategy will allow visual monitoring and supervision of outdoor activities by school staff. Where abrupt changes in elevation will occur on the site, guardrails and other safety barriers will be used. Vehicular areas on and adjacent to the site have been designed, and will be managed, to provide separation from student activity areas and pedestrian routes, as practical.

Utility and Solid Waste Services

The facility will obtain public potable water and sanitary sewer service by connection to existing OWASA utility systems, meeting all public health standards related thereto. Solid waste collection for the facility will be provided by the Town of Chapel Hill. The school’s solid waste management methods and facilities will be reviewed and approved by the Orange County Solid Waste Department, for conformance to all applicable regulations and standards.

Traffic

A traffic study is being conducted for the project, in accordance with analytical requirements and study criteria provided by the Town of Chapel Hill. The site plan has been coordinated with NCDOT District and MSTA staff.

Pedestrian and Bike Accommodations

The proposed school facility will be pedestrian oriented by design. The school's location near an established neighborhood allows optimization opportunities for alternative forms of access. A network of public sidewalks already exists along the street fronting the subject property. Building entry locations and onsite pedestrian routes will be designed to encourage and safely accommodate pedestrian access to and within the site. Additional sidewalks and pedestrian crossings will be constructed onsite to achieve a high degree of pedestrian emphasis

Bicycle access to the site will be accommodated by the local street network, and an appropriate number of bicycle parking spaces will be constructed on the site to encourage and accommodate biking as a viable means of transportation to and from the facility.

Modal Separation

The site design works to provide separation of various transportation modes and activities as appropriate. For example, bus traffic will be segregated from student car traffic for the high school. The majority of the staff parking will be in the western parking lot. The parking areas for parents/visitors and the parking area for staff will be located in different portions of the site, and accessed from separate locations, with little interconnection. Service vehicles will primarily access the building in a location that is remote and disconnected from student and parent/visitor areas, and that does not unnecessarily interact with staff parking areas. Student drop-off locations will allow most students to enter the building without crossing vehicular travel lanes. And pedestrians approaching the building from sidewalks along the street will have a direct means of entry into the building without having to cross vehicular parking areas. These design features and operational protocols will provide an inherent degree of onsite safety while allowing for the wide variety of activities and transportation modes that the site will experience.

Finding # 2: That the use or development complies with all required regulations and standards of this Chapter, including all applicable provisions of Articles 3 and 5, the applicable specific standards contained in the Supplemental Use Regulations (Article 6), and with all other applicable regulations.

General

The proposed project will comply with all applicable regulations and standards. No supplemental use regulations are identified in the LUMO for the proposed use.

Zoning

The proposed use will conform to all zoning parameters set forth in LUMO Article 3.

Design Development Standards

The proposed use will be designed consistent with the requirements of LUMO Article 5. In accordance with this article, the facility will be designed to “maximize energy efficiency and conservation”. The building has been configured to take advantage of the site’s topography, to minimize grading requirements. Retaining walls are proposed in strategic areas to avoid unnecessary horizontal disturbance adjacent to slopes. Erosion and sediment control methods will be used to mitigate the effects of land disturbance associated with the new facility.

Rainwater management techniques will be employed to meet or exceed Town standards for runoff rate, volume, and quality control. Landscaping, screening, and buffering will be provided to meet the stated purposes in Article 5.6.1. These purposes will be accomplished by the preservation of existing trees where practical, and by providing a substantial amount of new plantings and other landscape features.

The new facility will provide for adequate access and circulation for both pedestrians and vehicles, in accordance with the recommendations of a traffic impact analysis conducted for the project. Onsite parking and service areas will be provided, balancing the need to provide vehicle storage with the strong desire to emphasize and encourage alternate forms of transportation. In addition, lighting, utilities, signage, and solid waste management facilities will be designed to conform to applicable Town requirements.

Parking

Required parking for the site has been determined by using the designation of “School, secondary, high school 9-12” in accordance with LUMO section 5.9.7. The required minimum parking is 441 spaces; the required maximum parking is 588 spaces; the required bike parking is 177 spaces.

Landscaping

The school site will be designed to respect the existing vegetation in the perimeter buffers. The existing buffers along the north, east, and west of the site property lines will remain intact and supplemental landscaping will be added to these areas as necessary to meet the requirements of the LUMO. Buffers required per R-1 zoning within the LUMO along High School Road do not serve the public purpose within the district, and should be modified to create a safe and inviting environment and to help blend the new school into the fabric of the community. A modification is being requested for alternates to the required buffers along High School Road. Locations of these buffers can be found on drawings **L3.0** and **L3.1**. The ordinance requires a 30’ wide external class “D” buffer with 6 large trees, 12 small trees, and 40 shrubs per 100 linear feet of road frontage. Landscaping this dense would create a hedge that would limit visibility into the site and would not be appropriate within the community. Given the site as a school, the design should focus on optimizing safety. The modified landscape buffers will provide appropriate visual screening while still providing line of sight into the property so that in the area can be better supervised as a

protection measure for the occupants and the public. The modifications will allow better visual by public service officials when approaching and observing the site. Furthermore, a request for modification is being proposed for a reduction from the 40% requirement in tree canopy coverage standards. Modification requests are as follows:

LUMO Section 5.6.2 - Buffers Required

Modification Proposed - Street Frontage along High School Road– 15’ modified class “A” buffer’ with 2 large trees, and 6 shrubs per 100 linear feet of road frontage. (Necessary to provide visibility into site)

LUMO Section 5.7.2 - Tree Canopy Coverage Standards

Modification Proposed - Institutional (Use Group B) required 20%

Sustainability - General

The buildings and site will be designed to accommodate the Applicant’s special emphasis on sustainability for its facilities. The school will have numerous sustainable features, similar to generous daylighting of interior spaces, solar energy collection, solar-heated hot water, high-efficiency equipment, energy management systems, cool roof characteristics, and alternative paving treatments.

The sustainable features and characteristics of the facility will meet the Applicant’s Policy 9040, which stipulates a high degree of sustainability for new facilities. The Applicant intends that the project will meet the LEED certification within the project parameters. More importantly, sustainable features will also be expressed and presented within the facility in a manner that can be integrated into the school’s educational curriculum.

Building Configuration and Siting

The proposed building orientation was dictated by having to keep the existing buildings on site in operation during construction. The proposed classroom buildings in the center of the site have been placed just south/south east of the existing main building. The proposed buildings will also tie into the existing auditorium building and cafeteria building while taking advantage of a steep slope by splitting the building at two levels. The spaces that will be occupied as academic space for the majority of the day have been given priority for maximizing daylighting.

The main building orientation places the building with the main entrance facing southeast and away from High School and Seawell School Roads.

Environmental Protection

The project’s design will conform to all applicable environmental regulations. Measures have been taken to have minimal impacts to existing streams and buffered areas. A roadway crossing of Jolly Branch is proposed to alleviate traffic associated with parent drop off and pick up for the students. This roadway will be designed to minimize impacts

to the maximum extent feasible. No published floodplain exists on the property, and no structural feature is proposed in any low-lying area other than the stream crossing. Erosion and sediment control plans adhering to state requirements will be developed to mitigate sediment laden runoff during construction.

Rainwater Management

Rainwater runoff from onsite improved areas will be captured and managed to meet or exceed Town requirements for runoff quantity, rate, and quality.

Demolition, Deconstruction, and Construction Waste Management

The Applicant has begun coordination with Orange County Solid Waste staff to identify practical ways to deconstruct and re-use existing building materials. Based on preliminary indications, the Applicant expects to be able to divert most of the existing onsite building materials away from the traditional landfill waste stream.

During new construction, solid waste materials will be recycled and/or disposed in a manner consistent with Orange County and Town of Chapel Hill requirements. The Applicant intends to divert at least 75% of the waste from new construction activities to sources other than the landfill.

Energy Efficiency

One of the project's goals is to achieve a high level of energy use reduction. The design team expects to achieve greater than a twenty percent reduction in usage below ASHRAE 90.1, which is the baseline measurement standard. Alternative energy producing elements will be used such as photovoltaic cells and thermal solar collectors. Other systems will be explored and used as appropriate, including solar-heated hot water, high-efficiency HVAC and lighting equipment, energy management systems such as central building controls and occupancy sensors, etc. These system approaches will work together to achieve the highest energy reduction possible within the project parameters.

Finding # 3: That the use or development is located, designed, and proposed to be operated so as to maintain or enhance the value of contiguous property, or that the use or development is a public necessity.

The subject property has been used in the past as is currently operating as a public school. The existing land use is well established and the presence of this type of land use is already reflected in the market value of contiguous properties.

The buildings and site will be a physically attractive facility that sensitively responds to site conditions and to the concerns of local residents. Perimeter buffers will be provided to mitigate impacts to adjoining properties, and site lighting will be carefully designed to avoid detrimental glare.

New or re-developed schools, particularly within school systems that are known to provide high-quality educational services, are generally considered to have a positive effect on the real estate value of nearby properties. The proposed school facility will be a beneficial addition to the local community. It will provide a local source of quality public education, provide job opportunities for neighborhood residents and other citizens, and be a venue for a wide range of community activities and gatherings.

Based on the foregoing, the Applicant believes that re-development of the subject property for the new facilities will maintain or enhance property values for contiguous properties, and for properties in the neighborhood at large.

Finding # 4: That the use or development conforms with the general plans for the physical development of the Town as embodied in this Chapter and in the Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive Plan

The proposed project consists of a new campus constructed as a re-development of the existing Chapel Hill High School. Re-development of this site will replace existing facilities with a newer, safer, and education-driven infrastructure, providing important new elements of neighborhood support and identity.

The Chapel Hill High School request for re-development is fully consistent with the goals of the Chapel Hill 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The plan provides additional community facilities for the surrounding community without the need to impact additional undeveloped properties in the area. At the same time, the plan protects the woodland buffer to the adjoining middle school to the maximum extent feasible. Some of the relevant CP themes supported by the proposed development are:

- **A Place for Everyone:** The new Chapel Hill High School will create a vibrant rejuvenation within the community. With the expansion of the high school, we are creating a resource for Chapel Hill's children as they are an essential resource, and the community seeks to nurture them while they are here and nourish a community that will remain attractive to them as they learn, grow, and develop new ideas that will shape the community's future success.
- **Community Prosperity and Engagement:** The new Chapel Hill High School will re-develop the existing high school classrooms. The consolidation of the high school classrooms will free up mobile classrooms currently on site, which will decrease expenses for the municipality.
- **Getting Around:** The Chapel Hill High School will work to preserve and improve the existing sidewalk along High School Road and provide interconnectivity with the Middle School on the south side of Jolly Branch. Accessible curb ramps will be

added where needed to serve all users. Bike racks will be provided to promote non vehicular traffic.

- **Good Places, New Spaces:** The redevelopment decision making process for this site provides clarity and consistency with the goals of the Chapel Hill 2020 comprehensive plan.
- **Nurturing Our Community:** Open space and natural stands of vegetation and buffers will be preserved to the extent practical. Stormwater management will be designed in locations that follow existing drainage patterns seeking to maintain current flow patterns and reduce grading where possible.
- **Town and Gown Collaboration:** The expansion of Chapel Hill High School will improve and provide these students access intellectual pursuits that will broaden their horizons and career opportunities in the future. It will also assist these students in becoming more involved in the Town and going onto higher learning at the local Universities and Colleges.

Summary

The Applicant believes that the requested SUP modifications are justified by all of the required findings prescribed in LUMO Sec. 4.5.2; and further believes that these findings are supported by the materials contained in the SUP application for the subject project, including the written evidence presented above.