



Department of Planning and Economic Development

Staff Report to the Planning Commission

February 12, 2016

Goddard School

REQUEST	Site Plan Approval
APPLICANT	Swapna Chada 2685 Hickory Grove Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302
AGENT	Sandeep Chada
LOCATION	South side of Auburn, west of John R
FILE NO.	15-018
PARCEL NO.	15-35-226-001
ZONING	B-2, General Business with an FB-2, Flexible Business Overlay
STAFF	Sara Roediger, AICP, Manager of Planning

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Summary

The applicants are proposing to construct a new 10,992 square-foot, two-story school/day care with associated site improvements for approximately 140 students. The site measures 0.95 acres and is located on the southeast corner of Auburn and Graham Drive (west of John R). The site will be accessed from Graham Dr. A sidewalk to the site has been provided which will connect to the existing sidewalk/pathway on both Auburn and Graham Dr. In accordance with FB regulations, an outdoor amenity space has been provided at the northwest corner of the site. Storm water will be directed into an underground detention basin in the parking lot and routed to the existing storm sewer in the Graham Rd. right-of-way. The site is zoned with an FB-2 Flexible Business Overlay, under which the site will be developed using the requirements of *Section 138-4.422* of the Zoning Ordinance.

Adjacent Land Uses and Zoning

Childcare and learning centers are permitted in the FB-2 District. The site currently has a vacant, single-family home. To the north across Auburn is the Salvation Army Thrift Store, zoned B-3; to the south are the Country Club Village site condos, zoned R-3; to the east it is zoned B-2 with an FB-2 Overlay and developed with a home; and to the west, it is zoned R-3 and developed with a church.

It was discovered that the site was on the City's Potential Historic District list, meaning that no activity could be conducted on the site without further study or unless City Council delisted the property from the Potential list. The applicant went before the City Council on January 11, 2016, and Council unanimously removed the parcel from the list.

Site Plan Review Considerations

Please refer to the Planning Dept. memo dated February 3, 2016 for the requirements of *Section 138-4.422* for childcare learning centers and how the project complies. Some other site considerations:

1. **FB Dimension, Street Design and Building Standards.** The Flexible Business Overlay Districts designed to foster vital, lively, and sustainable development that creates an imageable neighborhood identity. The overlay has very detailed design regulations, of which the proposed project meets the vast majority of them, however as proposed, they are asking the Planning Commission to modify, in accordance with *Section 138-8.604* the following regulations:
 - a. Front yard setback along the Graham from 20 ft. to 78 ft.
 - b. Minimum building frontage build to area (*the width of the front façade of the building that is located in the area between the minimum and maximum setback requirements divided by the lot width at the minimum setback line*) as depicted on plans
 - c. Minimum façade transparency is slightly less than required, as depicted on the elevations.
2. **Parking.** The minimum parking requirement for a child care center of this size (140 students and 22 employees) is 36 spaces plus five stacking and two handicap spaces. The applicant meets the parking and barrier free space requirements but not the stacking requirement. The applicant has indicated that the school does not permit car drop-offs and that the type of parking proposed is appropriate. The Planning Commission may modify parking requirements based on evidence submitted by the applicant that another standard would be more reasonable.
3. **Landscaping/Tree Removal.** The Tree Conservation Ordinance does not apply to the site since the land was platted in 1940. Please refer to the Planning memo dated February 3, 2016 for the landscaping requirements for the FB district and what is proposed. The landscaping is deficient in deciduous and ornamental trees as outlined in the memo; however, it is not possible to plant due to restrictions of the site, therefore a payment into the Tree Fund will be provided. The plans are deficient in evergreens and shrubs for the required D Buffer on-site, but the applicant has indicated that the 9 mature evergreens just south of this site will be preserved in a landscape easement, which must be provided. The applicant will be required to post a landscape and irrigation bond in the amount of \$35,495 and pay \$3,000 into the City's Tree Fund for deficient tree plantings.
4. **Building Design.** The proposed building will consist of mainly red brick veneer with fiber cement wall panels and aluminum framing accents and will have a steel canopy and columns. It has been designed to meet the City's Architectural Standards. Please refer to the attached colored elevations.

Site Plan Summary

As part of the technical review for this project, the plans and supplemental documentation have been reviewed by all applicable city departments and consultants. Based on the review comments included in this report or contained within the enclosed information, and if the Planning Commission agrees the new school will be harmonious and compatible in appearance with the existing development, staff recommends approval of the following motions relative to City File No. 15-018 (Goddard School).

Site Plan Approval Motion

MOTION by _____, seconded by _____, in the matter of City File No. 15-018 (Goddard School), the Planning Commission **approves** the **Site Plan**, based on plans dated received by the Planning Department on January 20, 2016, with the following findings and subject to the following conditions.

Findings

1. The site plan and supporting documents demonstrate that all applicable requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, as well as other City Ordinances, standards, and requirements, can be met subject to the conditions noted below.
2. The proposed project will be accessed from Graham, thereby promoting safety and convenience of vehicular traffic both within the site and on adjoining streets. Walkways have been incorporated to promote safety and convenience of pedestrian traffic.
3. Off-street parking areas have been designed to avoid common traffic problems and promote safety.
4. The proposed improvements should have a satisfactory and harmonious relationship with the development on-site as well as existing development in the adjacent vicinity.
5. The proposed development will not have an unreasonably detrimental or injurious effect upon the natural characteristics and features of the site or those of the surrounding area.
6. The Planning Commission has determined that proposed plan meets the required criteria for a modification to the FB district requirements and therefore approves the requested modifications from the FB dimension and design standards for front yard setback, building frontage area build to area, and minimum façade transparency as described in this report to allow for a better development on the site.
7. Based on evidence submitted by the applicant, the requested reduction from 5 to 0 stacking spaces is justified due to the nature of the school's operations. Should the uses change or expand, this modification may be reconsidered.

Conditions

1. Provide a landscape bond for replacement trees in the amount of \$35,495 plus inspection fees, as adjusted as necessary by staff, prior to issuance of a Land Improvement Permit for this development.
2. Address all applicable comments from other City departments and outside agency review letters, prior to final approval by staff.

Reference: Plans dated received by the Planning Department January 20, 2016 (*Site Plan, Sheet C1.1, prepared by Apex Engineering Group, Inc.; Topographic/Tree Survey, Sheet 1 of 1; ALTA/ACSM Land Title Survey, Sheet 1 of 2 and 2 of 2, prepared by Diffin-Umlor & Associates; Main Level Floor Plan, Sheet A2.0; Upper Level floor Plan, Sheet A2.1; Lower Level Floor Plan, Sheet A2.2; Exterior Elevations, Sheet A3.0; Exterior Elevations, Sheet A3.1; Play Structure Elevations & Fence Details, Sheet A3.2; Photometric Plan, Sheet PH1.0; Photometric Cut Sheets, Sheet PH1.1, prepared by BmK Design + Planning, LLC; Landscape Plan, Sheet LA-1.0; Specifications & Details, Sheet LA-2.0, prepared by Design Team Plus; Irrigation Design, Sheet IR-1, prepared by SiteOne Project Services; and Colored Elevations, prepared by BmK Design.*)

Attachments: Assessing Department memo dated 11/17/15; Building Department memo dated 2/2/16; Fire Department memo dated 2/9/16; Parks and Forestry memo dated 2/1/16; DPS/Engineering memo dated 2/10/16; Planning Memo dated 2/3/16; WRC Letter dated 11/30/15; EIS dated 10/29/15.

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