

MEMORANDUM

To: Zach Pyle, Project Manager, Land Use Review

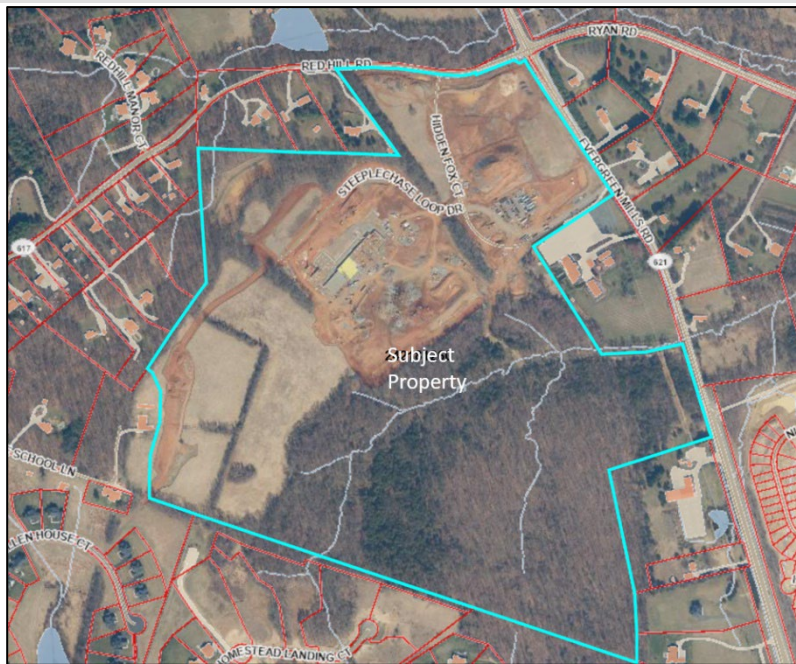
From: Pat Giglio, Senior Planner, Community Planning

Date: August 4, 2023

Re: **CMPT-2023-0006, Dulles North High School & Elementary School, Community Planning First Referral**

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Loudoun County School Board (LCSB) requests a Commission Permit (CMPT), to construct a high school and elementary school on a portion of the 173-acre County owned subject property in Aldie. The subject property (PIN: 242-18-1260) is located in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Evergreen Mills Road (Route 621) and Red Hill Road (Route 617). The property is currently being developed with a middle school site that is scheduled to open in August 2024. The high school and elementary school proposed on the property are being requested to address



2023 Aerial of Property and Subject Site.

increased student enrollment in the area. The property is bordered to the north and west by older single-family homes on 3 to 5 acre lots that are part of the Red Hill community. The property is bordered to the south by The Grant at Willowsford and a series of homes developed in a clustered residential pattern. The property is bordered to the east by Evergreen Mills Road and properties occupied by a winery, a church and single-family homes. The subject property and proposed schools will be accessed from entrances on Red Hill Road and Evergreen Mills Road and are linked by an internal street network.

The application proposes the construction of a two-story, 350,000-square-foot high school with a student capacity of 2,100 students in the southwestern portion of the property. Outdoor athletic

facilities including a lighted stadium, practice fields, baseball/softball diamonds and tennis court are located to the east of the high school towards the center of the property. The proposed High School and associated athletic fields are accessed from Evergreen Mills Road by Steeple Chase Loop Drive.

A two-story, 120,000-square-foot elementary school with a student capacity of 960 students is proposed in the northeastern corner of the property adjoining Evergreen Mills Road. The elementary school is accessed from Hidden Fox Court and features a bus loop in the front of the building with outdoor play areas and parking on the sides of the building.

The subject property is zoned A-3 (Agriculture-3), and while the public school use is identified as a permitted use in the Zoning District, approval of a CMPT is required for the proposed public use in accordance with the Revised 1993 Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance (Zoning Ordinance). A CMPT is required when a public utility or public service facility is proposed to determine if the general location, character, and extent of the use is in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan.

A review of County GIS data identified forest cover, moderately steep slopes, minor floodplain, and wetland areas on the subject property. A portion of the subject property has already been cleared and graded in preparation for construction of the middle school, though large areas in the center of the property located in the minor floodplain will be avoided and preserved as natural areas. The property is located within the Goose Creek Reservoir Protection area and special consideration should be taken to develop a stormwater management (SWM)/best management practice (BMP) approach for the site that address impacts to water quality. Areas of existing mature tree cover that meet the landscape buffering requirements on the perimeter of the property have also been preserved as Tree Conservation Areas (TCAs) and depicted on the Commission Permit Plat. Community Planning appreciates that these environmental resources have been incorporated into the site design and recommends that LCSB coordinate with the County's Natural Resources Team (NRT) to achieve policy goals regarding stormwater management techniques, protection of water resources, and the preservation of natural resources. A thorough evaluation of the site's natural, environmental and/or heritage resources will be conducted by the County during the site plan review process for the proposed schools.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The subject property is governed by the *Loudoun County 2019 Comprehensive Plan* (2019 CP), which comprises the *Loudoun County 2019 General Plan* (2019 GP) and the *Loudoun County 2019 Countywide Transportation Plan* (2019 CTP). The 2019 GP places the property within the Red Hill subarea of the Transition Policy Area (TPA), in an area identified as the Transition Large Lot Neighborhood Place Type (*2019 GP, Chapter 2, Transition Policy Area Place Types Map*). Public facilities, such as schools, are identified as conditional uses within the Place Type. The land use policies in Chapter 2, the natural, environmental, and heritage resources policies in Chapter 3, and the public facilities policies in Chapter 6 of the 2019 GP were used to evaluate the proposal.

LOCATION, CHARACTER, AND EXTENT

The application proposes the construction of an additional high school and elementary school on the 173-acre County-owned property occupied by future Watson Mountain Middle School. The property is located within the Transition Large Lot Neighborhood Place Type proximate to existing homes located within the Red Hill community and the Grant at Willowsford. The 2019 GP anticipates that schools will be located proximate to the residential communities which they serve to minimize transportation costs and address future planned residential growth (*2019 GP, Chapter 6, Fiscal Policy, Strategy 1.3, Actions 1.3.I and 1.3.J*). The Transition Large Lot Neighborhood Place Type is envisioned to develop with a mix of low-density residential neighborhoods and agriculturally based businesses with extensive natural and manmade open space areas. Public facilities, such as schools, are anticipated to serve residents living in the TPA, and are identified as conditional uses within the Transition Large Lot Neighborhood Place Type (*2019 GP, Chapter 2, Transition Policy Area Place Type*). The policies of the 2019 GP support and encourage the co-location of County facilities when it improves service efficiencies (*2019 GP, Chapter 6, Fiscal Policy, Action 1.3.B*). The proposed high school and elementary school are needed to accommodate future students associated with increased residential development in the area.

The location and grouping of the proposed high school and elementary school on a County-owned property within the TPA in conjunction with the future middle school and adjoining existing residential development within the school area to be served is supported by the land use and location policies of the 2019 GP. The 2019 GP envisions the TPA as an area with a distinct development pattern where open spaces serve as the dominant landscape, protecting natural, environmental, and heritage resources while framing a unique built environment (*2019 GP, Chapter 2, TPA, Introduction, text*). The proposed two-story schools have been designed to maximize the use of the acreage on the subject site and allow for the preservation of additional natural open space on the property. The site layout incorporates an area of forested minor floodplain near the center of the property and designates stands of existing mature tree cover on the perimeter of the property as Tree Conservation Areas (TCAs) to buffer views of the proposed schools and athletic fields from adjoining properties.

The proposed athletic fields provide active open space, while the remainder of the natural areas and existing forest cover that is incorporated into the landscape buffers comprise the required 50-percent open space on the subject property (*2019 GP, Chapter 2, Transition Large Lot Neighborhood Place Type, Design Characteristics*). The subject property is located proximate to several master planned residential communities and a County-owned regional park, with access provided from Evergreen Mills Road, which is a collector road and has design capacity to accommodate the higher traffic volumes associated with the proposed schools (*Countywide Transportation Plan, Appendix A1, Planning Guidelines for Major Roadways Countywide*). The traffic impact study (TIS) included with the application cites the staggered start and dismissal schedule of the schools as dissipating peak travel demands and acknowledges that athletic events on weekends outside peak travel times may generate additional traffic. The surrounding road network and planned improvements to Evergreen Mills Road associated with the project will assist in accommodating additional traffic associated with the schools on the property.

Community Planning finds the proposed high school and elementary school have been sited and designed to minimize impacts on the subject property and adjoining residential properties, through the incorporation of existing forested buffers and natural areas. Community Planning finds the proposed development of the property with a grouping of schools is supported by the land use and public facilities policies of the 2019 GP. The general location, character, and extent of the proposed schools on the subject site is in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The land use and public facilities policies of the 2019 GP support the co-location of County facilities such as schools to increase operational efficiency and optimize the use of the land. The proposed establishment of a high school and elementary school on the 173-acre property is consistent with the land use, environmental and public facilities policies of the 2019 GP. Community Planning finds the general location, character, and extent of the proposed high school and elementary school is in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and supports approval of the CMPT.

Cc: Theresa Stein, Program Manager, Community Planning (via e-mail)