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## STAFF REPORT

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**TO:** Chair and Planning Commission Members

**FROM:** Chad Weaver, Community Development Director  
Paul Michaud, Planning Manager  
George Burton, Senior Planner

**DATE:** December 5, 2023

**DEPARTMENT:** Community Development Department – Planning Division  
George Burton, 480-348-3525

**AGENDA TITLE:** Discussion on Phoenix Country Day School  
Intermediate Special Use Permit Amendment  
SUP-23-05. 3901 E Stanford Drive

### **SUMMARY STATEMENT:**

#### Request

The applicant, Rose Law Group P.C. on behalf of Phoenix Country Day School, requests an Intermediate Special Use Permit amendment (SUP-23-05) for Phoenix Country Day School located at 3901 E Stanford Drive regarding the construction of a Performance Arts Center for school use. Construction of the building is along the Stanford Drive frontage and will result in the relocation of the easternmost parking spaces to an area north of the existing maintenance building within the same parking lot including associated landscaping enhancements at both areas of improvement.

#### Location

The site is approximately 38.8 acres. It adjoins the City of Phoenix to the east (along 40<sup>th</sup> Street with single-family residential on 24,000 minimum square foot lots) and commercial uses to the south. Within the Town limits, the site adjoins Stanford Drive to the north (with the Camelback Bible Church located across the street) and R-43 single-family residential zoned properties to the west (which were annexed into the Town at nonconforming sizes that range from one quarter of an acre to one third of an acre). The Cudia City Wash (also referred to as the Echo Canyon Wash) bisects the property/campus with the lower and middle school grade activities generally north of the wash and the upper grade school activities south of the wash.

#### History/Background

This premier private school opened in 1961, with the Town issuing the Special Use Permit (SUP) in 1972. The school provides college preparatory instruction up to Grade 12 focusing on humanities, sciences, the arts, and a comprehensive range of skills in athletics. The Town approved numerous SUP amendments since 1972. The latest approvals included a Managerial SUP amendment in 2022 to remodel Burch Hall and an Intermediate SUP amendment in 2017 for the replacement of the existing

administration building, new fencing, and updated signage. These recent improvements are located north of the wash along Stanford Drive.

### Town Council Discussion

The Town Council reviewed and issued a Statement of Direction (SOD) on November 9, 2023.

### Purpose

The goal of the December 5<sup>th</sup> meeting is to discuss the scope of the request and the SOD.

### Scope of the Request

The new building is proposed along Stanford Drive, setback 40 feet from the street/north property line, and generally located halfway between the west property line (37<sup>th</sup> Place) and the east property line (40<sup>th</sup> Street) at a maximum height of 35 feet. The new building will have 600 seats and the site plan data lists the building at 23,916 square feet. However, the total floor area may increase slightly since the applicant needs to clarify if this number includes the mezzanine level and roof overhang square footage (which may increase the floor area to approximately 25,100 square feet).

The site area and lot coverage are compliant with the recommended limit outlined in Town SUP Guidelines. There is no change in the total site area with this request. The lot coverage will increase from 13.9 percent to 15.4 percent. The large site acreage, Echo Canyon Wash that crosses the site, and outdoor fields allow this site to fall well within the 25 percent limit recommended by the SUP Guidelines.

	<b>SUP Guidelines</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
<b>Lot Size</b>	Minimum 5 acres	1,700,420 net square feet (39.0 net acres)	No change
<b>Lot Coverage</b>	25% 425,105 square feet	13.9% 236,747 square feet (estimate)	15.4% 261,847 square feet (estimate)

The proposed elevations illustrate the building architecture and visual impact off-site. The proposed design, building materials, earth tone colors, and textures match and complement the existing improvements on campus and complement the overlooking Camelback Mountain views.

The request is an Intermediate SUP amendment of the private school's zoning requiring a Statement of Direction (Section 1102.8.C of the Zoning Ordinance). There are three criteria for an Intermediate SUP amendment. The first is that the request does not change or add any uses (a performance arts building is a compliant school use). The second criteria limits the amount of floor area that can be added over the last 60-month period. This amount is more than 5,000 square feet of new floor area (the limit for a Minor SUP amendment) but less than 40 percent of the existing or approved total floor area. This improvement, including improvements over the past 60 months, results in an increase of 25,874 square feet or a 10.9 percent increase in floor area. The third criteria is that the Performance Arts Center does not have any significant material effect on the adjoining property owners that is visible, audible, or otherwise perceptible from adjacent

properties that cannot be sufficiently mitigated (which is vetted and mitigated through the Planning Commission/Town Council review process).

### Statement of Direction (SOD)

Section 2-5-1.C of the Town Code requires the Town Council to issue a SOD for Intermediate SUP Amendments. The SOD is not a final decision of the Town Council and creates no vested right to the final action of this Special Use Permit. Rather, a SOD provides the Planning Commission with general guidance on a variety of development aspects of the project (such as height, setbacks, design, density, landscaping, lighting, noise, etc.), guidance on procedural aspects (such as application timing/completion of review, etc.), and guidance on policy aspects (such as identifying appropriate and acceptable standards, uses, and compatibility with the SUP) in response to the unique aspects of each SUP amendment. The full merits of the request are examined in detail during the Planning Commission review and recommendation process, with a full review and decision by the Town Council after the Planning Commission makes a formal recommendation.

The SOD identifies that the Town Council is generally supportive of this request (subject to public input) and that the Planning Commission must complete their review by March 5, 2024. Below is a summary of how the proposed project falls within the Town SUP guidelines for a private school based on the SOD topics. Please reference the Narrative Packet (Attachment E) for more information.

1. Use. The proposed Performance Arts Center building will complement the existing facilities used in the music and theater arts program at the school. The primary areas for the Planning Commission to study include, and are not limited to, the design/layout of the proposed improvements, the impact of the Performance Arts Center to the surrounding area outside the site (specifically traffic impact, noise, and light), as well as the specific operational factors (hours of operation, etc.).
  2. Noise Mitigation/Impact. The proposed setback of the Performance Arts Center is 40 feet from Stanford Drive. The new building is situated toward the middle of the school site along Stanford Drive, across the street from the Camelback Bible Church, and approximately 600 feet away from the nearest residential property. The main entry promenade is located along the west and south parts of the building (and vary in width between 14 feet and 24 feet). The adjoining outdoor areas may be used for outdoor gatherings (although the intended usage occurs within the enclosed building space) and the service area is located on the north side of the building (off Stanford Drive which is presently the easternmost driveway into the school). Since the new building will be placed over existing parking spaces, a new parking area will be placed on the west side of the campus (located just north of the existing maintenance building). Due to the potential impacts of these improvements on the neighboring properties, the Planning Commission shall consider impacts including noise, light, traffic, and any other adverse impacts (such as adjacent outdoor gathering areas).
  3. Heights/Viewsheds. The SUP Guidelines recommend a maximum height of 35 feet tall for principal structures at private schools and recommend that all
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buildings comply with the Open Space Criteria. The Performance Art Building complies with the overall recommended height limit of 35 feet tall but encroaches into the Open Space Criteria.

The proposed height of the Performance Art Building is not out-of-character for this area since the Camelback Bible Church's fellowship building is 36 feet tall (located directly north of this property) and the school's existing gymnasium is 38-feet tall. Due to the location of the building and the encroachment into the Open Space Criteria, the Planning Commission shall evaluate the proposed heights and viewsheds of the Performance Arts Center as seen from off-site (including the impact to the views of Camelback Mountain). Evaluation of the heights may require additional visuals such as sight line representations, renderings, etc. Mechanical screening and architectural elements of the building shall also be included in the maximum height measurement/limit.

4. Setbacks. The SUP Guidelines recommend a building setback of 40 feet adjoining a public street (Stanford Drive) (proposed at 40 feet) and a 60 foot setback adjoining residential properties (proposed at approximately 550 feet from the west property line for the proposed Performance Art Building and an approximately 35 foot setback for the new/relocated parking area from the west property line). The Planning Commission shall explore appropriate setbacks for the Performance Arts Center, with particular attention to the setback along Stanford Drive. The Commission shall also identify any mitigating circumstances that may buffer the development (e.g., how Stanford Drive meanders and creates a deeper landscape buffer within the right-of-way, the location of the building site away from nearby residential homes, the type and quality of landscaping, building articulation, location of outdoor congregation areas, etc.).
5. Landscaping/Buffers. The SUP Guidelines suggest a 30-foot-wide landscape buffer along a collector street (Stanford Drive), 40-foot-wide landscape buffer adjoining residential (west property line), shielding of parking lots from residential and the public street with walls and/or berms, and parking lots and internal driveways be minimally setback 60 feet from adjacent residential-zoned property.

The Planning Commission shall focus their review on the landscaping/buffers along Stanford Drive near the Performance Arts Center and within the new parking area. This includes, and is not limited to, appropriate screening or relocation of the utility boxes, the location and screening of the building service area, harmony of the proposed landscaping and accent walls with the adjacent Stanford Drive landscaping, appropriate type of plant material for the location (e.g., drought tolerance, scale, seasonal color), and appropriate stipulations (such as maintenance and replacing dead plant material). The Planning Commission shall also explore the use of screen walls, additional landscaping, etc. to mitigate any adverse impacts (such as noise and/or lighting) from the new/relocated parking area.

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6. Exterior Lighting. The SUP Guidelines suggest that exterior lighting be hooded and shielded so as not to be visible from an adjacent property, the brightness for any up lighting not exceed 300 lumens, pole lights be a maximum height of 16 feet tall, and the maximum illumination output be 0.5 foot candles adjacent to residential and 0.75 foot candles along other property lines (Section 1023, Zoning Ordinance). The proposed lighting is compliant with the Town's SUP Guidelines. The focus areas for Planning Commission review shall include the mounted height of lighting on the Performance Arts Center building, how illumination might wash the building, and evaluation of the new parking lot lights. The hours of operation of the new lighting shall also be examined.
7. Traffic, Parking, and Circulation. The proposed Performance Art Building will be placed over existing parking spaces and the new parking area will be placed north of the existing maintenance building (on the west side of campus). Existing drive aisles are utilized to access the new parking area and access the Performance Art building. Per the applicant's narrative, the performances will occur after school hours. The traffic analysis also identifies the Performing Arts Center will not affect school arrival period traffic and that no street improvements are necessary or appropriate.

The traffic, parking, and circulation is reviewed by the Town's professional staff to ensure compliance with the required safety standards and code requirements. The applicant must provide additional clarification/verification that the proposed Performance Arts Center will not negatively impact the traffic on nearby public streets and the verification of adequate on-site parking. The size/dimension of the new/relocated parking spaces shall be evaluated (in comparison with the current spaces on campus).

8. Signage. The narrative identifies any and all signage associated with the Performance Arts Center will complement and mimic the existing signage on campus. The Town has allowed signage on certain signature buildings (such as the aquatic center and gymnasium). The applicant must provide a sign package for review. The Planning Commission review shall focus on the impact of sign location, size, and illumination on the streetscape and compliance with SUP Guidelines.

#### Public Comment

There is no required notice for a work session. The applicant will hold a citizen review/neighborhood meeting in accordance with Town Code and the applicant will notify all neighbors within a 1,500 foot radius of the subject property of the scheduled public hearing date. Since the scope of work constitutes an Intermediate SUP Amendment, the Commission is a recommending body and will forward a recommendation of approval or denial to the Town Council.

#### Next Steps

This request is scheduled for January 16, 2014 work session review and February 20, 2014 Public Hearing. If deemed necessary, the Commission may hold another work session on February 6<sup>th</sup>. Per the SOD, the Planning Commission must make a recommendation on this application by March 5<sup>th</sup>.

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**ATTACHMENT(S):**

- A. Staff Report
  - B. Vicinity & Related Maps
  - C. Application
  - D. Statement of Direction
  - E. Narrative & Plans
  - F. Parking Analysis
  - G. Traffic Impact Analysis
  - H. Preliminary Drainage Report
  - I. Preliminary Water Report
  - J. Preliminary Wastewater Report
  - K. General Plan Policies
  - L. SUP Guidelines
  - M. Staff Presentation
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