

# **CITY OF SMYRNA**

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

### **MEMORANDUM**

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To: Mayor and Council

From: Ken Suddreth, Community Development Director  
Russell Martin, AICP, Senior Planner

Date: November 4, 2015

CC: Michael Jones, Interim City Administrator  
Planning and Zoning Board

**RE: Special Land Use Permit – Approval of a Campus Master Plan for Whitefield Academy**

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#### **BACKGROUND**

Whitefield Academy was formed in 1996 by the partnership of The Cranmer School and the Mount Vernon Christian Academy. Whitefield Academy relocated its campus from Buckhead to its current location in 1999. Since 1999, the school has grown from 52 acres to almost 100 acres. The school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) and competes athletically in the 1A division of the Georgia High School Association (GHSA). Whitefield Academy currently serves almost 800 students in PreK4 through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, with a planned eventual enrollment of 1,200 students.

The Whitefield Academy property is currently zoned R-15 (Single-family Residential) and RAD (Single-family Residential) and located on the north side of Pebblebrook Road and Buckner Road. The campus currently has two access points, one on Pebblebrook Road and one on Buckner Road. The current school property consists of:

- The Lower School, which houses grades Pre-K to 4<sup>th</sup> in 6 modular classroom buildings;
- The Middle School, which houses grades 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> in a 3-story, 44,000 sq. ft. building and modular classrooms;
- The Upper School, which includes grades 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> in a 3-story, 55,000 sq. ft. building and modular classrooms;
- Administrative and academic buildings in modular office buildings;
- A gymnasium, which is a 2-story, 37,500 sq. ft. building;
- A football stadium and track;
- Baseball and softball fields; and
- Tennis courts.

Whitefield Academy has developed a campus master plan that will help with future growth of the school. The proposed campus master plan was submitted with the Special Land Use Permit

Application for review by staff and is attached with this zoning item. The school proposes to increase its enrollment from almost 800 students to 1,200 students as part of the planned expansion of the site. In addition to the increase enrollment, several infrastructure changes are being proposed on the campus:

- A New Lower School Building, which consists of a 3-story, 80,000 sq. ft. building;
- A Future Learning Commons, which consists of a 3-story, 60,000 sq. ft. building;
- A Classroom Building, which consists of a 3-story, 75,000 sq. ft. building;
- A Competition Gym, which consists of a 3-story, 60,000 sq. ft. building;
- A Performing Arts Center, which consists of a 3-story, 50,000 sq. ft. building;
- A Natatorium, which consists of a 3-story, 40,000 sq. ft. building;
- New Lacrosse and Soccer fields with support buildings;
- New Baseball and Softball fields with support buildings;
- New Tennis Courts with support buildings; and
- Additional parking to support all new improvements.

The overall parking for the school will be increased to accommodate the future expansion of the school. The parking will be expanded from 334 parking spaces to 659 parking spaces. Without having the exact number of classrooms proposed in the master plan, staff is unable to make a definitive determination as to whether the parking proposed meets the city's requirements. However, the campus is large enough to accommodate more parking should it be required during the plan review and permitting process. The applicant is not requesting a parking variance and will be required to meet the City's minimum parking standards. The access and circulation for the campus are also proposed to undergo a few changes: These changes include the following:

- Relocation of the Pebblebrook Road access 0.15 miles further west along Pebblebrook Road;
- Separated parking areas for the new baseball and softball fields with access from Pebblebrook Road; and
- A new parking field on the east corner of campus with access from Buckner Road.

Community Development has reviewed the proposed campus master plan against the City's zoning requirements and has found the proposed plan meets the minimum zoning standards with regards to setbacks, buffering, building scale, and etc. The school has reflected a minimum 50' vegetative buffer around the perimeter of the property.

The school is currently serviced through Cobb County Water System for both water and sewer. The applicant has completed a water and sewer impact statement for the proposed campus master plan. Based on the plumbing guidelines of the American Society of Plumbing Engineers, Whitefield Academy estimates full enrollment to be 1,200 students and 150 employees with an estimated total of 28,485 gallons of waste/water per day at full campus build out. Cobb County Water System has reviewed the impact statement and has stated there is adequate capacity to serve the proposed campus master plan. There are 8" water mains available for use in both the Buckner Road and Pebblebrook Road right-of-ways. The campus and the proposed improvements will be served from the Pebblebrook water main. Cobb County requests that a flow test be provided at the time of permitting and subsequent flow tests be provided for each phase of construction. There is an existing sewer main that currently runs through Whitefield

Academy property along the bank of Nickajack Creek. Waste water treatment service will continue through this current location.

The City Engineer has reviewed the proposed campus master plan against the city's stormwater management requirements. The City Engineer believes the proposed campus master plan will be able to accommodate stormwater management on-site and meet the city's minimum requirements. The applicant will be required to meet all applicable stormwater management requirements when submitting development plans for permitting.

As part of the Special Land Use Permit Application, Whitefield Academy completed a traffic impact analysis of the existing conditions and the proposed expansion of the campus. The traffic analysis states that the proposed campus master plan will not take Pebblebrook Road and Buckner Road below an acceptable level of service for each road. The traffic analysis did propose several recommendations to improve ingress and egress to the site during peak traffic periods. The proposed recommendations include the following:

- Police officers be utilized at both site driveways during the peak traffic period in the morning;
- Dedicated left and right turn bays be constructed for both entering and exiting traffic at the relocated access road on Pebblebrook Road;
- The school should maintain circulation patterns that encourage even usage of both access points for entering and exiting movement during the morning drop-off.

The City Engineer has reviewed both the traffic analysis and the proposed campus master plan.

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## ANALYSIS

In order to approve the special land use permit, the governing body of the City of Smyrna must determine that, in their sole discretion, the granting of the permit would meet the requirements contained in Section 1510(5)(a) through (n) of the Zoning Code of the City of Smyrna. The following provides the fourteen factors followed by a staff analysis of each factor in italics:

- a) The use shall not have a significant adverse affect on the area or neighborhood in which the proposed use will be located.

*The proposed use should not have a significant adverse affect on the area or the neighborhood in which the proposed use will be located. Whitefield Academy has operated at this location since 1999. The proposed plan provides adequate building setbacks, landscape buffering and traffic improvements to mitigate adverse impacts to the surrounding area.*

- b) The use shall not be significantly incompatible with the zoning district or nearby districts.

*The subject property is zoned R-15 (Single-Family Residential) and RAD (Single-Family Residential). Under both the R-15 and RAD zoning districts, schools are listed as a permitted use within the zoning district. However, the location of the school must be approved the Mayor and Council. As stated above, the proposed use is currently*

*permitted within the R-15 and RAD zoning districts. Therefore, the proposed use should not significantly incompatible with the zoning district or nearby districts.*

- c) The use shall not result in the creation of a nuisance as defined under Georgia law.

*The proposed use will not result in the creation of a nuisance as defined under Georgia law.*

- d) The use shall not adversely affect the quiet enjoyment of the surrounding property.

*Per Section 701.5 of the Zoning Ordinance, schools are required to locate buildings not less than 50 feet from any property line and any lighting associated with night outdoor activities shall be established in such a way that adjacent properties and roadways are not adversely affected, and that no direct light is cast upon adjacent properties and roadways. The submitted campus master plan shows the buildings setback further than 50' from any property line, as well as, the provision of a 50' vegetative buffer along all shared property lines. The lighting requirement is handled at the plan review level and not during the zoning of a property. Community Development staff will require the applicant to meet these lighting requirements and will include the requirement as a condition of approval. Therefore, the proposed use should not adversely affect the quiet enjoyment of the surrounding property.*

- e) The use shall not adversely affect the property values of surrounding property.

*Whitefield Academy has operated at this location since 1999. The school has not shown to adversely affect the property values of the surrounding property.*

- f) The use shall make adequate provisions for traffic, water and sewage, according to a traffic, water, sewage and other appropriate utilities study prepared by a registered engineer, and approved by the Mayor and Council of the City of Smyrna, in its sole discretion.

*The Cobb County Water System has adequate water and sewer capacity to serve the proposed use. The traffic impact of proposed use has been studied by a registered engineer and recommendations have been provided.*

- g) The site or intensity of the use is appropriate.

*Both the site and intensity of the use are appropriate for this location.*

- h) Provisions are made, in writing, regarding appropriate hours of operation.

*The proposed use will have normal hours operations for a Pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade school.*

- i) Adequate limits or controls are placed on deliveries, receiving and shipping.

*The deliveries, receiving and shipping for the proposed use will happen during normal operating hours for schools.*

- j) Fencing and landscape plans are incorporated in the plans and proposals to ensure appropriate transitions between the subject property and surrounding properties.

*The applicant has provided a campus master plan, which reflects a 50' vegetative buffer between the school and adjoining residential properties. This buffer encompasses the perimeter of the property.*

- k) The public health, safety and welfare of the surrounding neighborhood will not be adversely affected.

*The proposed use will not adversely affect the surrounding neighborhood.*

- l) The site is accessible without travel over residential streets as defined by the City.

*The site will maintain the same number of access points to the property.*

- m) The applicant has supplied sufficient evidence of bonding capacity, references and financial strength, as required by the City of Smyrna, for the project under consideration.

*This requirement is not applicable.*

- n) Annual host fees shall be required for transfer centers, composting centers and landfills, as established from time to time, and on record with the City Clerk's Office, to City of Smyrna.

*The proposed use is a school and this requirement is not applicable.*

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## **STAFF COMMENTS**

Whitefield Academy is seeking approval of its campus master plan. The proposed plan includes the future growth goals for the school with respect to enrollment and site improvements. The Special Land Use Permit will allow the development of the property in accordance with the submitted master plan without having to come back to the city for a special land use permit for every new building or phase of the school. Community Development recommends **approval** of the requested Special Land Use Permit with the following conditions:

1. Approval of the subject property for a Special Land Use Permit shall be conditioned upon the development of the property in substantial compliance with the submitted site plan (campus master plan) dated 12/11/2015 created by Breedlove Land Planning..
2. The applicant shall be bound to the elevations submitted and dated 10/9/2015. Approval of any change to the elevations must be obtained from the Director of Community Development.
3. Any lighting associated with night outdoor activities shall be established in such a way that adjacent properties and roadways are not adversely affected, and that no direct light is cast upon adjacent properties and roadways.
4. All utilities within the development shall be underground.

5. The applicant shall be responsible for any traffic improvements (including additional right-of-way dedications) deemed necessary by either the City or the County during construction plan review. Sidewalks shall be provided by the developer inside the subdivision and outside the subdivision adjacent to any public right-of-way consistent with City's requirements for the extent of the development. A grass buffer with a minimum width of 2' shall be provided between the back of curb and sidewalk.
6. No debris may be buried on any lot or common area.
7. The applicant will comply with the City's current tree ordinance. All required tree protection measures shall be adhered to by the developer during construction.
8. All landscape plans must be prepared, stamped, and signed by a Georgia Registered Landscape Architect for any common areas or entrances.
9. All yards and common areas are to be sodded, and landscaped. Irrigate as appropriate.
10. The applicant will comply with the City's current zoning ordinance.

**Figure – 1**

