



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 19-1369, **Version:** 1

Item #: PH-1.

PC: Conditional Use Permit Modification, P2018-0249-CUP/MOD to Allow Installation of a Multi-Purpose Playfield and Reuse of Storage Building to a Classroom Building at The Willows Community School Located at 8509 Higuera Street.

Meeting Date: June 12, 2019

Contact Person/Dept: Jose Mendivil, Associate Planner
Michael Allen, Current Planning Manager

Phone Number: (310) 253-5757 / (310) 253-5727

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☒

Action Item: ☐

Attachments: ☒

Public Notification: (Mailed) Property owners and occupants within a 500 foot radius of the Project Site (05/21/19); (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - Planning Commission (05/22/19); (Posted) City Website (05/22/19).

Department Approval: Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director (06/03/2019)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve Conditional Use Permit Modification, P2018-0249-CUP/MOD, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2019-P005.

PROCEDURES

1. Chair calls on staff for a brief staff report and the Planning Commission poses questions to staff as desired.
2. Chair opens the public hearing, and receives comments from the general public.
3. Chair seeks a motion to close the public hearing after all testimony has been presented.
4. Commission discusses the matter and arrives at its decision.

BACKGROUND

Request

On October 19, 2018, The Willows Community School (the "School") applied for a modification to the School's existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow installation of a multi-purpose playfield and reuse of a storage building to a classroom building. These modifications will facilitate implementation of Phase II of the School's Master Plan. There are three phases to the Master Plan and Phase I is completed.

Project Description

Current Master Plan

The 2012 Master Plan describes the School's proposed construction of facilities to replace aging facilities; expansion of parking, playgrounds and open space; maintenance of existing facilities; and an enrollment increase from 425 students to a maximum of 575 students. The School's 2012 Master Plan is summarized in Attachment No. 3 which also describes existing conditions, parking, and added traffic conditions of approval.

Proposed Modification to Phase II of the Master Plan

The proposed 2019 Phase II modification to the School's Master Plan consists of the following:

- Demolish a storage building and install a multi-purpose playfield in its place;
- Reuse another 11,300 square foot storage building for six (6) classrooms, offices, and storage space.

The lots where the two storage buildings are located were originally part of the Master Plan Phase III. Under Phase III the lot with the proposed playfield was to be developed with a 10,000 square foot classroom building and the lot with proposed reuse of a storage building was to be developed with a 10,000 square foot theatre building and outdoor play areas.

Overview of School Campus

The Willows Community School is a private, non-profit, educational institution (Grades K-8) located in the Hayden Tract. The School is located on the north side of Higuera Street between Hayden Avenue and Eastham Drive, with frontage on both Warner Drive and Higuera Street. The campus is comprised of seven (7) contiguous lots addressed and referenced as follows:

- 8509 Higuera Street (W-I)
- 8490 Warner Drive (W-II)
- 8479 Higuera Street (W-III)
- 8520 Warner Drive (W-IV)
- 8476 Warner Drive (W-V)
- 8510 Warner Drive (W-VI)
- 8525 Higuera Street (W-VII)

Previous Entitlements

The School was approved on July 11, 1994, through an Administrative Site Plan Review and since then four modifications have been approved allowing the School to expand. Initial approval and subsequent student and campus expansion approvals are summarized below:

- July 11, 1994 (ASPR No. 94-02) - 180 students at W-I
- March 26, 1997 (CUP No. 96-04) - 261 students and expansion onto W-II
- January 12, 2000 - 425 students and expansion onto W-III
- September 12, 2002 - expansion onto W-IV with no student increase

- August 8 and September 24, 2012 - 575 students and expansion onto W-V through W-VII

The School's current Master Plan became effective in 2012. Attachment No. 4 contains the proposed 2019 Master Plan Development Plans with the 2012 Master Plan Development Plans included on Pages E-3 through E-6. Attachment No. 5 includes the proposed 2019 Master Plan Text in Strike Out Underline reflecting the proposed Phase II modifications.

Existing Conditions

As noted above the School is located on seven, relatively flat contiguous parcels that are improved with School-owned buildings and facilities. The project site is designated Industrial General in the General Plan and is zoned Industrial General (IG). The project site is located in the Hayden Tract and the surrounding land uses include a mix of creative office, dance studios and light industrial uses. Several buildings in the surrounding area are tilt up concrete, stucco, or brick with high ceilings conducive to light industrial operations and adaptive reuse to office. Attachment No. 3 summarizes existing conditions.

ANALYSIS:

Implementation of Phase II

The W-VI and W-VII properties were purchased by the School in 2012 and 2016, respectively. Following review of its near-term programming needs and fundraising objectives, the School proposed modified improvements at these two properties in order to implement Phase II of the existing Master Plan. The proposed 2019 Master Plan Phase II will:

- Repurpose an existing 11,300 square foot storage building (W-VI) to a multi-purpose facility with six (6) classrooms, offices, conference area, and storage
- Demolish a 10,800 square foot school storage building and install a 14,000 square multi-purpose playfield in its place (W-VII)
- Maintain the current 54 on-site parking spaces and student drop off/pick up off at Higuera St.

This differs from the 2012 Master Plan Phase II that involves:

- Demolition of a school building at W-III and construction of an 18,000 square foot building
- Reconfiguration of existing parking areas, outdoor play areas, and interior spaces on other portions of the campus
- Provision of 53 parking spaces along the east side of the campus with student drop off/pick up entering on Higuera Street and exiting on Warner Drive.

Pages E-11 and E-12 of Attachment No. 4 illustrate the proposed 2019 Master Plan Phase II. These modifications will facilitate enrollment increases from 475 students to 550 students and staff level increases by up to five (5) faculty and two (2) staff members, consistent with the 2012 Master Plan Phase II thresholds. Current school operations including the September to June academic year, summer program, school events, and student drop off/pick up will not change except for added operations regulating the new multi-purpose playfield. See Attachment No. 9 for an overview of operations.

Multi-Purpose Playfield at W-VII

As part of the playfield construction the site will be regraded and resurfaced with an artificial-turf field. A new wall fronting Higuera Street with safety netting along the west and south property lines and four light poles,

and a new internal landscaped pedestrian plaza will be installed. Street edge improvements will include new street trees and landscaping along the right of way directly adjacent to the W-VII property line and along the sidewalk parkway, leaving the existing sidewalk between the two landscaped areas in place.

The new field will allow the School greater flexibility to accommodate its current academic, athletic, and community programs and activities. It will not be regulation sized so no interscholastic games or events would be held on campus. However, the field will be sufficiently sized to allow the School's flag football and soccer teams to practice, eliminating the current procedure of going to city parks to practice. Additionally the field will be used for:

- Physical education activities
- Outdoor classroom space for daily lessons
- Special projects and exhibitions
- Recess/general play activities
- Space for the School's existing afterschool enrichment programs including yoga, outdoor theater, and dance activities.
- Annual School Events
- Potential use by the surrounding community

A condition of approval will require that the City reserves the right to administratively limit the hours for non-school users should there be nuisance complaints related to such activity. Parking during special events will continue to be provided at the existing Higuera Lot; Warner Lot (including the existing additional designated event parking); and at the off-site Samitaur Warner parking lot (8511 Warner Drive).

Noise and Light at the Play Field

Noise

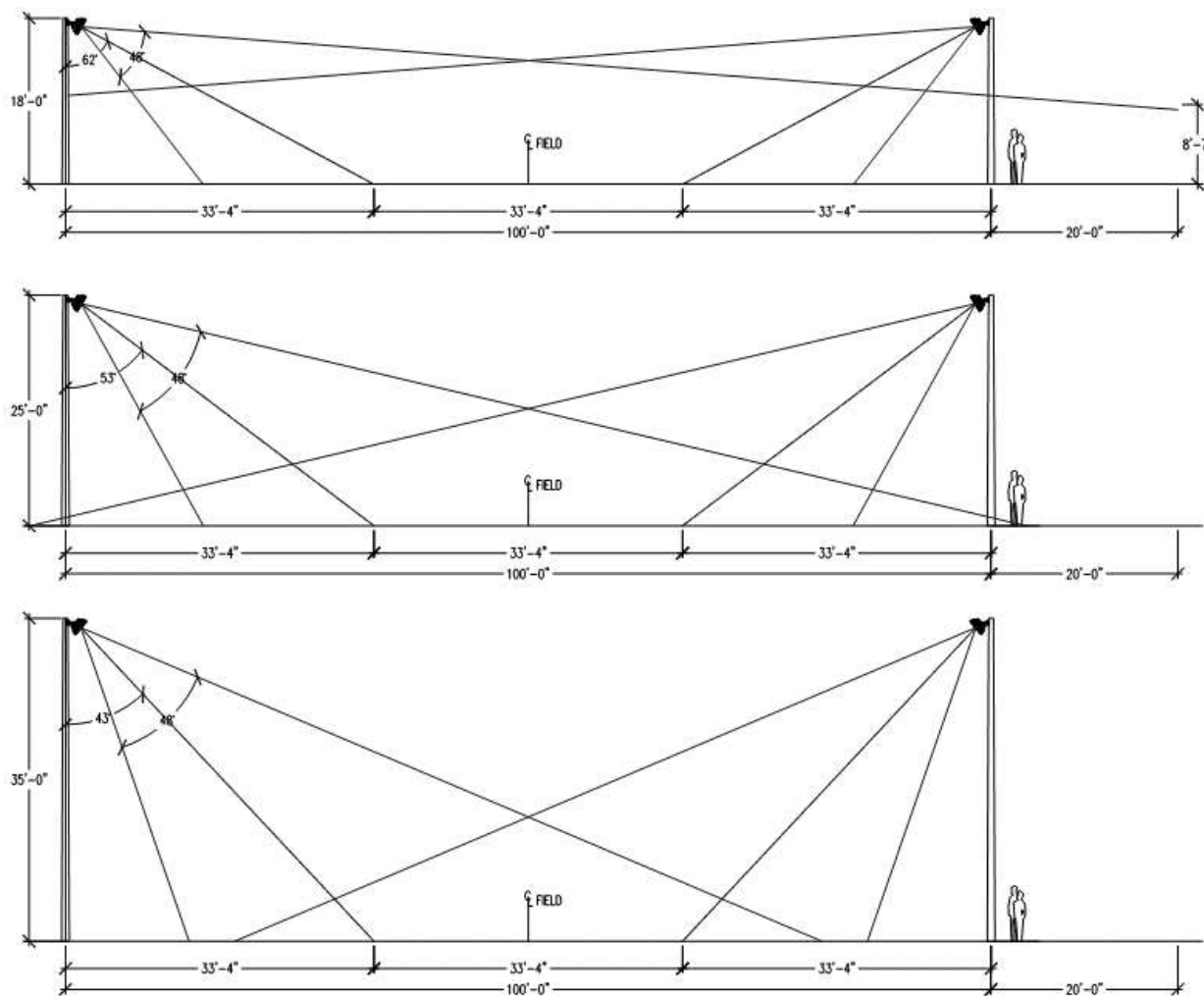
The noise study found that estimated noise levels from the playfield will be below the existing ambient noise levels in the area, during both daytime and evening hours and noise impacts associated with the field will be less than significant. Noise impacts associated with the field were determined by comparing the estimated maximum noise levels associated with the field operation at off-site sensitive receptors to existing measured ambient noise levels in the area. Current noise levels associated with the School were measured at the School's existing sport courts with the students playing over a period of 10 minutes. The measured sport courts noise levels were used as a reference source level for the noise model of the proposed field because similar activities will occur on both the existing sports courts and the proposed multi-purpose field. Estimated noise levels assumed 50 to 60 users of the new field at any one time.

Light

The light study assessed the potential impact of playfield lighting on surrounding residential and commercial areas. It compared three (3) pole heights: 18 feet, 25 feet, and 35 feet in order to determine light angles while minimizing potential impacts to neighboring properties. The study recommended a 35 foot high pole height in order to reduce light impacts onto adjacent properties and public right of ways. The study found that shorter light pole heights require greater illumination to ensure enough light spread over the field. The greater the aiming angle, the greater the increased probability of light trespass into adjacent properties. A lesser aiming angle for a greater pole height is required for the same amount of light spread over the field than for a shorter pole. A project condition will require that fixtures be selected that direct light as much as possible onto the field surface and side shields will be installed to minimize light trespass along the west and south property lines.

A diagram on page 6 of the Light Study (Attachment No. 10 - Noise and Light Studies) demonstrates how light

spread is affected by pole height and aiming angles. The diagram is illustrated below:



The nearest residential area (Schaefer Street) is approximately 540 feet from the field and field lighting is not expected to impact this neighborhood. Shielding and fixture heads directing light downwards will further reduce potential impacts. Evening events will most likely not go beyond 9:00 PM and dimming control will be required to conserve energy and provide flexible light levels based on the specific event taking place. An automatic 9 PM shut off time will be built into the lighting system.

Repurposing Existing Building at Willows VI

The proposed 2019 Master Plan Phase II will not result in new building square footage and only one existing building at Willows VI will require tenant improvements. The School will perform interior renovations to create classrooms, offices, and storage space. The existing exterior elevation finishes and color will not change except for new doors, windows, and canopies with similar design to surrounding Hayden Tract industrial buildings converted to creative office. Pages E-27 through E-30 of Attachment No. 4 illustrate existing and proposed changes to the building at Willows VI.

The building at Willows VI conforms to IG Zoning Code height and setback requirements; it is approximately 16 feet in height and setback five feet from the front property line. Setbacks are not required for the interior

side and rear property lines.

Traffic, Parking, and Circulation

Traffic

A traffic study prepared for the 2012 Master Plan analyzed potential traffic impacts resulting from a 150 student increase and campus expansion. It did not identify significant impacts and the proposed 2019 Phase II modification request does not propose student or campus expansions beyond the approved 2012 Master Plan. Overland Traffic Consultants prepared an updated traffic study for the proposed 2019 Phase II modification (Attachment No. 8) and determined there would be no significant impacts. The study recommends new traffic/circulation related conditions of approval to facilitate implementation of Phase II modifications including the 75 student increase; they are incorporated into the project conditions of approval and listed in Attachment No. 3.

Parking

The project complies with elementary school required parking: 1.5 spaces per classroom and 1 space per 200 square feet of indoor assembly area. Classrooms will increase by 6 with repurposing of Willows VI and indoor assembly area will not change. The School has two on-site parking areas - one facing Higuera Street and the other facing Warner Drive and leases additional parking spaces at the Samitaur surface parking lot (8511 Warner Drive). The School's current required parking is 82 spaces and with the proposed 2019 Phase II modification it will increase to 91 spaces. The School's on-site and off-site parking combined provides a total of 109 spaces, more than the current required 82 spaces and the Phase II required 91 spaces.

The School provides an alternate parking plan should the Samitaur off-site parking be eliminated. The School's alternate plan is an automated parking stacker at the School's on-site Warner Lot. The alternate parking will result in 91 spaces, complying with the 91 required spaces. A project condition will require the automated stacked parking be installed should the off-site Samitaur spaces be eliminated. The School is in the Hayden Tract Parking District which allows administrative approval of automated stacked parking. Attachment No. 3 summarizes project required and provided parking.

Circulation

The current drop off and pick up plan off of Higuera Street will remain with the proposed 2019 Phase II modifications except for the prohibition on left turn movements exiting the parking lot as recommended in the updates traffic analysis. A "look back" condition will require the School to implement measures should queuing onto Higuera Street occur with the additional 75 students in Phase II and 25 students in Phase III. In the event this should occur, City staff will work with the School to revise the drop off and pick up plan.

Economic Study.

On September 24, 2012 the City amended the Zoning Code to allow modifications or expansions of private schools with preexisting CUPs, provided the School is granted a CUP modification by the Planning Commission.

In order to compensate for the reduction in taxable property created by existing private school uses in the IG Zone that want to modify or expand, the City amended the Zoning Code in September 2012 to require the preparation of an economic study in addition to providing other application submittal documents and plans. The Zoning Code amendment allows private school expansions with a Public Benefit Contribution in an amount commensurate with the taxes generated for plausible continued commercial uses of the site based upon the findings of the economic study.

The 2012 Master Plan included an economic study and project conditions required an annual Public Benefit Contribution payment and an in-lieu payment of tax revenue. The City requested a supplemental economic study to determine if the proposed 2019 Phase II modifications including the timing of the Willows VI and VII purchases, would alter the fiscal opportunity cost calculations prepared for the 2012 Master Plan.

HR&A prepared the updated October 2018 study (Attachment No. 11) and determined that the proposed 2019 Phase II modification will not result in any change in fiscal opportunity cost to the City. Willows currently owns Willows V through VII, which figured in the Public Benefit Contribution payment conditions in the 2012 Master Plan. A summary of the contributions are included on page 7 of the updated study (table excerpt below). Contributions for each parcel did not begin until the previous commercial uses on the parcels converted to school uses. In 2018 the school contributed \$61,000 for Willows V; 21,413 for Willows VI; and \$22,956 for Willows VII. Existing monetary contribution requirements are incorporated into Draft Resolution No. 2019-P005 (Attachment No. 1) and annual payments will continue.

Actual Public Benefit Contribution Payments (2012-2018)			
	Willows V ¹	Willows VI ²	Willows VII ³
2012	\$61,000	N/A	N/A
2013	\$61,000	\$21,413	N/A
2014	\$61,000	\$21,413	N/A
2015	\$61,000	\$21,413	N/A
2016	\$61,000	\$21,413	N/A
2017	\$61,000	\$21,413	N/A
2018 ⁴	\$61,000	\$21,413	\$22,956
Total (2012-2018)	\$427,700	\$128,478	\$22,956

¹ Per Willows. Actual amount paid to City annually beginning in 2012.

² Per Willows. Actual amount paid to City annually beginning in 2013.

³ Per Willows; Conditional Use Permit Modification P-2011156, Condition Nos. 66.C., and 66.F. Willows paid property tax in 2017 to the County. Amount reflects portion received by City.

⁴ For Willows VII: Equal to the full Public Benefit Contribution payment (\$22,956) to be paid on 11/8/2018. Willows will also continue to pay property tax on Willows VII in 2018, because it has not yet received a welfare exemption for non-profit school use. The City received approximately \$8,721 in property taxes for Willows VII in 2017 and will receive approximately \$8,391 in 2018.

Sources: Willows; HR&A

Revised Master Plan

The Revised Master Plan Development Plans, Attachment No. 4, and Revised Master Plan Text, Attachment No. 5, reflect the changes to Phase II. The Revised Master Plan is intended to supersede the 2012 Master Plan.

Phase III

Phase III is unchanged from the 2012 Master Plan (Page E-6 of Attachment No. 4). However a condition of

approval will be added that requires the School to submit a conformance review of their proposed Phase III implementation plan prior to completing project construction. Based on analysis of the conformance review the City may require another CUP Modification for Phase III if the implementation plan is not in substantial agreement with the 2012 Phase III.

Conditions of Approval

Resolution No. 2019-P005 and Exhibit A “Conditions of Approval” (Attachment No. 1) includes all conditions of approval from the 2012 approval, incorporating revisions and new conditions as necessary for the Phase II modification. Resolution No. 2019-P005 supersedes the 2012 resolution.

Public Outreach

As part of the project review process, a community meeting was held on Thursday, June 21, 2018, at 6:30 pm, at the Willows Community School. No one attended the Community Meeting and there are no meeting notes.

Comments Received During Public Comment Period

No comments were received during the public comment period.

CONCLUSION

The proposed 2019 Master Plan Phase II is consistent the 2012 Master Plan Phase II student and campus expansion thresholds. The Phase II modifications result in less new building square footage than the 2012 Master Plan and updated Conditions of Approval reflect the proposed 2019 modifications and Staff recommends approval of the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act guidelines, the Culver City City Council on September 10, 2012, adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) determining the project will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Conditional Use Permit Modification, P2018-0249-CUP/MOD is within the scope of the adopted MND and the circumstances under which the MND was prepared have not significantly changed and no new significant information has been found that would impact the MND, and therefore no new environmental analysis is required.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The following alternative actions may be considered by the Planning Commission:

1. Approve the proposed Project with the recommended conditions of approval if the application is deemed to meet the required findings.
2. Approve the proposed Project with additional and/or different conditions of approval if deemed necessary to meet the required findings and mitigate any new Project impacts identified at the meeting.
3. Disapprove the proposed Project if the application does not meet the required findings.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2019-P005 and Exhibit A "Conditions of Approval"
2. Vicinity Map
3. Existing Conditions/Surrounding Area/Additional Traffic Conditions
4. Revised Master Plan Development Plans dated March 19, 2019
5. Revised Master Plan Text in Strike Out Underline and without Strike Out Underline
6. May 24, 2012 Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration
7. August 8, 2012, Planning Commission Approved Resolution
8. Overland Traffic Consultants October 2018 Traffic Impact Analysis
9. The Willows Community School Operations Plan and Student Drop Off/Pick Up
10. Noise and Light Studies
11. Economic Study - Prepared by HR&A and dated October 17, 2018

MOTION

That the Planning Commission:

Approve Conditional Use Permit Modification, P2018-0249-CUP/MOD, subject to the Conditions of Approval as stated in Resolution No. 2019-P005.