

## Letter of Justification for CUP Modification Hillbrook School

### **Purpose**

To seek approval to:

- increase our enrollment from 315 to 414 students (Condition #4);
- modify our peak period traffic from a maximum of 165 to an average of 185 per peak period each trimester (Condition #12);
- clarify the traffic requirements associated with the summer use of Hillbrook's campus (New Condition #14); and
- make minor changes to Conditions 1, 10 and 11 to clarify their intent.

### **Background**

Founded more than 75 years ago, Hillbrook School offers an extraordinary educational experience that prepares students for school and for life. Originally known as The Children's County School, the school served as a boarding school for wards of the state throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In the early 1950s, the school evolved into an independent day school and then changed its name to the Hillbrook School in 1960. Since then, the school has evolved into one of the leading independent schools in the Bay Area.

During the past 10 years, the school campus has been rebuilt and modernized, retaining its historical look and feel while bringing the school facilities up to date. The program has also evolved and expanded, balancing rigorous academics with a focus on social emotional learning and service to the community. The school is a vital part of the Los Gatos community, not only serving many families who live in Los Gatos and surrounding communities but also through the service efforts of our students and families. In just the past year, for example, students have volunteered at Live Oak Adult Day Services, participated in a telethon for "The Venue," and hosted a number of special needs students from the local public schools.

### **History of the CUP**

The original CUP was approved in the late 1980s by the Planning Commission when the school sought to build Founder's Hall (the gym). To address neighborhood concerns that the Hall might be used for weddings and similar activities, Hillbrook agreed to limit Founder's Hall usage to school activities. The school also agreed to build a new access road and gate off of Ann Arbor to provide emergency access to the Middle School side of campus, but to limit the Ann Arbor access to emergency vehicles and construction equipment. (Condition #2). The school also agreed to limit enrollment to 315 students. (Condition #4).

In the late 1990s the CUP was amended as part of the school's application to rebuild the campus. The school's facilities had become dilapidated and were not earthquake safe. The new CUP conditions addressed neighborhood concerns about traffic. The school agreed to adopt a

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voluntary carpool program, and also agreed to limit car counts to 165 cars leaving campus during the two high impact traffic windows 7:30 – 8:30 am and 2:30 – 3:45 pm. (Condition #12)

In 2001 Hillbrook received ASA approval of a master site plan to rebuild the facilities on campus (PRJ-99-063). That approved master plan allows a total of 55,715 square feet of buildings. Since obtaining that approval, Hillbrook has renovated, rebuilt or replaced most of the buildings on site. Currently, the building square footage on the campus is 52,683 (see attached data table). Hillbrook can accommodate the requested 414 student enrollment within the 55,715 square feet provided by the approved master plan.

### **Our Program & Campus Usage**

The educational program integrates rigorous academics with strong arts, athletics, and service learning. The school day begins at 8 am for grades 1-8 and 8:15 am for JK/K. Dismissal times are staggered, with JK/K ending at 2:45 pm, 1-4 at 3 pm, and 5-8 at 3:15 pm.

The school also offers after school programs for students. After School Enrichment offerings include dance, Lego engineering, woodworking, Introductory Spanish for JK/K, and drama. We also have a full range of competitive sports programs for our Middle School students, including volleyball, flag football, cross country, basketball, and lacrosse. Our Extended Care program to support working parents runs until 6 pm.

During the day, the school holds regular meetings of the Board of Trustees and the Hillbrook School Parent Council, and periodically hosts parent education speakers. The school hosts a limited number of evening events, including Back to School Nights for both Lower School and Middle School, parent education programs, Hillbrook School Parent Council meetings, a winter holiday concert, and Family Fun Night (a beginning of year celebration which involves the entire school community).

Weekend use is limited to a boys and girls basketball tournament typically in February and/or March and an admission Open House in November. In addition, faculty and administrators come on campus to complete work, and grounds maintenance services are provided.

During the summer, the school operates a summer program, which includes various opportunities for students from JK-8. Programs have included a soccer camp, Camp Acorn for children in grades JK-1, a drama camp, and a Spanish immersion camp. The school also partners with Breakthrough Silicon Valley, a non-profit that serves under-resourced Middle School students, to provide a rigorous, college preparatory program for Middle School students.

The school also holds periodic professional development opportunities for teachers and school leaders throughout the year. For example, last year the school hosted numerous groups of teachers and administrators from both public and private schools interested in learning about the school's iPad program.

### **Our Efforts to be a Good Neighbor**

As a school, we work hard to be good neighbors. We send regular updates about school activities and strive to keep open lines of communication.

The biggest impact the school has on the neighborhood is in the form of traffic. As a school, we have taken a number of steps to mitigate traffic. Our Traffic Demand Management plan includes:

- A strong and consistent message to our parents to carpool and to obey all traffic laws in the neighborhood
- The creation of a web-based resource for parents that facilitates the creation of carpools
- Two bus lines (one that travels down Hwy 9, one from Willow Glen/Rose Garden neighborhood – 60 kids signed up) that minimize the number of cars coming to and from campus
- The placement of portable signs in the neighborhood reminding parents of the speed limit and the importance of slowing down
- The regular presence of school staff in the neighborhood
- Regular requests of the Los Gatos/Monte Sereno police department to place portable electronic speed signs in the neighborhood and to be a presence in the neighborhood
- To address the summer traffic concerns expressed by neighbors, we are proposing a new condition to our use permit to regulate that traffic.

As part of our pre-application process, we decided in consultation with the Town of Los Gatos that a traffic study would be beneficial to verify that our request to increase enrollment would be viable. TJKM, the traffic consultant commissioned by the Town, performed its initial site observations and traffic counts in May of 2011, and performed a follow-up observation in December of 2011. As part of its initial observations, TJKM recommended the school add an additional stacking lane (from four lanes to five) and additional pick up/drop off spots (from four to six) in order to improve the traffic flow on campus. The school made this change in August 2011.

### **Proposal**

- **Increase Enrollment To Improve Quality of Educational Program**

**Current Condition #4: ENROLLMENT. The enrollment shall be limited to 315 students.**

**Proposed Revised Condition #4: ENROLLMENT. The enrollment shall be limited to 414 students.**

#### Explanation:

The school's current enrollment cap of 315 was set back in the late 1980s. At the time, the school was structured differently, with a pre-school program of 45-50 children and a JK-8 program that hovered around 250 students. In the late 1990s, the school dissolved its pre-school program and moved to a structure with two classes (or sections) at each grade level. The school had increasing demand for its JK-8 and wanted to begin to even out the enrollment at each grade level within the constraints of the CUP.

Today, the school is seeking to increase the enrollment to 414 for two reasons. First, we hope to complete the process of evening out our classes begun in the late 1990s (see attached chart). By increasing our enrollment, we can have consistent enrollment (2 classes of 20 students) in our lower grades.

In addition, increasing our enrollment will enable us to achieve a signature piece of Vision 2015 – the school’s strategic plan – allowing us to strengthen our Middle School by providing more academic flexibility, enhancing our co-curricular offerings (dance, music, athletics, robotics), broadening social opportunities, and bringing in new students and families who will add an exciting energy to our community. To accomplish this goal, we need to increase our Middle School enrollment from two classes to three classes. (see attached chart)

- **Increase Peak Period Traffic To Accommodate Additional Enrollment**

**Current Condition #12:** *TRAFFIC COUNTS. At the applicant’s expense, the Town shall conduct traffic counts at the Marchmont Drive gate of Hillbrook School twice a year, during appropriate months chosen by staff. The maximum number of vehicles leaving the school during each of the hours of 7:30 A.M. to 8:30 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. to 3:45 P.M. shall not exceed 165 vehicles.*

**Proposed Revised Condition #12.A:** *SCHOOL YEAR TRAFFIC COUNTS. During the school year, the maximum number of vehicles leaving the campus during each of the periods of 7:30 A.M. to 8:30 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. to 3:45 P.M. shall not exceed an average of 185 vehicles per period each trimester. A permanent traffic counting device shall be installed and maintained by Hillbrook School to measure exiting traffic during these periods, with the records of traffic counts preserved electronically. Reports of the traffic leaving the campus during these periods shall be provided by Hillbrook School to the Town promptly after the end of each trimester.*

**Explanation:**

Associated with the increase in enrollment, Hillbrook seeks a modest increase in allowed peak period exiting traffic during the school year, from the current limit of 165 vehicles to an average of 185, with the determination of the average based on the traffic counts for the trimester. Hillbrook’s transit service, staggered schedule, and efforts to promote carpooling have been extremely successful: As reflected in the Town traffic study (dated December 2011), our community typically generates an average of 135 vehicle exits during the peak periods. We recognize that to determine average exiting traffic, a permanent traffic counting mechanism would be necessary. Hillbrook is prepared to provide that system and has included the requirement in the proposed revised language of the condition.

Additionally, for the reasons described in the next section, we are proposing that Condition #12 be limited to school year traffic, and that a new condition #14 be added to address summer campus traffic.

- **Clarify the Traffic Requirements Associated with Summer Use of Hillbrook's Campus**

**Proposed New Condition #14: SUMMER TRAFFIC COUNTS.** *During the period between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next school year, the maximum number of vehicles leaving the campus during each of the periods of 7:45 A.M. to 9:30 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. to 3:45 P.M. shall not exceed an average of 185 vehicles during either period. A permanent traffic counting device shall be installed and maintained by Hillbrook School to measure exiting traffic during these periods, with the records of traffic counts preserved electronically. Reports of the traffic leaving the campus during these periods shall be provided by Hillbrook School to the Town promptly after the beginning of the new school year.*

Explanation:

As described above, Hillbrook has historically provided summer programming that compliments its educational focus during the school year. For the summer of 2010, we created new programs, including partnering with "Steve & Kate's" to jointly operate a camp and extended care program with a flexible drop-off and pick-up schedule. As the summer progressed, the programs grew in popularity, and with it, additional traffic throughout the day, until both well exceeded what was experienced in prior summers.

This became a source of confusion within the neighborhood, as the Hillbrook traffic was not following the school-year pattern due to the open drop-off and pick-up times and with day to day drop-in services. We believe it would be prudent to add a condition to the CUP to specifically address summer traffic, to more accurately reflect typical summer drop-off and pick-up times, which tend to occur over a slightly longer period than during the school year. We believe this condition will benefit the neighborhood by assuring that summer traffic during peak periods will be less concentrated than during the school year.

- **Make Minor Changes to Other Permit Conditions to Clarify Them**

We believe that three of the Permit conditions would benefit from rewording to clarify their intent, without changing that intent. Those conditions are discussed in this section.

**Current Condition #1: EXPIRATION.** *Vesting for the Master Site Plan includes the demolition and reconstruction of the new classroom building under Architecture and Site Application PRJ-99-063. Once the application is vested, there are not further time limits to for the Master site Plan.*

**Proposed Revised Condition #1: EXPIRATION.** *Vesting for the Master Site Plan pursuant to Architecture and Site Application PRJ-99-063 has occurred and substantial work has been completed. Accordingly, there are no further time limits applicable to the Master Site Plan.*

Explanation:

When this condition was written, the Master Site Plan had not vested. It has vested now, and so the condition should be modified to reflect that.

**Current Condition #10: LEASE/RENTALS.** *No lease or rental of the campus facilities shall be permitted to third parties.*

**Proposed Revised Condition #10: LEASE/RENTALS.** *No lease or rental of the campus facilities shall be permitted to third parties. Hillbrook partners with a number of groups, including food service providers, transportation companies, and educational providers, to support its educational mission. This condition is not intended to limit Hillbrook's ability to provide educational programs.*

Explanation:

Last summer, questions were raised about the school's partnerships with several organizations, including Steve & Kate's, and whether these partnerships violated Condition #10. The condition as originally conceived and imposed was intended to preclude Hillbrook from hosting weddings and other social gatherings that were unrelated to Hillbrook's educational purpose. As a school, we do not believe that our current usage violates this condition, but we are amenable to clarifying this condition in order to eliminate future confusion.

**Current Condition #11: SIX MONTH REVIEW.** *This application shall be reconsidered by the Planning Commission six months from the date of approval.*

**Proposed Revised Condition #11: Intentionally deleted.**

Explanation:

As this condition related to the previous amendment to the CUP and has been satisfied, it serves no continuing purpose and should be deleted.

**Application Process**

On May 9, 2011, the school held an open meeting for the greater Marchmont neighborhood to share our plans for improving our Middle School. One week earlier we provided notice of the meeting to everyone within 300 feet of the school as well as all of the neighbors along the full extension of Marchmont (from the school to Englewood). Sixteen people attended the meeting. We placed details about our plan on our website in order to allow all interested members of the community to learn more about our vision.

In mid-May of 2011, as part of our quarterly neighborhood newsletter, we included an invitation to all neighbors to meet with the school to share their thoughts about the proposed plans. As a result of that outreach we had three meetings with interested neighbors as well as one phone conversation.

As a part of our pre-application process, the Town of Los Gatos commissioned a traffic study. TJKM, the traffic consultant commissioned by the Town, performed its initial site observations and traffic counts in May of 2011, and performed a follow-up observation of the reconfigured stacking lanes in November of 2011. The final traffic study issued by TJKM concludes that the increase in enrollment and increase in peak period exits sought by Hillbrook will not result in significant

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traffic impacts to the local streets. Following receipt of the study, we prepared our formal application to modify the CUP.

As part of our neighborhood outreach in May of 2011, we committed to hosting a meeting to review our CUP modification application before submission to the town. We held that neighborhood meeting on January 18, 2012, to share our plans and to receive feedback. Two weeks prior to the meeting we again noticed everyone within 300 feet of the school as well as all neighbors along Marchmont. 51 people signed in at the meeting. During the meeting, we heard concerns about the impact of traffic in the neighborhood as well as concerns about our summer usage. Since the meeting, we have had additional communication with interested neighbors and remain open to working with neighbors to find ways to address their concerns.

### **Conclusion**

As part of our effort to create the strongest educational program possible and to best serve the community, we are asking to have our CUP modified to increase our enrollment from 315 to 414 students, to change our peak period exiting vehicle limitation to an average of 185 per peak period each trimester, to add a condition regulating summer traffic associated with Hillbrook's campus, and to make the other minor changes to three existing permit conditions described above.

Sincerely,

Mark Silver  
Head of School  
Hillbrook School