



CONSIDER AN APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL USE PERMIT MODIFICATION CHAPEL HILL HIGH SCHOOL, 1709 HIGH SCHOOL ROAD (PROJECT #17-059)

STAFF REPORT SERVICES

TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Ben Hitchings, Director
 Judy Johnson, Operations Manager
 Aaron Frank, Senior Planner

PROPERTY ADDRESS 1709 High School Road	DATE February 27, 2018	APPLICANT Chapel Hill Carrboro City School
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board, Community Design Commission, Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board, and Planning Commission review and make a recommendation on the application to the Town Council.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The applicant is asking for modifications to regulations. See attached Staff Analysis for additional information.

PROCESS

The application will be presented to Council for approval of a Special Use Permit. The Council must consider the **four findings** for approval of a Special Use Permit, which indicate that the use or development:

1. is located, designed, and proposed to be operated so as to maintain or promote the public health, safety, and general welfare;
2. would comply with all required regulations and standards of the Land Use Management Ordinance;
3. 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; and
4. conforms to the general plans for the physical development of the Town as embodied in the Land Use Management Ordinance and in the Comprehensive Plan.

DECISION POINTS

- A new vehicular access to Seawell School Road is proposed.
- Modification to Regulations requested to allow 30% tree canopy rather than 40% required.
- Modification to Regulations requested to maintain the existing western landscape buffer rather than the required 20' buffer.
- Capacity for 105 additional students is requested.

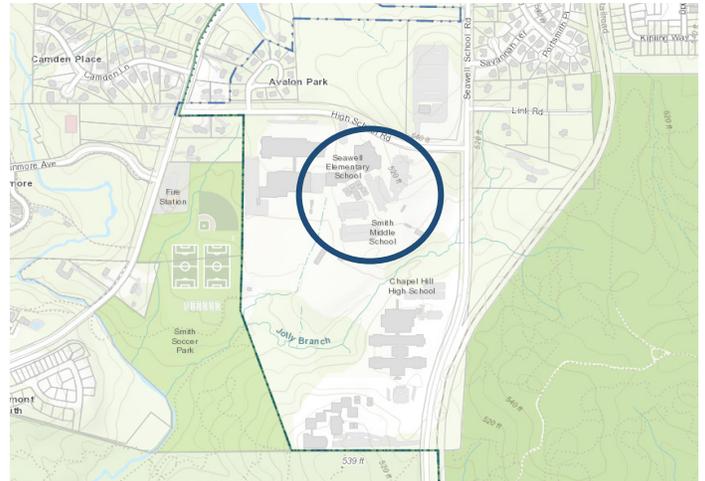
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools proposes a Special Use Permit Modification to renovate and expand its campus. The project proposes adding 163,273 square feet, reducing 43 parking spaces, adding 178 bicycle spaces, and adding a new vehicular access to Seawell School Road. The renovation allows for additional enrollment of 105 students, totaling student capacity to 1,625 students.

The property is zoned Residential-1 (R-1), and a school is a permitted land use.

Following the public hearing, staff will evaluate the evidence and comments received at the public hearing and will offer the Council a recommendation on the status of the Four Findings as they relate to this Special Use Permit Modification application.

PROJECT LOCATION



ATTACHMENTS

1. Project Summary Form
2. Resolution A
3. Resolution B
4. Application Form & Materials
5. Submitted Plans

TECHNICAL REPORT

Background

1966	Chapel Hill High School was constructed on High School Road.
1990	Site Plan was approved to construct a new administrative building, math and science addition, gymnasium, and new softball field.
1994	Site Plan was approved to allow bus loading and parking lot improvements.
1999	Special Use Permit was approved to allow development of Smith Middle School.
April 17, 2017	Concept Plan for High School redevelopment is presented to Town Council. Key points from the Council discussion included an interest in stormwater management, the new driveway access to Seawell School Road, and adding additional school capacity at the school.

Connections to other Documents:

Town staff has reviewed this application for compliance with the themes from the [2020 Comprehensive Plan](#)¹, the standards of the [Land Use Management Ordinance](#)², and the [Town of Chapel Hill, NC : Design Manual and Standard Details](#)³ and offers the following evaluation:

Comprehensive Plan Themes: The following are themes from the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, adopted June 25, 2012:

Council Goals:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Create a Place for Everyone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Develop Good Places, New Spaces
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Support Community Prosperity	<input type="checkbox"/>		Nurture Our Community
<input type="checkbox"/>		Facilitate Getting Around	<input type="checkbox"/>		Grow Town and Gown Collaboration

Staff believes the Chapel Hill High School expansion proposal complies with the above themes of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use Plan: The [2020 Land Use Plan](#)⁴, a component of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, designates this site for Institutional land use, which includes schools.

¹ <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=15001>

² https://www.municode.com/library/#!/nc/chapel_hill/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=CO_APXALOUSMA

³ <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/town-hall/departments-services/public-works/engineering/design-manual-and-standard-details>

⁴ <http://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=1215>

Proposed Modifications to Regulations:

- 1) Section 5.7.2 Tree Canopy Coverage Standards:** The School District requests to change the required tree canopy from 40% to 30% of the site. According to the District, this modification is to reflect existing conditions. Less than 1% of tree canopy will be removed during the project and resulting in 30% tree canopy.

Staff Comment: Staff believes that Council could find a public purpose due to existing conditions, and that the High School contains a large amount of recreational space that consists of natural or permeable surfaces.

- 2) Section 5.6.6 Buffer Modification:** The School District proposes a modified buffer on the western property line from the required minimum 20 foot Type C buffer to a buffer ranging between 3 and 20 feet. This modification is proposed because the western portion of the property will not be changed with this application, and the applicant requests to maintain existing conditions. Currently limited vegetation exists along the western property line between the parking lot and the adjacent properties; approximately 20 feet between the High School and a single family dwelling, and 3 feet between the High School and parkland. A modification to regulations is necessary to allow the continuation of this condition.

Staff Comment: Staff believes that Council could find a public purpose to continue existing buffer conditions, provided the existing conditions are adequate. Allowing this modification will prevent additional land disturbance and construction. A fence could be provided at this location and serve as an alternative buffer, rather than a modification to regulations. Staff has asked the applicant to coordinate with the adjacent property owner.

- 3) Table 3.8.1: Dimensional Matrix:** The School District proposes a maximum secondary building height of approximately 42 feet, higher than the 40 foot maximum height permitted in the Residential-1 (R-1) zoning district. This height exception is proposed for an approximately 21 foot wide architectural element of the building entrance façade of the northern building; the remainder of the building will be approximately 34 feet in height.

Staff Comment: Staff believes that Council could find a public purpose to allow a Modification to Regulations to allow a prominent architectural feature at the building entrance.

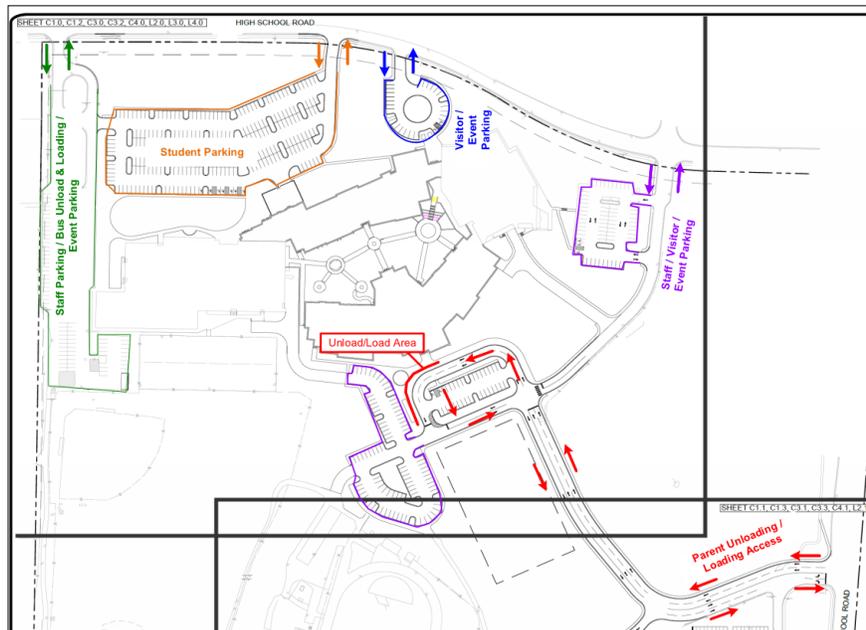
Council Findings and Public Purpose: The Council has the ability to modify the regulations according to Section 4.5.6 of the Land Use Management Ordinance. Staff believes that the Council could modify the regulations if it makes a finding in this particular case that public purposes are satisfied to an equivalent or greater degree. If the Council chooses to deny a request for modifications to regulations, the developer's alternative is to revise the proposal to comply with the regulations.

For additional information on the proposed modifications, please refer to the developer's attached materials.

TRANSPORTATION

Vehicular Access & Parking Areas: The site will have five vehicular accesses; four from High School Road and one from Seawell School Road. The Transportation Impact Analysis is provided as an attachment to the staff memo.

Access (from left to right)	Purpose
High School Rd Access #1 (shown in green)	Bus Unloading/Loading, Staff Parking
High School Rd Access #2 (shown in orange)	Student Parking
High School Rd Access #3 (shown in blue)	Visitor Parking
High School Rd Access #4 (shown in purple)	Staff/Visitor Parking
Seawell School Road Access #5 (shown in red)	Student Drop-off & Pickup, Staff/Visitor Parking



Note: The site orientation in the graphic above has since been modified although the purposes of the highlighted parking lots and accesses remain the same.

Traffic Impact Analysis & Transportation Improvements: A Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) was performed for this application and reviewed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Municipal Schools Transportation Assistance (MSTA) staff.

The MSTA recommended the vehicular queue length based upon the school's maximum capacity of 1,625 students. MSTA recommends a queue length of 2,042 feet for an average school day and 2,655 feet for high demand days. The proposal provides 2,225 feet. This meets the anticipated average day queue length, and the applicant and NCDOT have agreed that a designated traffic control staff member will be made available to direct traffic on high demand days. This will be a stipulation of approval.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Resource Conservation District Encroachment: The development proposes a new vehicular access that crosses Jolly Branch and the surrounding Resource Conservation District (RCD). Jolly Branch is a perennial stream and has 150' buffers on each side. Transportation facilities such as driveways are a permitted use in the RCD, subject to a Special Use Permit. The applicant has revised the driveway orientation to cross Jolly Branch more perpendicularly, and the stream crossing has been shifted further south, away from the RCD to reduce the amount of disturbance.

The proposed total impervious surface and disturbed area is provided below:

	Stream Side	Managed Use	Upland Zone
Impervious Surface Ratio	.02 (6,187 sf.)	.06 (13,303 sf.)	.09 (26,032 sf.)
Disturbed Area	.06 (14,700 sf.)	.08 (17,850 sf.)	.16 (33,100 sf.)

Jordan Buffer: Jolly Branch does contain a Jordan Stream Buffer, and the project is subject to the Town's Jordan watershed stormwater management regulations.

Stormwater Management: The development proposes an approximately 2 acre reduction of impervious surface, and stormwater quantity and quality improvements are proposed to ameliorate existing stormwater runoff. Three bio-retention basins are proposed to treat new student parking areas on the northern part of the site. An above ground cistern is proposed in the courtyard to capture roof runoff, and rain gardens are proposed to treat water quality and provide educational opportunities. Pervious parking will also be used in portions of the parking lot.

The site drains to Jolly Branch at two different points, and the drainage pattern within the school campus will be altered with this project. Specifically, an intermittent stream currently flows north to south from High School Road to Jolly Branch, and is piped underneath the high school buildings, and flows between the baseball field and football field before it confluences with Jolly Branch. This stream is proposed to be re-routed in a westward direction north of the high school through bio-retention basins within the student parking lot, and the stream will be piped along the western side of the property prior to joining with Jolly Branch. This revised drainage pattern will provide stormwater quality and quantity improvements to this tributary; however, the existing riparian area south of the high school that the stream flows through will be modified. Stormwater flow to this area may be reduced and the ecological area surrounding this historical drainage area may languish with reduced stormwater flow.

Impervious Surface: The development proposes to reduce net impervious surface by approximately 2 acres. The northern parking lot where the most concentrated area of impervious surface addition is proposed will be treated with three bio-retention basins.

Public Outreach: Prior to review by the development review advisory boards, the applicant met with the Friends of Bolin Creek, and the Stormwater Management Utility Advisory Board.

DESIGN REPORT

Landscape Bufferyards: The table below outlines the minimum landscape buffers requirements for the site and the buffers proposed by the applicant.

Landscape Buffers		
Location	Ordinance Requirement	Proposed Buffers
North Buffer	Min 30' type D buffer	30' type D buffer and retention of existing vegetation.
South Buffer	Min 10' type B buffer is	30' type D buffer and retention of existing vegetation.
East Buffer	Min 30' Type D buffer	>30' existing buffer.
West Buffer	Min 20' Type C Buffer	Retention of existing 20' to 3' buffer

The School District is requesting a Modification to Regulations for the western landscape buffer as noted earlier in this report.