

Attachment No. PC 2

Applicant's Project Description

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November 21, 2022

Mr. Jim Campbell
Deputy Community Development Director
City of Newport Beach
100 Civic Center Drive
Newport Beach, CA 92660

Subject: Site Development Review and Use Permit Amendment Request for Sage Hill
School Located at 20402 Newport Coast Drive

Dear Mr. Campbell:

On behalf of Sage Hill School (Sage Hill), CAA Planning, Inc. (CAA) submits this application for a Site Development Review and Conditional Use Permit for the addition of a new middle school and gymnasium building to the existing Sage Hill School. The Site Development Review is required for non-residential construction over 20,000 square feet and a new Use Permit is required to increase the maximum allowable development from 141,900 square feet to 160,392 square feet, and to increase the maximum student enrollment from 600 to 750 students.

Existing Condition

Sage Hill School is located on an approximately 28 acre property in Newport Coast (formerly unincorporated Orange County), east of Newport Coast Drive and south of the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor. The project site is located east of the Newport Coast and Newport Ridge Planned Communities and the closed Coyote Canyon Landfill is located adjacent to the south and west of the site. The school was originally approved under Use Permit PA97-0173 issued by the County of Orange. The original approval contemplated a 600 student private high school with 141,900 square feet of floor area. The school site's General Plan and Zoning designations are Private Institution (PI), consistent with the operation of a Private School.

The school opened in 2000 with approximately 120 9th grade students and four buildings, and today, the school has approximately 550 students enrolled in grades 9 through 12. The school's approved master plan has been implemented over time and the campus is now developed with approximately 120,300 square feet of floor area including classrooms, administration, a library, a state-of-the-art science center, a dance and theatre studio, and athletic facilities including sports fields, tennis courts and an aquatics center. There is 21,600 square feet of unbuilt intensity based on the original approval.

Project Description

The project proposes to expand the existing facilities with a new 38,658-square-foot building. The building will contain eight new classrooms for a 7th and 8th grade middle school, associated



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support facilities, and a new gymnasium for all school use. The new middle school facilities at Sage Hill will serve an additional 150 students bringing the total enrollment to 750 students.

The new building will be three levels and will follow the grade of the existing terrain, which slopes approximately 35 feet from east to west. The gymnasium will be approximately 38 feet high, with the third-floor classrooms extending to approximately 55 feet 4 inches. At the entry to the building on the east side, the building will appear to be a single-level structure in-line with the height of the existing science building.

The expansion area will occur on the northern portion of the existing school campus between the existing science building and the baseball field. The project will replace a grassy practice field with a smaller footprint field with artificial turf. The project will add artificial turf and night lighting on the existing baseball field.

The $\pm 22,878$ -square-foot first floor will include a gymnasium, bleachers, and associated support facilities including offices, restrooms, team rooms, a training room, and storage. The gymnasium will be configured to allow for multiple sports courts in an east/west orientation, or for use as a single exhibition court in a north/south orientation. The bleachers will provide up to 824 seats, with the option for portable bleachers to further increase bleacher seating. The first floor will provide access to the reconfigured practice field located to the south of the building.

The $\pm 8,100$ -square-foot second floor will include four middle school classrooms, office space, and storage space, and a 515-square-foot café. The café is intended to serve middle school students. The second-floor classrooms will open to an outdoor learning area on the east that includes a flat patio and terraced spaces. This unique outdoor learning space will serve as a gathering space for the entire middle school. The second floor will provide access to the top of the gymnasium bleachers via an internal concourse between the gym and the classrooms. An outdoor patio will be located immediately adjacent to the café along the southern side of the building. The $\pm 6,543$ -square-foot third floor will include four middle school classrooms, a restroom, and office space. An interior corridor will provide flexible break out space for the third-floor classrooms.

From the east, the building will be accessed via a paved pathway north of the science building. The pathway will lead to a pedestrian access bridge at the northeast and southeast corners of the building, which will provide access to the third level of the building. A large “social stair” will provide access to the second level of the building on the south side, with a smaller staircase providing access to the ground level. At the northeast side of the building, a staircase will provide access to the second level. An elevator located inside the building at the southeast corner across the pedestrian bridge will provide access to all three levels of the building.



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In addition to the new building which will house the middle school and gymnasium, as described above, the project proposes the modernization of existing baseball fields. The existing natural turf on the baseball fields would be replaced with artificial turf and a new practice area would be created adjacent to the gymnasium. New sports lighting would be installed on the baseball fields and practice area.

A Plan Set prepared LPA Design Studios. Sheet G0.01 provides the sheet index and general project information, Sheet G0.02 provides a composite key plan, Sheet G0.03 provides a plan for fire access travel, Sheet G0.04 provides the proposed path of travel, and Sheets G0.05 and G0.06 provide enlargements of the proposed site plan. Civil Sheets C1.01 through C4.02 provide existing conditions, preliminary storm drain and stormwater quality plans, preliminary utility plans, and preliminary grading plans. Landscape Sheets L0.01 through L7.02 provide landscape notes and schedules, materials, and planting plans. Architectural Sheets A2.01 through A3.04 provide floor and roof plans, exterior elevations, and site sections. Lighting Sheets ST1.01 and LT1.02 provide photometric studies. The plan set is attached.

A preliminary water quality management plan has been developed for the project and is attached for City review. Additional technical information will be submitted in the coming weeks, including a Biological Assessment, Acoustical Analysis, and a Queuing Analysis. We understand that the City may require a traffic study consistent with the City's Traffic Phasing Ordinance.

Site Development Review

Pursuant to 20.52.08 F., the review authority may approve or conditionally approve a Site Development Review application after first finding all of the following:

1. *Allowed within the subject zoning district.*

The site is designated as Private Institutional (PI) in the City's General Plan and Zoning Code. This designation allows for operation of a private school consistent with a use permit. The County of Orange approved Use Permit PA97-0173 in 1998 and the existing development is consistent with the approved Use Permit. An amendment to the Use Permit is requested, as further detailed below, to allow for an increase in square footage and an increase in the student enrollment.

2. *In compliance with all of the following applicable criteria:*

- a. *Compliance with this section, the General Plan, this Zoning Code, any applicable specific plan and other applicable criteria and policies related to the use or structure.*

The proposed project complies with the uses permitted in the PI General Plan and Zoning Code designations. Building size, height and required parking are in compliance with City regulations. The building height is approximately 55 feet 4 inches at the tallest point, where 65 feet is allowed. Additionally, the General Plan allows a 0.5 FAR and the proposed FAR is 0.18. The PI designation



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requires a use permit for school use. The use permit establishes the parking rate and the student enrollment.

- b. The efficient arrangement of structures on the site and the harmonious relationship of the structures to one another and to other adjacent developments, and whether the relationship is based on standards of good design.*

The proposed middle school and gymnasium building will be located on the northern portion of the existing school campus between the existing science building and the baseball field. The building will be three levels and will follow the grade of the existing terrain, which slopes approximately 35 feet from east to west. The gymnasium will be approximately 38 feet high, with the third-floor classrooms extending to approximately 55 feet 4 inches. At the entry to the building on the east side, the building will appear to be a single-level structure in-line with the height of the existing science building. The building has been designed considering the existing topography and the building heights of the existing structures on the school site.

- c. The compatibility in terms of bulk, scale, and aesthetic treatment of structures on the site and adjacent developments and public areas.*

The building square footage is well within the maximum 0.5 FAR permitted by the General Plan. The project site is 28.4 acres and the proposed FAR is 0.18. The architecture of the existing school site will be maintained in the new middle school and gymnasium building, as shown on the attached architectural plans. The top of the proposed building will be the same height of the existing science center located northeast of the proposed building to ensure the scale of the buildings is appropriate. The adjacent area consists of open space and the SR-73 Toll Road. There are no public areas in direct proximity to the school site.

- d. The adequacy, efficiency and safety of pedestrian and vehicular access, including drive aisles, driveways and parking and loading spaces.*

The site is currently developed with an existing private high school. The site is served by a long driveway leading into an ample parking area. The extended driveway ensures that school traffic does not queue onto the public street. The required parking is 238 parking stalls; the project provides 466 parking stalls. No changes are proposed to the existing on-site circulation system. Additional fire access lanes will be provided to ensure adequate emergency access to the new building.

- e. The adequacy and efficiency of landscaping and open space areas and the use of water efficient plant and irrigation materials.*

The landscaped area on the site will be approximately 18% of the total site area. Landscaping will be limited to water efficient plants in compliance with the City's water efficient landscaping



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ordinance. The project will replace a grassy practice field with a smaller footprint field with artificial turf. Additionally, the project will reduce landscape water useage by converting the existing baseball field to articial turf.

f. The protection of significant views from public right(s)-of-way and compliance with Section 20.30.100 (Public View Protection).

The project site is located between Newport Coast Drive and SR-73. Newport Coast Drive is located at a substantially lower elevation compared to the school site and intervening open space reduces the visibility of the school site from the public right of way. No significant views from public rights-of-way will be impacted by project development.

3. Not detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City, or endanger, jeopardize or otherwise constitute a hazard to the public convenience, health, interest, safety or general welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood of the proposed development.

The project site is currently developed with a private high school within a PI zone. There is no development located in immediate proximity to the site. The project will not be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City as the site has been designated for such uses in the General Plan and Zoning Code and has operated as such for more than 20 years. The project will not constitute a hazard to the public convenience, health, interest, safety or general welfare of persons residing or working in the neighborhood of the proposed development as the project will be consistent with all regulations and policies applicable to the site and will not introduce a hazardous use or result in a safety concern on the site.

Use Permit Amendment

As indicated above, the school was approved by the County of Orange prior to annexation into the City of Newport Beach. The County approved UP PA97-0173 in 1998. UP PA97-0173 contemplated the phased implementation of school facilities overtime. The County approval allowed for 141,900 square feet. The table below details the existing development, remaining intensity, and proposed increase in square footage.

	Existing Square Footage	Proposed Square Footage
Use Permit PA97-0173	141,900	--
Existing Facilities	120,300	--
Remaining Square Footage	21,600	--
Proposed Project	--	38,658
Requested Increase	--	18,482
Total	--	160,382



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An amendment to the Use Permit is requested in order to increase the allowable intensity by 18,482 square feet, to 160,382 square feet. With the proposed project, the FAR for the site would be increased to 0.18, which is well below the 0.5 FAR established for the site. An amendment to the use permit is also requested to increase the student enrollment from 600 students to 750 students.

Use permit findings will be submitted under separate cover.

California Environmental Quality Act

The proposed development is exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1) for existing facilities and Section 15314 (Class 14) Minor Additions to Schools.

Class 1 exempts the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures. The proposed project contemplates the addition of a new middle school building and gymnasium on an existing private school campus.

Class 14 exempts minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase the original student capacity by more than 25% or ten classrooms. A Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared for construction of the school. The MND analyzed a student population of 600 students. The proposed middle school addition would increase the student population by 150 students, which meets the 25% threshold established by the Class 14 exemption. The proposed middle school addition would not increase the number of buildings on campus beyond the previously analyzed 7 buildings but does increase the classroom count by eight classrooms, which is within the 10 classroom threshold established by the Class 14 exemption.

Conclusion

We appreciate your consideration of this exciting project. The proposed middle school and new gymnasium facilities will allow Sage Hill to not only continue fulfilling their mission to “*inspire in our students a love of knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge creatively, compassionately and courageously throughout their lives*” but also build on it by providing excellence in education to 7th and 8th grade students. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,
CAA PLANNING, INC.

Shawna Schaffner
Chief Executive Officer



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Attachments: SDR Plan Set prepared by LPA
Preliminary Water Quality Management Plan

cc: Patricia Merz, Head of School

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