



**PLANNING DIVISION  
STAFF REPORT**

**Board of Adjustment**

**September 6, 2023**

CASE No.: <b>BOA23-00269</b>	PROJECT NAME: <b>St. Timothy School Addition</b>
Owner's Name:	St. Timothy Roman Catholic Parish Mesa
Applicant's Name:	Vince Di Bella, Adaptive Architects, Inc.
Location of Request:	2520 South Alma School Road
Parcel No(s):	305-07-563B
Nature of Request:	Requesting a Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit (SCIP) to allow deviations from certain development standards.
Zoning District:	Single Residence-6 with a Planned Area Development Overlay (RS-6-PAD)
Council District:	3
Site Size:	2± acres
Existing Use:	School
Hearing Date(s):	<b>September 6, 2023 / 5:30 p.m.</b>
Staff Planner:	Samantha Brannagan, Planner II
Staff Recommendation:	Approval with Conditions

**HISTORY**

**On March 6, 1972**, the City Council annexed 1,770± acres of land, including the subject property, into the City of Mesa (Ordinance No. 732).

**On May 20, 1974**, the City Council approved the Dobson Ranch Unit 3 subdivision plat, which created 549 lots including the subject property as Tract G.

**Between 1982 and 1986**, per the Maricopa County historical aerial photos, a chapel was built on the subject property.

**In 1993 and 1996**, per the Maricopa County historical aerial photos, three accessory structures were built onsite.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### **Background:**

The applicant is requesting a Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit (SCIP) to address deviations from certain development standards and allow for a new, two-story multi-use building to serve the existing kindergarten – 8<sup>th</sup> grade school. The new building will include classrooms, a media center, cafeteria, and administrative offices. This proposed building will replace an existing building which at one point was used as a chapel but is now used for classrooms.

The site currently has one, two-story building and three, one-story buildings serving the school with an internal courtyard and basketball court. The western most one-story building facing South Alma School Road will be demolished for construction of the new, multi-use building. Due to existing conditions onsite, achieving full conformance with the MZO would require significant alterations including the existing buildings, parking area, and on-site circulation. Section 11-73 of the MZO establishes the Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit (SCIP) process and review criteria, which allows for bringing the site into substantial conformance without requiring the entire site to be brought to full conformance with the current development standards of the MZO.

### **General Plan Character Area Designation and Goals:**

The Mesa 2040 General Plan Character Area designation on the property is Neighborhood. Per Chapter 7 of the General Plan, the primary focus of the Neighborhood Character Area is to provide safe places for people to live where they can feel secure and enjoy their surrounding community. The design, development, and maintenance of neighborhoods focuses on ensuring clean, safe, and healthy areas where people want to live and maintain their investments. The Neighborhood Character Area also provides accessory uses including schools, churches, and parks. Overall, the existing school conforms with the General Plan and the intent of the character area.

### **Site Characteristics:**

The address of the subject property is 2520 South Alma School Road and is located on the west side of South Alma School Road and North of West Guadalupe Road. The subject lot is 2± acres in size with an existing school to serve kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Per the Maricopa County Assessor’s historical aerial photos, the existing chapel was constructed in between 1982 and 1986 in conformance with the MZO development standards in effect at that time. Per Maricopa County historical aerial photos, between 1993 and 1996 three accessory buildings were constructed on the property west of the chapel to serve as a school. The chapel has since been converted to serve as classrooms. The school can accommodate a maximum of 225 students and includes a carport canopy for parking, an internal courtyard, and a basketball court.

### **Surrounding Zoning Designations and Existing Use Activity:**

<b>Northwest</b> RS-6 Single Residence	<b>North</b> RS-6 Single Residence	<b>Northeast</b> (Across Alma School Road) RS-6 Single Residence
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<b>West</b> RS-6 Single Residence	<b>Subject Property</b> RS-6 School	<b>East</b> (Across Alma School Rd) RS-6 Single Residence
<b>Southwest</b> RS-6 Single Residence	<b>South</b> RS-6 Church	<b>Southeast</b> (Across Alma School Rd) RS-6 Single Residence

**Mesa Zoning Ordinance Requirements and Regulations:**

**Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit (SCIP) MZO Section 11-73:**

The subject site is legally non-conforming as it does not conform to the current MZO standards regarding setback requirements per Table 11-5-3(A) and minimum parking standards per Table 11-32-3(A).

Table 1 below summarizes the minimum MZO requirements, the applicant’s proposal, and staff’s recommendations. Text in **bold** indicates modifications from the MZO code requirements.

Table 1: Development Standards

Development Standard	MZO Requirements	Applicant Proposal	Staff Recommendation
<i>Minimum landscape yard – non-single residence to single-residence</i> [Section 11-33-3(B)(1)]	20’ (north, south, west)	<b>5’ (north)</b> <b>10’ (south)</b> <b>5’ 9” (west)</b>	As proposed
<i>Minimum parking spaces</i> [Table 11-32-3(A)]	80 parking spaces	<b>69 parking spaces</b>	As proposed

To bring the site into substantial conformance with the development standards of the MZO, the applicant proposes the following improvements as identified on the site plan and landscape plan:

- Addition of three new parking stalls, with existing parking stalls to be re-striped and new concrete curbs
- Addition of five new landscape islands
- New landscaping along the frontage to Alma School Road as well as improvements to perimeter landscaping.
- Installation of new walkway paths between buildings and new pedestrian connection to S. Alma School Road.

Per Section 11-73-3 of the MZO, when deciding on a SCIP, the Board of Adjustment shall find upon sufficient evidence that:

- A. The entire development site will be brought into substantial conformance. Substantial conformance shall mean physical improvements to the existing development site which

constitute the greatest degree of compliance with this Ordinance that can be attained without causing or creating any of the following conditions:

1. The demolition or reconstruction of existing buildings or other significant structures (except signs); or

**Significant alterations to the site, including demolition of existing structures onsite to meet current setback and parking requirements, would need to occur to bring the site into full conformance with current MZO development standards.**

*The request meets this criterion.*

2. The cessation of the existing conforming use, or the preclusion of any other lawful, permitted use.

**Full compliance with current development standards for the site would impose a hardship on the existing school and significantly decrease use of the site for its current number of staff and students.**

*The request meets this criterion.*

3. The creation of new non-conforming conditions.

**Construction of the proposed multi-use building to serve the existing school will meet all standards for new development under the current MZO code. Therefore, no new non-conforming conditions will be created with the proposed development.**

*The request meets this criterion.*

- B. The improvements authorized by the SCIP will result in a development that is compatible with, and not detrimental to, adjacent properties or neighborhoods.

**The proposed addition and improvements to the site is compatible with the adjacent uses, as schools and churches are often located within residential neighborhoods as accessory uses to serve property owners in the area. The improvements will bring the site into further compliance with the MZO and enhance the appearance of the site. Therefore, staff does not believe that the proposed request will be detrimental to adjacent properties or neighborhoods.**

*The request meets this criterion.*

Findings:

- A. The property was annexed into the City of Mesa in 1972 as part of a greater 1,770± acre area.
- B. The site was created as part of the Dobson Ranch Unit 3 subdivision plat in 1974.

- C. The site was developed for a chapel between 1982 and 1986, with three accessory structures built between 1993 and 1996, per Maricopa County Assessor's historical aerial photos.
- D. The subject site does not meet the current MZO development standards and is therefore considered legally non-conforming.
- E. Full compliance with current MZO would require significant alterations to the site including demolition of some existing structures.
- F. Improvement to the existing site include installation of landscape islands, landscape improvements around the perimeter of the site, and installation of new parking spaces.
- G. The proposed improvements will not create any new non-conformities onsite.
- H. The proposed improvements will result in a development that is compatible with, and not detrimental to adjacent properties or neighborhoods.

**Neighborhood Participation Plan and Public Comments:**

The applicant sent the required notification letters to all property owners within 500 feet of the site. As of the writing of this report, staff has not been contacted by any resident to express support or opposition to the request.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Based on the application received and preceding analysis, staff finds the request for a Substantial Conformance Improvement Permit meets the required findings of Section 11-73-3 of the MZO, and therefore recommends approval with the following conditions:

**Conditions of Approval:**

1. Compliance with the final site plan and landscape plan as submitted.
2. Compliance with all City Development Codes and regulations, except as identified in Table 1 of this report.
3. Compliance with all requirements of the Development Services Department regarding the issuance of building permits.
4. Compliance with all requirements of Case No. DRB23-00267 for Design Review.
5. Compliance with all requirements of Case No. ZON23-00376 for Initial Site Plan Review.

**Exhibits:**

- Exhibit 1 – Vicinity Map
- Exhibit 2 – Staff Report
- Exhibit 3 – Narrative and Justification Statement
- Exhibit 4 – Site Plan
- Exhibit 5 – Landscape Plan
- Exhibit 6 – Site Circulation Plan