

VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF AUTISM (VIA)

Expansion at Hillsdale Drive

Special Use Permit Application Narrative for Private School and Stand Alone Parking

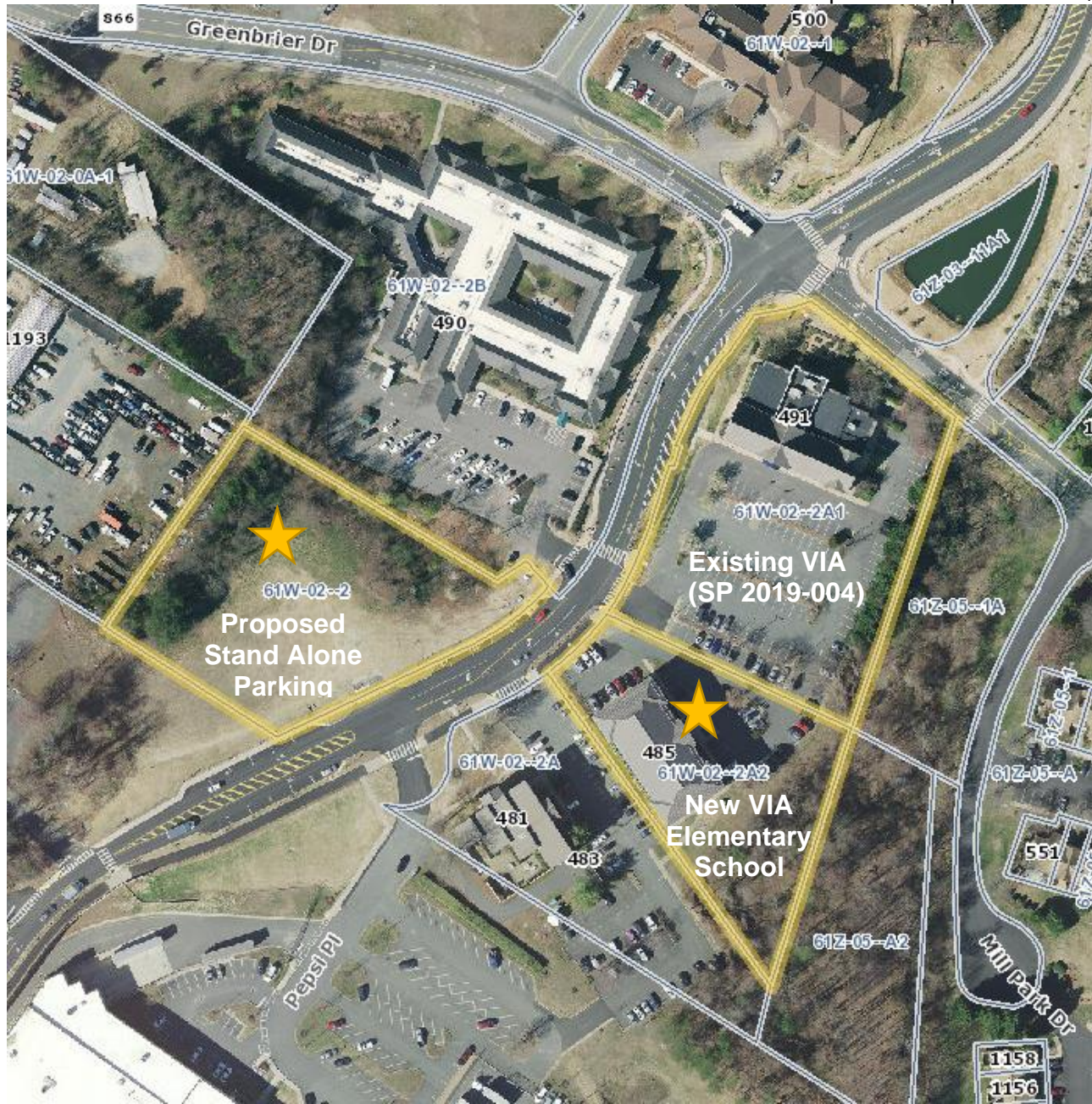
Tax Map Parcels 061W0-02-00-002A1, 061W0-02-00-002A2, 061W0-02-00-00200

SP 2022-009 Private School SP 2022-010 Stand Alone Parking

Introduction:

The Virginia Institute of Autism (“VIA”) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in 1996 and headquartered in Charlottesville, Virginia. VIA’s mission is to help people overcome the challenges of autism through innovative, evidence-based programs in education, outreach and adult services. In response to a diagnosis that is associated with isolation, VIA builds community bridges. To do this, VIA uses its expertise to translate science into service. VIA employs state-of-the-art, evidence-based approaches that are tailored for each individual and their family. Through collaborative partnerships with the University of Virginia and others, it develops services that result in meaningful and profound changes in the lives of the people it serves. With its James C. Hormel School, Outpatient Services, and Adult Services, VIA addresses the unique needs of people with autism throughout their lifespan. The organization provides clinical and educational services regardless of the individual’s race, national or ethnic origin, cultural heritage, religion or political beliefs.

Tax Map Parcel	Acres	Owner	Existing Zoning	Proposed Special Use	Comprehensive Plan Designation
061W0-02-00-002A1	1.74	Virginia Institute of Autism	C-1 Commercial	Amendment to Existing SP for Private School (SP 2019-004)	Institutional
061W0-02-00-002A2	1.71	Ja-Zan LLC, successor to Ja-Zan Limited Partnership	C-1 Commercial	Private School	Office / R & D / Flex / Light Industrial
061W0-02-00-00200	1.55	Ja-Zan LLC, successor to Ja-Zan Limited Partnership	C-1 Commercial	Stand Alone Parking	Urban Density Residential



Proposal:

VIA currently has multiple locations, one that is located at 491 Hillsdale Drive on TMP 061W0-02-00-002A1, which was approved under SP 2019-004, and another located on Westwood Road in the City of Charlottesville, that VIA wishes to relocate to the adjacent parcel at 485 Hillsdale Drive, which is identified as TMP 061W-02-00-002A2. The special use permit that was approved with SP 2019-004 serves VIA's older children and adults, and the facility in the city that VIA proposes to relocate to 485 Hillsdale serves younger children. VIA wishes to amend the prior special use permit in order to consolidate the two locations and services to one campus. VIA would use the existing building and parking on TMP 061W-02-00-002A2 for the younger children, and share parking and amenities with the adjacent site. The addition of TMP 061W-02-00-002A2 to the existing VIA campus requires the amendment of SP 2019-004. Detailed description of the programming and students for each age cohort is provided below. VIA also proposes to further amend the Special Use Permit to add TMP 061W0-02-00-00200, a vacant parcel on the west side of Hillsdale Drive from 485 Hillsdale, to the VIA campus. This parcel would be

used in the future for additional parking for VIA. This use would require an additional Special Use Permit for Stand-Alone Parking. More details about the proposal for stand-alone parking is described later in this narrative.

Existing VIA Adult Service Center (SP2019-004)

VIA's Adult Service Center Program located at 491 Hillsdale Drive is a year-round day program that provides adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) ongoing, practical education and support throughout adulthood. This unique program offers comprehensive day programming services designed to promote the skills necessary for adults with ASD to lead productive and enjoyable lives. The Adult Service Center is staffed by a highly trained team of clinicians and educators who develop and deliver programs that provide the support needed for all program participants to better integrate into the Charlottesville community. From vocational training to social support and clinical services, the Adult Service Center equips program participants with the tools they need to enhance and maintain autonomy.

The Adult Service Center offers a variety of classes and activities to enhance vocational skills, independent living skills, and enable program participants to participate in a variety of cultural and recreational activities offered both at the Adult Service Center and in the Charlottesville community. In addition, the Adult Service Center is also serving as VIA's headquarters. The senior leadership team, human resources department, finance department, and advancement department have their offices and workspaces in the building.

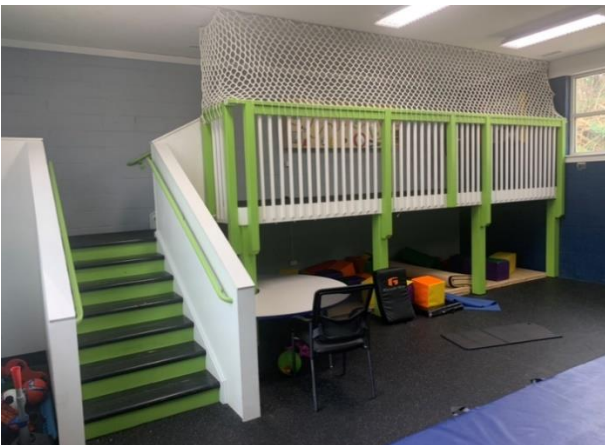
Proposed VIA Elementary School Center

VIA's Elementary Center Program, currently housed in the City of Charlottesville at Westwood Road, provides a year-round day program for children ages 5-14 years old with ASD, as well as outpatient support for helping children with ASD succeed in a public school setting. Students engage in comprehensive, state of the art education and clinical programs designed to address a range of needs for learning, communication, behavior or social supports that are too intensive for public school settings. The Elementary program provides students and families with services from behavior analysts, special educators, psychologists, speech-language therapists, and occupational therapists.

VIA proposes to relocate its Elementary Center Program to the property at 485 Hillsdale Drive, which has an existing building and parking lot. The building footprint will not be enlarged or changed to accommodate the school and only interior renovations are planned. A new outdoor space on site is proposed that will include modifying some of the existing parking areas. The addition of the 485 Hillsdale property to the SUP for VIA, and the modifications to create the outdoor play space there requires an amendment to the existing special use permit. The outdoor play space at the existing location on Westwood Road includes 4,800 square feet of area, and the proposed play space at 485 Hillsdale is planned to be 6,800 square feet. It is anticipated that similar play structures will be provided at the new location. See below photos of the existing playground at Westwood Road.



In addition to the outdoor area and playground, indoor gym/play space will be provided on the first floor of the building at 485 Hillsdale. Photos of the existing indoor and outdoor space at the Westwood Road center are provided below as examples of what is envisioned at 485 Hillsdale.



VIA envisions the Elementary School Center initially serving only the existing students from the Westwood site and moving them over to the new campus. This first Phase would then include the existing 40 students and 60 staff members from the Westwood property. VIA plans, following a capital campaign, to expand within the

building at 485 Hillsdale to renovate it to include an additional four classrooms that could serve up to an additional 32 students and 39 staff. This will allow VIA to serve more children and their families, as it currently has a waiting list for admission. Based upon a parking needs assessment of staff and visitor parking needs, additional parking will need to be provided when the school expansion occurs, for parking needs will then exceed the existing number of parking spaces on the combined 485 and 491 Hillsdale property (117 spaces).

Overall, the new VIA campus will provide the following number of students and staff across the Adult Service Center and the Elementary School Center:

	Phase 1 Students	Phase 2 Students	Total Number of Students	Phase 1 Staff	Phase 2 Staff	Total Number of Staff
SP2019-004 Approval:	30	35	65	68	0	68
Proposed Amendment:	40	32	72	60	39	90
Total:	70	67	137	128	39	158

The facility hours of operation will be 7:30a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday – Friday with occasional weekend and evening events.

Parking needs:

- Currently there are 117 parking spaces on-site
- Based upon the submitted parking study dated August 12, 2022, the Adult Center currently uses anywhere from 52 to 53 parking spaces to serve all uses in the building.
- Together the Adult Center and Elementary School Center anticipates the need for 121 spaces for the first Phase, and an additional 37 spaces for the second Phase, for a total of 157 spaces.
- Parking for the first Phase will be met on site as shown on the conceptual plan or in accordance with the alternatives provided in [Section 4.12.8](#) of the Zoning Ordinance during the site plan stage via on street parking along Hillsdale Drive, through a shared parking agreement with adjacent property, via the stand-alone parking across that street that is requested with this application, or a combination thereof.

Participant arrival/departure schedules:

- VIA anticipates Elementary students being picked up and dropped off by buses and family vehicles. There will be some overlap with the Adult Service Center participants and the bus will serve both buildings. Adult Service Center participants arrive via public transportation, Jaunt Inc. buses, cabs, and being dropped off and picked up by family vehicles (no participants in the Adult Service Center drive independently).

Proposed Stand Alone Parking

Due to the ratio of teachers to students for the school, VIA’s parking needs may eventually require an additional parking lot proposed on a vacant property across the street, on TMP 061W0-02-00-00200. VIA anticipates that this parking need may occur when the Elementary School Center building is renovated to add additional classrooms and the staff and visitor need exceeds the existing parking on the property (117 spaces). The conceptual plan shows a maximum of 66 spaces for the stand alone parking at the vacant parcel. It is anticipated that this parking lot will mainly serve the teachers and staff and occasional visitors to the school. This use requires a special use permit for Stand Alone Parking since there is not an existing use or building on the property.

Description of Surrounding Area:

Virginia Institute of Autism Adult Services to the north; The Laurels of Charlottesville across Hillsdale Drive to the west; Pepsi administrative office building to the south (with the Pepsi bottling plant further to the south, in the City of Charlottesville); RoseWood Village Assisted Living across Greenbrier Drive and Hillsdale Drive to the north; Branchlands across Greenbrier Drive to the northeast; and Meadow Creek, vacant land, and the Brookmill neighborhood to the east.

Site Pictures:



View of Building from Hillsdale Drive



View of Vacant Parcel from Hillsdale Drive



View of Existing VIA Building to the left, and Proposed Building for New School to the right

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan:

The property proposed for the expansion of VIA for a private school use is designated as Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial within the Places29 Master Plan area. While a private school (institutional) use is not a primary use within this designation, it is a recommended secondary use. Within the master plan, page 4-8, states that *“Approval of secondary land uses should be based on the designation of the larger area, rather than on a per site or per parcel basis.”* Given the proximity to the existing school, which is designated as institutional in the master plan, the fact that the expansion will be within the existing building on the site, the Pepsi (light industrial) use next door, and the use is recommended as a secondary use in the master plan, it is appropriate to find that the new use is complimentary to the surrounding land uses, and consistent with the recommendations in the master plan.



The property proposed to include the stand-alone parking use is designated as Urban Density Residential. While parking is typically proposed with a structure and use on a property, the proposed parking area will only be necessary when the school expansion creates a need for employee parking. It is anticipated that a future use or building will be constructed on the property and that the school would share the lot with that future use. When the parking is needed, it will include the required landscape screening required by the site plan ordinance to minimize impact to Hillsdale Drive.

Impacts on Public Safety, Public Facilities, Public Infrastructure & Environmental Features

The proposed project will not have any negative impacts on public safety, public facilities, public infrastructure, or environmental features. The Property is currently used as an office building, and the proposed use will be very similar in impact. The proposed playground area will include removal of some of the parking, however it is anticipated that no steep slopes will be disturbed on site. The entrance into the property is existing and the parking area is adequate for bus circulation and drop off that will not impact Hillsdale Drive. The property to be used as a parking lot in the future phase is currently vacant and the area for the parking is flat and will require no disturbance of steep slopes. In addition, the parking will be screened from Hillsdale drive as required by the site plan ordinance.

Summary:

The proposed special use will not be a detriment to adjacent lots or change the character of the zoning district as the use will be very similar to the current use as an office building. The Applicant does not propose any

March 21, 2022

Updated August 12, 2022

Updated September 16, 2022

changes to the Property other than to convert a portion of the parking lot to a play space. The consolidation of VIA's schools to one campus, and future expansion of classroom space, will allow efficiencies at the schools for bussing and shared amenities, and will allow VIA to offer additional students and families services that are currently in need in the community.

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