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**DATE:** December 8, 2021

**TO:** Planning Commission Chair and Commissioners

**FROM:** Jane Kansier, AICP, Consulting Planner  
Jessica Jagoe, City Planner

**SUBJECT:** Planning Case #21-028 – Public Hearing Required  
**Applicant:** ISD #621: Mounds View Public Schools  
**Property Location:** 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road  
**Request:** PUD Amendment

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## **Requested Action**

Mounds View Public Schools (“The Applicant”) the applicant is requesting an amendment to the approved Planned Unit Development (PUD) Amendment for Mounds View High School. The proposed amendment finalizes the road and safety improvements for Lake Valentine Road, and identifies the final design of the parking lot located at 1901 Lake Valentine Road.

## **Background**

### **1. Planned Unit Development**

At their May 22, 2019 and subsequently amended on April 27, 2020, the City Council approved Planning Case 18-014 for a Planned Unit Development with Mounds View Public Schools for Mounds View High School. The approved PUD allowed for several additions to the existing high school, a reconfiguration of the existing parking lot, and the use of the property at 1901 Lake Valentine Road, for parking and other school purposes. The amendment approved in April, 2020, added 14 additional conditions to the existing Planned Unit Development to address existing traffic and pedestrian safety issues based on the findings contained within the traffic study report, an evaluation of existing site conditions, and the Planned Unit Development Agreement. The terms of the PUD approval require the School District to implement safety improvements on Lake Valentine Road to address traffic and increased pedestrian crossings between the school building and the north parking lot, including installation of turn lanes and other access improvements, trail and sidewalk improvements, pedestrian signal, signage and striping modifications, and drainage and utility improvements.

The Applicant originally proposed two separate phases of traffic and pedestrian safety improvements for Lake Valentine Road. Phase 1 safety improvements, installed in 2020, included installation of a pedestrian traffic signal system, crosswalk markings, temporary painted center median, curb ramps and sidewalk pedestrian routes to the front of the school.

The Phase 2 traffic and pedestrian safety improvements were scheduled for construction in 2021 in order to allow the School District to acquire additional property from the State of Minnesota. This additional property would have allowed the relocation of the west entrance to the north parking lot to align with the drop-off/pick-up lot on the south side of Lake Valentine Road. Additional improvements include construction of a center median at the crosswalk, modifications to the south boundary of the north parking lot, and the construction of dedicated right turn lanes for westbound traffic accessing the east parking lot entrance and for the eastbound traffic accessing the drop-off/pick-up lot. The Applicant worked with the State of Minnesota for nearly two years on purchasing property, but has been unsuccessful in obtaining an easement or acquisition of land. The State indicated they were at least another year out in considering the sale of this land. As a result, the Applicant believes this option is no longer feasible and asked the City Council to consider a revised alignment. The City Council reviewed this issue at their May 17, 2021, workshop. The Council noted the use of the State property is preferred; however, they understand there is no guarantee the school district will be able to purchase that land. Safety is the most important factor. In August, 2021, the City Council approved an extension of the original Phase 2 construction to 2022.

## **2. Overview of Request**

The proposed amendment consists of two elements. The first is the final design of the road improvements to Lake Valentine Road. These improvements include a raised center median to complement the mid-block crossing and pedestrian traffic signal. The project also aligns access points and provides right turn lanes and left turn lanes. The second element is the final design of the north parking lot. The revised layout accommodates the revised access points, as well as a new surface, striping, parking lot islands and landscaping and lighting. The Applicant is requesting the Planning Commission consider the proposed amendments.

### **Application Review**

#### **1. 1355.04 Procedural Requirements for Specific Applications**

A public hearing for a PUD Amendment request is required before the request can be brought before the City Council. The applicant or its representative shall be given the opportunity to appear before the Planning Commission to answer questions or give explanations regarding the proposal. Upon completion of the public hearing and its study and consideration of the application, the Planning Commission shall submit its written report, containing its findings, conclusions, and recommendations as to the application, to the City Council.

Under Section 1355.06 subd.4, an application for an amendment shall be administered in the same manner as required for a new application. Any structural alteration, enlargement or intensification change in site plan, or similar change not specially permitted, shall require City Council action and all procedures shall apply as if a new application were being requested; provided, however, that

when such changes are deemed to be insignificant by the Zoning Administrator, the requirements of a public hearing may be waived.

## **2. *Phase II Roadway Improvements***

In the attached narrative (Attachment B), the Applicant describes the Phase II roadway improvements. These improvements are intended to expand upon pedestrian signal work completed in 2020 with a raised center median. This median will provide an additional level of safety for pedestrians crossing Lake Valentine Road. The project also aligns the access points on both the west side and the east side of the school site. A single intersection is proposed on the west side of the site, providing access to both the school drop-off/pick-up on the south and to the parking lot on the north. On the east, a single intersection provides access to the accessible parking lot on the south and the parking lot on the north.

Right turn lanes are also provided at both the east and west access points to improve traffic operations and to allow for any queuing needs to occur in a dedicated turn lane. Left turn lanes on eastbound Lake Valentine Road are provided for access at both entrances to the north parking lot. A left turn lane on westbound Lake Valentine Road is also provided for access into parent drop-off area on the south side of the road. Overall, the proposed improvements are expected to improve safety and mobility for pedestrians, Lake Valentine Road thru traffic, and traffic entering/exiting the Mounds View High School Site. Attachment C is a color rendering of the proposed improvements, while Attachment D includes the plans. These plans have been reviewed by the City Engineer and consultants.

## **3. *North Parking Lot Improvements***

The north parking lot, at 1901 Lake Valentine Road, was originally the site of the First Student bus garage. The Applicant is proposing to reconstruct the existing parking lot and stripe it for more efficient car parking. The existing building on the site will be used for School District maintenance equipment.

## **4. *Zoning Code Review***

### **A. *Landscaping – Section 1325.05, Subd. 1***

The Zoning Ordinance requires planting islands in parking lots to visually break up expanses of hard-surface parking areas, to provide safe and efficient traffic movement, and to define rows of parking. Planting islands must occupy at least ten (10) percent of the parking area, and must be edged with concrete curbs. Parking lot planting islands are also required to be a minimum of 150 square feet in area, be of appropriate width and length, and include at least one tree meeting the requirements of this ordinance.

The approved PUD plan does not include any planting islands, and the City Council granted flexibility to this provision. The proposed plan (Attachment E) includes some planting islands, equaling approximately 6% of the parking area.

### **B. *Drainage – Section 1325.05, Subd. 2***

The drainage plan, approved as part of the original PUD, directs stormwater runoff to a large stormwater pond located north of Lake Valentine Road, west of Janet Court, and east of the

existing bus storage building. This pond has been constructed, and should be sized appropriately to meet the drainage criteria. The parking lot grading plan must be approved by the City Engineer and the Rice Creek Watershed District prior to any construction.

### **C. Lighting – Section 1325.05, Subd. 3**

The plan proposes new lighting in the parking lot on the north side of Lake Valentine Road. The Applicant submitted a photometric plan (Attachment F) that indicates the lighting does not exceed 0.4 foot candles at the property boundary, which is consistent with ordinance requirements.

### **D. Parking Requirements – Section 1325.06**

The required parking for Mounds View High School is 622 spaces. Before construction of the additions and use of the north lot, the school included 517 parking spaces. The approved PUD plan included 500 parking spaces on the north lot, for a total of 710 parking spaces. The reconfiguration of the lot to accommodate the new driveways and the landscape island reduces the number of spaces on the north lot to 381 spaces, for a total of 591 parking spaces. Although this number is less than the required 622, it exceeds the original number of spaces provided. The additions to the school are not expected to generate additional parking demand on the campus.

The Applicant may be able to provide additional parking spaces on the site if the landscape islands are completely eliminated. The Planning Commission should comment on the tradeoff between landscaping and parking spaces.

## **Additional Review**

### *Public Works Director/City Engineer*

City Engineering staff has reviewed and commented on the design team's 60% plans. The team will be making revisions from those comments and will bring back 90% plans for City staff to review and comment. Before this project can move into construction the following permits are anticipated to be required:

- Arden Hills Grading and Erosion Control
- Arden Hills Right-of-Way
- Rice Creek Watershed District Stormwater Management
- MnDOT Approval

## **Findings of Fact**

The Planning Commission must make a finding as to whether or not the proposed application would adversely affect the surrounding neighborhood or the community as a whole based on the aforementioned factors. Staff offers the following findings for consideration:

1. The properties located at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road are located in the R-1 Single Family Residential District.
2. The proposed conditions when implemented will create a safer environment for pedestrian movement across Lake Valentine Road.

3. The proposed roadway improvements will improve traffic flow through the road section adjacent to the school.
4. With the applied conditions, the application is not anticipated to create a negative impact on the immediate area or the community as a whole.
5. The traffic and pedestrian study was reviewed as part of the April 2020 Amended PUD application by City and School District staff.
6. The City and School District staff concur on the proposed conditions and recommended improvements.

### **Proposed Motion Language**

Staff has provided the following options and motion language for this case.

1. **Recommend Approval with Conditions:** Motion to recommend *approval* of Planning Case 21-028 for an Amended PUD at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road, based on the findings of fact, as amended by the conditions in the August 4, 2021, Report to the Planning Commission:
  - a) The road construction and realignment as shown on the approved plans must be completed prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year.
  - b) All other conditions of the original Planned Unit Development and Amended Planned Unit Development shall remain in full force and effect.
2. **Recommend Approval without Conditions:** Motion to recommend *approval* of Planning Case 21-028 for an Amended PUD at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road, based on the findings of fact.
3. **Recommend Denial:** Motion to recommend *denial* of Planning Case 21-028 for an Amended PUD at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road, based on the following findings of fact: *findings to deny should specifically reference the reasons for denial and why those reasons cannot be mitigated.*
4. **Table:** Motion to *table* Planning Case 21-028 for an Amended PUD at 1900 and 1901 Lake Valentine Road for the following reasons: *a specific reason and/or information request should be included with a motion to table.*

### **Public Notice and Comments**

Notice was published in the *Pioneer Press* on November 26, 2021. Notice was prepared by the City and mailed to property owners within 1,000 feet of the subject property.

### **Deadline for Agency Actions**

The City of Arden Hills received the completed application for this request on December 1, 2021. Pursuant to Minnesota State Statute, the City must act on this request by January 30, 2022 (60 days), unless the City provides the petitioner with written reasons for an additional 60-day review period. With consent of the applicant, the City may extend the review period beyond the initial 120 days.

## **Attachments**

- A. Location Map
- B. Applicant's Narrative
- C. Road Realignment (Color Rendering)
- D. Road Realignment Plans
- E. North Parking Lot Plan and Landscape Plan (2 Sheets)
- F. Photometric Plan