

REQUEST FOR DISCRETIONARY APPROVAL

3430 McManus Avenue, Culver City, CA 90232

REQUESTS

The Applicant, ***Echo Horizon School / Echo Foundation***, requests the following discretionary approval:

- Pursuant to **Culver City Municipal Code (“CCMC”) Section 17.530.015**, the Applicant requests a Conditional Use Permit (“CUP”) to allow the continued use and operation of the existing Echo Horizon School in an R-2 zone, as well as a modification of the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff members from 40 to 52 (“Project”).

Pursuant to various CCMC sections, the Applicant will request approvals and permits from the Building Safety Division and other municipal agencies for Project construction actions, which may include, and not be limited to, demolition, excavation, shoring, grading, haul route, foundation, and building and tenant improvements.

PROJECT SITE INFORMATION

The Project Site is located at 3430 McManus Avenue in Culver City. The site is comprised of multiple lots (Lots 153 through 159 and Lots 195 through 202 of Tract 5560) with a total lot area of 80,823 square feet. It is zoned R-2 (Two-Family Residential) with a Low-Density Single Family General Plan Land Use designation. It is not located within an Overlay Zone or Special District. The site is located on a block surrounded by Jacob Street to the north, Roberts Avenue to the east, and McManus Avenue to the west. Abutting the school Site to the immediate south is Syd Kronenthal Park and its associated parking lot.

The Site has been home to an elementary school since 1925 when Washington Elementary (a Culver City Unified School District school) occupied the existing school building initially. Echo Horizon has been operating on the Site since 1983 (i.e. for the past 39 years).

The existing site contains a 41,011 square foot¹, two-story school building with a height of 30 feet². The school building has 19 classrooms for the currently enrolled 185³ students in Pre-K through 6th Grade. There are two outdoor play and recreation areas, one at the north end and one at the south end of the Project Site, both along Roberts Avenue. The play area located to the south of the site is reserved for students in kindergarten. Along the southerly portion of the site is a gated surface parking lot with a one-way, two-lane queuing drive aisle that is part of the drop-off and pick-up circulation system for the school.

Currently, the school provides 42 automobile parking spaces for full-time faculty and staff. 25 of the parking spaces are standard, 15 are compact, and 2 are reserved for ADA.

The subject parcel and corresponding zoning are described as follows:

¹ Figure from 2005 CUP Plans by Pica & Sullivan Architects, Ltd.

² Figure from 2005 CUP Plans by Pica & Sullivan Architects, Ltd.

³ Per CUP/M P-2004143, the school’s student enrollment allowance is at 315 and Echo Horizon wishes to maintain that allowance level.

APN	Address	Zoning	Land Use Designation	Lot Area
4205-012-903	3430 McManus Ave.	R-2	Low Density Single Family	80,823 sf (1.86 acres)
Total Lot Area				80,823 sf

APPLICANT

Echo Horizon School is a Pre-K through 6th Grade elementary school for both hearing and hearing Impaired/deaf children founded by Carol Proctor and Kent Landsberg. It has been operating at 3430 McManus Avenue within Culver City's Arts District since 1983. The mission of Echo Horizon School is to educate children in a collaborative environment that is academically challenging and developmentally appropriate. The school actively promotes mutual respect, individual responsibility, and ethical action.

A unique aspect of the Echo Horizon School is its Echo Center. The Echo Center is an integrated program within Echo Horizon School that supports students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) in the mastery of listening and spoken language.

Fifteen percent (15%) of Echo Horizon's students are DHH and use hearing technology. Through the Echo Center program, they learn alongside their hearing peers, the latter who make up 85 percent (85%) of the school. Although the Echo Center is for DHH students, all of the students benefit from the unique and inclusive educational model in place at Echo Horizon.

The school's academic hours of operation are from 8:30 am – 3:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 8:30 am – 2:00 pm Friday. The before school program hours are 7:30 a.m. – 8:10 a.m. Monday through Friday, and the after-school program hours are from 3:00 pm – 5:45 pm Monday through Thursday and 2:00 pm – 5:45 pm Friday. Approximately 20-25% of Echo Horizon families utilize the before and after care programs.

As Echo Horizon is an elementary school, there are minimal special events in a school year. The following are some of the special events and enrichment programs provided to students of Echo Horizon and their families:

Family Engagement and Events

Back-to-School-Night

Back-to-School-Night is held a few weeks after school opens. This is a special evening for school families during which parents are introduced to the faculty and have an opportunity to see their child's classroom and classwork.

Halloween Carnival

On or before October 31, the Parent Association organizes an afternoon carnival during school hours with games and fun for all grade levels.

Grandparents/Special Friends Day

This is a day set aside in November for grandparents or special friends to visit the school

for brunch and interact with their grandchildren in their classrooms.

Spring Open House

Parents/guardians are invited to visit their child's classroom and see many of their accomplishments from the school year.

Prospective Family Events

The school hosts 2-3 events throughout the year to showcase the school to potential new families. These events include an Open House during the school day, a Prospective Parent evening, and an Admission Panel on Zoom.

After School Programs

Echo Horizon's After School Enrichment Classes, Recreation Program, and Athletics Program help students develop physically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Students take part in a balanced, sequential program of age-appropriate activities such as fitness, cooperative games, cultural projects, and sports. They learn and practice invaluable life skills such as respect, responsibility, empathy, and fair play while having a great time and making friends.

Enrichment Classes

Offered on a trimester basis with a typical course lasting 10–12 weeks

- Classes may include musical theatre, basketball, video-game design, soccer, filmmaking, dance, sewing, yearbook, art, Lego robotics, a variety of clubs, and a teacher-supported study hall.

Recreation Program

- Offered five days a week until 5:45 pm and on parent/teacher conference days with an RSVP.
- A daily schedule includes a circuit rotation of physical games, crafts/projects, quiet-space time, free play, and snack.

Athletics Program

- Sports teams for grades 4–6 in basketball, volleyball, track and field, and soccer. Students can also participate in interscholastic competition.
- Practices and competitions each take place once a week.

Summer Program

Echo Horizon runs summer camps for six weeks each summer. Generally, the school has around 100 students in attendance plus 20 faculty/staff members during the summer program. The summer program runs for the same hours as the regular school day.

PARKING DEMAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

As previously noted, the surface parking lot located south of the Project Site provides 42 parking spaces for full-time faculty and staff. Echo Horizon actively promotes and encourages carpooling

and the use of alternate modes of transportation. This is consistent with Echo Horizon's commitment to environmental sustainability. At present, approximately 16% of staff either carpool, bike, get dropped off/picked-up, or take public transit to work. The school also employs alternative work schedules for several administrative employees who work remotely a couple of days a week.

Alternate modes of transportation are viable and utilized options for Echo Horizon's staff. There are new dedicated and protected bike lanes throughout Culver City (particularly along Washington Blvd.). The Ballona Creek Bike Path runs from the beach (Playa Vista, Marina del Rey, Venice) through Culver City and connects to the adjacent Syd Kronenthal Park. The site is less than a mile from the Culver City Expo rail station and the school is served by several Culver City bus lines running along Washington Blvd. Additionally, Echo Horizon has two secure bike racks for both students and faculty/staff on campus, each rack allowing for approximately 5 bikes (for a total capacity of 10 bikes). Echo Horizon's Leadership Team remains committed to additional ways to incentivize walking and biking to work as part of the school's ongoing sustainability and good neighbor efforts. For the 2022-23 school year, Echo Horizon will begin offering to purchase transit passes for those staff members who use public transportation to get to/from work. The school is also presently considering a flat rate monetary incentive for full-time employees who do not drive and do not require a parking space. Please see the attached Parking Demand Management (PDM) plan prepared by KOA and dated April 25, 2022.

The surface parking lot is gated and entry to the lot is off Roberts Avenue, which exits onto McManus Avenue. The gated parking lot is open to parents dropping students off from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. for morning arrivals. Two members of the school's facilities staff are posted at 8:00 a.m. near the gates on Roberts Avenue and McManus Avenue to direct the traffic flow during arrival and dismissal. Use of the two lanes in the parking lot functions to minimize street traffic during pick up and drop off hours by allowing 22 cars to queue on site within the parking lot's aforementioned two lanes. Additionally 4 cars can queue in the horseshoe driveway off of McManus Avenue. Please see entitlement plan set inclusive of Circulation/Carline Plans as prepared by architectural firm Pica+Sullivan.

In order to optimize parking availability, the surface parking lot is used by full-time faculty and staff only. The parking lot is gated and open to staff from 7:30 am to 8:30 am for morning arrivals. Most of the staff arrive no later than 8:00 am. It is then closed and locked for the remainder of the school day. Faculty and staff have clicker access if they need to come and go during the day. Street parking is not allowed for employees during school hours.

School is dismissed at 3:00 pm on Mondays–Thursdays and at 2:00 pm on Fridays. Vehicles picking up students are directed from Roberts Ave. through the school's parking lot and to the loading zone stations in front of the school's main entrance on McManus Avenue, where staff members assist students entering vehicles. The school has several staff members in the driveway opening car doors and loading students at the noted stations, and one staff member with a walkie talkie at the top of the steps sending students efficiently to the appropriate loader.

Parents are informed that they may not arrive before 2:00 pm on Fridays and 3:00 pm on Mondays through Thursdays as early arrival could create street queuing. To expedite the on-site queuing, vehicles may not park at any time while in the queuing area for drop off and pick up of the children and parents are not allowed out of their vehicles.

Families are encouraged to arrange a carpool to and from school as many of the families live in the same neighborhoods. The school has created a Family Directory, which allows families to see

who in the community lives in their same neighborhoods and enables them to contact other families directly. Many of the cars arriving and departing from Echo Horizon carry 2-3 students at a time, minimizing the total number of cars that come to campus during drop off and pick up hours.

The surface parking lot is also used for evening events for parents and visitors, as faculty/staff depart at 4:00 pm. Echo Horizon holds a minimal number of evening and weekend events throughout the year, such as Back to School Night in the fall and 2 to 3 Admission events in the fall and winter. The school prepares for the increased traffic and parking demand anticipated for special events. Depending on the event, the school purchases Culver City visitor parking passes to reserve short-term parking at the Syd Kronenthal City Park parking lot, which is located directly south of the Project Site. On other occasions, the school has used valet services to manage the parking or has rented the parking at the Culver City Trader Joe's garage or at the Platform. Vans then transport parents, children, and guests to and from McManus Avenue.

Echo Horizon holds orientations to ensure that all faculty and staff newcomers as well as families understand the school's transportation and parking policies. The school also provides written traffic and parking information to families within the Student Handbook and regularly advises families that parking on the residential streets surrounding the school is not allowed, particularly during school hours. Echo Horizon families and visitors are expected to be respectful neighbors by abiding by the parking restrictions posted in the neighborhood, driving slowly and safely, and minimizing noise.

SURROUNDING ZONES AND LAND USES

North of the project site, on the same block and across Jacob Street, are various single-family homes. East of the project site and across Roberts Avenue are additional single-family homes. South of the Project Site is a surface parking lot for Syd Kronenthal City Park. At the end of McManus Avenue and Roberts Avenue cul-de-sacs is Syd Kronenthal City Park. To the west of the project site and across McManus Avenue are additional single-family homes.

Figure 1. Project Site (Outlined in Red)



PREVIOUS ENTITLEMENTS

The site was originally the location of Washington Elementary School. Due to low enrollment, the school was closed by decision of the Culver City Unified School District Board of Education at the end of the spring semester in June 1983. As a public school, the facility had a maximum enrollment of 330 students; enrollment had decreased to 246 when it was closed.

The Planning Commission approved Conditional Use Permit ("CUP"), PL-1350 in July 1983, for Echo Horizon School to operate a private elementary school and daycare center at the former Washington Elementary School site for a period of five years. Subsequently, the Planning Commission granted a series of short-term extensions of the CUP, all running concurrent with the lease agreement between the Echo Horizon School and the Culver City Unified School District ("CCUSD"). CCUSD has maintained ownership of the site to present day.

On January 26, 1994, Extension of and Modification to CUP, PL-1350 was approved, granting an extension of the CUP to June 30, 2022, to coincide with, a 30-year initial term of the lease agreement between CCUSD and the school (1992 to 2022). The extension and modification to the CUP also allowed Echo Horizon School to increase their student enrollment to 275 students (from a maximum of 250) and construct a modest addition at the rear of the school building in conjunction with site improvements. The square footage addition at the rear of the building required a Historical Preservation Certificate of Appropriateness because the school building is designated as a "Significant" structure per the City's Historic Preservation Program.

Echo Horizon's current Conditional Use Permit (CUP/M P-2004143) was approved on January 12, 2005, which modified CUP, PL-1350 to increase student enrollment from 275 to 315 students with staff level remaining at 40. Echo Horizon's lease with CCUSD has three 10-year renewal options. Echo Horizon has opted to renew the lease for the initial 10-year term commencing July 2022. After the initial renewal term expires, Echo Horizon will have two more 10-year renewal options.

As the school's current CUP is set to sunset in June of 2022, Echo Horizon is applying for a CUP to continue its operations at the present site and a modification to increase the FTE staff level from 40 to 52. The campus and overall operations for the Echo Horizon School will remain unchanged from those originally approved under its current CUP. No increase in the 315 maximum student enrollment level (per the 2005 CUP approval) and no new construction or renovations to the existing school facilities are proposed.