

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development - Planning Division
Conditional Use Permit
BZZ-5683

Date: August 27, 2012

Applicant: Lake Country School

Address of Property: 3733-3749 Pleasant Avenue South

Project Name: Lake Country School-Landscape Renovation

Contact Person and Phone: Paulette Zoe, (612) 827-3707

Planning Staff and Phone: Aaron Hanauer, (612) 673-2494

Date Application Deemed Complete: August 1, 2012

End of 60 Day Decision Period: October 1, 2012

Ward: 8 **Neighborhood Organization:** King Field

Existing Zoning: R1A, Single Family Residential

Zoning Plate Number: 25

Legal Description: Not applicable for this application

Proposed Use: Garden/outdoor classroom

Concurrent Review:

Amended Conditional Use Permit: To allow the expansion of school use in the R1A district.

Applicable zoning code provisions: Chapter 525, Article VII, Conditional Use Permits; Chapter 546, Residence Districts.

Background: Lake Country School, a Montessori learning environment for pre-K through 9th grade students, is located on three parcels in South Minneapolis: 3733 Pleasant Avenue, 3749 Pleasant Avenue, and 3752 Pleasant Avenue South. The subject parcels and a majority of the surrounding area is zoned R1A. The future land use of the parcels is to remain an urban neighborhood.

Lake Country School has been at this location since 1980. Prior to this, 3749 Pleasant Avenue South was the location of the Institute of the Incarnation Catholic School. The school building was constructed in 1910 and received additions in 1925, 1929, and 1988. The 1988 addition is the three-story brick and concrete block gymnasium addition on the north elevation.

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Until June 2011, a single-family house with a detached garage was located on the parcel at 3733 Pleasant Avenue South. The school tore down the house, but left the garage. Since the removal of the house, the space has been used as an outdoor area for students to study, read, and enjoy the outdoors in a garden setting (a separate play area is located at 3752 Pleasant Avenue South). The garage has been used as a place to store equipment to maintain the garden.

The Applicant is proposing a landscaping project to enhance the garden area on the 3733 Pleasant Avenue parcel and to continue the same programming: a place for reading, studying, and lessons on sustainability. “As a Montessori school, much of the students’ work is self-directed and the garden provides a quiet outdoor space to pursue their studies.” The project includes constructing gravel paths, a spiral labyrinth, and flower beds with Minnesota native flora for teaching lessons on sustainability. Picnic tables are proposed to be replaced by seating stones in order to “create a more natural environment.” The stones will sit 18 inches above grade and range between 12 and 36 inches in width. A covered porch area of 377 square feet is proposed to be attached to the existing garage to allow users to enjoy the space on rainy days and to provide additional shade on hot, sunny days.

Lake Country School has discussed the project with the neighborhood and has made it clear it will not be used as a playground area or recess space, nor is it to be regularly programmed for classroom activities. The school has also welcomed the neighborhood to use the garden space.

A six-foot wooden privacy fence runs along the property line between 3727 Pleasant Avenue and the garden site at 3733 Pleasant Avenue South; this fence is proposed to remain in place as part of the new project.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT - to allow the expansion of the elementary school with an outdoor space

Findings as Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code:

The Community Planning and Economic Development Department – Planning Division has analyzed the application and from the findings below concludes that the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the proposed conditional use:

- 1. Will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, comfort or general welfare.**

The proposed garden/outdoor classroom redesign will not be detrimental or endanger the public health, safety, comfort or general welfare of the surrounding area. The school currently has a playground area where students are able to run and play. The proposed garden/outdoor classroom project will provide a quiet study area and an area where students can learn lessons in sustainability.

As part of this proposal the Applicant is proposing a 377-square foot ground-level deck that would be located 3 feet from the side property line. CPED recommends that the ground level deck meet the R1A

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Zoning District five-foot side yard setback. If the setback is not adhered to a setback variance would need to be obtained.

2. Will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the vicinity and will not impede the normal or orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.

The proposed garden/outdoor classroom redesign will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the vicinity nor impede the development and improvement of surrounding property. The proposed use is not intended for a children’s play area in which there is a greater likelihood of higher noise levels. The proposed use is intended to provide a study area for students and allow the school to teach lessons in sustainability. The garden/outdoor classroom area will also provide the neighborhood with an additional green space. In addition, the proposed garden/outdoor classroom will be separated from the residence at 3727 Pleasant Avenue South by an existing six-foot high privacy fence.

3. Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, necessary facilities or other measures, have been or will be provided.

Adequate utilities, access roads, and drainage facilities exist.

4. Adequate measures have been or will be provided to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.

No additional traffic congestion is anticipated with the proposed garden. The purpose of the garden/outdoor classroom is to serve the Lake Country School student body and to be an amenity for the neighborhood to enjoy.

5. Is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan.

The proposed use would be consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan, *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. The future land use map of the Comprehensive Plan designates this site as urban neighborhood¹. According to the principles and polices outlined in the plan, the following apply to this proposal:

Land Use Policy 1.2: Ensure appropriate transitions between uses with different size, scale, and intensity.

1.2.1 Promote quality design in new development, as well as building orientation, scale, massing, buffering, and setbacks that are appropriate with the context of the surrounding area.

¹ Urban Neighborhood (UN)— Predominantly residential area with a range of densities, with highest densities generally to be concentrated around identified nodes and corridors. May include undesignated nodes and some other small-scale uses, including neighborhood-serving commercial and institutional and semi-public uses (for example, schools, community centers, religious institutions, public safety facilities, etc.) scattered throughout. More intensive non-residential uses may be located in neighborhoods closer to Downtown and around Growth Centers. Not generally intended to accommodate significant new growth, other than replacement of existing buildings with those of similar density.

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Environment Policy 6.14: Preserve and enhance the quality of the urban environment to promote sustainable lifestyles for its citizens.

6.14.1 Promote environmental stewardship and awareness through education and outreach.

Open Space and Parks Policy 7.1: Promote the physical and mental health of residents and visitors by recognizing that safe outdoor amenities and spaces support exercise, play, relaxation and socializing.

7.1.1 Ensure that adjacent land uses contribute to the safety and ambiance of parks and open spaces.

7.1.4 Ensure open spaces provide peaceful, meditative, and relaxing areas as well as social, recreational, and exercise opportunities.

7.1.5 Provide equipment, programming, and other resources when possible that promote the physical and mental health of citizens.

6. And, does in all other respects conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.

Proposed use: A K-12 school is a conditional use in the R1A Zoning District. The Applicant is proposing a garden/outdoor classroom area for the lot at 3733 Pleasant Avenue South. The applicable development standards for K-12 schools are:

1. To the extent practical, all new construction or additions to existing buildings shall be compatible with the scale and character of the surroundings, and exterior building materials shall be harmonious with other buildings in the neighborhood.
2. An appropriate transition area between the facility and adjacent property shall be provided by landscaping, screening and other site improvements consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

As part of the project, a deck and deck overhang will be attached to the garage in order to provide temporary shelter during rain and heat. The overhang will be 8.5 feet in height and constructed of corrugated polycarbonate; the decking will be approximately 370 square feet and built with a composite decking material. These elements, as conditioned, will be compatible with the scale and character of the surroundings.

The garden/outdoor classroom is an appropriate transition between the school building and the adjacent residential structures to the north and to the east.

Parking/loading area design and maintenance: The Pleasant Avenue boulevard easement between the sidewalk and the property line is seven feet, which is deeper than a typical boulevard easement. The easement contains a three foot deep landscape buffer and portions of three parking spaces. It is recommended that the Applicant landscape the entire boulevard easement (seven feet total) and screen it to be in compliance with Section 530.170 (b) (2) of the Zoning Code.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation of the Community Planning and Economic Development Department - Planning Division for the conditional use permit:

The Community Planning and Economic Development Department - Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the findings above and **approve** the conditional use permit to allow the expansion of an elementary school's outdoor facilities, subject to the following conditions:

1. The conditional use permit shall be recorded with Hennepin County as required by Minn. Stat. 462.3595, subd. 4 before building permits may be issued or before the use or activity requiring a conditional use permit may commence. Unless extended by the zoning administrator, the conditional use permit shall expire if it is not recorded within one year of approval.
2. Raised planting beds in the side yard setback shall comply with permitted obstruction requirements in Table 535-1 of the Zoning Code.
3. The ground level deck and canopy shall meet the side yard setback requirements of Chapter 546 of the Zoning Code.
4. The parking spaces in the boulevard easement along Pleasant Avenue South shall be removed.
5. The boulevard easement shall be landscaped with turf grass, native grasses, or other perennial flowering plants.
6. The landscaped yard, between the sidewalk and property line, shall have screening that is in compliance with Section 530.170 (b) (2) of the Zoning Code.

Attachments:

1. Statement and findings from Applicant.
2. Zoning map.
3. Letters to Council Office and Neighborhood
4. Project description
5. Site plans.
6. Photos.