

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## PZC APPLICATION



### SOUTH WINDSOR HIGH SCHOOL PROPOSED SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD AND TENNIS COURT RECONSTRUCTION

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**Prepared For:** Dr. Kate Carter – Superintendent of Schools

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**Address:** South Windsor High School – Nevers and Ayers Road, South Windsor, CT

**Project Description:**

This proposal is for a plan to improve three major aspects of South Windsor High School; a lighted playing field, traffic patterns, tennis and pickleball courts. South Windsor Public Schools has worked for several years to identify issues and to determine how best to address them.

The primary issue is the need for additional athletic fields and an athletic field with athletic field lighting. Currently, South Windsor is the only high school in its District Reference Group (DRG) without a lit field. This requires students to be dismissed from school early and miss class time at both South Windsor and for visiting schools so that they can have adequate daylight for events. Additionally, many parents have to either take time off from work to see their child participate or to miss events totally. The school enrollment projections show that enrollment will continue to increase over the next several years. This compounds the need for additional field space, for traffic and parking improvements. School provided studies have shown that pick up and drop off times can cause significant delays. The South Windsor Police Department and the School have reviewed several proposed solutions with the most feasible being an additional driveway connecting the existing parking lot at the Wapping Annex and the student parking lot adjacent to the existing track. Lastly, the existing tennis courts were built in the 1960s and require significant repairs for upkeep. To address these issues a new synthetic turf field with athletic field lighting, a new parking area / driveway adjacent to the Wapping Annex, and new tennis courts are proposed. These improvements can be completed from late spring to early fall.

**New Synthetic Turf Field with Athletic Field Lighting:**

All fields at South Windsor High School were reviewed for their capability to increase the number of fields on campus and the ability to have athletic field lighting. By the Town Zoning Regulations, athletic field lighting has a 100' setback restriction to a property line. The only area on campus that both does not lose a field and has adequate distance to property line is the area adjacent to the Wapping Annex in the location of the existing tennis courts. All other areas would either lose existing field space or be too close in proximity to a property line to provide these improvements.

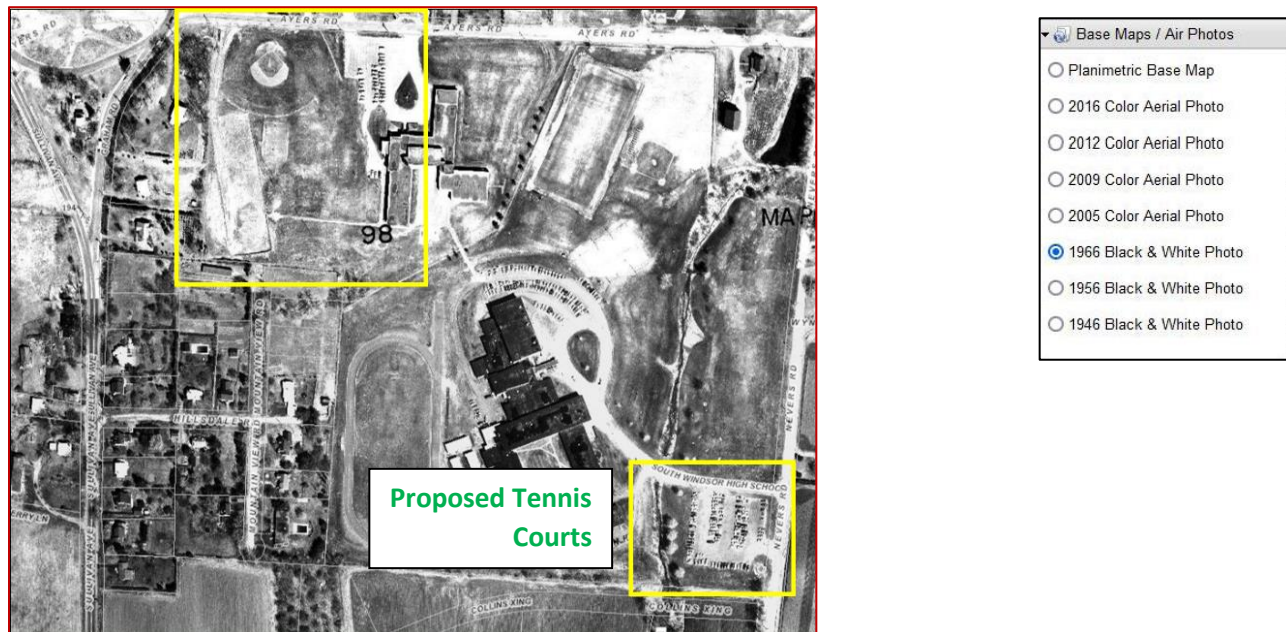
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The proposed field will include a synthetic turf playing surface, athletic field lighting, bleachers, press box, ADA accessibility improvements and space to accommodate for future buildings to support the facility such as a concession stand for dry goods. The new field will address the need for additional playing space with a lit field, and provide opportunity for the existing, heavily dated tennis courts, to be relocated and replaced.

### Tennis Court Relocation:

The existing tennis courts were built in the 1960s and are very dated and in need of extensive repairs. Additionally, the existing tennis courts are located roughly 300' from the nearest parking space and are at the bottom of a large grass slope. This makes them inaccessible to many people who would want to use the courts. Lastly, the 6 courts are not enough to provide courts for all team tennis matches. The tennis team has 7 competitive matches for each event meaning that one match must wait until another match finishes in order to begin their match. This will require all other participants to wait until the 7<sup>th</sup> match is completed in order to leave the facility. Below is a screen shot of the South Windsor GIS from 1966 showing the tennis courts being built and their proposed new location; formerly a parking lot and currently the grass field at the corner of Nevers Road and Collins Crossing.



The proposed improvements include 7 new tennis courts with nearby parking spaces, 4 new pickle ball courts and the replacement of the existing throwing events at the site. These new tennis courts will meet the number of courts needed for tennis matches, provide parking adjacent to the courts, accommodate the growing desire for pickleball courts in the community, and will be fully installed within the existing developed area of the site. This site was selected for these improvements due to its limited existing use, that it was formerly developed as a parking lot, and the proximity to the Community Center. This location will allow significantly better access for the community of South Windsor.

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### Traffic and Circulation Improvements:

South Windsor Public Schools has been reviewing the ongoing traffic and circulation issues on campus for several years. They have conducted numerous studies, reviewed the conditions with South Windsor PD, and reviewed with internal staff. They have determined that there is a need to have more flexibility in how to access the site, as there is only 1 driveway to access the School for emergency vehicles. Additional parking would be a bonus. The most feasible and effective improvement was determined to be the addition of a driveway from the Wapping Annex parking lot to the student parking lot adjacent to the existing track. This will allow the School to have flexibility on student pick up and drop off operations, improving emergency vehicle access, and increasing parking on campus and adjacent to the tennis courts. The proposal has been vetted with South Windsor Public Schools staff, South Windsor Police Department, and Town staff.

### Summary and Construction Timeline:

These improvements are planned to be constructed from late Spring to early Fall. The throwing events will be relocated and the new tennis courts will be built. Once the tennis season is completed on the existing tennis courts, construction will begin on the synthetic turf field and driveway improvement work. This will allow the tennis and track seasons to be completed without interruption, while also allowing the driveway improvements to be completed for the start of the school year. The field and lighting system is projected to be completed during September and early October in time for use for the second half of the season. This proposed timeline was found to be the most efficient to decrease any impacts on the athletic season and disruption of school activities.

The proposed improvements have been extensively researched by South Windsor Public Schools for a number of years. The new synthetic turf field with athletic field lighting, the additional driveway, the replacement of the existing tennis courts and the installation of pickleball courts, will be significant improvements to both South Windsor High School and the South Windsor community.

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### Zoning Review and Special Exemption Application:

South Windsor High School is located in an A-20 residential zone and proposal improvements are subject to Special Exception as part of Section 3.1.1A of the South Windsor Zoning Regulations. Additionally, this application is seeking approval for Special Exception and waivers for the following sections of the regulations:

- **Section 6.3.4-3 'Recreational Facility Lighting': Special Exception to allow lighting poles higher than 35'**
  - *Regulation: "Poles higher than 35 feet are permitted by Special Exception. An application for special exception may be approved after the Commission considers the impact on the following:"*
    - a. *Effects on the exiting uses in the area*
      - Reasoning: The proposed site has been in use as athletic facilities for many years. Athletic field lighting currently exists on several adjacent sites including the South Windsor Little League fields on Ayers Road and at Rotary Field on Nevers Road. Also, lighting currently exists on the existing tennis courts. The addition of new athletic field lighting to this site will not change existing uses in the area.
    - b. *Conservation of surrounding property values and character of the neighborhood*
      - Reasoning: The application proposes lights further than the 100' minimum distance to the property line and has gone to great lengths to ensure that no mature trees along the property lines will be required to be cleared. Also, an earthen berm with 10 screening trees is proposed along Ayers Road to help screen the project from adjacent properties. Due to the existing vegetated buffer being maintained, that additional screening measures that are being proposed and that the proposed lighting is beyond the 100' setback; the application will not have an adverse impact to surrounding property values.
    - c. *Impacts on the capacity of the present and proposed utilities, street, drainage system, sidewalks and other elements of the infrastructure*
      - Reasoning: The application has reviewed the existing and proposed utilities with Town staff and local energy suppliers. No concerns were raised regarding potential adverse impacts to the capacity of the utilities to support the application.
    - d. *Suitability of the land for the proposed use and any environmental impacts created by the proposal*
      - Reasoning: The existing site is currently developed with athletic facilities. The application does not propose any adverse environmental impacts to the currently developed site.
    - e. *Consistency with the goals and objectives of the Town Plan of Conservation and Development and/or Recreation Master Plan*
      - Reasoning: The application is consistent with the goals of the Recreation Master Plan. One of the major desires found in the public needs assessment was for additional synthetic turf fields and improved lighting at sports fields. This application would address both of those public needs.

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- **Waiver 6.3.4-2 'Recreational Facility Lighting': Waiver to allow tennis court lighting within 50' of property line in lieu of 100'.**
  - o *Regulation: "Poles are to be located a minimum of 100 feet from residential zones or property lines (where residence is the primary use). A waiver may be granted if this commission deems it justified due to adverse topographic or environmental conditions or difficult site configuration."*
    - Reasoning: The location of the proposed tennis courts is adjacent to an RR zone. The properties adjacent to this proposed tennis courts do not have residence as the primary use. The RR zone neighboring properties are the South Windsor Community Center directly across Nevers Road and a 'null' strip of property abutting the site, between the existing drainage swale and Collins Crossing. All tennis court lighting will be below the 35' maximum height for lighting. Along Nevers Road within the Town right of way, there are existing street lights and flood lights for the field. The addition of tennis court lighting would not greatly impact the existing character of this area.
    - Due to the current non-residential use of the and the existing lighting, the application requests a waiver to allow lighting for the tennis court to be within 50' of the property line rather than 100'.
- **Wavier 6.3.4.10 Minimum Number of EVSE Parking Spaces: Waiver to defer installation of EVSE spaces**
  - o *Regulation: "The applicant may request to modify and/or defer the number of EV Charging spaces required based on site conditions at the time of the application."*
    - Reasoning: The application proposes 45 new parking spaces. 5 Parking spaces have been identified as potential area for future EV spaces. The application requests to defer the installation of these spaces until such a time that the Board of Education can evaluate the overall need for EV spaces at all school facilities and create a plan to implement suitable number of spaces per educational institution.