



ALBEMARLE COUNTY
STAFF REPORT

Project Name: CCP202300002, Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School	Staff: David Benish, Development Process Manager.
Planning Commission Work Session: October 24, 2023	Board of Supervisors Public Hearing: n/a – PC finding forwarded for information only
Owner: Albemarle County School Board	Applicant: Albemarle Co. Public Schools (ACPS)
Acreage: 15.8 acres	Comprehensive Plan, Consistency with: Proposal to construct a public elementary school in Urban Area 4
TMP: 09100-00-00-01100	Location: 133 Galaxie Farm Lane
School Districts: Mountain View E.S., Walton M.S., Monticello H.S.	By-right use: Zoned R1-Residential. Low density residential uses
Magisterial District: Scottsville	Proffers: No. The site is not subject to previously established proffers.
Proposal: Construct a 72,500 sq. ft. elementary school serving 500 students	Requested # of Dwelling Units: None
DA (Development Area): Yes (Southern + Western Neighborhoods Master Plan)	Comp. Plan Designation: <u>Institutional</u> – schools, libraries, parks, utilities, hospitals, universities, colleges and other developed and undeveloped publicly owned property.
Character of Property: Mostly wooded and undeveloped, except for one single-family house. There is an existing private road (Galaxie Farm Lane) that provides access to the house and property. The proposed use will be accessed from Founders Place off of Mill Creek Drive.	Use of Surrounding Properties: The Monticello Fire Rescue Station and Tandem School are adjacent to the north and northeast. Albemarle Health Care Center and two residences/parcels are adjacent to the east. Two other County owned properties and one parcel with a residence are adjacent to the west. The recently approved Galaxie Farm development is located to the south.
Factors Favorable: 1. The proposed facility is consistent with the Growth Management policy. 2. The proposal is, overall, consistent with Community Facilities Objectives/Strategies,	Factors Unfavorable: 1. A collaborative community process has not been undertaken as recommended in the Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan for the Mill Creek Center area.

<p>and the Neighborhood Model principles for public facilities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The proposed use is consistent with the land use designation of Institutional as described in the Southern + Western Neighborhoods Master Plan. 4. Approval of the school will not foreclose on the opportunity to undertake an effective and useful collaborative community process to plan for the Mill Creek Center area as recommended in the Master Plan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The proposed school may generate sufficient additional traffic to accelerate the need for road improvements on Avon Street, Mill Creek Drive, and the extension of Founders Place to Rt. 20. 3. This location concentrates school and related park and community center functions in one DA neighborhood, leaving other southern and western DA neighborhoods lacking in these facilities.
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RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission find that the location, character, and extent of the proposed elementary school and public use thereof to be in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan for the reasons identified as favorable factors in this staff report.

STAFF PERSON:
PLANNING COMMISSION:
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

David Benish
October 24, 2023
N/A

CCP20100002, Southern Feeder Pattern Elementary School:

BACKGROUND

The Albemarle County School Board is proposing to construct an elementary school to serve the southern feeder pattern including the southern and portions of the western development areas. This school will help to address the capacity issues with Mountain View Elementary School. (see Attachment B, Applicant’s Project Description).

The elementary school (kindergarten through 5th grade or paired with Mountain View Elementary) Center II is planned to be 72,500 square feet and serve up to 500 students, with primary school hours from 7:30 – 4:00 (arrival/drop-off to main dismissal).

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

A Compliance with the Comprehensive Plan Review (“CCP Review” or “2232 Review,” in reference to the Code of Virginia statute which necessitates this type of local review process), considers whether the general location, character, and extent of a proposed public facility are in substantial accord with the adopted Comprehensive Plan. It is reviewed by the Planning Commission, and the Commission’s findings are forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for their information; no additional action is required of the Board. The Commission’s action is only related to the consistency of proposal (the use and its location) with the Comprehensive Plan and is not an action or recommendation on whether the facility should be constructed.

CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The 15.8-acre property (TMP 91-11) is located immediately south of Monticello Fire Rescue Station and Tandem School. The site will be accessed from Mill Creek Drive and the extension of Founder Place, which currently provides access to the fire rescue station and Albemarle Health Care Center. Once built, the new school will be accessed from Founders Place and not connected to Route 20; however, accommodation is being made as part for site planning and development process to provide space/right of way for the future extension of Founders Place to connect to the new public road in the recently approved Galaxie Farm development and to Route 20, as recommended in the Southern and Western Master Plan (S+WNMP). The project’s design consultant will be designing the road, and the intent is to request bids for the road construction as an add-on component to the school construction project. If bids are favorable, the road would be constructed as part of the project.

Two parcels immediately to the east of this parcel are owned by the County (TMP 91-10 and TMP 91-8B) and are undeveloped (except one single family home on each parcel). The areas to the north and west of the site are developed primarily in public or institutional type uses, including public and private schools (Monticello High School [MHS], Mountain View Elementary School, Tandem Friends), public safety and private health facilities, and ACSA property/water tank. There are two single family homes on small lots on the southeastern boundary of the parcel and the recently approved Galaxie Farm development is located south and east of this parcel.

The property is mostly wooded and undeveloped, except for the one existing single-family house currently on the parcel. The parcel is sloping generally from high points on the western side of the property downward to the east. There are no FEMA 100-year floodplain, WPO stream buffers, or

designated preserved slopes on the property. There are several very small areas of designated Managed Slopes, but most are located outside of the area proposed for development.

PLANNING HISTORY:

Background of County Ownership:

This parcel and the two parcels immediately to the east are owned by the County (TMP 91-10 and TMP 91-8B) and were purchased in 1999/2000 period to inventory for future public uses as needed, including for possible school sites. Site studies were undertaken to evaluate the potential for siting an elementary and/or middle school on the properties., The site has been considered for several other possible public uses but has never been formally proposed as a final location for a public facility until the High School Center II (HSC II) was proposed in 2019. In December 2019 this parcel was conveyed to the Albemarle County School Board.

All Parcels County or School Bd. Owned

Parcels	Total Acres
TMP 91-11 (proposed school site)	15.8
TMP 91-10	8.33
TMP 91-8B	8.34
TOTAL	32.47

Prior CCP Review/Proposal:

County Schools previously proposed constructing a second High School Center (HSC II) on this site (CCP201900004, High School Center II). The High School Center facility is intended to provide both specialized learning opportunities and address high school student capacity issues (particularly at Albemarle and Western HS). The Planning Commission found that proposal in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan (June 23, 2020). HSC II is now proposed to be located on the Lambs Road Schools Campus, allowing this site to be used for the proposed elementary school.

The staff analysis and subsequent action by the Planning Commission on the prior CCP was specific to the HSC II facility; therefore, the County Attorney has determined that the elementary school proposal on this site requires a separate CCP review. A comparison of the major elements and impacts of the two schools is provided below.

Major Elements	So. Feeder Elementary	HSC II
Total building sq. footage	72,500	60,000
Student capacity	500	400
Total staff/employees	85	35
Outdoor fields/gym/large meeting-event space	Yes/yes/yes	No/no/yes
School hours (drop off – dismissal)	7:30-7:50 am – 3:15-4:00 pm	8:45 am–3:25 pm
Estimated buses	5 buses	5-6 buses total/day

SPECIFICS OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposed Center II will consist of the following:

- Up to 72,500 square foot building, with a capacity of up to 500 students (grades K-5th or paired with Mountain View Elementary). The site plan and building design are still under development, so site and building information is approximate.
 - Approximately 85 staff/employees during the day.
 - The site will contain play/ballfields and other recreation facilities typically associated with elementary schools.
 - The location and number of parking spaces on-site are to be determined.
 - Primary school hours from drop-off to dismissal time will be 7:30AM to 4:00 PM. Athletic/recreational activities and other after-hour functions will occur on the site, as typically associated with elementary schools.
 - Access to the school will be by public school bus (estimated 5 total), parent drop-off and pick-up, walking and biking (walking and biking will be dependent on final school district boundaries, which have yet to be determined).
 - Road access to the site is through the extension of Founders Place.
 - Site development will allow space for the future public road extension of Founders Place to a new public road segment in the Galaxie Farm development and then to Rt. 20. The design of the road is part of the consultant's design work and will be bid as an add on project. If bids are favorable the road may be constructed as part of the project
 - Space will also remain available around the school site to provide road access to the remaining County properties east of the elementary school site/property.
 - Sidewalks to the site and trails connecting to nearby areas will be provided. The final location, type and timing for these connecting trails is yet to be determined at this time but will be provided to appropriate adjacent developments and uses.
 - Traffic impact is estimated at 600-700 total trips per day.
- See Attachment B for the School's Application containing a project description and development concepts.

COMMUNITY MEETING

A community meeting was held at the 5th & Avon CAC on September 21, 2023. School staff presented the proposal. attendees consisted of most of the CAC members. No public attended the meeting.

- There were general questions about the operation of the facility (enrollment, hours, curriculum, etc.).
- Questions were asked about the operation of the school and relationship to Mountain View and location of the new school district boundary (not determined at this time).
- Concern was raised by some of whether this proposal was adequate to serve the longer term needs of the southern Urban Areas and surrounding rural area.
- Concern was expressed about traffic on the extension of Founders Place, with volume of traffic, cut-through traffic, and speeding issues potentially creating conflicts and safety issues with the school use. However, others noted that the inter-connection would be needed to better distribute traffic and lessen traffic impacts on Mill Creek Drive. Sidewalks and interconnection to other surrounding areas/development, and Mountain View School would be important to provide.
- Members suggested the new district boundaries for each school allow for some nearby neighborhoods to be able to walk to the schools.

Overall, there was general support for the location of the facility at this site. No formal action was taken.

IMPACTS TO INFRASTRUCTURE AND SURROUNDING USES

Staff do not anticipate significant impacts to the surrounding uses, given that the character of the area consists primarily of similar institutional, and school uses. Nearby residential areas may benefit from proximity to the school use and its related activities and facilities.

The site is served by public water and sewer. Fire rescue service is located immediately adjacent to the site. Infrastructure and other public services will not be significantly impacted by this proposal, except for transportation infrastructure.

The most significant impact to infrastructure will be from additional traffic generated from the site/use. Staff estimates that the school will generate between 600-700 trips per day (and potentially higher), with many occurring during the AM and PM peak hour periods. Mill Creek Drive currently carries 2,600 trips (2018 count, the most recent traffic data from VDOT) and has capacity to carry the additional trips, but. From Mill Creek, trips will be split between Route 20 and Avon Street. It is difficult to determine the distribution of traffic to either intersection until the school district boundaries are determined, but significant traffic delays now occur at morning and evening peak times at the Mill Creek Drive intersections with Avon Street and with Scottsville Road (Rt. 20). The Avon Street Corridor Study recommends construction of a roundabout at the Mill Creek Dr./Avon Street intersection. That project is not yet programmed for development. Construction of this school in this area may accelerate the need for transportation improvements in the area. The completion of Founders Place to connect to Scottsville Road/Rt. 20 would mitigate some traffic impacts to Mill Creek Drive/intersections but, again, the extent of the impact is difficult to determine until school district boundaries area established.

There are no critical resources identified for protection on this site—no FEMA 100-year floodplain, WPO stream buffers, preserved slopes, cultural/historic resource, or any other resource or features identified for protection in the Master Plan.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN/MASTER PLAN

Staff provides the following information for the Planning Commission to consider regarding the proposal's consistency (accord) with the County's Comprehensive Plan and the associated Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan (S + WNMP). The staff's comments (*italic print*) follow the relevant sections of the Comp Plan and Master Plan.

Comprehensive Plan:

Albemarle County Growth Management Policy: Promote the efficient use of County resources through a combination of:

- A. Protecting the elements that define the Rural Area:...and
- B. Promoting the Development Areas as the place where a variety of land uses, facilities, and services exist and are planned to support the County's future growth, with emphasis placed on density and high quality design in new and infill development.

Staff comment: This proposal is consistent with the County's Growth Management Policy by establishing a new public school facility and service in the Development Area, and meeting the intent found in "B." above.

Growth Management Goal: "Albemarle County's Development Areas will be attractive, vibrant areas for residents and businesses, supported by services, facilities, and infrastructure. Growth will be directed to the Development Areas..."

Staff comment: This proposal would advance the County's Growth Management Goals by establishing a new public school facility and service within the Development Area. However, staff is concerned that the location adjacent to another elementary and high school creates an imbalance in the provision of the facilities and services provided to the southern urban area, leaving the Fifth Street area with less convenient access to school, community center and park/recreation/field facilities and services. Lack of available and viable land for sale in the southern urban area, and the timing needs for providing additional capacity in the southern feeder pattern area, has led to the decision to use existing lands owned by County for the siting of this facility.

As noted previously, this school may generate a greater amount of traffic on the adjacent road network than the previously proposed High School Center II (HSC II) due to the larger school capacity, and the potential for a high level of student drop off/pick-up and corresponding level of bus service/use. There would be a greater impact to peak traffic periods as the traffic generated by the school would likely correspond with the other public schools in the area, while the previous HSC II operational hours were more staggered in relation to the other schools. The intersections of Mill Creek Drive and Avon Street and at Scottsville Rd (Rt, 20) currently experience high levels of delay at peak periods. The County may need to advance transportation improvements in this area to accommodate future growth and development in this area, including development of this school site.

Development Areas Objective 8: "Preserve natural systems which are shown for preservation on Master Plan Land Use Plans."

Staff comment: This proposal is not in conflict with this objective. There are no natural systems on this site that have been designated for preservation in the Master Plan.

Community Facilities Goal: "Albemarle County's facilities and services will be of high-quality and delivered in an environmentally responsible and cost-effective manner."

Objective 1, Strategies 1a-j: Continue to provide public facilities and services in a fiscally responsible and equitable manner.

Staff comment: This Community Facilities Objective and its supporting Strategies are intended to apply to all types of Community Facilities, including school facilities. Staff has reviewed this Objective and its relevant Strategies and finds that, overall, this proposal is consistent with these Strategies.

Regarding this Objective's broader guidance on fiscal responsible and equitable provision of service, staff notes the following:

- *The proposed site is County (School Board) owned and was acquired to provide a site for needed public facilities, including schools. The use of this land reduces the cost of acquiring a new site for the school. The School's Facilities staff have searched for other sites but could not find other available and viable sites within the southern development areas at this time.*
- *The location of the facility adjacent to Mountain View Elementary School raises the question of whether the school (and its additional functions as a park facility and community center) is being located in an equitable manner to serve the southern urban areas. The proposed location will result in three (3) public schools and one (1) private school being in one area, while other parts of the southern development areas have no such facilities. There is no specific guidance or standard in the Comp Plan that specifically states that a school should be in each Development Area neighborhood.*
- *There may be a need to advance planned road improvements in this area, along Avon Street, Mill Creek Drive, and Founder's Place (extension) to address traffic impacts from further development in this area.*

The staff's more complete assessment of the Strategies in this section can be found in Attachment C.

Objective 1, Strategy 1k: "Ensure that public buildings and spaces provided in the Development Areas conform to the principles of the Neighborhood Model."

*Staff comment: The proposal adequately addresses most of the Neighborhood Model Principals. See **Attachment D** for staff's assessment of the project's consistency with the Neighborhood Model Principals. Additional discussion of the Neighborhood Model Principals is also found in Attachment D.*

Objective 3: Provide physical facilities that enable the School Division to provide a high quality educational system for students in Albemarle County.

*Staff comment: This Community Facilities Objective and its supporting Strategies are intended to apply specifically to school facilities. Staff has reviewed this this Objective and its relevant Strategies and finds that this proposal is consistent with these Strategies. Staff's assessment of this section can be found as **Attachment C**.*

Southern and Western Master Plan:

Land Use Recommendation:

The Master Plan's future land use designation for this property is "Institutional." The Master Plan states that the Institutional designation "represents areas and uses which serve a public purpose..." The Master Plan states (p. 34) that the primary uses within this Institutional designation are "Schools, libraries, parks, major utilities hospitals, universities, colleges and ancillary facilities. It also covers public owned property which has not yet developed."

Staff Comment: The proposed elementary school use is consistent with the primary uses anticipated for areas designated for Institutional use.

"Center" Designation:

The general area around, and including, this property and the adjacent County owned parcels is also designated as a *Center* in the Master Plan. The Master Plans states the following about designated Centers:

“Centers, as described in the Neighborhood Model Design section of the Comprehensive Plan, are focal points or places where people congregate. A center may be a school or a park. It may be a major employment area or a shopping area. It may be a mixed-use area...” (p.28).

The Master Plan provides a brief narrative of each designated Center. The following is the narrative for this Mill Creek Center area (p.41):

13. The **Mill Creek Drive Center** (Figure 23) includes the Monticello Fire Rescue Station Monticello High School, the fire rescue station, and several large undeveloped parcels owned by the County. Civic uses are expected on the County-owned properties in the future; however, a collaborative community process is needed before the County decides on the uses for the properties. The process should result in a small area plan for the Center. Pedestrian and bicycle access will be essential in any future development. Attention will be needed to size, scale, and massing of buildings to create a pedestrian-oriented place for civic activities. Preservation of important environmental features such as streams, stream buffers, and preserved slopes is expected.



Staff Comments regarding the Mill Creek Center Narrative: The school use is consistent with the expectation for “civic uses...on the County-owned property.”

- *This narrative also states that “a collaborative community process is needed before the County decides on the uses for the properties.” A collaborative community process has not been undertaken to date. However, school uses have always been assumed to be part of the mix of uses within this Center area—the parcels were acquired in anticipation of the need to address school capacity/service needs.*
- *The proposed school will be sited on approximately 1/3 of the undeveloped land within the area encompassing the whole Center designation (approx. 46 acres). Use of this portion the “Center” area will not significantly impede the ability to do an effective and useful collaborative community planning for the remaining area.*
- *School staff anticipate undertaking a community engagement process throughout the programming and design process for the school.*

The section also identifies the importance of “pedestrian and bicycle access in any future development.” Sidewalk and crosswalk improvements are being incorporated into the road improvements on Founders Place and on-site. There is already existing sidewalk on west side of Founders Place and most of the east side of the road, up to and across the fire-rescue station site. The intent is to provide sidewalks to the site, and in and around the site. Multi-use paths are being considered and will ultimately be installed to connect to appropriate adjacent areas and uses.

The section further notes that “attention will be needed to the size, scale and massing of the buildings to create a pedestrian-oriented place for civic activities.” The school building has not yet been designed but efforts will be made to address these site and building design expectations. But, larger school buildings, and the typical size and massing associated with such structures, were anticipated uses within this center. The Founders Place road cross-section will include sidewalks, bikelanes, and street trees in tree lawns.

SUMMARY

Staff has identified the following factors which are favorable to this request:

1. The proposed facility is consistent with the Growth Management policy.
2. The proposal is, overall, consistent with Community Facilities Objectives/Strategies, and the Neighborhood Model principles for public facilities.
3. The proposed use is consistent with the land use designation of Institutional as described in the Southern + Western Neighborhoods Master Plan.
4. Approval of the school will not foreclose on the opportunity to undertake an effective and useful collaborative community process to plan for the Mill Creek Center area as recommended in the Master Plan.

Staff has identified the following factors which are unfavorable to this request:

1. A collaborative community process has not been undertaken as recommended in the Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan for the Mill Creek Center area.
2. The proposed school may generate sufficient additional traffic to accelerate the need for road improvements on Avon Street, Mill Creek Drive, and the extension of Founders Place to Rt. 20.
3. This location concentrates school and related park and community center functions in one DA neighborhood, leaving other southern and western DA neighborhoods lacking in these facilities.

Staff finds the proposed elementary school is, overall, in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan and the Southern + Western Neighborhoods Master Plan. However, the siting of the school in the area may advance the need for transportation improvements along the Avon Street and Mill Creek Drive corridors. This location does not create the most equitable distribution of school and associated parks/recreation and community center services within the development areas.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission find that the location, character, and extent of the proposed elementary school and public use thereof to be in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan for the reasons identified as favorable factors in this staff report.

ATTACHMENTS:

[Attach A: CCP2023-02 South Feeder Pattern Elementary School - Vicinity Map](#)

[Attach B: CCP2023-02 South Feeder Pattern Elementary School - Application: Project Description and Concept Plan](#)

[Attach C: CCP2023-02 South Feeder Pattern Elementary School - Assessment of Project to Community Facilities Objectives](#)

[Attach D: CCP2023-02 South Feeder Pattern Elementary School - Analysis of Project to Neighborhood Model Principals](#)