

**Loudoun County School Board**  
**Statement of Justification**  
**Special Exception for The North Star School**  
**on C.S. Monroe Property**

**July 31, 2018**

Updated December 11, 2018

Updated May 15, 2019

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\* Childrens 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 opened in the fall of 2018, the Monroe Advanced Technology Academy (“MATA”) program relocated 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, The North Star 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 included 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 new two-story building is proposed to be 94,700+ square feet. The planned peak student population for the new school is 570, with 450 students for the Alternative Education program and 75-120 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.

<b>Summary of Existing Facilities and Proposed Facilities</b>			
	<b>Existing Monroe Technology Center</b>	<b>Proposed New Public School Facility</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Building SF	81,500 SF	94,700+/- SF	
Stories	One Story	Two Story	35 ft. max height in R4 District
Footprint	81,500 SF	48,425+/-	
Number of Students	152 B Days/92 A Days	Current Douglass has 140/450 planned for new school	2018-2019 School Year for current students
Adult Education	90+ (night)	75-120 during day Varies at night	Added LPN Program Depends on course offerings
Parking	178	367	Parking is provided at 1 space per 1.67 students, based on maximum capacity plus 20 visitor spaces (570/1.67=342 plus 20 =362)
Buses	Typically one from each high school; the high school buses also transport the middle school students (small middle school participation- currently 15 students/planning for 50)		15 HS in 2018-2019 School Year; 2 HS under construction;
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. The Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) Program which has a capacity of 20 students is also proposed for relocation from the

Academies of Loudoun to The North Star School. 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 are to be moved 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 four classrooms plus the testing and computer labs, which equate to 75-120 students at any one time. The addition of the LPN Program added a Science lab and a Simulation room to the facility.

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 nighttime 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: Childrens 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 approximately 40% 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, 50 feet in width. (The existing parking lot is setback approximately 20 feet from this boundary). Existing mature trees within this area will be protected to the extent possible. A certified arborist has reviewed the proposed plan and has identified trees that are unlikely to survive the impact from construction. These trees will need to be removed. It will be possible to preserve approximately half of the existing trees. These are identified on the landscape plan. Where trees must be removed, new landscaping will be implemented. (A tree survey has been conducted to ensure the trees to be preserved 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 onsite, over-night bus parking. The bus loop is 10-60 feet from the eastern property boundary and approximately 150 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. 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 has been calculated utilizing the higher standard for university, college or similar institution. This standard requires one space per 1.67 students ( $570/1.67 = 342$  spaces plus 20 visitor spaces for 362 spaces) as opposed to the public-school standard which requires one space per 2.5 classroom seats ( $450/2.5 = 180$  spaces plus 20 visitor spaces for 200 spaces). The college standard would apply to the 120 adult education students ( $120/1.67 = 71$  spaces plus 20 visitor spaces) for 91 spaces. Combined, the two standards result in 291 spaces. 367 parking spaces are proposed. The proposed number of spaces reflects the anticipated need at full enrollment.

<b>Student Drivers</b>	<b>+/- 150</b>
<b>Faculty/Staff</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Maximum Daytime Adult Ed Enrollees</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Total parking spaces needed to meet daily anticipated demand at the planned facility</b>	<b>+/- 370 parking spaces</b>

**Landscaping** will be provided in accordance with the zoning ordinance standards. Additional evergreen trees have been incorporated along the common property boundary with the Foxridge community to 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 for core learning spaces at or below 35 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 combine the two existing driveways serving the site. Vehicles arriving for the kiss and ride and access to the parking lot will turn to the right upon entry. The buses coming into the site will continue straight, stacking on the eastern side of the building adjacent to the park and along the rear of the building. There is stacking for 15 buses. Bus transportation is provided to all

middle and high schools from which students will be attending. The high school buses also transport the middle school students. The buses pick up the students from their base school and because they are traveling from various high school locations throughout the county 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 had 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 350 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. Frontage improvements will be provided along Childrens Center Road.

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 Town Park trail to the east of the site. A sidewalk will also be constructed along the school frontage on Childrens Center Road from the entrance to Wild Turkey Way.

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

## **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.

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