

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

Public Hearing Date: July 15, 2021

Item #: PZ2021-825

ST. PIUS X CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL FIELD LIGHTS - VARIANCE

Project Name: St. Pius X Catholic High School Field Lights
Owner: Catholic Education of North Georgia
Applicant: Blaise Wannemacher, St. Pius X Catholic High School
Proposed Development: Outdoor, pole-mounted lights for baseball field and practice sports field
Requests: One (1) variance
Site Address: 2730 Shallowford Rd
Parcel Number: 18 245 05 032
Staff Recommendation: **DENIAL** of one (1) variance request



Current Zoning: Village Residential (VR) – This zoning district is intended primarily for single-family attached and detached residences, two-family residences, and multifamily residences with related accessory uses, supportive nonresidential uses, open space, and amenities.

Current Use: Recreational sports fields and a surface parking lot

Case Number: PZ2021-825

City Council Work Session (Public Hearing): July 15, 2021

City Council Regular Meeting: July 20, 2021

Surrounding Land Use: North – Corridor Commercial (CC): Surface parking lot owned by the same owner as that of the subject property
 South – VR: St. Pius X Catholic High School
 East – CC: Commercial businesses
 West – Neighborhood Residential 1 (NR-1): Single-family detached residences

Applicable UDO Standards:

Supplemental Use Standards	Requirement	Provided
Recreational and sports field lighting distance to residential uses or the ROW	60 ft	Pole A2: 24 ft from SFR use Pole B2: 28 ft from SFR use Pole P1: 20 ft from ROW Pole P2: 18 ft from ROW

Site Description:

The site consists of a 6.07-acre double-frontage lot with a practice sports field in the south section fronting the north side of Frontier Trail, and a baseball field including a multi-sport practice field north of that. The west property line abuts six lots zoned NR-1 containing single-family residential uses for its entire length. The property contains a surface parking lot with 39 parking spaces in the northeast section fronting Shallowford Rd. The site is entirely enclosed by a 6-ft-tall chain link fence on Shallowford Rd and Frontier Trail. The property slopes down from east to west and there is extensive vegetation along the west lot line. Bollard lighting just above ground level currently exists to illuminate the pedestrian path on the west side of the site. There are currently no sports field lights to illuminate large areas of the fields.

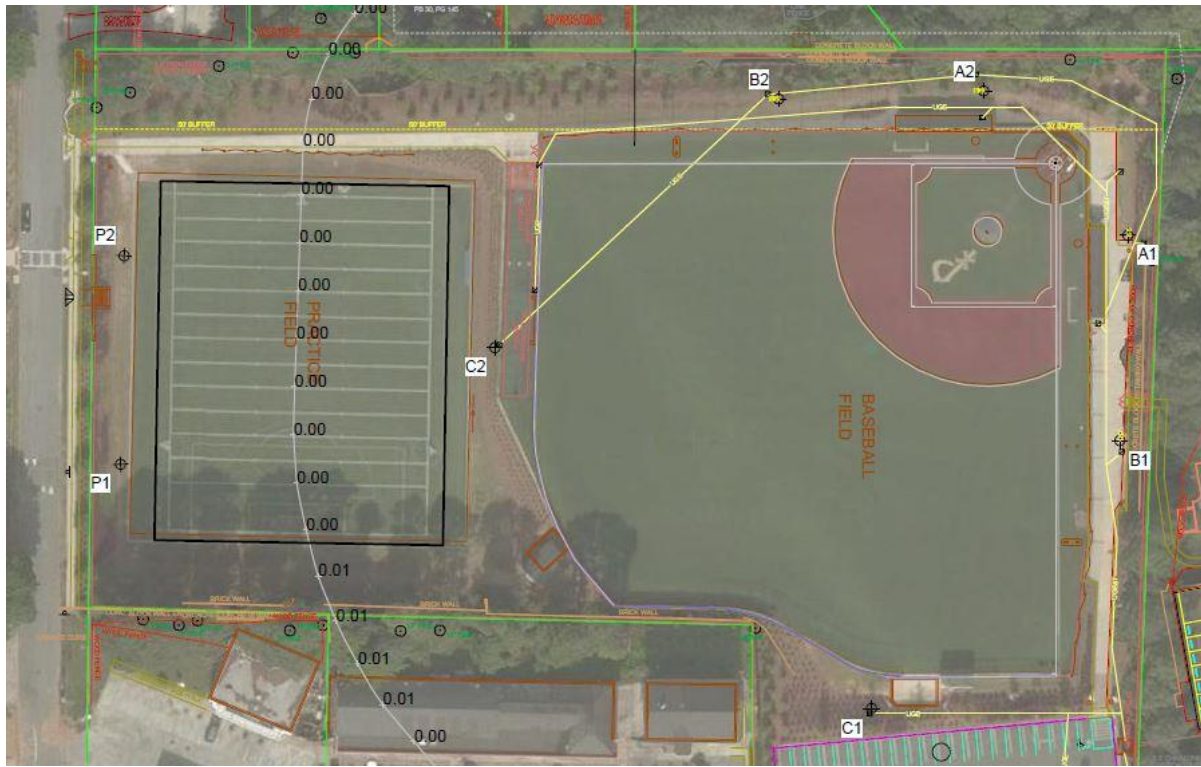
History of the Property:

The property was developed with sports fields for St. Pius X Catholic High School around 2011. The site previously contained an apartment complex. The school purchased the property in 2009. The school also installed the surface parking lot to the north of the site, in 2015, after demolishing a hotel.

Description of the Proposed Project:

The applicant proposes to install outdoor lights around the recreational sports fields that front Shallowford Rd and Frontier Trail. Eight light poles are proposed, and are identified as follows: two infield poles (A1, A2) on the baseball field that are 70 ft in height with lower walkway lighting at 40 ft in height on the same pole; four outfield poles (B1, B2, C1, and C2) that are 80 ft in height, with the walkway lighting on B1, B2, and C2; and poles P1 and P2 at 60 ft in height with the walkway lighting on P1.

Poles A2, B2, P1, and P2 require a variance. A2 and B2 are located within the 60 ft setback adjacent to the NR-1 zoned properties, and P1 and P2 are located within the 60 ft setback of the right-of-way along Frontier Trail, as shown below.



Applicant’s Variance Request:

The applicant requests approval of a variance from the following regulation of Title 2 of the UDO:

1. Variance from Sec. 230-31(e)(3)(a)(3) to allow light poles for recreation fields to be within 60 ft of residential properties or public right-of-way.

Per the review and approval criteria found in Sec. 280-32(a), the Mayor and City Council may authorize variances from the provisions of the UDO only after making the following findings:

- a. There are extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the particular property in question because of its size, shape or topography;**

There are no extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the particular property in question because of its size, shape, or topography, other than the fact that it is 6 acres. The site does slope down from Shallowford Rd to the west lot line, but it is not extraordinary or exceptional. The size and shape are rather different from the surrounding properties because the parcel is approximately 6 acres and is a non-corner lot with street frontage on both Frontier Trail and Shallowford Rd.

It is, however, an extraordinary condition that a high school baseball field is located on this lot, given what the dimensions of the subject lot and the standard dimensions of a

high school baseball field are. This is evidenced by the unusual shape that the outfield fence takes near centerfield.

b. The application of this zoning ordinance to the particular piece of property would create an unnecessary hardship;

The application of the zoning ordinance would continue a hardship that has existed since the property was developed, which is that of baseball players and their spectators only playing during daylight. The recreation fields were installed several years ago, and an attempt was made to install pole-mounted lighting at that time.

The variance request to install the light poles within 60 ft of the residential property is for the two poles, A2 and B2, along the first base line on the west side of the property. Those light poles would be 24 ft and 28 ft from the residential properties, respectively. For the request regarding the poles in relation to the right-of-way, It appears there may be alternatives to the proposed location of the poles.

c. Such conditions are peculiar to the particular piece of property involved;

The conditions are peculiar to the particular piece of property involved.

d. Such conditions are not the result of any actions of the property owner; or

The conditions are the result of actions of the property owner. There appears to be the ability for the applicant to install the light poles in locations that would not require a variance, particularly the ones encroaching the 60-ft setback from the residential properties.

e. Relief, if granted, would not cause substantial detriment to the public good nor impair the purposes or intent of this zoning ordinance.

Relief from the UDO requirement that recreational and sports field lights are at least 60 ft from residential uses or the right-of-way would be detrimental to the public good and impair the intent of the UDO. Aside from the possibility of light trespass, there is the visual nuisance the poles would create in the skyline behind the residential neighborhood.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on the analysis of this application, using the standards and criteria found in Chapter 280 of the UDO, Staff recommends the action below in variance application [PZ2021-825](#).

Staff recommends **DENIAL** of the following variance request:

1. Variance from Sec. 230-31(e)(3)(a)(3) to allow light poles for recreation fields to be within 60 ft of residential properties or public right-of-way.

Should Council motion to approve the variance request, Staff recommends it be with the following exhibits and conditions:

1. The development shall be constructed in substantial conformity with Exhibit A: Plan Sheet Set, dated received June 14, 2021.
2. The applicant shall ensure that additional evergreen trees are planted to shield imposing light on adjacent properties.
3. The applicant shall meet all other outdoor lighting requirements including full cut off fixtures for light poles A2 and B2 that abut the residential properties.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Exhibit A: Plan Sheet Set, dated “Received June 14, 2021”

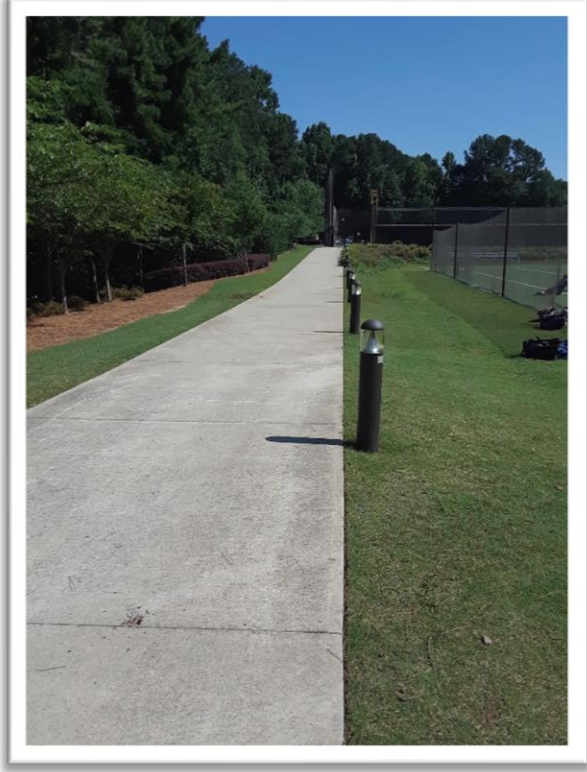
Attachment 2 – Application

Attachment 3 – Maps

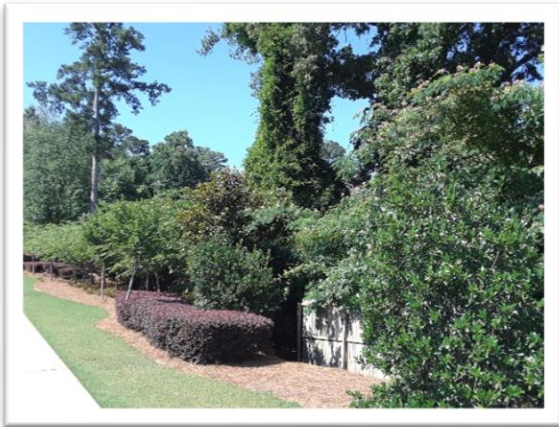
Site Visit:



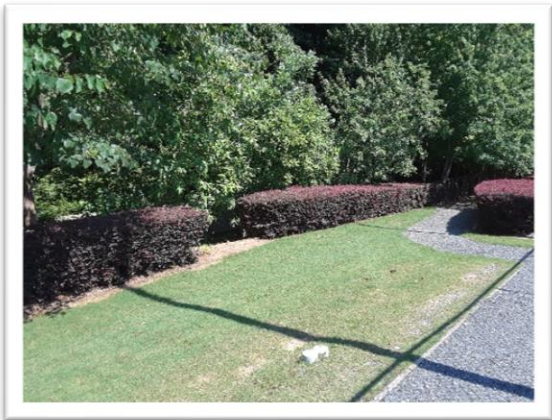
Practice field light location



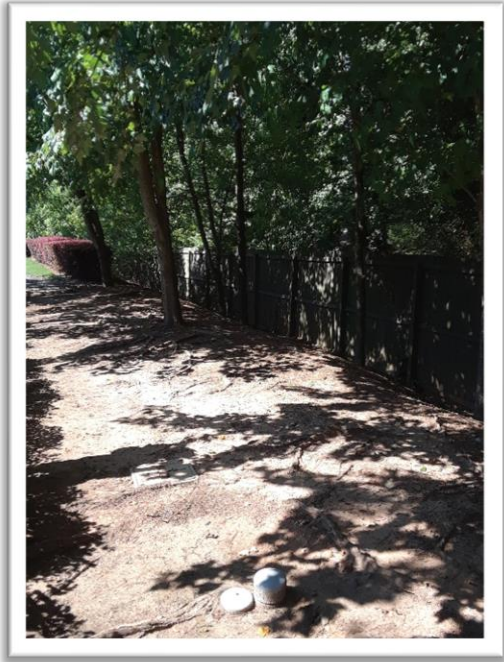
Existing pathway site lighting



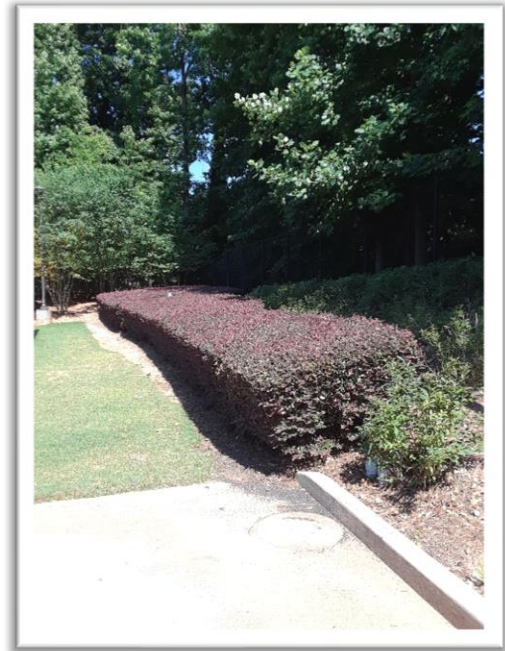
Existing vegetation at west property line



Proposed light pole location near west lot line



Proposed light pole location on west lot line



Proposed light pole location on north lot line