



Legislation Text

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Date: June 20, 2019

To: Members of the Planning Commission

From: Scott Tempel, City Planner

Conditional Use Permit for Zimtor Elementary School

Action Requested:

The Northfield Planning Commission considers a recommendation on a Conditional Use Permit for a proposed K-5 Elementary school in the R1 zone district.

Summary Report:

The Community Development Department received a proposal from Lewis Campbell of the Zimtor Corporation for a conditional use permit (CUP) to permit a private K-5 elementary school in the Low-Density Residential Zoning District (R1). The project is located at 113 Linden Street South. Zimtor Elementary would have a maximum enrollment of twenty and be located in the lower level of the Masonic Lodge building.

Zimtor is tuition free, supported by an endowment. It is a year-round school focused on a project based curriculum and independent learning. Free bus transportation is provided and only two staff will be parking at the facility.

Conditional Use Permit Analysis:

The site is currently located in the R1 Low-Density Residential zoning district. A CUP follows the Type 4 Review Procedure found in Section 5.4.7 of the LDC. When reviewing a CUP, the Planning Commission is to consider the following criteria:

- a) **The proposed use is allowed as a conditional use in the district for which it is proposed.**
An elementary school is allowed as a conditional use in the R1 zone district according to Table 2.7-1 Permitted Principal Uses in the LDC.

- b) **The conditional use will be in accordance with the general objectives, or with any specific objective, of the city's comprehensive plan and this LDC.**
The conditional use complies with the Comprehensive Plan. Map 4.3 Conservation and Development designates the project area for Neighborhood Conservation, which calls for preservation and maintenance of existing buildings. The Comprehensive Plan context zone designation for this site is Neighborhood Central, which calls for reinforcing the existing character of the neighborhood.

The project proposes to house a new, small elementary school in the lower level of an existing building

(The Masonic Center) within a residential neighborhood. Such a proposition resonates with a handful of objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan, outlined in Chapter 12 therein, as follows:

Objective CI 2.3 - Create new educational opportunities in and around the downtown

Objective CI 4.2 - Provide for a mix of uses to create new neighborhood centers

Objective CI 7 - Support local schools

Objective LU 3.1 - Promote efficient use of land resources by encouraging infill, redevelopment, intensification or re-use

Objective CF 2.4 - Encourage civic uses, such as schools, to locate in residential neighborhoods.

The proposal meets the Site Development Standards for the R1 Zone District as defined in Article 3 of the LDC and the Use Specific Standards found in Article 2.

- c) **The conditional use will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such use will not change the essential character of the same area.**

The proposed use will be located in the existing Masonic Lodge. It will not significantly alter the existing construction, operation, or maintenance of the Lodge. The existing neighborhood is a mixture of schools, churches, and residences. St. John's Church, St. Dominic Church, St. Dominic School, and Longfellow School are all nearby. The proposed use is consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

- d) **The conditional use will not be hazardous or reasonably disturbing to existing or future uses.**

The proposed use will not change the character of the existing Masonic Lodge except to add a parking lot and playground. There are two nearby playgrounds, so the playground should not pose a significant additional hazard or disruption.

- e) **The conditional use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services such as streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, water and sewer.**

The property is currently served by public utilities adequate for the proposed use.

- f) **The benefits of the conditional use outweigh the potential negative effects of the surrounding community.**

The only potential negative effects are slight increases in traffic and noise. Giving parents in Northfield an additional choice of elementary school with a unique philosophy outweighs these minor effects.

- g) **The conditional use will not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services.**

No additional public costs for public facilities and services are anticipated at this time.

- h) **The conditional use will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment and conditions or operations that will be detrimental to any persons, property or the general welfare by reason of excessive traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors.**

Children will mostly arrive by school bus, so any increase in traffic will be minimal. As an elementary school with an outdoor playground, there will be some increase in noise during the workday.

- i) **The conditional use will not result in the destruction, loss, or damage of natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance as may be established in the comprehensive plan or other city plans related to natural, scenic, or historic features**

None identified.

- j) **The traffic and parking generated by the use will not lower the Levels of Services as described in the comprehensive plan update of intersections within a quarter mile of the site.**

A few parents may drive their children to school, which will increase local traffic slightly. Since the school will enroll a maximum of twenty children, the increase should amount to only a few cars each day at most.

- k) **In residential districts, the use is of a similar height, building orientation, massing, setback, and scale as to be compatible with surrounding uses in compliance with Section 3.5 Neighborhood Compatibility Standards.**

The use is proposed in an existing building with no change in compatibility.

- l) **In the Perimeter Transition Area (PTA) - Not applicable to this site.**

- m) **Impacts such as noise, hours of activity, and outdoor lighting have been addressed to mitigate negative impacts on nearby uses.**

Increases in noise should be small, and the new landscaping around the parking lot should minimize its impact. Hours of activity will be normal school hours, which should not effect the neighborhood significantly. No new outdoor lighting is proposed.

- n) **Parking is adequately provided for the proposed conditional use.**

Yes, the school will occupy only the lower level of the building, about 1100 square feet. The number of students is limited to a maximum of twenty. There will be only one full-time employee and no part-time employees. Deliveries would limited to occasional school supplies and occur during the day only. The Land Development Code (LDC) calls for six parking spaces for the entire building. Three spaces are proposed, as only the lower half of the building will be used for the school.

Alternative Options:

If a proposed conditional use satisfies both the general and specific standards set forth in the zoning ordinance, the applicant is entitled to the conditional use permit. Importantly, if the applicant meets the general and specific ordinance standards, the city usually has no legal basis for denying the CUP.

Financial Impacts:

None.

