



**Planning and Zoning Commission**

**STAFF REPORT**

AGENDA

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**TO:** CASA GRANDE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

**FROM:** Laura Blakeman, City Planner

**MEETING DATE:** July 6, 2017

**REQUEST**

**DSA-17-00041: Request by Brian Johns, Associated Architects** for the following land use request for Grande Innovations Academy located at 950 N. Peart Rd.:

- 1. Major Amendment to the approved Major Site Plan/Final Development Plan** to add a gymnasium and classroom building with associated site improvements.

**APPLICANT/OWNER**

Brian Johns  
6 E. Palo Verde Street, Suite #1  
Gilbert AZ 85296  
P: 480-964-8451  
Email: brian@associated-architects.com

Casa Grande Investments, LLC  
775 W. 1200 N Suite 100  
Springerville, UT 84663

**HISTORY**

April 16, 1973: The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 459 annexing said property into the City of Casa Grande.

November 2, 1987: The site was zoned R-3 (Multi-family Residential) with the official adoption of the Zoning Ordinance and map.

November 21, 2005: CGPZ-203-005: The City Council approved the Minor General Plan Amendment to change the land use from High Density Residential to Medium Density Residential #1.

CGPZ-204-005: The City Council approved the Zone Change request from R-3 (Multi-family Residential) to PAD (Planned Area Development) for The Reserve at Peart.

- February 2, 2006: CPGZ-048-006: The Planning and Zoning Commission approved the Preliminary Plat for a 51-lot (Z-lot product) subdivision.
- December 7, 2006: CGPZ-282-006: The Planning and Zoning Commission approved the housing product.
- January 16, 2007: Resolution No. 2825.141: The City Council approved a Final Plat for The Reserve at Peart. A financial guarantee was never provided, therefore the Plat expired.
- March 7, 2013: DSA-12-00104: The Planning Commission approved the Major Amendment to an approved PAD Zone/Preliminary Development Plan. The request amended the Reserve at Peart PAD to create the Odyssey PAD and the amendment involved, changing the land use from residential (51 z-lots) to a commercial/school use.
- March 7, 2013: DSA-13-00009: The Planning Commission approved the Major Site Plan/Final Development Plan for the Odyssey Preparatory Academy.
- July 15, 2013: The Map of Dedication was approved by City Council for the Peart Road right-of-way.
- February 27, 2014: DSA-13-00058: The Final Landscape Plan for Odyssey Preparatory Academy was approved by Staff.

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	
<b>Site Area</b>	8.6 acres
<b>Zoning</b>	PAD (Planned Area Development)
<b>General Plan Designation</b>	Community Center
<b>Building Height</b>	14 ft. 3 portable classroom buildings 31 ft. Gymnasium
<b>Parking:</b>	<p>a. One and one-half (1.5) spaces for each classroom, library, lecture hall and cafeterias, (30 classrooms x 1.5 = 45 spaces).</p> <p>Additional classrooms(6 classrooms x 1.5 = 9 spaces One (1) space for each 21 square feet of area available for public assembly if fixed seats are not provided. (Gymnasium 4,983 sq. ft x 1 /21 = 237 spaces</p> <p><b>Total Required = 291</b> <b>Total Provided = 150 existing</b> <b>141 new event parking stalls = 291 total provided</b></p>

## SITE AERIAL

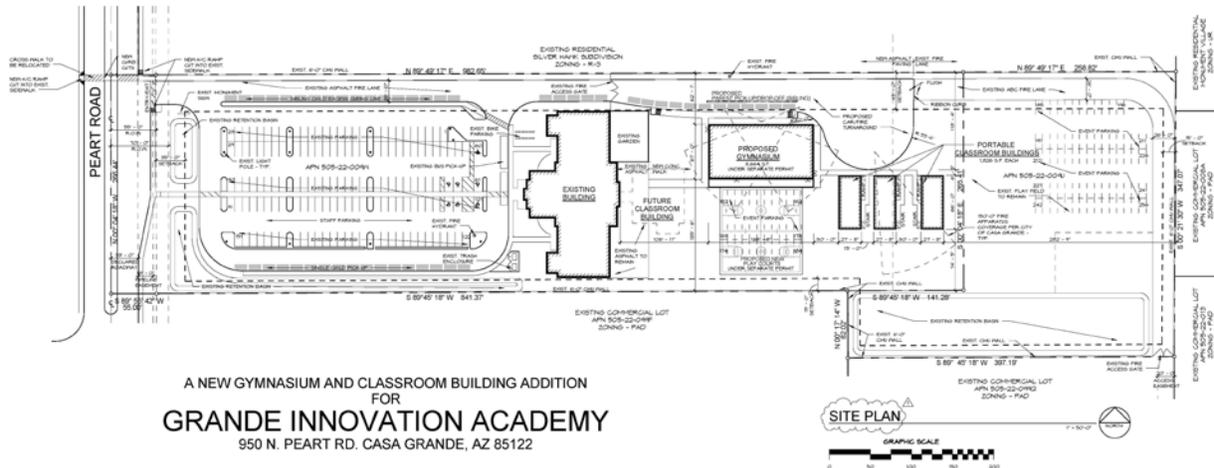


### Overview

Per Arizona Revised Statutes, public schools are not required to comply with the City's land development regulations, other than building and fire codes. In 2016 ARS 15-189.01.B, was modified to grant charter schools the same exemption (See Exhibit A). Accordingly, because State Law now exempts charter schools from complying with zoning regulations, the following report is being presented as informational:

Grande Innovation Academy is currently operating with 455 students. The school is planning an expansion to bring to increase the enrollment from 455 students to 600 students. In order to accommodate their student population growth, the school is constructing additional facilities on their site.

The proposed expansion includes the addition of three new modular classroom buildings to accommodate 6 classrooms and a 4,983 square foot modular gymnasium building. These new buildings will be located approximately 106 feet to the east of the existing charter school building.



Prior to Grande Innovation Academy claiming their “exemption” status, City Staff performed a preliminary review of the project. Staff determined that the project appears to be in compliance with zoning codes. However, concern remains over the impact the additional traffic generated by the school will have on the creation of traffic congestion on Peart Rd.

Based on the Traffic Impact Analysis that was approved in 2013, with the Final Development Plan, the following site improvements were done to mitigate the traffic issues:

1. A school crossing was completed on the north side of the intersection of Peart Road and 9th Street. A sidewalk was constructed connecting this school crossing heading north along the east side of Peart Road to the main school campus.
2. A school crossing guard utilizing roll out signs with proper signing and marking are a part of the daily school routine.
3. A southbound “No U-turn” sign was installed on Peart Road at 9th Street.

With the above measures in place and the internal circulation traffic flow designed on site and managed by the school, there are existing traffic issues that are present today. The main concerns are as follows:

- Cars are parking along 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Peart at the Fire Station in the afternoon at pick up times
- Cars are backing up into the right turn lane of the site at pick up times
- Cars are making U-turns at 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Peart

Based on the proposed expansion and the above issues, a recent Traffic Impact Analysis was submitted to address these issues.

According to the Traffic Impact Analysis submitted by CivTech, dated June 19, 2017, the school has recently improved their circulation plan. Currently, the school provides two (2) queuing lanes traversing counter-clockwise around the perimeter of the parking lot for single child pick up in front of the school. The school recently added two (2) queuing lanes traversing counter-clockwise around the raised sidewalk at the northern perimeter of the parking lot for siblings' pick-up.

The available queuing length of the queuing lanes is 1,125 feet for single child pick-up and 1,225 feet for siblings' pick-up for a total of 2,350 feet. The pattern allows access for staff and visitors to the parking lot.



Total Available Queue Storage 2,350

The school plans to add a second bus as well as provide a separate loading/unloading area for buses. Kindergarten students will be dismissed ½-hour earlier than the remainder of the students which will allow some parents to pick-up their child and leave before the school's main pick-up occurs.

The school currently provides one (1) bus and plans to add a second bus with the expansion, including a separate bus loading/unloading area and turnaround. Each bus has the potential to transport up to 160 students (80 each), decreasing the number of parents in the queue. For analysis purposes, 80 students are discounted from the total queue (40 for each bus), which reduces the recommended internal storage length from 2,250 feet (90 vehicles) to 1,950 (78 vehicles).

With a total of 2,350 feet of queue storage available, the site would normally be anticipated to accommodate the expected on-site queueing during drop-off and pick-up operations. Recent observations have indicated that the school queuing currently works acceptably, the increase in enrollment is expected to extend the single child pick-up queue onto Peart Road. This is likely due to vehicle interaction between the vehicles exiting the single child pick-up queue and the sibling/carpool queue.



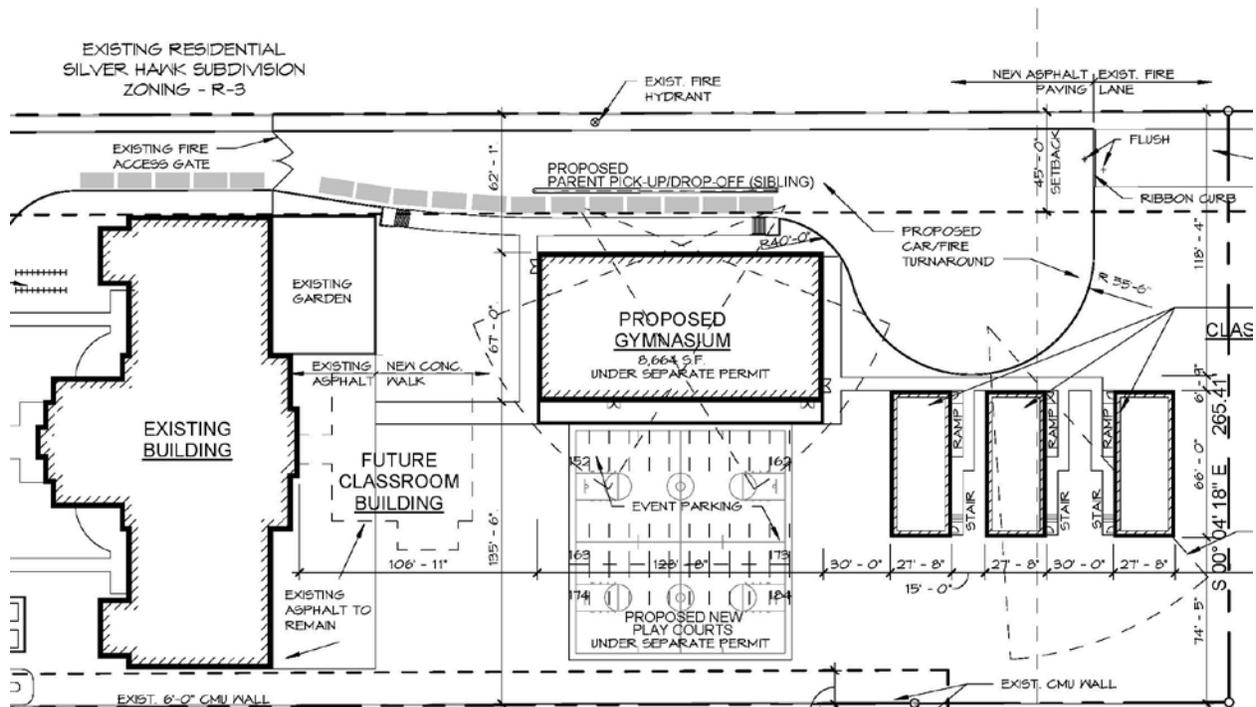
Total Available Queue Storage 2,700

In meeting with school officials and their consultants City staff recommended that the single-child pick-up area be moved to the proposed bus loading area (circulation path extended to that location). This suggested change would result in a single-child queue length of 1,500 feet, sibling/carpool queue length of 1,200 feet and a total of 2,700 feet. The school has modified their site plan to reflect this relocated child drop-off/pick-up location. This is a net change of on-site vehicle queue storage of 350 feet. The 2,700 feet of available on-site storage is anticipated to accommodate the expected on-site queueing during drop-off and pick-up operations.

Prior to the recent installation of the sibling pick-up route during the previous school year, the vehicle queuing would occasionally extend out of the site and onto Peart Road creating a potential traffic hazard. Additionally, parents were observed parking elsewhere to drop off students, including in front of the nearby fire station. A school official indicated that they have contacted the manager at The Home Depot adjacent to the school and he agreed that parents were welcome to park at The Home Depot and walk their kids along the sidewalk to the school (no road crossing necessary).

Mr. Eitel, City Traffic Engineer, suggested that a possible solution would be to create a secondary access via a new back exit by paving an existing unpaved emergency access. With this potential exit, some of the vehicles that currently make U-turns could exit more in the direction they intend without making U-turns. The potential back exit route cannot directly connect to any public road, however, as the potential exit passes through parcel(s) that are privately owned.

Level of Service Analysis report shows that, with a signal cycle of 110 seconds, the intersection of Peart Road at Florence Boulevard currently operates at acceptable overall levels of service of LOS C and no movements operating at less than LOS D.



Staff finds that based on the site re-design and the information compiled by the Traffic Impact Analysis; it appears that the traffic issues will be addressed with the school expansion.

As Staff previously mentioned, the project is not subject to zoning code regulations, however, Staff wanted to brief the Commission on the proposal as well as update the Commission on the traffic issues and how they are being addressed.

**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION/COMMENTS**

**Notification**

City Staff sent out notices to property owners within 300 feet of the subject site for the surrounding property owners to be aware of the school's expansion.

**Inquiries/Comments**

As of the date of writing this Staff Report, Staff has not received any feedback regarding this project.

## **Exhibit A**

### 15-189.01. Charter schools; zoning; development fees

A. Charter schools shall be classified the same as public schools that are operated by a school district for the purposes of zoning and the assessment of zoning fees, site plan fees and development fees, including any required hearings or applications. Municipalities and counties shall allow a charter school to be established and operate at a location or in a facility for which the zoning regulations of the county or municipality cannot legally prohibit schools operated by school districts, except that a county or municipality may adopt zoning regulations that prohibit a charter school from operating on property that is less than an acre in size and that is located within an existing single family residence zoning district.

B. Except as provided in subsection D of this section, a charter school is subject to the same level of oversight and the same rules, hearing requirements, application requirements, ordinances, limitations and other requirements, if any, that would be applied to and enforced against a school that is operated by a school district. A municipality or county shall not enforce, or attempt to enforce, any ordinance, procedure or process against a charter school that cannot be legally enforced against a school district. Voluntary compliance of a school district in the zoning regulations of a municipality or a county does not result in the application of those zoning regulations to a charter school.

C. The construction and development of the charter school facility shall be subject to the building codes, including life and safety building codes, of the municipality, county or state in which the charter school facility is located.

D. Municipalities and counties shall adopt procedures to ensure that hearings and administrative reviews involving charter schools are scheduled and conducted on an expedited basis and that charter schools receive a final determination from the municipality or county within thirty days after the beginning of processes requiring only an administrative review and within ninety days after the beginning of processes requiring a public hearing and allowing an appeal to a board of adjustment, city or town governing body or board of supervisors.

E. Except as provided in subsection F of this section, no political subdivision of this state may enact or interpret any law, rule or ordinance in a manner that conflicts with this section.

F. Notwithstanding subsections A and B of this section, a charter school shall not be established or operated on commercial or residential property in an age restricted community that is located in unorganized territory.

G. A charter school may authorize a third party to apply to a municipality or county as the representative of that charter school for any application or action prescribed in subsections A through D of this section.