

LOUDOUN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD
STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION
Commission Permit (CMPT-2021-0008)
Dulles South Elementary School (ES-32)
Co-location with Lightridge High School and Hovatter Elementary School
July 28, 2021

Proposal

The Loudoun County School Board (LCSB) seeks approval of a Commission Permit (CMPT 2021-0008) to allow a future Dulles South elementary school (ES-32) to be co-located with Lightridge High School (HS-9) and Hovatter Elementary School (ES-29) on approximately 117 acres of land situated on the west side of Lightridge Farm Road, south of Braddock Road. The Property is more particularly described as MCPI 288-19-4044 (117.49 ac.), in the Blue Ridge Election District. The Greens at Willowsford borders the site to the north (Community Center and Recreation Area and four residential homes) and to the south (open space and one house). To the west is a County owned a 34-acre vacant parcel. Lightridge Farm Road is along the eastern boundary. On the site, the proposed elementary school will be northeast of HS-9 and northwest of ES-29.

The Adopted LCSB Capital Improvement Program (FY2022-2027) plans the opening of ES-32 in 2025. The elementary school will provide seats for future students in this high growth area. The intent is to utilize the new elementary school (ES-32) for kindergarten through grade 2 students and Hovatter Elementary School for grade 3-5 students. Hovatter Elementary School will open this fall (2021) and serve students K-5 until such time as ES-32 is opened. The 117-acre property is zoned TR-3UBF (Transition Residential - 3, Upper Broad Run/Upper Foley) with a small area of TR-1, UBF (Transition Residential - 1, Upper Broad Run/Upper Foley) and contains approximately 12 acres of minor floodplain, Floodplain Overlay District (FOD). A small portion property (northeast corner adjacent to Lightridge Farm Road) is located within the one-mile buffer of LDN60, Airport Impact Overlay (AIO) District. The 11-acre area to be utilized for ES-32 is outside of the AIO and only a small portion in the southwest corner is within the FOD.

The Loudoun County Public Schools program for the proposed elementary school includes a two-story building of approximately 111,500 square feet with a student capacity of 960. The two elementary schools will share recreational facilities including a softball field and an all-purpose field.

COMMISSION PERMIT FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION:

The checklist for a Commission Permit requires a Statement of Justification that details the proposed use. Central to the review of a Commission Permit is the need to establish that the use is consistent with the applicable comprehensive plan policies.

The proposed public use site is governed under the policies of the Loudoun County 2019 Comprehensive Plan (2019 GP). The subject property is designated for Transition Large Lot Neighborhood. This place type includes low density residential communities with significant

open space and the opportunity for serving public facilities, such as schools. Policies for the Transition Area include ensuring adequate public facilities and services to meet the demands generated by new development. By 2025, when the proposed school is planned to open, nine out of the ten Dulles South elementary schools are projected to be over capacity with the tenth at 96% capacity. This site is proximate to the existing and developing residential communities it will serve.

The subject property was previously identified as appropriate for public uses through Commission Permit 2017-0001, which was approved April 20, 2017, and included the existing high school (HS-9), the elementary school (ES-29), currently under construction, and the County's 34-acre public use parcel. Commission Permit 2017-0005, approved January 18, 2018, allowed the conversion of an existing farm building to be utilized as a public utility service center. The purpose of this Commission Permit request is to co-locate an additional elementary school with the previously approved public uses. The 2019 GP public facilities policies promote the co-location of public uses including parks and schools to effectively provide multi-purpose community facilities.

The 2019 GP foresees the Transition Policy Area as a planning area intended to include expansive open space with publicly accessible recreational opportunities. By the nature of their design, school sites provide significant open space. The 117-acre school site will include 50% open space with numerous playing fields. When the recreational fields are not in use for school purposes, they are scheduled by County Parks, Recreation and Community Services for community use.

Safe and convenient vehicular access will be available to the proposed elementary school via Lightridge Farm and Braddock Roads. The site is situated on the west side of Lightridge Farm Road, a local serving street, approximately 200 feet south of Braddock Road, a major collector. Significant transportation improvements provided as a part of the HS-9 and ES-29 site development are in place to serve the new school:

- Single lane roundabout at the intersection of Braddock Road and Lightridge Farm Road;
- Two lane Lightridge Farm Road, with turn lanes at the site entrances, from Braddock Road to Hovatter Drive, transitioning to south of the school site;
- Pave-in-place Lightridge Farm Road south of the school site to Gardenia Drive;
- Traffic signal, with associated turn lane improvements, at the intersection of Braddock Road and Northstar Boulevard; and
- All way stop condition at Braddock Road and Trailhead Drive/Grassland Grove Drive.

A preliminary traffic review has been conducted for the proposed elementary school. This analysis finds that there will be minimal increase in peak hour trip generation. With the previously constructed traffic improvements, the site entrances and surrounding road network is projected to accommodate the new elementary school. A detailed traffic study will be provided as a part of site plan submission.

The 2019 GP provides guidelines for protection and enhancement of natural, environmental and heritage resources. These features were extensively reviewed as a part of the overall site development of the larger 117-acre school site. Prior studies and delineations have been submitted to the County and the Army Corps of Engineers with HS-9 and ES-29 development plans. The proposed elementary school site contains limited environmental features. There is a small area of minor floodplain located in the southwest corner of the elementary school site, south of the existing Hovatter Drive. There is also an existing wetland situated along the western edge of the proposed development area. There are no steep or very steep slopes. The property is not adjacent to any scenic rivers and does not possess limestone conglomerate. No adverse impact to groundwater is anticipated. The project will utilize public sewer and water.

Archaeological studies have been conducted on the property and no archaeological sites of significance were discovered. Development will comply with the County's standards for air quality, light and noise. Site lighting will be cutoff and fully shielded, directed inward and downward toward the interior of the property. Landscape buffers along the 117-acre school site boundaries have been provided as a part of the HS-9 and ES-29 site development.

School building design will incorporate features to provide an aesthetic appearance and accent materials will be incorporated to provide interest in color and texture. The Loudoun County School Board, as a goal for design, construction, renovation and operation of all LCPS public facilities strives to meet or exceed the criteria of nationally recognized programs for measuring energy efficiency such as ENERGY STAR, LEED, Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) and Green Globe.

Development will be accomplished in accord with the County regulations and development standards, including Zoning Ordinance Section 5-666, Additional Regulations, Public Schools . Overall, the physical characteristics of the site are well suited for the proposed elementary school.

Summary

The proposed elementary school is consistent with the policies of the 2019 GP. Specifically:

- The School Board has determined the need for an additional elementary school in the Dulles South area to serve the growing population.
- The 2019 GP promotes the timely availability of public facilities.
- The 2019 GP endorses the co-location of public facilities when it will improve service efficiencies.
- The proposed site is located proximate to the existing and developing residential communities it will serve.
- Safe and convenient access is available to the site. Substantial road improvements were implemented with the construction of the co-located high school (HS-9) and elementary school (ES-29). The traffic statement provided with this application finds that the

existing road network will accommodate the proposed elementary school. A detailed traffic study will be provided in conjunction with the site plan application.

- LCPS and Parks, Recreation and Community Services have a long-standing coordination policy for shared use of fields. When not in use for school purposes, school playing fields, are programmed by Parks, Recreation and Community Services for community use thereby providing recreational opportunities for both the school use and the community.
- Numerous studies have been conducted for the 117-acre school site including wetlands delineation, tree study, rare and endangered species, environmental, archaeological and traffic. Development has and will continue to take into account the natural, environmental and heritage resources of the property. The elementary school site has limited environmental features and development will comply with County and federal regulations.
- The proposed site will be served by public sewer and water and will have all utilities needed to support the proposed use.
- The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding land uses. Buffers are provided along the property boundaries. School building design will incorporate features to provide an aesthetic appearance. Proposed building, parking and security lighting will be cutoff and shielded, directed downward and toward the interior of the property.
- The proposed use will comply with the zoning standards of the TR-3 Zoning District and the zoning performance standards for public schools.

Overall, the proposed location, character, and extent of the proposed elementary school is in substantial accord with the County's adopted comprehensive plan and will meet a critical service need. Your favorable consideration is respectfully requested.