



STAFF REPORT

TO: Mayor Stanton and Town Council Members

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

DATE: May 28, 2026

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

AGENDA TITLE: Discussion & Possible Action on Phoenix Country Day School Intermediate Special Use Permit Amendment (SUP-25-06) (3901 E Stanford Drive)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Town Council approve Ordinance 2026-01.

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

Request

The applicant, Rose Law Group P.C., on behalf of Phoenix Country Day School (PCDS), requests an Intermediate Special Use Permit amendment (SUP-25-06) for Phoenix Country Day School located at 3901 E Stanford Drive to update/renovate the existing baseball field, construct a new Wellness Center building, and add a digital display sign in the north parking lot and the east parking lot for school use.

The baseball field improvements and new Wellness Center building are located on the west side of the campus. The existing baseball field will be updated and improved in the same location (setback approximately 28 feet from the west property line) and located south of the existing maintenance buildings. Construction of the new Wellness Center is located east of the baseball field (setback approximately 345 feet from the west property line) and south of existing Building M - Middle School Classroom Building.

One digital sign will be placed in the north parking lot, setback approximately 200 feet from the north property line (adjoining Stanford Drive) and will be next to existing Building D – Shepard Welcome Center. The other digital sign will be placed in the east parking lot, setback approximately 200 feet from the east property line (adjoining 40th Street) and will be next to the existing Building Z – Dady Aquatic Center.

Location

The site is approximately 38.8 acres. It adjoins the City of Phoenix to the east (along 40th 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 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 Minor SUP Amendment for a new Music Building in 2024, an Intermediate SUP Amendment for a new Performance Art Center Building in 2024, 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. The baseball field and Wellness Center improvements are located at the western part of the campus between the wash and existing maintenance buildings. The digital signs will be placed in the north and east parking lots.

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. 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.

There are two timing provisions. Section 1102.3.C.3.c of the Zoning Ordinance requires the Town Council issue a SOD within 45 days from the date of the first staff presentation (which was March 19th) and Section 2.5.2.D of the Town Code requires the Planning Commission forward a recommendation to the Council within 90 days from the approval date of the SOD, or 150 days from the filing of the application for the Special Use Permit, or within a specified time set by Council in the SOD (*with the Planning Commission to hold their public hearing review no later than April 21, 2026*).

In summary, the SOD identifies that the Planning Commission review shall focus on the audible and visual effects the improvements may have on the neighboring properties. A copy of the SOD is enclosed in Attachment E.

Town Council Discussion

The Town Council reviewed the draft SOD at the February 12th study session and approved the SOD at the February 26th public meeting. Town Council expressed concern regarding the proposed information signs and the applicant clarified that the

signs are for information purposes, are setback 200 feet way from the property lines, and are angled so they do not directly face the neighboring properties.

Town Council discussed the proposed improvement and draft Ordinance 2026-01 at the May 14th work session. The Council did not have recommended edits to the draft ordinance.

Planning Commission Discussion

The Planning Commission reviewed these proposed improvements at the March 17th study session and the April 7th public hearing. During the March 17th work session, the Planning Commission inquired about the height of the digital information signs, inquired about the drainage associated with these improvements, and directed the applicant to provide a construction staging plan to ensure that the construction does not impede traffic or interfere with school drop-off and pick-up times.

The consensus of the Commission was that the height of the information signs is acceptable. In response to Commissions concern about construction parking, the applicant provided a preliminary construction staging plan for Commission review (see Attachment I).

The preliminary drainage report identifies that there are no adverse drainage impacts to either the downstream existing properties or drainage ways from this site. Onsite flows are conveyed to on-site detention facilities via surface flow and when necessary, catch basins and storm drainpipes. Flows generated by the proposed building are conveyed to an existing storm drain network and discharged directly to the Cudia City Wash. The drainage and on-site retention will be reviewed again for code compliance by the Town's Engineering Division during the building permit process.

During the April 7th public hearing, the Planning Commission forwarded Ordinance 2026-01 with a recommendation of approval. The Commission modified Stipulation 12.a to identify that no advertising is permitted on the digital signs.

Scope of the Request

Baseball Field Update & Improvements

The existing baseball field is located on the west side of the campus and will remain in the same location. It is setback approximately 28 feet from the west property line and is located just south of the existing maintenance buildings. The school is proposing to:

- Replace the existing dirt fire lane with an asphalt fire lane.
 - Replace the existing fencing around the baseball field with new 6-foot-tall chain link fencing.
 - Replace the natural grass field.
 - Add new artificial turf along the north and east sides of the field.
 - Replace the backstop with a new 34-foot-tall chain link backstop.
 - Add a 12-foot-tall warm-up batter's cage
 - Replace the two existing bleachers and shade canopies with two new bleachers and canopies (the canopies are steel frame structure with fabric tops, are 14 feet 6 inches tall, and placed over the bleachers). The shade canopies are approximately the same size as the existing ones (40 feet long by 13 feet wide).
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- Add a new/third bleacher with canopy will be placed behind the back stop (this canopy is also a steel frame structure with a fabric top at a height of 14 feet 6 inches tall). This canopy is 23 feet long by 13 feet wide.
- The existing seating/bleacher capacity accommodates 128 people. The renovated seating capacity will accommodate a maximum of 165 people.
- Replace the metal roof over the existing dugouts with new metal roofs. The new roofs maintain the existing size and existing height of 9 feet tall (measured to the top of the roof).
- Add two new 20-foot-tall foul line poles at the edges of the field. One pole will be placed near the northwest corner of the field (setback approximately 28 feet from the west property line) and the other pole will be placed near the southeast corner of the field.

The baseball field will maintain its existing use, will not be illuminated, and will only be used by the school (and will not be rented out). Baseball games will begin after dismissal (around 2:00 p.m.) and typically end by 6:00 p.m. Any weekend games will take place on Saturdays and will end at dusk. The school averages 6 middle school baseball games and 18 upper school baseball games each year.

The school will use its existing PA system. A recent sound study conducted by Newton Environmental Consulting concluded that the existing PA system registers around 48-50 decibels of sound when it reaches the nearest neighbor's property. This sound level is less than the Town's daytime limit of 56-decibel (from 7 am – 10 pm), measured at the property line (which is the time of day the field will be used).

New Wellness Center Building

The new building will be located east of the baseball field and south of existing Building M - Middle School Classroom Building. This building is setback approximately 344 feet from the west property line (adjoining the neighboring residence), setback approximately 664 feet from the north property line (adjoining Stanford Drive), is approximately 22 feet tall measured from the lowest natural grade (LNG) under the structure, is single story, and is 7,756 square feet in size.

The proposed elevations illustrate the building architecture. The proposed design, building materials, earth tone colors, and textures match and complement the existing improvements on campus (with brown and tan colored block and reddish and grey accent colors).

The Wellness Center will provide a workout facility for the students and facility, will have a multi-purpose room for dance classes and other physical education programs, a concession stand for athletic events, two locker rooms to be used by the PCDS soccer team and the visiting soccer team (the existing PCDS soccer field is south of this building within the wash, not changing, and not part of this SUP), restrooms for athletic events, and an office for PCDS athletic staff.

Digital Information Signs

These signs will be located on campus to provide parents with school information during drop-off and pick-up. The signs will display static text messages, pictures, and graphics that will cycle through transitions in a similar way to a slide show on a computer screen.

The school anticipates no more than 3 to 5 messages being displayed during the operating hours of the signs. Individual messages will be displayed anywhere between 2-to-5 minutes (depending on the length of information being displayed). After that 2-to-5-minute timespan is up, the sign will cut to the next announcement.

The first sign will be positioned adjacent to the Shepard Welcome Center and will be setback approximately 200 feet from the north property line (adjoining Stanford Drive). The second sign will be situated near the aquatic center and will be setback approximately 200 feet from the east property line (along 40th Street).

These signs are an illuminated screen attached to a masonry wall which is 12 feet tall by 11 feet 4 inches wide. The size of the illuminated screen is 4 feet 2 inches high by 8 feet 4 inches wide. The height of the digital screen is 10 feet 2 inches tall, measured from the finished grade. The signs will be illuminated Monday - Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on a regular basis. If events (e.g. a school band concert) take place during evening hours, the signs will be operational during those events and will not go past 10:00 p.m. The signs will only be used on weekends if there is a school event taking place over a weekend and they will adhere to the same hour restrictions as regular school week.

The applicant also provided photometric plans showing the output for these signs. According to the photometric plans, the maximum output of each sign is 0.03-foot candles measured at the property line (and Town Code limits the output to 0.75-foot candles at the property line). The applicant also identified that the brightness of the screens may be adjusted and the draft ordinance (Ordinance 26-01) has a stipulation that states:

- If the Town receives a complaint from an offsite owner that the signs are too bright, the Town Community Development Director or designee may inspect the signs and require the Owner to adjust the brightness of these signs and/or adjust the operational hours of these signs.

Site Area

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 17.4 percent to 18.4 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.

	SUP Guidelines	Existing	Proposed
Lot Size	Minimum 5 acres	1,700,420 net square feet (39.0 net acres)	No change
Lot Coverage	25% 425,105 square feet	17.4% 257,296 square feet	18.4% 272,166 square feet

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 (an updated baseball field, a Wellness Center building, and signs to display school information are compliant school uses). The second criterion 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 41,826 square feet or a 17.7 percent increase in floor area. The third criterion is that the improvements do not have any significant material effect on the adjoining property owners that are 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).

Traffic, Parking, and Circulation

The Town's professional staff reviews traffic, parking, and circulation to ensure compliance with the required safety standards and code requirements. The applicant provided a traffic statement from a traffic engineer identifying that:

- The baseball field will serve the same functions and purposes as currently provided; and therefore, the improvements to the baseball field will not change the number of vehicles entering and exiting the Phoenix Country Day School campus nor the campus parking demand.
- The new Wellness Center building will serve the existing students, faculty, and administrative personnel. As a result, the new Wellness Center will not increase the number of students, the number of faculty, or the number of administrative personnel. Therefore, the new Wellness Center will not increase the number of vehicles entering and exiting the campus nor the campus parking demand.
- Because the renovated baseball field and the new Wellness Center will not generate additional traffic and parking demands, a traffic and parking analysis is unnecessary.

Ordinance 2026-01

Ordinance 2026-01 outlines the draft stipulations associated with the proposed improvements (see Attachment F). In summary, the stipulations identify that:

- All improvements shall be in substantial compliance with the submitted plans and documents (including the construction staging plan),
 - The use of the existing portable audio/PA system for the baseball games shall not exceed the Town's noise requirements,
 - The baseball field shall not be illuminated,
 - The new landscaping must be maintained,
 - The digital information sign shall display static text messages, pictures, and graphics that cycle through with unobtrusive transitions; shall operate from 7 am – 7 pm Monday – Friday and 30 minutes after evening events (no later than 10 pm); and if Town receives complaint that signs are too bright, the Town Community Development Director may require brightness of signs and/or hours of operation of signs be adjusted,
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- The new Wellness Center Building may only be used by the school and the rental of all, or part, of this building shall be prohibited, the exterior lighting may operate from dawn to dusk, all mechanical equipment requires screening, and signage to comply with the approved plans,
- Various standard construction-related stipulations, and
- All existing stipulations shall remain in effect unless modified by this SUP amendment.

Public Comment

The applicant held a citizen review meeting on January 30th and a copy of the meeting minutes are enclosed for reference. There was concern regarding one of the existing trees on the western property line. One neighbor wanted the tree to be removed and another neighbor wanted the tree to remain. The applicant spoke with both neighbors and resolved the issue by agreeing to trim the tree.

The applicant also notified all neighboring property owners of the April 7th Planning Commission public hearing in accordance with the Town requirements and policies. Staff received comment from two neighbors on the east side of 40th Street. The first neighbor called staff and noted that his neighborhood gets inundated with PCDS event parking and is therefore opposed to anything which results in more parking in his neighborhood. The second neighbor had questions about the digital information signs and the Wellness Center building, along with concerns about the traffic congestion created by the school at the roundabout at 40th Street and Stanford Drive. Staff and the applicant provided information regarding the application and a copy of the correspondence is enclosed (see Attachment K and Attachment L) for reference.

Next Steps/Process

The purpose of this meeting is to act on Ordinance 2026-01. The Town Council may approve or deny the ordinance or continue the hearing for further review and consideration.

ATTACHMENT(S):

- A. Staff Report
 - B. Vicinity & Related Maps
 - C. Application
 - D. SUP Comparison Chart
 - E. Statement of Direction (SOD)
 - F. Draft Ordinance 2026-01
 - G. Narrative & Plans (with Preliminary G&D Plans)
 - H. Traffic/Parking Statement
 - I. Logistic/Construction Staging Plan
 - J. Notification Materials
 - K. Neighbor Email with Staff Response
 - L. Applicant Response to Neighbor's Questions
 - M. General Plan Policies
 - N. SUP Guidelines
 - O. Staff Presentation
 - P. Applicant Presentation
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