

Special Permit and Coastal Site Plan Application
Project Narrative for South Norwalk Elementary School

The City of Norwalk and Board of Education are exciting to move the proposed new South Norwalk Elementary School forward and seek approval from the Planning and Zoning Commission of this Coastal Area Management and Special Permit Application for a new school and athletic fields in South Norwalk. As described below, the application fully complies with all your Regulations – no text changes or map changes are sought, no variances requested, and no wetland permit required.

The subject property is located on just over 12 acres at 1 Meadow Street Extension in the D Residence Zone. It is the site of the former Hatch and Bailey lumberyard and an associated nursery. The City intends to construct a new elementary school with 127 parking spaces, an athletic field, and additional playground areas.

The school.

The school will feature a brick façade with punched openings and metal panels making for a modern twist on the classic brick architecture of the South Norwalk neighborhood. The school will be limited to two stories with classrooms, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, media center, multi-purpose rooms, various support rooms, a music room and an art room, administrative offices and special support rooms while the new school will primarily be two stories, some portions of it will be a single story. It will vary in height, but will have an average height of only 30 feet with a maximum height under 40 feet (65 feet permitted).

Drainage will be improved.

The site is currently approximately 60% impervious with an existing pipe and catch basin network to convey stormwater runoff. The proposed site coverage will be reduced to approximately 30% impervious. Runoff will be collected in a traditional pipe and catch basin network before discharging into the existing storm network. In addition to a decrease of impervious coverage by approximately 30%, additional water quality improvements include vegetated swales and a rain garden to collect and treat parking lot runoff and a hydrodynamic separator directly upstream of the site drainage outfall. The stormwater system, as designed, will effectively manage quality and quantity of stormwater runoff for the proposed development.

Conservation efforts.

It is anticipated that rooftop solar will be installed on portions of the roof and the City has been working with SNEW to arrive at a feasible approach for the installation of ground solar at the rear of the site. The school will be heated primarily through the use of energy efficient air-source heat pumps. Each space will be provided with Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) units connected to heat pumps located on the roof to reduce the use of natural gas within the building. Water heaters will also be electric, to avoid the use of fossil fuels. Exterior walls will have an R value of 46, which exceeds the code minimum of R-23. Roof construction will have an R value of 41, which exceeds the code minimum of R-30.

Parking and traffic will remain stable or improve.

The project will include 127 parking spaces– well exceeding your parking requirement of 94 spaces. Significant thought has been given to laying out the site so as to promote efficient and stable traffic flow during the peak drop-off and pick-up hours. This has resulted in a design with a separate parent drop-off and pick-up entrance from the bus drop-off and pick-up. The parent drop-off area will provide room for over 30 cars to queue. Traffic improvements include installing an all-way stop at the intersection of Meadow St. Ext. and Oxford Street.

A traffic impact study was conducted by Langan in support of the new elementary school. Trip generation rates used for the new school are based on traffic volumes collected for three Norwalk elementary schools, which were found to be higher than ITE trip generation rates and more reflective of those expected at the new school. The addition of the new school traffic volumes to the study area roadway network resulted in nominal changes to the traffic operating conditions, with one exception: the school driveway at Meadow Street Extension, if unmitigated, is proposed to operate at a low Level of Service (LOS) due to the heavy traffic demand in a short period of time. Langan has proposed to mitigate this through its traffic management recommendations including:

- Vehicular management strategies during arrival/dismissal periods will help to minimize congestion and reduce queueing on-site by staggering arrival/dismissal periods;
- The school should implement curb-side active management programs to prepare students for arrival/dismissal periods to reduce vehicle service time;
- Active and static traffic control measures should be used, including a police officer at the Meadow Street Extension Driveway and cones placed on-site;
- An all-way stop should be installed at the intersection of Meadow Street Extension and Oxford Street to manage vehicle speeds and improve line-of-sight restrictions for the driveway; and
- School zone signage should be installed in the vicinity of the new school.

Based on Langan’s findings and recommendations, the existing roadway infrastructure can safely and efficiently support the increase in traffic volume generated by the proposed school and shows that all study intersections are expected to operate within an acceptable LOS.

The site will be well landscaped and appropriately lit.

A landscape plan has been submitted which calls for a diverse array of plantings with dozens of new street trees and shade trees blanketing the parking areas. In total 140 new trees are proposed, 385 new shrubs are proposed along with various groundcover plantings. A site lighting plan has been submitted and, as can be seen from the plan, the athletic field is anticipated to be used during daylight hours only and no lighting is proposed for the athletic field.

The Application complies with Coastal Area Management Site Plan criteria

As detailed in the CAM application the application fully complies with your CAM Site Plan requirements (only a small portion of the Property is even located in the CAM Zone).

No coastal polices or resources will be impacted by this project and the site improvements will result in an increase in stormwater quality and decrease in stormwater peak flows and volume.

The Application complies with your special permit criteria.

The proposed school is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of your regulations and complies with your special permit regulations. Specifically:

- (a) Density of use and bulk of buildings. The density of use of the proposed building, as well as the bulk of the building, comply with Norwalk’s Zoning Regulations and is similar to the existing density of use and bulk in the neighborhood.
- (b) Stable Traffic Flow. As demonstrated by the traffic report, the proposed construction will not adversely affect pedestrian or vehicular safety or increase traffic congestion to an unacceptable level of service.
- (c) Availability of mass transit facilities. Norwalk Transit has a Wheels bus stop (wheels route 10) located on South Main Street approximately 100 feet north of Meadow Street; additionally, users will access the site on public school buses or will live within walking distance to the school.
- (d) Availability and compatibility of utilities. The Property is served by city water and sewers.
- (e) Adverse impact from noise, odor, fumes, dust and artificial lighting. No adverse impacts are anticipated and a lighting plan has been submitted demonstrating the immediate neighborhood and will not be adversely impacted.
- (f) Size of signs and design that are in harmony with the neighborhood. No signage is proposed.
- (g) Adequacy of yards and open space, screening and buffering. Yards and open space, screening and buffering comply with Norwalk’s Zoning Regulations.
- (h) Impact on neighborhood properties, as compared to uses and structures permitted as a matter of right. If this site were developed by a private developer, under existing regulations over 300 units of housing could be sought.
- (i) Existing land use in the area. The areas surrounding the property is generally developed with a mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- (j) Proximity of community facilities. N/A.
- (k) Compliance with the Zoning Code and POCD. The proposed uses comply with the Zoning Code and POCD including the POCD’s policy of supporting the Board of Education’s facilities improvement plan for the school system which includes the new South Norwalk school.

- (l) Conservation of wetlands, watercourses and other ecologically viable lands.
There are no wetlands at the Property, and;
- (m) No zoning violation exists on the property. There are no known zoning violations on the property.

THE APPLICANT,
CITY OF NORWALK AND THE NORWALK
BOARD OF EDUCATION

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