

Project Narrative – Alverno Heights Academy Sports Courts

Revised

Note: The Design Review Permit application process requires a project narrative which was developed to review single family and multi-family developments. The narrative has been customized to discuss the findings in relationship to the design of the proposed sports courts.

The proposed sports courts were approved by the City Council as part of a comprehensive master plan for the school, which included a series of required findings dealing with the adequacy of the site, access to public streets, a comprehensive environmental review, which determined that the master plan reduced any remaining impacts to a level of insignificance. The school currently has one sports court, which is located in the Michillinda parking lot. City Council Resolution No. 23-13, which approved the amendment to the Alverno Heights Academy Master Plan, eliminates the sports court use of the Michillinda parking lot in July of 2024. The proposed sports courts outlined the Master Plan were proposed to eliminate the noise impacts from the use of the sports court area in the Michillinda Parking Lot and to find a suitable area on campus to accommodate recesses, physical education classes, sports practices, and games.

The school operates under a conditional use permit which states that the master plan is designed to *“facilitate the development of two Sport Courts to help reduce noise levels.” (Finding 4.1)* In order to further understand the potential noise impacts and if additional mitigation measures were necessary, the school commissioned a third noise study, which is included as part of the design review application. The school wanted to ensure that the proposed sports courts complied with the City’s Noise Ordinance.

Design Review Findings

- 1) The proposed sports courts are consistent with the general plan, zoning code and applicable design standards. The proposed sports courts were approved by City Council Resolution No. 23-13, the Alverno Heights Academy Master Plan Update. The school’s land use designation is Institutional and the school is located in the Institutional Zone. Schools are conditionally permitted in the Institutional Zone.

- 2) The proposed sports courts will not unreasonably interfere with the use, possession, and enjoyment of the surrounding and existing properties. The proposed sports courts will be located in the southwest portion of the campus, in the location approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council. The proposed sports courts are buffered on the Highland Avenue and Michillinda Avenue property lines by existing mature trees, shrubs, and vegetation. The proposed sports courts are buffered on the east by a large hedgerow of mature Italian Cypress trees and to the north by the Villa Del Sol D'Oro. In order to improve the Highland perimeter, the school installed a series of box trees on this perimeter last year.

The campus is surrounded by residential land uses on all four sides of the campus. The closest residential home on Highland Avenue is located approximately 75 feet from the sports courts, while the closest residential home on Michillinda Avenue is located approximately 730 feet from the proposed sports courts. A noise study completed by Resonance Acoustics found that the proposed sports courts may exceed the 5-minute noise level criterion of 70dBA at the south campus property line (along the north sidewalk of West Highland Avenue). Noise levels across the street at the residence on Highland Avenue will comply with the 1-minute and 5-minute noise criteria.

- 3) The height, bulk, scale, mass, and siting, of the proposed sports courts is compatible with the Villa and the adjacent residential neighborhood. The proposed sports courts require a small retaining wall at the south side of the courts, in order to minimize the cut and the fill to produce a flat play surface.
- 4) The proposed sports courts do not visually overpower the neighborhood, since it is located at grade and is buffered by existing trees, shrubs, and vegetation.
- 5) The proposed sports courts create no view impacts since the courts are constructed at grade and will not block views of the neighbors. The noise levels are not unreasonable and are similar to noise levels at other schools in Sierra Madre.
- 6) The proposed sports courts were carefully designed to be coherent with the Alverno Heights Academy Master Plan and future classroom construction.
- 7) The proposed sports courts are not seeking relief from the development standards and the courts comply with the approved master plan.

- 8) The school and the proposed sports courts are not located in a residential zone as specified in Sections 17.20.27 C, 17.30.045 B, or 17.28.070 of the Design Review findings and are therefore not subject to these requirements. The proposed grading plan preserves two protected oak trees on the perimeter on Highland Avenue. One protected oak is proposed for removal since it is located in the middle of the proposed courts. The proposed courts cannot be reasonably developed without the removal of the tree. Replacement trees are proposed to be installed on the Michillinda Avenue perimeter. The graded areas will be replanted with drought tolerant plants and drip-irrigation as detailed in the concept landscape plan, consistent with the school's approved master plan.

Submitted by:

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