

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Building & Planning Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Campus Plan Ordinance

Prepared by: Christopher Leswing, Director, Building & Planning Department

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I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

No action is requested of the Board at the time. The proposed ordinance amending the Subdivision & Land Development Code to establish plan submittal requirements and application procedures for campus plans should be discussed.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

Any amendments to the Subdivision & Land Development Code must be adopted by the Board of Commissioners.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

N/A

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

Wednesday's agenda includes proposed revisions to the impervious surface standards for institutional uses contained within Article IV and a draft ordinance amendment to the existing Subdivision & Land Development Code (SALDO) establishing processes and procedures for approval of Campus Plans.

The Draft SALDO Ordinance is intended as a temporary measure to permit the entire Zoning Code to move forward for advertisement while providing regulations for Campus Plans in the SALDO until a full rewrite of the SALDO can be completed later this year. The proposed temporary Campus Plan requirements are an awkward fit for the existing SALDO and will be better crafted to fit the revised SALDO.

The following narrative summarizes the intent and concepts that are proposed in the temporary ordinance and that will continue to be refined with the adoption of the updated SALDO.

Background

The majority of educational institutions with the Township were approved by the Zoning Hearing Board as Special Exceptions to the underlying residential zoning. As such, educational institutions were subject to the same amount of imperious surface and regulated by the same bulk area standards as surrounding single-family homes.

Several educational institutions developed prior to the establishment of zoning and or lot coverage regulations. As such, the location of buildings and amount of lot coverage on certain older campuses may be non-conforming to the existing and/or proposed district regulations.

Educational campuses function differently than single-family homes, which are customarily occupied by a single principal building and accessory structure (house/garage), containing a no more than three unrelated persons living as a family unit. The lot coverage of single-family homes provides for a principal building, accessory structures vehicular access (driveway) and hardscaped outdoor entertainment area. Educational campuses customarily contain multiple non-related users distributed over a larger area for broad purposes of education, athletics and cultural enrichment. Lot coverage of educational campuses provides for multiple principle and accessory buildings, access and parking for multiple vehicles and hardscaped areas for pedestrian connectivity, gathering and social interaction.

The non-paved areas of single-family homes and educational campuses also customarily differ in composition and use. A traditional low density suburban single-family yard sets the principal building back from the public street and provides natural space and breathing room with neighboring homes of similar style and character. The suburban yard supports occasional low levels of activity by the few members of the household. The non-paved areas of educational campuses also provides setting and content for the multiple buildings, but also serves to mitigate the higher intensity of the educational institution from the surrounding lower intensity residential neighborhood. The non-paved areas of educational campuses may also contain athletic fields and recreational spaces.

Intent

The Institutional Educational District seeks to establish reasonable bulk area standards to promote the logical modernization of educational uses within the Township, while ensuring that future changes to institutional campuses do not create unreasonable externalities for their established low-density residential context.

Approach

‘Adjacency’ is a concept introduced into the Draft Zoning Ordinance to establish a base level of impervious surface to regulate an educational institution in relation to its surrounding neighborhood context. Adjacency assumes that Educational Institutions both have and require impervious surface levels above the surrounding low intensity residential context. Adjacency respects the context of the neighborhood in which the institution is located.

The Draft Code also includes an ‘Maximum Cap’ which establishes the maximum level of impervious coverage that an educational institution campus may contain through the bulk area requirements of the Zoning District. The Maximum Cap recognizes that while educational institutions require higher levels of impervious surface than single family homes to properly function that nonetheless a maximum acceptable level of impervious surface is required to ensure that higher intensity institutional use remain in harmony with their surrounding residential content.

The Draft Code also introduces the concept of a ‘Campus Plan’. A Campus Plan is a planning/regulatory framework to permit institutions to exceed permitted levels of impervious surface established through adjacency without exceeding the Maximum Cap. The Campus Plan provide additional impervious surface provided that the design of the improvements resulting from the additional activity is properly located to reduce externalities. The Campus Plan establishes standards where additional impervious may be located and also establishes criteria to guide the effective placement and replacement of campus elements.

A key component of the Campus Plan is the ‘Residential Protection Area Plan’ that establishes the location where the level of impervious surface may not exceed the level established via the adjacency in the Zoning Code. The Residential Protection Area Plan ensures that while additional impervious surface is granted via the Campus Plan to an entire campus the total maximum level of impervious surface may not exceed the base adjacency level in the Residential Protection Area. The Residential Protection Area Plan includes standards requiring that higher levels of activity be shifted a minimum of 100’ from minor (residential scaled) roads and/or single- family residences. The goal is to locate higher intensity uses away from lower intensity uses and towards roads and uses that can more appropriately accommodate higher levels of activity.

Campus Plan Process

Campus Plans are structured as an incentive within Article IV of the Draft Zoning Code. The submission requirements and approval criteria are contained within the Subdivision and Land Development Code (SALDO). Campus Plans are required when an institution changes its Primary Use and may be required when an institution seeks impervious surface above the levels established through adjacency in Article IV.

Campus Plan Elements

Campus Plans include the following:

- I. ***Plan of Existing Campus Features and Neighboring Context*** showing sufficient information of natural and built features on the campus being reviewed as well as the location of buildings and natural features within 200’ of the campus which may be impacted by the proposed and future changes to the campus.
- II. ***Residential Protection Area Plan*** showing the area(s) towards the center of the campus and closer to primary roads where levels of impervious surface may exceed the levels established under Article IV. The protected areas along the perimeter must comply with the impervious limits in the abutting residential district. The Residential Protection Area Plan functions as an overlay layer to the Plan of Existing Campus Features and Neighboring Context.
- III. ***Future Development and Redevelopment Plan*** showing the location of future buildings, fields, landscaping and other campus improvements proposed to be added or reconfigured through the campus planning process. The Future Development and Redevelopment Plan shows the location of future physical and programmatic improvements on the entire campus in relation to the surrounding residential context.

IV. ***Phasing Plan*** showing the potential timing of construction and/or reorganization of campus elements.

V. ***Quantitative Data*** necessary to evaluate proposed levels of existing and future activity necessary to plan the proper arrangement of campus elements.
Quantitative Data includes:

- a. Summary of existing use and activity for campus buildings and elements necessary to evaluate and plan for the appropriate design of future campus activities/development to be in harmony with surrounding context.
- b. Traffic, Parking and Mobility Plan showing the amount, design and location of vehicular parking necessary to accommodate existing and proposed uses. The Traffic, Parking and Mobility Plan also shows locations of existing and proposed pedestrian and multi-use pathways as well as the logical destination points of such pathways within the campuses and along campus edges. The Traffic, Parking and Mobility Plan is intended to enhance vehicular and non-vehicular mobility for the campus and surrounding neighborhood while providing linkages through the campus to logical community institutional destinations such as transit facilities, commercial areas and community amenities. The Traffic, Parking and Mobility Plan should also show existing and proposed sidewalks, trails and bike/scooter infrastructure.

Campus Plan Standards

Campus Plan standards are intended to ensure that additional and reconfigured development and campus activities resulting from the grant of additional impervious surface achieves the following:

1. The location of future improvements and the reconfiguration of existing facilities/activities in conjunction with future improvements will be coordinated to mitigate unreasonable externalities; and
2. Provides at least one of the following:
 - a. Preserves opens spaces, trails and viewsheds indicated within the Township's Official Map and Scenic Viewsheds Study; or
 - b. Promotes community connectivity by providing public access through the campus to destinations established on the Traffic, Parking and Mobility Plan or shown on the Township's Official Map.
 - c. Promotes reasonable public use of playfields and or recreational facilities as determined by the Board of Commissioners.

The Board of Commissioners has the authority to require adjustment to the location of future improvements and activities to minimize unreasonable externalities resulting from the additional impervious surface while ensuring that the additional impervious surface promotes community connectivity/use of recreational facilities without compromising open space elements of the established residential context.

V. **Impact on Township Finances:**

This ordinance will have no impact on Township finances.

VI. **Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends the Board of Commissioners discuss the proposed ordinance. Staff is seeking input on the appropriate increase in impervious surface that should be provided when an applicant submits a Campus Plan. Staff will incorporate amendments to this ordinance and plan to bring it forward on August 5th to obtain approval to authorize the advertisement of the ordinance for a September hearing so the campus plan requirements are adopted at the same time as the zoning code update.