



**ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING**  
**STAFF REPORT SUMMARY**

<p><b>Project Name:</b> SP202200009 Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA) Expansion-Adult Service Center and Elementary School and SP202200010 Stand Alone Parking</p>	<p><b>Staff:</b> Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager</p>
<p><b>Planning Commission Public Hearing:</b> September 27, 2022</p>	<p><b>Board of Supervisors Hearing:</b> To be scheduled</p>
<p><b>Owner(s):</b> Virginia Institute of Autism, Ja-zan Limited Partnership</p>	<p><b>Applicant(s):</b> Virginia Institute of Autism, represented by Valerie Long, Williams Mullen</p>
<p><b>Acreage:</b> Approximately 5 acres across three parcels.</p>	<p><b>Special Use Permit for:</b> Private School-18-22.2.2(6) and 18-18.2.2(5); Stand Alone Parking-18-22.2.2(9)</p>
<p><b>TMP:</b> 061W0-02-00-002A1; 061W0-02-00-002A2; 061W0-02-00-00200</p>	<p><b>Location:</b> 491 and 485 Hillsdale Drive; vacant parcel to the west across Hillsdale Drive from 485 Hillsdale</p>
<p><b>School District:</b> Elementary: Woodbrook Middle: Journey High: Albemarle</p>	<p><b>By-right use:</b> C-1 Commercial – retail sales and service and office; residential by special use permit (15 units/ acre)</p>
<p><b>Magisterial District:</b> Rio</p>	<p><b>Proffers/Conditions:</b> Yes</p>
<p><b>Proposal:</b> <u>SP202200009</u>- Amend a prior approved special use permit (SP201900004) to expand VIA to an adjacent parcel at 485 Hillsdale Drive. This would allow the Elementary School to locate at 485 Hillsdale Dr., beside the existing Adult Service Center at 491 Hillsdale Drive. With the expansion, VIA would serve a total of 137 students and 158 staff members across both parcels. Existing buildings would be utilized and adjustments made to the site to provide outdoor play space. <u>SP202200010</u>- A stand-alone parking lot of up to 66 spaces on a 1.55 acre parcel. This parking would serve the proposed expansion of VIA as requested with special use permit SP202200009.</p>	<p><b>Comp. Plan Designation:</b> Places29 Master Plan-Neighborhood 2; <u>Institutional</u> – civic uses, parks, recreational facilities, and similar uses on County-owned property and <u>Office/R&amp;D/Flex/Light Industrial</u> – commercial, professional office; research and development, design, testing of prototypes; manufacturing, assembly, packaging; residential is a secondary use (no maximum density); <u>Urban Density Residential</u>- residential (6.01 – 34 units/ acre); supporting uses such as religious institutions, schools, commercial, office and service uses.</p>

<p><b>Character of Property:</b> The subject properties are near the intersection of Hillsdale Drive and Greenbrier Drive, adjacent to Pepsi Place. The proposed parcel for the school expansion consists of one two-story building which faces a parking area.</p>	<p><b>Use of Surrounding Properties:</b> The property lies in an area where zoning transitions from commercial to residential districts. Parcels to the north and east of the property offer medical care services, while parcels south of the property offer office uses. To the east, two planned unit developments, Branchlands Retirement Village and Brookmill, that are buffered from the subject parcel by a heavily vegetated stream.</p>
<p><b>Positive Aspects:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Institutional uses, such as private schools, are consistent with the master plan.</li> <li>2. The proposed school is accessed from adequate public roads for the use.</li> <li>3. No detrimental impacts to adjoining properties are anticipated.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Concerns:</b> None identified.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation:</b> Staff recommends approval of SP202200009 Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA) Expansion-Adult Service Center and Elementary School and SP202200010 Stand Alone Parking with conditions.</p>	

**STAFF CONTACT:**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION:**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager  
 September 27, 2022  
 To be scheduled

**PETITIONS:**

PROJECT: SP202200009 Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA) Expansion-Adult Service Center and Elementary School

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Rio

TAX MAP/PARCEL(S): 061W0-02-00-002A1; 061W0-02-00-002A2; 061W0-02-00-00200

LOCATION: 491 and 485 Hillsdale Drive

PROPOSAL: The Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA) requests to amend a prior approved special use permit (SP201900004) to expand onto an adjacent parcel at 485 Hillsdale Drive. This expansion would allow the Elementary School to locate at 485 Hillsdale Dr., beside the existing Adult Service Center at 491 Hillsdale Drive. With the proposed expansion, VIA would serve a total of 127 students and 138 staff members across both parcels. Existing buildings would be utilized and adjustments made to the site to provide outdoor play space. A special use permit (SP202200010) to allow stand-alone parking to serve the expansion is proposed on parcel 061W0-02-00-00200 and is located across Hillsdale Drive.

PETITION: Private School-Sections 18-22.2.2(6) and 18-18.2.2(5)

ZONING: C-1 Commercial – retail sales and service; residential by special use permit (15 units/ acre)

OVERLAY DISTRICT(S): Steep Slopes (Managed and Preserved), Flood Hazard Overlay, Airport Impact Area

PROFFERS: No

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Places29 Master Plan-Neighborhood 2; Institutional – civic uses, parks, recreational facilities, and similar uses on County-owned property and Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial – commercial, professional office; research and development, design, testing of prototypes; manufacturing, assembly, packaging; residential is a secondary use (no maximum density).

PROJECT: SP202200010 Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA) Stand Alone Parking

MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Rio

TAX MAP/PARCEL(S): 061W0-02-00-00200

LOCATION: Vacant parcel-Hillsdale Dr, approx. 400 feet southwest of its intersection with Greenbrier Dr., across Hillsdale Dr. from 481, 483, and 485 Hillsdale Dr.

PROPOSAL: A parking lot of up to 66 spaces on a 1.55 acre parcel. This parking would serve the proposed expansion of VIA as requested with special use permit SP202200009.

PETITION: Stand Alone Parking-Sections 18-22.2.2(9)

ZONING: C-1 Commercial – retail sales and service; residential by special use permit (15 units/ acre)

OVERLAY DISTRICT(S): Steep Slopes (Managed), Airport Impact Area

PROFFERS: No

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Places29 Master Plan-Neighborhood 2; Urban Density Residential- residential (6.01 – 34 units/ acre); supporting uses such as religious institutions, schools, commercial, office and service uses.

**CHARACTER OF THE AREA**

The subject property is located at the corner of Hillsdale Drive and Greenbrier Drive. Traveling along Greenbrier Drive away from Route 29, this area transitions from commercial to residential zoning. The subject property lies at the edge of the commercially-zoned area and is buffered from residential uses by a highly vegetated stream.

(Attachment 1-Location Map) Abutting properties are described below:

	<b>Existing Land Use</b>	<b>Zoning District</b>	<b>Comp Plan Designation</b>
North	Skilled Nursing Home, VIA Adult Services	C1 Commercial	Urban Density, Institutional
South	Pepsi Bottling: United States	City of Charlottesville-	City of Charlottesville-Urban

	Post Office	Highway Corridor	Mixed Use Node
East	Brookmill Condos Open Space and Residential	PUD Planned Unit Development	Urban Density
West	Grocery Store, Auto/truck Repair, U-Haul rental	C1 Commercial	Urban Density

**PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY (Attachment 2-Zoning Map):**

SDP199000078-The Senior Center at Pepsi Place- The senior center was established at 491 Hillsdale Drive and occupied that space until the move to the new building at Belvedere.  
 SP201900004-Virginia Institute of Autism Adult Service Center- A special use permit was approved to allow school use of the use an existing building at 491 Hillsdale Drive for the purpose of an Adult Service Center program. The program is a year-round, day program serving approximately 52 adult participants and 69 staff members.  
 SDP202000047- A minor site plan amendment was approved for site changes including removal of parking spaces, adding fencing, adding an outdoor recreation area, and final approval of bus circulation.  
 SDP198900026- A final site plan was approved for a Pepsi office building at 485 Hillsdale Drive. The building is now occupied by various office tenants.

**DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL (Attachment-3 Project Narrative and Attachment 4-Concept Plan):**

The proposal includes relocation of VIA' s Elementary Center Program, currently housed in the City of Charlottesville at Westwood Road, to 485 Hillsdale Drive. The center 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.

The existing building and parking lot would be utilized and only interior renovations are planned to the building. A new outdoor space on site is proposed that will include modifying existing parking areas. 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.

The maximum requested enrollment is 137 students and an expected staff of 158. The school anticipates increases in enrollment happening in two phases. Existing parking may be adequate for certain incremental increases but at full maximum enrollment, additional parking will be needed and is the reason for the stand-alone parking lot request of up to 66 spaces. This additional parking would meet staff parking needs but could also provide parking for other nearby businesses, if needed.

**COMMUNITY MEETING:**

The applicant conducted the required community meeting with the Places29 – Rio Community Advisory Committee on April 28, 2022 over [Zoom](#). There were several neighboring property owners in attendance who expressed questions, concerns, and support as summarized below.

- Concern about the use of the playground and noise.
- Concern about current traffic and future traffic patterns, including concern about visibility making a left turn on Greenbrier heading northwest onto Hillsdale Drive.

- Concerns related to pedestrian safety to and from the stand-alone parking lot. Other comments were in support of the request and indicated the site may have been used for parking in the past and there are existing sidewalks and crosswalks.
- Concern about bus traffic in and out of the property.
- Positive comments regarding use of an underutilized building with an exciting and creative concept, especially for play areas.
- Positive comments noted that the Virginia Institute of Autism is important not just for the community, but the greater region. Students are served here in Albemarle County and are also coming from Waynesboro and other communities outside of the County.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUESTS**

Special Use Permits are evaluated under reasonable standards, based on zoning principles which include the proposal's compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. Any impacts caused by the proposal may be addressed through conditions which must be reasonably related and roughly proportional to the impacts.

Section 33.8 of the Zoning Ordinance states that the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors shall reasonably consider the following factors when reviewing and acting upon an application for a special use permit:

1. ***No substantial detriment. Whether the proposed special use will be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels.***

In evaluating whether the proposed special use will be a detriment to adjacent properties, the type and intensity of new uses are considered, as well as comments and concerns of neighboring properties. The special use proposed on the property will functionally be very similar to the current use of the adjacent site by VIA. Nearby residences are more than 200 feet away and are separated by a wooded area that provides an adequate buffer.

2. ***Character of the nearby area is unchanged. Whether the character of the adjacent parcels and the nearby area will be changed by the proposed special use.***

The proposed special use on the subject property is consistent with the existing character of the area, in that it will provide medical services and office uses. Also, VIA's proposal for the Autism Service Center suggests a repertoire of support, education, and recreational programming that is similar in nature to what has been historically located in this area.

3. ***Harmony. Whether the proposed special use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter,***

***with the uses permitted by right in the district,***

The purpose and intent of the C1-Commercial zoning district is to permit retail, service, and public use establishments to support urban areas, communities, and villages. Located at the edge of commercial and residential areas, the special use permit request for a private school in this area is in harmony with the intent of this zoning district as well as the transition between these zoning classifications – commercial and residential. The addition of a private school and stand-alone parking in this district will not restrict the current uses or other by-right uses available on this, or adjacent properties.

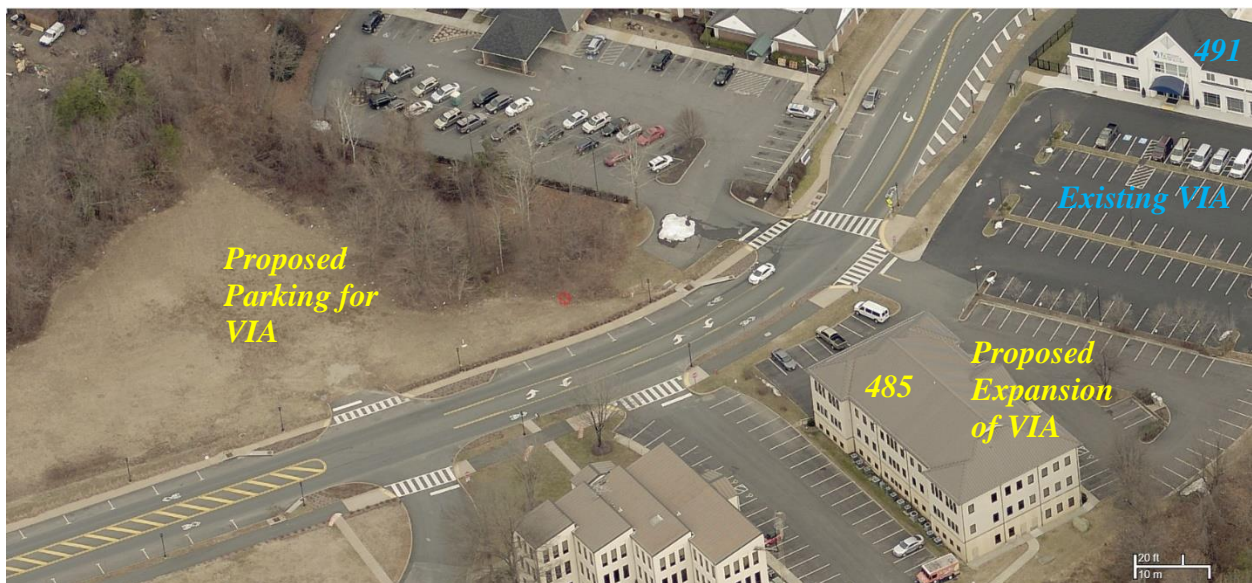
**with the applicable provisions of section 5,**

No supplementary regulations apply to the private school use or stand-alone parking.

**and with the public health, safety, and general welfare (including equity).**

Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

The proposed school expansion and stand-alone parking would be located along a segment of Hillsdale Drive that includes an existing shared use path on the east side and sidewalk on the west side. There are numerous crosswalks, turn lanes, and on-street parking along the street. The school would utilize an existing entrance already established and would be shared with the existing VIA facility for the expansion. The stand-alone parking lot entrance has already been established curb/gutter and a crosswalk. Please see below. It is approximately 215' from the proposed parking to the lighted and striped crosswalk across Hillsdale Drive that would provide a safe crossing for employees to VIA. The applicant worked with VDOT to make sure concerns regarding the ingress and egress of buses providing regular drop off and pick up services to the site, are addressed.



Both VDOT and County transportation planning staff have reviewed the proposal and did not have any objections or concerns. During review of the initial VIA special use permit, a condition of approval was included to require signage that only a left turn out of the entrance is permitted. This was recommended because bus turn movement analysis indicated buses would potential enter the southbound turn lane into the site if making a right turn out onto Hillsdale Drive.

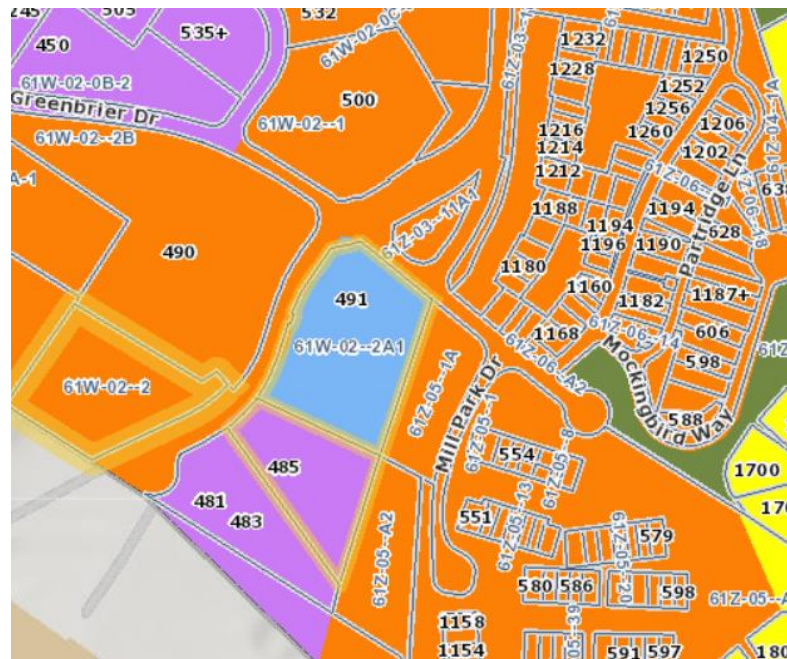
Regarding site distance concerns at the intersection of Hillsdale Drive and left turns from Greenbrier if headed northwest, the fence in question was reviewed and approved with the minor site plan amendment for the existing VIA location (491 Hillsdale Drive). That property has a site distance easement at the intersection and the fence location was approved outside the site distance easement.

As is typical with private school uses, conditions of approval are recommended to address maximum enrollment and hours of operation.

**4. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Whether the proposed special use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.**

The Places29 Master Plan, revised in 2015, designates this property as “Institutional” which allows for civic uses, parks, recreational facilities, and similar uses on County-owned property.

- **Institutional** – civic uses, parks, recreational facilities, and similar uses on County-owned property
- **Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial** – commercial, professional office; research and development, design, testing of prototypes; manufacturing, assembly, packaging; residential is a secondary use (no maximum density).
- **Urban Density**– residential (6.01 – 34 units/ acre); supporting uses such as religious institutions, schools, commercial, office and service uses



Staff believes that support, education, and recreation opportunities for participants in the VIA programs are consistent with the Office/R&D/Flex designation. Schools are anticipated uses in Urban Density areas, as appropriate. Staff believes this is an appropriate location, on property designated Urban Density and many of the surrounding areas residential.

Given that the use would locate in an existing building and utilize existing parking areas, staff has not done a detailed neighborhood model analysis for the proposed school use. Regarding stand-alone parking, typically parking is recommended to be located behind or to the side of a building from the street. 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.

**SUMMARY:**

**Positive aspects of this request include:**

1. Institutional uses, such as private schools, are consistent with the master plan.
2. The proposed school is accessed from adequate public roads for the use.
3. No detrimental impacts to adjoining properties are anticipated.

**Concerns associated with this request include:**

None identified.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Staff recommends approval of SP202200009 Virginia Institute of Autism (VIA) Expansion-Adult Service Center and Elementary School with the following conditions:

1. Development of the use shall be in general accord with the conceptual plan titled " Virginia Institute of Autism Hillsdale Expansion" prepared by Timmons Group, with the latest revision date of August 12, 2022, as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator. To be in general accord with the Conceptual plan, development shall reflect the following major elements within the development essential to the design of the development:
  - a. Location of potential phase 1 play area as shown on the plan.

Minor modifications to the plan which do not conflict with the elements above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

2. Maximum enrollment shall be 137 participants.
3. Normal hours of operation for the Center shall be from 7:30 am, to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, with occasional evening and weekend activities.
4. Signage must be provided onsite, near the point of egress, notifying buses that only a left turn out is permitted.

Staff recommends approval of and SP202200010 Stand Alone Parking with the following condition:

1. Development of the use shall be in general accord with the conceptual plan titled " Virginia Institute of Autism Hillsdale Expansion" prepared by Timmons Group, with the latest revision date of August 12, 2022, as determined by the Director of Planning and the Zoning Administrator. To be in general accord with the Conceptual plan, development shall reflect the following major elements within the development essential to the design of the development:
  - a. Location of parking areas

Minor modifications to the plan which do not conflict with the elements above may be made to ensure compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.



**MOTIONS:**

**SP202200009 Private School Expansion**

Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:  
I move to recommend approval of SP202200009 with the conditions outlined in the staff report.

Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:  
I move to recommend denial of SP202200009. *State reasons for denial*

**SP202200010 Stand-Alone Parking**

Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:  
I move to recommend approval of SP202200010 with the conditions outlined in the staff report.

Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:  
I move to recommend denial of SP202200010. *State reasons for denial*

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Location Map
2. Zoning Map
3. Application Narrative
4. Concept Plan