



CONSIDER AN APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL USE PERMIT MODIFICATION FOR CHAPEL HILL HIGH SCHOOL, 1709 HIGH SCHOOL ROAD

STAFF REPORT

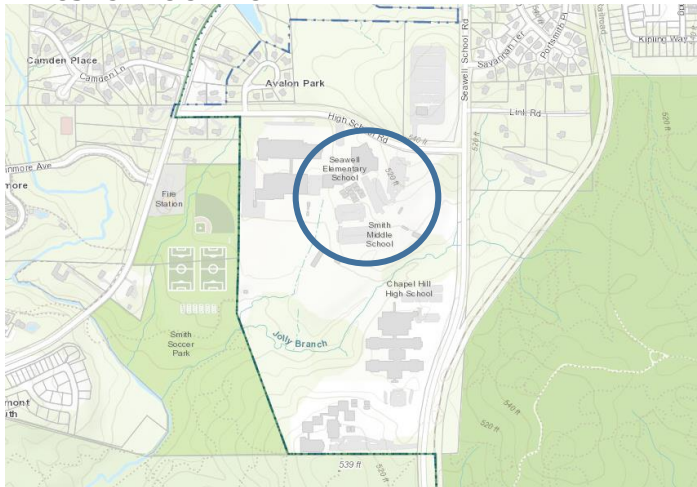
TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Ben Hitchings, Director
Judy Johnson, Operations Manager
Aaron Frank, Senior Planner

PROPERTY ADDRESS 1709 High School Road	DATE April 18, 2018	APPLICANT Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION
That the Council open the public hearing, receive evidence on the proposed Special Use Permit Modification and recess the Public Hearing to May 23, 2018.

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

<p>PROCESS</p> <p>The applicant is presenting an application for a Special Use Permit Modification for Council approval. The Council must consider the four findings for approval:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>DECISION POINTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant proposes new vehicular access to Seawell School Road crossing the Resource Conservation District and Jordan Nutrient Buffer. • The applicant requests Modification to Regulations for tree canopy coverage, western landscape buffer, bicycle parking, and maximum building height.
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<p>PROJECT OVERVIEW</p> <p>Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools proposes a Special Use Permit Modification to renovate and expand the school. The project proposes adding 163,273 square feet, removing 78 parking spaces, adding 163 bicycle spaces, and adding vehicular access to Seawell School Road using the Smith Middle School driveway. The renovation allows for additional enrollment of 105 students, increasing student capacity to a total of 1,625 students.</p> <p>The property is zoned Residential-1 (R-1), and a school is a permitted land use.</p> <p>Following the public hearing, staff will evaluate the evidence and comments received at the public hearing and offer the Council a recommendation based on the status of the Four Findings as they relate to this Special Use Permit Modification application.</p>	<p>PROJECT LOCATION</p> 
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ATTACHMENTS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff Memorandum with Reports 2. Draft Staff Presentation 3. Resolution A 4. Resolution B 5. Project Summary Table 6. Advisory Board Recommendations 7. Application Form & Materials 8. Traffic Impact Study 9. Submitted Plans
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Key Considerations

Planning Commission Recommendation:

At the March 20, 2018 meeting, the Planning Commission recommended approval with the following comments on modifications to regulations and recommendations:

Modifications to Regulations:

- **Height:** Supports a modification to regulations to maximum height and allow building height of 50’.
- **Tree Canopy:** Strongly suggests that the applicant reach 40% tree canopy coverage, but not less than 35%.
- **Buffer Modification:** Supports a modification to regulations to allow a buffer on the western property line ranging between 3 and 20 feet, and endorses the Community Design Commission’s recommendation that additional plantings be provided and that the applicant work with the adjacent property owner.

Proposed Stipulations:

1. Work with the adjacent neighbor to provide native evergreens to screen the adjacent property.

Staff Response: We have added language to this effect as a stipulation in Resolution A.

2. Endorse the Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board’s recommendation that 163 bicycle parking spaces be provided and that 25% of Class II parking spaces be provided as sheltered parking spaces in lieu of providing bike lockers.

Staff Response: We agree and have included this as a stipulation in Resolution A.

3. Endorse the Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board’s recommendation that electric conduits be provided at all parking lots so that electrification is provided to a minimum of 20% of parking spaces.

Staff Response: We agree and have included this as a stipulation in Resolution A.

4. Advocate that the applicant create a plan for safe crossings for students especially across High School Road, and explore a lighted signal, crossing signal, or pedestrian refuge.

Staff Response: We agree and have included this as a stipulation in Resolution A.

5. Recommend that the applicant provide an as-built traffic study to evaluate traffic conditions after occupancy, similar to that required for the Lincoln Center.

Staff Response: We agree and have included this as a stipulation in Resolution A.

Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board

At the March 19, 2018 meeting, the Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board recommended approval with the following special considerations:

Special Considerations:

- Explore an environmental impact analysis for the proposed stream crossing for concerns related to flora and fauna
- Consider a staggered student release or other approach to mitigate traffic congestion and reduce emissions from vehicle idling
- Explore Safe Routes to School as a way to increase multi-modal access to the school, specifically NACTO intersection safety guidelines
- Follow Best Management Practices for designing rainwater harvesting systems for pre-filtering and overflow sizing to prevent system failure
- Incorporate environmental education into the sustainable design features and fixtures associated with the project

Staff Response: We recommend that the applicant take the special considerations from the Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board under advisement.

Community Design Commission

At the March 15, 2018 meeting, the Community Design Commission recommended approval with the following stipulations:

1. Provide additional plantings along the western property line to protect the adjacent residential area.

Staff Response: We agree and have included this as a stipulation in Resolution A.

2. Identify existing trees to be saved and protected on the tree survey, saving as many mature trees whenever possible.

Staff Response: We agree and have included this as a stipulation in Resolution A.

Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board

At the February 27, 2018 meeting, the Transportation and Connectivity Advisory Board recommended approval with the following stipulations:

1. That the applicant run conduit to all the new parking lots so that at least 20% of the parking spaces could be electrified in the future.

Staff Response: We agree and have included this as a stipulation in Resolution A.

2. That the applicant may provide the minimum bike parking space requirement (163) as long as they provide covered bike parking to at least 25% of Class II bike parking spaces. In exchange, the applicant need not provide as many bike storage lockers.

Staff Response: We agree and have included this as a stipulation in Resolution A.

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 was 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_APXALAUSMA

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 35% of the site. According to the School District, this modification is to reflect existing conditions.

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. The proposed tree canopy coverage has been increased from 30% to 35% following review of the application by Boards & Commissions.

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. The applicant will provide additional plantings along this property line and coordinate with the adjacent property owner. The applicant may also construct a fence along this property line, which could serve as an Alternative Buffer, in accordance with LUMO 5.6.8, rather than a modified buffer as currently proposed. Staff encourages the applicant to work directly with the adjacent property owner to determine the preferred screening and buffering solution.

3) Table 3.8.1: Dimensional Matrix: The School District proposes a maximum secondary building height of approximately 50 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.

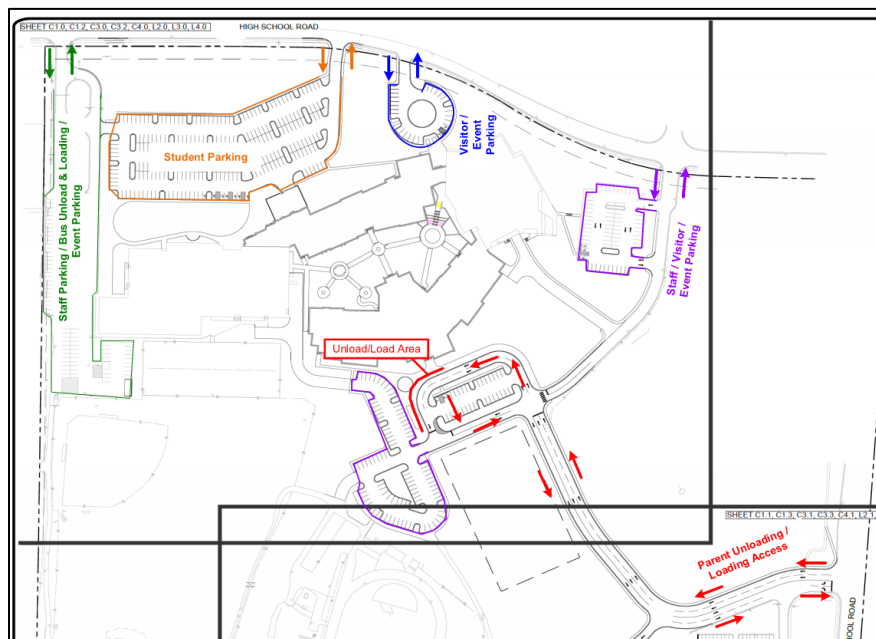
Council Findings and Public Purpose: The Council has the ability to modify the regulations according to Section 4.5.6 of the Land Use Management Ordinance. Staff believes that the Council could modify the regulations if it makes a finding in this particular case that public purposes are satisfied to 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 REPORT

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 Site	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 (33,200 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 two-acre reduction of impervious surface, and stormwater quantity and quality improvements are proposed to ameliorate existing stormwater runoff. The applicant proposes three bio-retention basins to treat new student parking areas on the northern part of the site. The development proposes an above ground cistern in the courtyard to capture roof runoff, as well as rain gardens 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, is piped underneath the high school buildings, and flows between the baseball field and football field before it confluent with Jolly Branch. The development proposes re-routing this stream 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 two 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

This section includes information on landscaping, trees, building elevations, and lighting.

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.

The applicant proposes to comply with all of the minimum required buffer widths on the boundaries of the site except for the western buffer. A minimum 20' Type C buffer is required along the western property line, and the applicant wishes to retain the approximately 20' to 3' buffer that currently exists. A modification to regulations is necessary to allow the existing conditions to continue. The applicant may also construct a fence along this property line, which could serve as an Alternative Buffer, in accordance with LUMO 5.6.8, rather than a modified buffer as currently proposed. The applicant will provide additional plantings along this property line and coordinate with the adjacent property owner.