



TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE

66 MAIN STREET, WEST ORANGE, N.J. 07052

Department of Planning and Development

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TO: Planning Board Members

FROM: Paul Grygiel, AICP, PP, Township Planner

DATE: October 30, 2023

RE: **PB 23-10/GBSJ, LLC t/a Goddard School**
Block: 83; Lots: 1 and 5.01; Zone: B-2
289 Mount Pleasant Avenue
Application for Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan Approval with Variances to
Expand Existing Childcare Center

INTRODUCTION

The applicant is proposing modifications to expand an existing childcare center by modifying and expanding an existing building on an adjacent property. The two properties will be consolidated as part of the application. Additional modifications are proposed to the site layout. The Planning Board approved an application in 2017 to permit the existing development.

LAND USE

The subject property is located on the northeastern corner of the intersection of Mt. Pleasant Avenue and Prospect Avenue. The area surrounding the subject property is developed with a mix of land uses, which include office, retail, residential and utility. An electrical substation is located to the west across Prospect Avenue, the Essex County Country Club is located to the southwest and a large vacant parcel is located to the south across Mount Pleasant Avenue. Offices are located along Marcella Avenue, Mount Pleasant Avenue and Prospect Avenue.



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Communications towers and ancillary facilities are located on properties along Marcella Avenue. Other commercial uses are located along Prospect Avenue.

SUBMISSIONS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SIGNED BY</u>	<u>DATE/REVISION</u>
Site plan (9 sheets)	Gerard P. Gesario, P.E.	10/18/23
Architectural plans (2 sheets)	Matthew B. Jarmel, AIA, MBA	10/19/23
Traffic & Parking Assessment Report	Matthew J. Seckler, PE, PP, PTOE and John R. Corak, PE	10/20/23

VARIANCES REQUIRED

SECTION/REQUIREMENT	PERMITTED /REQUIRED	PROPOSED
25-7.1 Minimum front yard	30 feet	12.5 feet
25-7.1 Minimum side front yard	25 feet	3.0 feet
25-7.1 Maximum lot coverage	60%	66.1%
25-12.2b.1 Minimum number of parking spaces	58 spaces	45 spaces

DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The subject property is located at the intersection of two main roads: Mount Pleasant Avenue and Prospect Avenue. Mount Pleasant Avenue is a County road (Route 577) adjacent to the subject site, and is a State highway to the west of Prospect Avenue (Route 10), while Prospect Avenue is a County road (also Route 577 north of Mount Pleasant Avenue). A childcare center is located on Lot 5.01, along with a metal transmission tower and related improvements. Photographs of existing site conditions are attached.

Existing site improvements include an 8,800-square foot, one-story building and a 5,600-square foot outdoor fenced-in play area on the northeastern portion of the site (i.e. adjacent to Marcella Avenue). A total of 45 parking spaces are currently provided in two parking lots: an upper lot at the same elevation as the building, and a lower lot accessed by a driveway and stairs. Twenty-two spaces are located in the upper parking lot, and the remaining 23 spaces are in the lower lot. Vehicular access to the site is provided by a right-in, right-out access driveway on Mount Pleasant Avenue and a two-way driveway on Marcella Avenue. The existing childcare center on this lot was approved by the Planning Board in 2017 and has been operating for five years.



Lot 1 is developed with a three-story building and multiple radio transmission towers. The facilities do not appear to be in operation currently. The towers would be removed as part of this application.

The applicant is requesting approvals to renovate and expand the existing building on Lot 1 to serve as an annex to the existing child care center on Lot 5.01. The proposal includes the construction of two additions to the building, one at the north end and one near the southwest corner. Three classrooms would be located within the building, one on each floor. The total capacity of the classrooms would be 70 children. An elevator and three stairways are proposed to be added to comply with applicable codes and regulations.

A new crosswalk is proposed across the site driveway closest to Marcella Avenue to connect the two buildings. An existing trash enclosure at the southeast corner of the upper parking lot is proposed to be replaced by one in a similar location.

The existing Lot 5.01 is 54,492 square feet (1.25 acres) in area. Lot 1 is 3,852 square feet in area, which when added to the existing Lot 5.01 would result in a new total lot area of 58,344 square feet (1.34 acres).

The application was reviewed at the October 10, 2023 meeting of the Township of West Orange Site Plan Review Advisory Board (SPRAB). The applicant has addressed nearly all of the issues raised at the SPRAB meeting through revised and supplemental application materials. The following site plan and design issues discussed at this meeting remain outstanding:

- Mount Pleasant Avenue frontage: A concern was noted regarding cleanup of trash discarded from passing vehicles, and the potential change to low maintenance materials in this location. A suggestion was offered for the Township or County to provide anti-littering signage.

Testimony should be provided at the public hearing regarding this topic.

An applicant for a “c” variance must comply with the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) at N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70c. A “c” variance applicant must demonstrate that there is either undue hardship or practical difficulty associated with the strict application of the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in connection with this specific piece of property; or that one or more purposes of zoning would be advanced by the deviation and the benefits of granting the variance for this specific piece of property would substantially outweigh any detriment. In addition, a variance applicant must address the “negative criteria,” and affirmatively demonstrate that the variance can be granted “without substantial detriment to the public good” and “without substantial impairment to the intent and purpose of the zone plan and zoning ordinance” of the municipality.





Existing building to be converted viewed from Marcella Avenue



Tower above existing building to be converted



Existing building to be converted viewed from upper parking lot on subject property



Upper parking lot on subject property



Lower parking lot on subject property