Narrative to Support Increasing the Number of Students at CrossLife Community Church to 150– PREAPP202300017

PROJECT PROPOSAL

In 1986, Alliance Bible Church (currently known as CrossLife Community Church) built their church at 1410 Old Brook Road in a manner to house a vibrant preschool called Merridale. Because the school closed many years later, Community Christian Academy requested and was granted a special use permit to house a Pre-K through 12th grade school at that location for 85 students in 2012 (SP 201200004). We had incremental growth for multiple years, but when the pandemic shut down the public schools for in-person education, we suddenly filled up all our classes. Since that time, we have not been able to accept all the students who have applied because of the 85-student limit. This is why we want to increase the number of students to 150.

Not only did the public-school shutdowns emphasize the benefit that private schools provide to our community, but also the increasing enrollments in many, if not all, of our private schools emphasize the desire and need for more educational options. Even though we have a special use permit for Pre-K through 12th grade, we have not added a high school yet. In the past, we were able to get our graduating eighth-graders into whichever schools they applied. This year, those same schools had limited ninth-grade openings and many more applicants. Clearly the demand is there to support additional private-school options or larger private-school capacities.

CrossLife is well-positioned to have a great deal of activity without disruption to the neighbors. Facing the church, the lot to the left contains a multi-business complex, and the manager of that complex has a child in our school. There are trees between that property and the church, and there are woods behind the church separating it from residential properties behind it. To the right of the church, there is Old Brook Road and only a few properties within eyesight of the church. The closest properties already have tall bushes, trees, or fences blocking the views into the properties, and one property belongs to a family whose children attend our school. Rio Road is in front of the church, and because the church is on the corner, parents coming to the school are not traveling through the neighborhood along Old Brook Road.

CrossLife Community Church is on property that is zoned Neighborhood Density Residential within Neighborhood 2 of the Places 29 Master Plan. Within this designation, the primary use is for single-family residential units, but there are additional secondary uses that support neighborhoods that can be approved such as commercial, institutional, and retail sites. A school is a use that supports members living within the neighborhood. Since we have students in the neighborhood where CrossLife is located, it is clear that the school supports the needs of people living in the neighborhood.

CrossLife's property is in the Places 29 Rio Community. According to the County's Places 29 Master Plan, it is considered a benefit for a neighborhood-serving business to be located where multiple neighborhoods can easily access it and where it shares a location with other community-serving businesses. CrossLife Community Church is within walking distance of multiple neighborhoods including but not limited to Raintree, Abbington Crossing, and Fieldbrook. It is

also located next to a business center that includes various businesses such as Split Endz Hair and Beauty Salon, Robbins Staffing Solution, Farm Credit, and Mark Cloth Orthodontics.

Because we already have a special use permit for a school and have been operating a school at CrossLife Community Church for eleven years, we are already in compliance with the applicable regulations in Section 5 of the Zoning Ordinance. We are also in compliance with various local and state requirements for a school, as well as requirements through our accreditation organization. These requirements frequently serve to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the children in our school.

CONSISTENCY WITH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

As explained in the project proposal, Albemarle County has already approved the special use permit for a Pre-K – 12th grade school because using this church in this way is consistent with the comprehensive plan. The Places 29 Master Plan – Rio and the neighborhood residential zoning support residences and secondary uses, like institutions, that support those and nearby neighborhoods.

IMPACTS ON PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

When the church was built in 1986, it was designed to support a preschool. It is on public water and sewer, and when we first sought a special use permit eleven years ago, the building inspector confirmed that the building was appropriate for the needs of a school. Ray Gaines, a local architect who understands the requirements for educational facilities, has walked through the property and believes that the building can easily accommodate 300 students, double what we are requesting. He will draw up the required plans for submission indicating the number of students for the building when we proceed with the Change-of-Use process. The school has its own playground, so there will be no impact on public parks. Most parents drive their children to school, so there will be no impact on public transportation. Our numbers are not large enough to significantly impact public schools.

IMPACTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The property is already designed to suit the needs of a school – appropriately-sized classrooms, restroom facilities, fenced-in playground, large parking lot, etc. Increasing the total number of students from 85 to 150 will not change the environment features. No changes to the building or property will be done to increase the number of students to 150.

PARKING DOCUMENTATION

There are 2 handicap and 66 non-handicap parking spaces at CrossLife Community Church. For 85 students, we currently employ 16 people, two of whom work nights after students, and frequently teachers, have left for the day. Of the remaining 14, two are administrators, five are full-time teachers, and seven are part-time teachers or teachers' aides. The part-time teachers are frequently not on location at the same time, so we need fewer than 14 parking spaces for faculty. If we grew from 85 to 150, we would not need to add more administrators, and we would continue to have part-time teachers who not all would be onsite the same days or times. I would estimate needing no more than 20-25 parking spaces for faculty and staff.

With 85 students, there are 51 families who have children attending our school. Based on the current ratio of families to total students, I would estimate 90 families for 150 students. Because students in different grades have different starting and pick-up times, we have a large window of time when parents can drop-off their children. The drop-off time is in a 35-minute window from 7:40 to 8:15 a.m. The pick-up time is in a 15-minute window of 3:00 to 3:15 and is longer on days where there are after-school clubs and activities.

During the COVID year when we required morning wellness checks before entering the school, the Executive Director was in plain view of the drop-off line every school morning. This year, the Elementary Principal has parking-lot duty each school morning, and neither the Elementary Principal nor the Executive Director has ever seen more than three cars in a row for drop-off. This evidence suggests that there is enough space in the parking lot to accommodate the increased number of families we would have with 150 students.