

**STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION
for
ZONING ATLAS AMENDMENT

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL #11
CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO CITY SCHOOLS**

**Chapel Hill Township
PIN 9788-18-1797**

April 15, 2009

GENERAL

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools requests a zoning change for the subject property to allow re-development of the property for a new elementary school. The property consists of 7.89 acres situated between Caldwell Street and McMasters Street, in the north-central portion of the Northside neighborhood. The Applicant requests that the property's zoning be changed from the current R-3 (CD-1) designation to OI-3 (CD-1).

The subject property currently has a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the existing public use. Concurrent with this request for zoning atlas amendment, the Applicant will also request modification of the property's SUP, specifically for the elementary school use. While no conditional use zoning district is available for the requested OI-3 designation, the property will still be regulated under a SUP in substantially the same way that would occur under a conditional zoning district.

JUSTIFICATION

The Applicant believes that the requested zoning atlas amendment is justified (a) because of changing conditions in the Northside neighborhood, and (b) because the resulting development will achieve the purposes of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

CHANGED CONDITIONS

Numerous concerns have been raised about recent changes in the Northside community. Some of these concerns, such as the conversion of single family homes to rental units and the resulting loss of traditional neighborhood character, have been documented in the Comprehensive Plan and the Northside Neighborhood Conservation Plan. As residential properties in the neighborhood have begun to be more highly valued as rental property than as owner-occupied residences or family homes, a more transient neighborhood demographic has evolved. This transition has resulted in a noticeable loss of neighborhood cohesion and identity, and has begun to diminish Northside's traditional family-oriented

character. These changes run contrary to the Town's intentions to protect and preserve the historic character of the Northside neighborhood.

The location of a new elementary school in the heart of this community will strengthen the traditional neighborhood character in several important ways. By providing a neighborhood source of high-quality elementary education, the proposed school will increase the potential for local residential properties to be desired for family-oriented purposes. Also, by providing a strong physical presence in the neighborhood, serving as a location for community meetings and activities, and providing a source of shared community experiences, the school will be a durable foundational asset to the neighborhood. In these ways, the proposed elementary school will be a positive force against some of the demographic changes that threaten Northside's historic qualities, and will help protect and preserve the community's family-oriented character.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The requested rezoning is necessary for the proposed land use, which will be consistent with several goals and purposes of the Town's adopted Comprehensive Plan (CP). Some of the relevant CP themes supported by the proposed development are:

- ***Conserve and protect existing neighborhoods:*** The new elementary school will provide a protective effect within the Northside neighborhood, by increasing the attractiveness of the neighborhood for families and owner-occupants, and encouraging longer-term residents to occupy the neighborhood residences, naturally leading to a neighborhood population that is more stable and invested. The new elementary school will thus be a stabilizing force that will have a protective effect on the social fabric of the Northside neighborhood. These benefits are discussed more fully below.
- ***Encourage desirable forms of non-residential development:*** The proposed elementary school will not generate local tax revenue directly, but neither does the current governmental land use on the property. The new school will be a beneficial non-residential development with desirable attributes and positive community impact. It will serve vital public educational purposes, express leadership in sustainability and environmental responsibility, and provide a valuable neighborhood venue for secondary activities that will contribute to neighborhood identity and quality.
- ***Provide quality community facilities and services:*** Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools is recognized as a quality provider of educational services to the local community, and as a leader in the construction of high-quality educational facilities. The new school facility will continue the CHCCS record of providing a high level of service to the local community, within a facility that will be recognized for leadership in sustainability.

Chapter 3 of the CP addresses “Community Character” with a stated objective of “protecting the social fabric of neighborhoods”, specifically listing Northside as one of the targeted areas. This chapter states that strategies should be implemented to make the neighborhood “attractive for a spectrum of longer-term residents”, and to “address the effects” of conversions from owner-occupied residences to rental properties. As previously described, the proposed elementary school will increase the attractiveness of the neighborhood for families and owner-occupants, encouraging longer-term residents to occupy the neighborhood residences, naturally leading to a neighborhood population that is more stable and invested. The new elementary school will thus be a stabilizing force that will have a positive and protective effect on the social fabric of the Northside neighborhood.

In accordance with the neighborhood preservation objectives of the CP, the Northside NCD Plan was adopted by Town Council. The Vision Statement contained in this Plan outlines several objectives to be accomplished by development in the neighborhood. Some of the objectives relevant to the proposed project are:

- **Preserve the history, charm and composition of a proud and historic community:** The proposed school will reinstate the historic educational usage of the property and will support the historic family-oriented composition of the neighborhood.
- **Protect the family atmosphere:** The new elementary school will serve neighborhood families in several important ways. It will provide a neighborhood source of high-quality elementary education, provide expanded education-related services such as after-school programs, serve as a venue for community meetings and activities, and be a source of shared community experiences for neighborhood children and parents.
- **Nuture an environment that promotes community interaction:** Pre-design meetings have been held with project stakeholders, which have included neighborhood representatives. Input and design guidance taken from neighborhood citizens have strongly influenced site and building design for the new school. This collaboration with the neighborhood will continue through the final design phase, giving voice and investment to neighborhood residents, and promoting an interactive community spirit in the design process.

Lastly, Chapter 11 of the CP addresses “Community Facilities”, with one of the initiatives being to “support Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools in providing quality public education”. Rezoning the subject property as requested will be consistent with the CP by creating the zoning condition necessary to support the development of a high quality elementary school facility in the Northside neighborhood.

SUMMARY

The requested zoning amendment will allow Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools to construct a new elementary school on the subject property. The rezoning is justified because development of the new school will respond positively to recent changes in neighborhood characteristics, and be consistent with the purposes of the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

