



COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

FROM: Diana Wheeler, Community Development Director
Prepared by: Kathi Cook, Boards Administrator

SUBJECT: MP-11-03/CU-11-01 –
Windward Master Plan/Amana Academy

PLANNING COMMISSION: August 4, 2011

CITY COUNCIL: August 22, 2011

RECOMMENDATION

Approve MP-11-03/CU-11-01 – Windward Master Plan/Amana Academy, request to add “Academic School” as a conditional use for Pod ‘14A’, subject to the following conditions:

1. **The “Academic School” use shall be limited to this individual parcel and shall not be a use allowed throughout Pod 14A.**
2. **School shall be limited to a maximum of 750 students. Classes shall be limited through grade 8 with no high school classes offered.**
3. **Signage shall comply with the City of Alpharetta Sign Regulations required for an “office building” as well as Windward signage guidelines. In addition, one wall sign shall be allowed on the existing building.**
4. **No driveway access from Windward Parkway onto the property shall be permitted.**
5. **If school traffic and stacking is not contained within the property, School shall work with the City to mitigate traffic impacts to Edison Drive and Windward Parkway. Mitigation measures may include additional channelization for drop-off and pick-up activities, increasing stagger between middle school and elementary school use, and/or other traffic demand management techniques, subject to Engineering Department approval.**
6. **Playground shall not be visible from Windward Parkway and shall be located where it will have the least impact to specimen trees.**

REPORT-IN-BRIEF

The subject property includes an existing building on a 15.91-acre parcel located within Pod ‘14A’ of the Windward Master Plan development. The applicant, Amana Academy, is requesting a master plan amendment that will allow a school as a permitted use on Pod ‘14A’.

DISCUSSION

The subject property is located on Windward Parkway at Edison Drive in Pod 14A of the Windward Master Plan development. Windward is bounded to the west by GA 400, to the east by Douglas Road, to the north by the Forsyth County line and to the south by Webb Bridge Road. The original master plan was approved by Council in 1980 at which time land use designations that include single family, multi family, office and retail were assigned on seventy-four (74) individual use pods throughout the project.

Pod 14A has been designated as a "Business Center" within the Windward Master Plan. The Pod is 44.9-acres in size with permitted uses as follows:

"Office-Institution, research and development, office-professional, light industrial and hotel conference center zoning categories."

The City's Unified Development Code permits a school use within CUP zoning with conditional use approval. A conditional use for a health club was approved in 2001; however, the property has been vacant for four years.

The site plan depicts a 75,000 square foot three-story existing building on property fronting Windward Parkway. The building was previously occupied by Health Images and is configured with office and warehouse space. The property is 15.91 acres in size and partially wooded. There is a stream bisecting the property immediately west of the building fronting Windward Parkway and includes a wetland/flood plain area.

The proposed use for the property will be educational and extra-curricular activities associated with public education. Amana Academy is an authorized public school by the Fulton County School system and operates as a combined elementary and middle school through 8th grade. The building is 75,000 square feet and will be used for educational classes, library and a gym for physical education. They plan to convert a portion of the property for an outdoor classroom and playground. The application states that up to 750 students may be enrolled in the future.

Amana currently operates in the Alpharetta Square Shopping Center on Main Street. The school desires to move to a permanent location that will accommodate enrollment growth projections of 750 students. The current enrollment is 500 students. The school is also concerned with safety at its current location since the parking lot is shared.

TRAFFIC

Estimated traffic counts provided by the applicant are worst case, as requested, and do not take into consideration the busing of approximately 140 students or existing carpools. A total future enrollment of 750 students' state that 678 cars will enter/exit the site during (school) AM peak hours. They further estimate 453

cars would enter/exit the site during (school) PM peak hours. If the property were used for an office use of 1 person per 150 square feet there would be 500 employees. Currently only 255 parking spaces exist on the site however; additional parking could be constructed to accommodate office employees. The AM peak hour for the school is from 7:00 AM to 8:00 AM which impacts half of the existing typical AM peak for the area which is from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM resulting in a similar impact as an office development. The application states that the school plans to bus a small portion of the student population to the facility which will lesson the overall number of trips as well as established carpools. The PM peak hour will be from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM which will not impact the typical area PM peak hour. Of course, there will be no lunch hour impact as well.

The A & R Engineering Inc. report received on July 28, 2011 states the following on page 20:

“It should be noted that the PM peak hour for Amana Academy is between 3:00 PM and 4:00 PM, which does not coincide with the adjacent street PM peak hour traffic. Most of the Amana Academy traffic will have exited the site before the PM peak hour traffic rush, while an office use will impact both the typical AM and PM rush hour traffic. The proposed charter school land use will have negligible impact during the PM peak hour and will only impact approximately half of the morning peak period. Staff typically arrives before 7:30 AM, middle school students arrive before 7:45 AM and elementary students arrive before 8:00 AM. Based on the information above, the morning peak hour 8:15 – 9:15 will be minimally impacted and the PM peak rush hour will not be impacted.”

CONCURRENCES

According to UDC 2.3.7, a conditional use otherwise permitted within a zoning district shall be considered to be compatible with other uses permitted in the district, provided that due consideration is given to the following objective criteria at a public hearing and satisfactory provisions or arrangements are made for:

1. Access into and out of the property with regard to traffic and pedestrian safety, volume of traffic flow, and emergency vehicles, as well as the type of street providing access;
2. The extent to which refuse areas, loading and service areas, off street parking, and buffers and screening are provided on the property;
3. Ensuring that the conditional use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of the environment or of other property in the immediate vicinity or diminish and impair property values within the surrounding neighborhood;
4. Ensuring that the conditional use will not increase local or state expenditures in relation to the cost of servicing or maintaining neighboring properties;

5. Ensuring that the conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development of surrounding property for uses predominant in the area; and
6. Ensuring that the location and character of the conditional use is considered to be consistent with a desirable pattern of development for the city, in general.

The school has grown significantly since its inception and subsequently outgrown the current area in the shopping center. Filling an existing vacant building helps reduce the amount of excess office space which benefits property values.

Other City Departments were consulted on this request for the proposed school use. The Fire Department stated that the school must comply with Fire Codes with special attention to Life Safety Code 14.2.12 which dictates room locations for kindergarten and first grade students in multi level buildings.

The Engineering Department also had comments regarding existing stream buffers and flood plain location limiting areas for playground and garden use. The playground area will require a land disturbance permit to determine location outside of required buffers and flood plain as well as a tree survey. They also reviewed the traffic flow diagram submitted with the application and stated the 70 car queuing capacity will be sufficient to ensure cars do not stack onto Edison Drive.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN

The applicant notified surrounding property owners of their application and intent for the property. They also met with the Windward Business Center Association. The Association voted unanimously to support the school use. Staff has received a letter from the Windward Community Services Association stating the Board Member concerns regarding the application (attached). They expressed concerns about traffic, the precedent of amending the Windward Master Plan, the appropriateness of this use at this location, as well as concerns for an expansion of the school.

The applicant also met with the Windward Homeowners Association on July 28. They received comments and concerns regarding traffic, school operations, size of the school and potential impacts of a possible high school.