

**CITY OF COPPELL
PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

STAFF REPORT

CASE NO.: PD-287-SF-7, Coppell Middle School North & Denton Creek Elementary

P&Z HEARING DATE: December 15, 2016

C.C. HEARING DATE: January 10, 2017

STAFF REP.: Gary L. Sieb, Director of Planning

LOCATION: 120 & 250 Natches Trace Drive

SIZE OF AREA: 24.77 acres of property

CURRENT ZONING: SF-7 (Single Family-7)

REQUEST: A zoning change request to PD-287-SF-7 (Planned Development-287-Single Family-7), to allow an existing 8 foot-tall chain link fence with barbed wire at the top at Middle School North and elimination of the masonry requirement for the existing shade structure vertical poles at Denton Creek Elementary.

APPLICANT: Coppell Independent School District
Louis Macias
1303 Wrangler Circle
Coppell, Texas 75019
(214) 496-8056
Email: lmacias@coppellisd.com

HISTORY: There is not a lot of development history on Middle School North. The Site Plan and Plat were approved in 1998. In July-August 2014, a 1,570-square-foot concession building was approved south of the football field, on the north-west side of Denton Creek Elementary. In August of 2015, the Director of Planning administratively approved a 600-square-foot patio structure at the elementary school which met all code requirements, including brick columns.

HISTORIC COMMENT: There is no historic significance associated with this property.

TRANSPORTATION: State Highway 121 is built as a six-lane divided tollway. The subject property is adjacent to the east bound one-way service road. East Natches Trace Drive is a residential collector street built within a 60-foot right-of-way.

SURROUNDING LAND USE & ZONING:

North: S.H. Highway 121; Vista Ridge retail; PD-228-HC (across 121)

South: Andrew Brown Central Park; TC, Town Center

East: single family residences; PD-165-SF-7

West: Coppell Office Village; PD-238-HC, and HC

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

Coppell 2030, A Comprehensive Master Plan, designates this area as Residential Neighborhood with school use noted.

DISCUSSION:

This is a zoning request generating substantial conversation in the community. A number of comments need to be stated before staff presents its recommendation on this application, therefore; there are several facts that need to be recognized as we review the request. First, the zoning ordinance allows barbed wire in two zoning districts: A, Agriculture and LI, Light Industrial (Code of Ordinances, Sec. 9-2-8). Middle School North is currently zoned SF-7. Second, the eight-foot chain link fence with barbed wire at the top was constructed without procurement of a building permit, as was the shade structure which does not comply with the 80% masonry column requirement at Middle School North and Denton Creek Elementary, respectively. Third, the school district currently has similar fencing at Middle School West Leslie Field, and the football field at Coppell High School. Fourth, Leslie Field is zoned C, Commercial, and the High School is zoned PD, Planned Development. We can find no fence permits being issued for either facility. Fifth, eight-foot fencing without barbed wire is located at the baseball fields and softball fields at Middle School West and the baseball practice field at the High School.

The events that led up to this request were initiated when it was brought to the city's attention that fencing with barbed wire was being installed at Middle School North. Building Inspection shut the project down stating that no building permit had been procured. The school district stated that Leslie Field and the High School had similar fencing and school personnel were ignorant of violating any permit procedures. It should be stated here that CISD has subsequently applied for a building permit, and is requesting PD zoning on Middle School North to establish a specific development condition that allows the fence, barbed wire, and non-masonry shade structure poles to remain as constructed. The issue of Leslie Field and High School fencing being constructed without permit is not a part of the decision-making process for this zoning case—this hearing is exclusively for barbed wire fencing and masonry column elimination at Middle School North and Denton Creek Elementary.

Now, let's discuss the merits of this zoning request. Staff will analyze the absence of masonry columns on the shade structure first. In the past we have modified the requirement for masonry columns on shade structures, permitting them without masonry if they cannot be seen from the public right-of-way. Indeed, we have cooperated with the middle school site and allowed such structures on the west side of the building where their locations are not clearly seen from the street. In this case, however; it is noted that this structure is clearly seen from the street and across from residential structures. The shade structure should comply with zoning requirements and masonry columns are recommended to be added to the structure for compliance with code.

Of more immediate attention is the presence of barbed wire. To the school district's credit, once known a building permit had not been submitted, the district

immediately applied for a change of zoning (the PD) to allow the chain link/barbed wire to remain. In that regard, the district is attempting to make things right and the PD request can include a condition allowing the fencing to remain. Because of security issues and potential damage to the expensive turf surface, the district elected to construct the fencing now in place. During the applicant's presentation, reasons for the fence construction will be explained. In staff discussion, the district pointed out the reasoning behind the fence—potential vandalism of the field, cost of the turf and potential repair expenses, unauthorized use of the field, problems with monitoring who and when the field was used, altercation between trespassers, etc. Staff believes those are points that warrant consideration in weighing the merits of this case. What would help reduced the “prison” appearance stated by many respondents to the zoning notice, would be the addition of landscape screening on the east side of the fence adjacent to the residential neighborhood across the street. Trees, and foundation landscaping would do much to ameliorate the “prison” appearance. On the north side adjacent to the 121 access road, trees would also help to reduce the barbed wire appearance.

To sum, the school district constructed a chain link/barbed wire fence without obtaining a building permit. They did the same with construction of the shade structure. When they were advised building permits were required and the process to allow them legally was through Planned Development zoning, they submitted the zoning application being heard tonight. There is no question the district constructed these structures in violation of city code. However, in an attempt to become legal, they made the right decision and applied for zoning. The district needs to protect its assets and the expensive playing fields (some say over \$1M spent in developing these artificial turf fields) constructed at tax payer expense. Their solution for protection is the fencing now in place. Staff understands that and would recommend approval of the request for Planned Development zoning with the following conditions:

1. Construct masonry columns that comply with code around the existing shade structure that faces the residential neighborhood.
2. Allow the chain link/barbed wire fencing to remain but plant over-story trees 40 feet on center and low foundation landscaping along the east side of the fencing adjacent to the residential neighborhood to the east.
3. Plant over-story trees at 40 feet on center along the north side of the property adjacent to the playing field fencing.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION:

Staff is recommending APPROVAL of this zoning request with the following conditions:

1. Construct masonry columns that comply with code around the existing shade structure that faces the residential neighborhood to the east.
2. Allow the chain link/barbed wire fencing to remain, but plant over-story trees of minimum three-inch caliper, at 40 feet on center and low foundation landscaping along the east side of the fencing adjacent to the residential neighborhood to the east.
3. Plant over-story trees of minimum three-inch caliper at 40 feet on center along the north side of the property adjacent to the playing field fencing.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Recommend approval of the request
2. Recommend disapproval of the request
3. Recommend modification of the request
4. Take under advisement for reconsideration at a later date

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Overall Site Plan (Sheet C1)
2. Detail of Eight-foot fence and barbed wire detail (Sheet C2)
3. Shade structure flame retardant letter dated May 11, 2017 (request of Fire Department)