



# CITY COUNCIL MEETING STAFF REPORT

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
SUBMITTED BY: KATHI COOK  
DRAFTED BY: MICHAEL WOODMAN

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## I. AGENDA ITEM TITLE: MP-17-04/V-17-09 ADVANCED

CITY COUNCIL: APRIL 24, 2017

This item was heard at the April 12, 2017 Planning Commission meeting. No one spoke in favor or in opposition to the request. After discussion, the Planning Commission recommended to approve this item. Vote (7-0)

## II. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve MP-17-04/V-17-09 AdvancED subject to the following conditions:

1. Office density in Cousins Westside Pod Q shall be limited to 18,500 square feet per acre.
2. Property shall be developed substantially in accordance with submitted plan prepared by Warren Epstein & Associates, dated 1/20/2017.
3. Building elevations shall be substantially similar to the existing office building and shall be designed and constructed to meet LEED standards.
4. Applicant shall make an effort to determine if any existing landscaping (ornamental trees and shrubs) can be spaded and relocated on-site to enhance the maturity level of landscaping at time of project completion.
5. Applicant shall set aside sufficient land within the undeveloped wooded area to accommodate 160 parking spaces. At such time that the use of the building(s) change to a traditional office use or City Staff identifies a parking shortage, the property owner shall construct the necessary parking spaces to support the use of the property as determined by Staff.
6. Replace any dead, dying or missing landscape material in required landscape strips and landscape islands.

## III. REPORT IN BRIEF:

The applicant, AdvancED, is requesting an amendment to the Cousins Westside Master Plan Pod Q to allow for the construction of a 3-story, 40,000 square foot office building on 5.5 acres. The master plan amendment includes changes to previous conditions of zoning to increase the allowable office density in Pod Q, as well as site plan modifications. A parking variance is requested to reduce the required parking. The subject property is located at 9115 Westside Parkway.

## DISCUSSION

The submitted request, if approved, will allow a 3-story, 40,000 square foot office building on a 5.5-acre property. The proposed office density is 18,500 square feet per acre. The subject property is owned by AdvancED and is currently developed with a 3-story, 60,000 square foot office building. Cousins Westside Master Plan Pod Q is zoned CUP (Community Unit Plan) and is approved for office use at a density of 12,000 square feet per acre. The subject property is located at 9115 Westside Parkway on the east side of Westside Parkway, just north of Maxwell Road.

Surrounding properties are zoned CUP and are subject to the Cousins Westside Master Plan, except for the Honda property located to the east is zoned LI (Light Industrial). Master Plan pods surrounding the property include Westside Villas to the west, vacant land and the Westside City Park to the south and North Point Research Park to the north. The vacant land to the south, which is also part of Pod Q, is approximately five (5) acres and is owned by AdvancED. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan designation of the property is Corporate Office, which allows the proposed office use.

A master plan amendment (MP-09-03) was approved on April 27, 2009 for Cousins Westside Pod Q to allow a 60,000 square foot office building for AdvancED on 5.5 acres. Pod Q was originally entitled for a 223,400 square foot community center. A parking variance was granted allowing for a parking reduction of 10% or from 240 to

216 parking spaces. Conditions of zoning required that a park be improved and dedicated to the City on the south side of the applicant's property. The applicant requests the following changes to the Cousins Westside Master Plan Pod Q conditions of zoning:

1. Office use shall be added as a Primary Use to the northern 5.5 acres of Pod 'Q' and density shall be limited to ~~12,000~~ 18,500 square feet per acre, subject to the issuance of a Land Disturbance Permit and commencement of construction of the proposed AdvancED building by 04/27/2011. If this development does not occur, then property uses shall be limited to those in effect for Pod 'Q' prior to this approval.
2. Northern building site plan shall be developed substantially similar to site plan submitted prepared by Warren Epstein & Associates, dated 1/20/2017, with limited parking between Westside Parkway and the building.

The applicant requests a variance from UDC Section 2.5 Parking and Loading, to reduce the required number of parking spaces from 376 to 182 spaces. The UDC requires one (1) parking space per 250 square feet of office use. Therefore, the proposed office building would require an additional 160 parking spaces. The use of the subject property is unique and does not function as a typical office building. The majority of users of the facilities are transported to the property by way of shuttle service and do not drive to the property. Staff has conducted several site visits at various times of the day and has found the utilization of the existing parking lot to be approximately 30%.

AdvancED is a school accreditation business and represents 34,000 public and private schools and district across the nation and worldwide. AdvancED is a non-profit organization that conducts rigorous, on-site external reviews of Pre-K – 12 schools and school systems to ensure that students realize their full potential. The applicant states that the new office building will be LEED Gold Certified to match the existing building.

#### **SITE PLAN ANALYSIS**

The applicant's site plan depicts the existing 60,000 square foot AdvancED office building, as well as a 3-story, 40,000 square foot new office building at the rear of the site within the existing parking lot. An aerial bridge crossing is proposed to connect the two (2) office buildings at the 3<sup>rd</sup> level. 18 parking spaces will be provided underneath the new office building. However, 34 existing parking spaces will be displaced by the new office building and a rain garden at the southeast corner of the property. Previous conditions of zoning required a 15' setback and undisturbed buffer at the rear of the property adjacent to Honda. The applicant's site plan maintains the undisturbed buffer at the rear of the property.

#### **VARIANCE REVIEW CRITERIA**

The City of Alpharetta Unified Development Code Article IV, Section 4.5.3 outlines the criteria set forth for granting a variance. The ordinance specifically states..."a variance may be granted in whole or in part, or with conditions, in such individual case of unnecessary hardship upon a finding that":

- (1) There are extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the particular piece of property in question because of its size, shape or topography; or

*Response: There are no extraordinary or exceptional conditions pertaining to the subject property with regard to its size, shape or topography. However, the applicant's use does not function like a traditional office use and requires much less parking. The applicant could develop the office building and/or parking on the adjacent 5-acre parcel to the south, but they would likely impact many of the trees on that property.*

- (2) The application of the Ordinance to this particular piece of property would create an unnecessary hardship; or

*Response: The applicant could provide the required parking on the adjacent 5-acre property to the south. However, the applicant's use does not generate the need for the Code-required parking and would result in the removal of trees and a significant increase to the overall impervious area of the site.*

(3) There are conditions that are peculiar to the property which adversely affect its reasonable use or usability as currently zoned; or

*Response: The applicant's use does not function like a traditional office use and requires much less parking. The applicant could develop the office building and or parking on the adjacent 5-acre parcel to the south, but they would likely impact many of the trees on that property.*

(4) Relief, if granted, would not cause substantial detriment to the public good or impair the purpose and intent of the City of Alpharetta ordinances.

*Response: Approval will not cause substantial detriment to the public good, if conditions are in place requiring land be set aside for future parking needs.*

## **CONCURRENCES**

Staff has reviewed the applicant's proposal and finds that it can generally support the request for master plan amendment and variance. The applicant's use does not operate like a traditional office use and therefore, requires less parking. The applicant states that the majority of employees/visitors are transported to the site via shuttle service and do not drive to the property. Staff has conducted several site visits at various times of the day and has found the utilization of the existing parking lot to be approximately 30%. Construction of parking spaces deemed to be unnecessary would result in the removal of several trees on the 5-acre property to the south, as well as a significant increase in the overall impervious area. The applicant proposes parking underneath the proposed office building, which helps minimize the overall impervious area. If approved, staff recommends that land be set aside to accommodate future parking needs should the use change or if a parking shortage is identified.

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLAN**

The report submitted by the applicant states that property owners within 500' were contacted regarding the applicant's intent. The report states that no comments were received.

## **IV. ATTACHMENTS:**

- Site Plan