

Loudoun County School Board
Statement of Justification
Special Exception for School on C.S. Monroe Property
July 31, 2018

The Loudoun County School Board (School Board) requests a special exception for the construction of a new school facility on the (former) C. S. Monroe Technology Center site (Monroe Property). This ten-acre, Single Family Residential (R-4) zoned property is identified as PIN 271-39-2180 and is located on the western edge of Leesburg, immediately east of and adjacent to the Route 7 Bypass, at 715* Children's Center Road, SW. The property is also within the Noise Abatement Corridor (NAC) Overlay (within 300 feet of centerline of Rt. 7 Bypass).

When the Academies of Loudoun opens this fall (Fall 2018), the Monroe Advanced Technology Academy ("MATA") program will relocate to the new facility on Sycolin Road (42075 Loudoun Academy Drive, Leesburg). It is proposed to raze the existing C. S. Monroe Technology Center building and construct a new facility. The new school is planned to accommodate the Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) Alternative Education program currently located at the former Douglass High School at 407 East Market Street (the Douglass School) in Leesburg and to continue the LCPS Adult Education program. There is currently an Adult Education Program offered at the Monroe Property along with several other schools throughout the County. The School Board Adopted FY 2019-FY2024 Capital Improvement Program includes funding for this project. The facility is planned to open in the 2021-2022 school year.

This site has been utilized for school purposes since 1977. The existing one-story buildings total approximately 81,500 square feet. The proposed new two-story building is proposed to be 91,000+ square feet. The planned peak student population for the new school is 550, with 450 students for the Alternative Education program and 75-100 daytime adult education students. Adult education will also be available at night with varied attendance depending on the courses offered. The Alternative Education Program and daytime Adult Education will operate 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., with an occasional additional adult education class in the 3:30 to 6:00 p.m. timeframe. The nighttime Adult Education program hours are 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. (Arrival and dismissal of staff and students will extend slightly beyond these hours.) There are no competition athletic fields; recreational space will be provided indoors.

*address typographical error corrected 9/12/18 from 751 to correct 715.

Summary of Existing Facilities and Proposed Facilities			
	Existing Monroe Technology Center	Proposed New Public School Facility	Notes
Building SF	81,500 SF	91,000+/- SF	
Stories	One Story	Two Story	35 ft. max height in R4 District
Footprint	81,500 SF	48,600+/-	
Number of Students	152 B Days/92 A Days	Current Douglass has 200/450 planned for new school	2017-2018 School Year for current students
Adult Education	90+ (night)	75-100 during day Varies at night	Depends on course offerings
Parking	178	407	Parking is provided at 1 space per 1.67 students, based on maximum capacity plus 20 visitor spaces (550/1.67=329 plus 20 =349)
Buses	Typically one from each high school and middle school served (small middle school participation- currently 15 students/planning for 50)		15 HS in 2018-2019 School Year; 2 HS under construction; 17 middle schools in 2018-2019
Student Drivers	75+/-	150+/-	Potential drivers based on current student drivers and proposed student capacity. Less than half of students will be of age to drive.

The Alternative Education Program serves both middle and high school students who perform better in a non-traditional school setting. Students are supported with varied learning pathways to provide the optimum *climate for success*. They complete the same requirements for promotion and graduation as other LCPS students but in a smaller class setting (10 students vs. 21 MS and 23 HS typical classroom). Students come from all LCPS high schools and middle schools.

The Adult Education Program provides life-long educational opportunities and support services to adults 18 years and older. The major programs are Adult Basic Education, General Education Development (GED) preparation classes, English for English Language Learners (ELL), Adult High School, and a selection of general interest classes. It is proposed to relocate the daytime adult education program currently held at the LCPS Staff Training Center in Ashburn and the nighttime adult education program held at Loudoun County High School to this facility. In the Spring of 2018 there were 203 students enrolled in 15 courses at the Staff Training Center. Some classes operate for a full semester (13 weeks) while others may only be a few weeks or a

single instructional period. There are morning classes and afternoon classes; the classes are also held on varying days. For the new facility, the daytime capacity is limited to the three classrooms plus the testing and computer labs, which equate to 75-100 students at any one time.

Evening classes will be offered from 6-9 pm. The number of students will vary depending on the class offerings. As noted above, the length of the classes may be of a brief duration or for the semester and vary by subject. In addition to the dedicated Adult Education classrooms and labs, classrooms utilized for the Alternative Education Program may be used for nighttime Adult Education. It is anticipated that nighttime attendance will be similar to the current program at Loudoun County High School. In the Spring of 2018, there were 172 students enrolled in 16 night time courses at Loudoun County High School. In the Fall of 2017, there were 217 students enrolled in 18 classes.

SPECIAL EXCEPTION CRITERIA

Section 3.4.6 F. of the Zoning Ordinance specifies the criteria utilized by the Town of Leesburg in the consideration a special exception application.

A. The proposed use will not adversely affect the use of neighboring properties.

This ten-acre property has been utilized for school purposes for over forty (40) years. The surrounding land uses are:

North: Children's Center Road/Single Family Detached (Park View Estates & Stonegate)

South: Single Family Detached (Foxridge)

East: Town Park

West: Route 7 Bypass/Graydon Manor

The Town Plan designates the property as Major Institutional, within the Central Policy Area. The Major Institutional designation recognizes the services that institutional uses provide to the community. The surrounding area is designated as Low Density Residential. Schools are considered to be a compatible use within residential communities. Residential policies in the Town Plan provide that schools, places of worship and community centers are appropriate in residential areas. Policies also promote the protection of residential uses and compatibility between uses. Site design, the location of the facility, access, building height, scale, massing and buffers are measures utilized to ensure compatibility.

The proposed building is to be located approximately 200 feet from the nearest residential community to the south (Foxridge). (The existing building is approximately 135 feet from the

southern property boundary). It is proposed to construct a two-story building. The maximum height in the R-4 District is 35 feet; the adjacent residences are also two-story. The change from the existing one-story building to a two-story building reduces the building footprint by 36% and affords the opportunity for increased setbacks, buffers and parking. Parking is to be setback 50 feet from the southern property boundary with a planned buffer ranging in width from 25-50 feet. (The existing parking lot is setback approximately 20 feet from this boundary). Existing mature trees within this area will be protected unless found to be unhealthy. (A tree survey is being conducted to ensure the trees are healthy and stable. Any diseased or unstable trees will be removed.)

Adjacent to the park and east of the building, the bus loop is proposed. There will be no on-site, over-night bus parking. The bus loop is 10-20 feet from the eastern property boundary and approximately 130 feet from the southern property boundary. The school and park are both community uses and by their nature compatible.

The proposed building is 210+ feet from the northern property boundary, adjacent to Children's Center Road, and approximately 280+ feet from the residential community to the north (Park View Estates). A buffer will be provided along the northern property boundary to screen the parking. Existing healthy trees will be maintained and supplemented with evergreen trees to provide a year-round buffer.

The school property is situated 8-10 feet higher than the Bypass, and over 100 feet from the Graydon Manor property. Existing healthy trees will be maintained and supplemented as needed, consistent with Town landscaping and buffer requirements.

Overall, the site has been designed for compatibility with the surrounding uses and will not adversely impact the use of neighboring properties.

B. The use shall comply with applicable zoning district regulations and applicable provisions of the adopted Town Plan, including but not limited to the Plan's Land Use Compatibility policies.

The zoning of the property is R-4, Single Family Residential, permitting up to 4 dwelling units per acre and various compatible uses. Public schools are permitted by Special Exception. While the existing school facility has operated on the property since 1977, there is not an existing special exception. It is believed that the prior zoning was R-1, which allows the school use by-right. Because the existing building is to be removed and replaced, a special exception is necessary. The proposed use complies with the development standards of the R-4 District and will meet additional development standards related to parking, landscaping, lighting and similar requirements. The proposed school will also comply with policies of the Town Plan including compatibility between uses (detailed in Item A. above), energy efficiency, provision of

community facilities, walkability, and safe, convenient, and efficient transportation. Transportation, both pedestrian and vehicular, are reviewed in Item D below.

Parking for the use will be provided utilizing the higher standard for university, college or similar institution (at the recommendation of Town staff). This standard requires one space per 1.67 students ($550/1.67 = 329$ spaces plus 20 visitor spaces for 349 spaces) as opposed to the public school standard which requires one space per 2.5 classroom seats ($550/2.5 = 220$ spaces plus 20 visitor spaces for 240 spaces). Over 400 parking spaces are proposed.

Landscaping will be provided in accordance with the zoning ordinance standards with the exception that a modification is requested to provide evergreen trees in lieu of shrubs at a quantity of one evergreen tree per 6 shrubs. The evergreen trees will provide a denser, year-round buffer. A detailed landscaping plan is included with the application submission.

Lighting for the site will be provided for safety and security. Building and parking lot lighting will be full-cutoff, directed downward and inward toward the property. Light pole location will exceed the minimum distance of 10 feet from the property line. The maximum light pole height will be 25 feet. A lighting plan has been included in the application submission.

Highway Noise. The property is located within the Noise Abatement Corridor (NAC) overlay zoning district. The NAC applies to properties within 300 feet of the centerline of identified roadways. This site is adjacent to the Route 7 Bypass and is 8-10 feet higher than the roadway. There is an existing mature tree line between the proposed use and the Bypass. The building is setback 300 feet from western property boundary. Building construction will incorporate noise attenuation measures to provide a maximum interior background noise level at or below 45 dB(A).

Energy. LCPS received the 2018 Energy Star Sustained Excellence Award for the seventh consecutive year and received the Energy Star Partner of the Year Award the two years prior. LCPS has been an Energy Star Partner for twenty years and is committed to reducing costs and promoting energy efficiency. LCPS implements a comprehensive approach to sustainability by incorporating measures from leading programs including Energy Star, Green Globe, LEED, and the U.S. Department of Energy into design, construction and operational practices. These same practices will be employed in the development, and ultimate use, of the proposed facility.

Community Services. The proposed facility will continue to provide services to the community. More specifically, educational opportunities will be provided for LCPS middle and high school students, as well as adults in the Loudoun community.

In summary, the proposed use will meet or exceed the zoning ordinance standards and comply with the Town Plan policies.

- C. The location, size and height of buildings, structures, walls and fences, and the nature and extent of screening, buffering and landscaping shall be such that the use will not hinder or discourage the appropriate development and use of adjacent or nearby land and/or buildings.**

As outlined in both A and B above, the proposed facility has been designed to be compatible with the nearby uses. This site has been utilized for school purposes for 40 years. The proposed site layout incorporates increased setback from residential uses, increased parking, and will provide evergreen plantings to afford year-round buffering and screening. The Special Exception Plan included with this application provides the site layout and a detailed landscaping plan.

- D. The proposed use will be such that pedestrian and vehicular traffic generated will not be hazardous or conflict with the existing and anticipated traffic in the neighborhood and on the streets serving the site.**

Access to the property is from Childrens Center Road, west of Catoctin Circle. It is proposed to retain the two existing driveways serving the site. The eastern entrance will be utilized for bus traffic and the western entrance for the kiss and ride and access to the parking lot. The bus loop has stacking for at least 17 buses. Bus transportation is provided to all middle and high schools from which students will be attending. The buses pick up the students from their base school and will not all arrive at the same time. (The buses will stack in the bus loop for the afternoon dismissal). In the Fall of 2018, LCPS will have 15 high schools (and two under construction) and 17 middle schools. The majority of the students will be high school (ultimately 400) with a limited number of middle school (ultimately 50) students. Approximately half of the high school student population will be of driving age. It is anticipated that some of these high school students and the adult education students will arrive in separate vehicles. The parking lot provides over 400 spaces, which will more than accommodate the anticipated need.

A detailed traffic analysis prepared in accord with Town requirements has been submitted with the application. The study evaluated nine intersections in the vicinity of the site and found that the surrounding transportation network will adequately accommodate the proposed use.

A pedestrian plan has also been submitted with the application. Because students come from all over the County the number of potential pedestrians will be minimal. For those that may walk, there are sidewalks along Childrens Center Road and Catoctin Circle. An onsite pedestrian network is planned which will connect to the existing sidewalk on Childrens Center Road.

Overall, the existing transportation network will continue to provide safe and efficient access to this school site.

Buffer Yard Modification

A modification to the buffer yard requirements is requested to allow evergreen trees to replace shrubs at a ratio of 1 evergreen tree per 6 shrubs. The justification for this change is to provide a more intense screening along the property perimeter and a year-round buffer. This request does not affect the potential site development density nor the calculation of the buffer square footage. This modification will exceed the public purpose of the existing buffer requirements by providing a year-round buffer. It is proposed to provide an increased buffer width (50 vs 25 feet) adjacent to the residential community to the south. Included with the application submission is a landscape plan depicting the location and extent of the required buffer and a calculation of the difference between the required shrubs and proposed evergreen tree plantings. It is also proposed to retain as much of the existing site perimeter vegetation as possible.

SUMMARY

The subject property has been used for school purposes for four decades. This proposal seeks to remove the existing building and provide a new facility for the LCPS Alternative Education Program and for adult education classes. Public utilities and a safe, efficient transportation network serve the site. The use is consistent with the Town's comprehensive plan designation and land development policies and will be developed consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Your support for this use is respectfully requested.