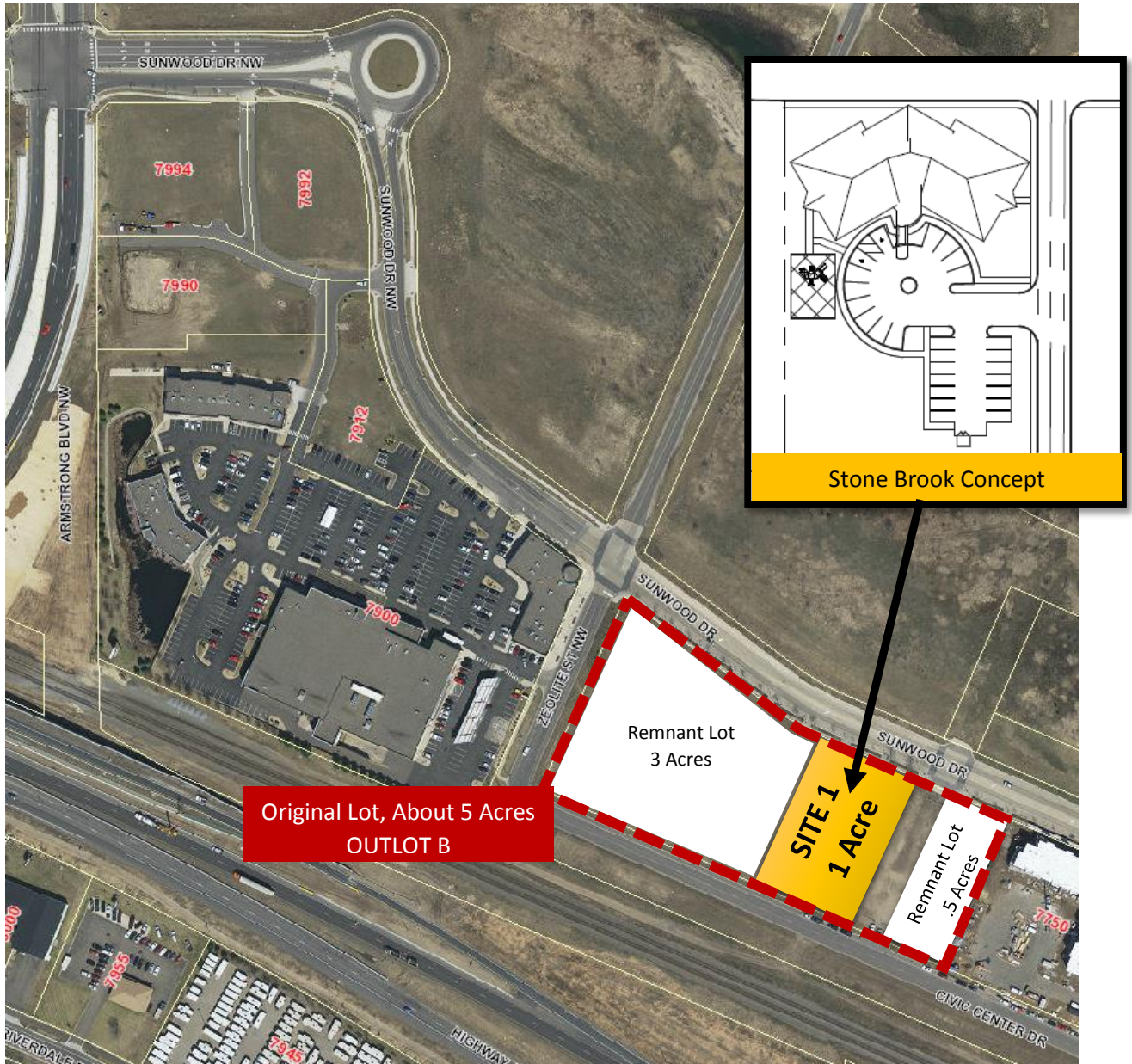


Stone Brook Academy  
(previously known as Prestmore Academy)  
Site Selection Log

**SITE 1**  
02/01/2017

# SITE 1



Outlot B is a roughly 4.95-acre parcel. The user, Stone Brook Academy, would like to utilize a roughly 1-acre portion of the property. This site is located in the COR-2 Retail district, on the boarder of the COR-1 Mixed district.

The shape/ dimensions of this site is ideal for development (rectangular). This site will require fill (is low), which will increase project costs for Stone Brook. Infrastructure generally is in place, and surrounds this site. The one question mark RE infrastructure is the potential Yolite Street connection. The other item worth noting, is this project will solidify the two remnant lots.

# (1) Stone Brook Feedback

## A. Why does Stone Brook think they need to be located on this site?

1. For the reasons outlined below, Stone Brook is confused why this question is being discussed—as it appears the City is providing mixed and conflicting direction/ messages on The COR.
  - The City’s adopted COR Master Plan specifically shows a childcare center on this site.
  - The City’s adopted COR Master Plan shows three individual projects on this site, including a very small project (not one single large project as many have discussed recently).
  - The City’s adopted COR-2 Zoning District allows for this use.
  - The City is formally marketing this parcel for sale. Stone Brook is willing to purchase at a reasonable price—and is not asking for a formal business subsidy.
  - Stone Brook is proposing a quality project, a quality service, and a destination use for The COR.
2. Stone Brook has reviewed all available site locations in The COR on multiple occasions, over the past six months. This includes reviewing sites with developers, architects, banks, and walking sites. Stone Brook wants to purchase this property now (purchase agreement). They have been saving for the past two plus years—and are very interested in this specific site. They desire to begin construction in early summer 2017.
3. Look/ feel/ vision are very important to Stone Brook. This site (near center of The COR) meets the vision of Stone Brook. They want a high-class, high-tech, high-amenity, well-respected, nice looking academy/ childcare center, that fronts Sunwood Drive, and fits in *WELL* with the surrounding area—which they believe is near the center of The COR. This facility will be much more of a state-of-the-art children’s academy, rather than simply just a childcare center. This will be an asset/ destination for this community.
4. Stone Brook believes in the City’s vision of The COR—and they are drawn to this specific site. They believe near the heart of The COR is where family oriented uses/ destination uses are best located—like academy’s, community centers, theaters, train stations, municipal, parks, etc. (details in location section below).
5. Being located near the center of The COR, versus on one extreme end or the other, provides better ability for Stone Brook to evenly pull from Ramsey’s major population areas (north and east of Ramsey Boulevard), and also to pull from future developable areas (west of new Armstrong interchange).
6. Being located near the center of The COR allows Stone Brook to draw from nearby dense housing—including apartments, townhomes, and other residential developments within The COR—as a result, in many cases, this location may be walkable. Being located near the center of The COR may also attract people using the Northstar Commuter Rail.
7. This site (Site #1) allows for a nice transition of uses, from multiple apartment users (i.e. COR-1 zoning district) to a traditional retail area (COR-2 retail district). Naturally, this site is a transition site. A transition user, like Stone Brook, makes sense.
8. Stone Brook believes being located on Sunwood Drive, near the center of The COR, is important for fit/ feel/ safety of the academy. Traffic flow (ease of access, congestion) and nearby users impact the perceived safety/ security/ fit of their facility. Stone Brook believes being located on either end of The COR detracts from these principles (i.e. convenience retail areas).

9. The McDonald's sites are 25%-35% bigger than what Stone Brook needs, and will result in wasted space/ remnant lots (which the City will be unhappy with). The Casey's sites on the east end of The COR have several more "development issues" than Site #1. PSD is not willing to sell their site for less than \$12.00 psf. The Northgate site is too small. Not only is this their #1 desired site, Stone Brook believes other options in The COR don't work well.
10. This type of business, a high-end children's academy, is not commonly seen in Anoka County, if at all (however, is common in Hennepin County for example). It is critically important, to the owners, that they are able to *deliver* top-notch services in a high-class facility. They will not open a facility in Ramsey if they cannot achieve that goal. Stone Brook believes their pricing structure is very sensitive/ risky in Ramsey (unproven market for this product). They need to do everything they can to keep user costs as low as possible in Ramsey (Site #1 works for their budget).

## **B. Is this a daycare or a pre-school?**

1. Stone Brook is a center based childcare. Stone Brook is not a daycare. [Based on State regulations,] daycares are centers located inside peoples' homes. A center based childcare, under MN Dept of Human Services guidelines, has specific requirements for number of children, as well as, staff qualifications. Stone Brook will be applying for a childcare license [though the State]. This license will enable Stone Brook to service children ages 6 weeks-preschool.
2. [With the above in mind,] Stone Brook is not just opening up a childcare center just to open up a childcare center. Childcare centers are a very tough and regulated business. Therefore, to spend time and energy and personal assets just for a business would be foolish. Stone Brook has been in contact with many people and [childcare] centers for two years now, trying to gather information and to produce a quality product. First and foremost for the children, but second of all, for the community.

Stone Brook will be regulated by the MN Dept of Human Services. Requirements, see website [pages](#). Supporting a childcare center in the community is vital to the growth of the community. Yes, the family is a powerful influence on a child's ability to succeed, but Stone Brook's goal is to also work collaboratively in a process that is fun, educational, and have a beneficial social impact. Therefore, Stone Brook will be [include] special events for families, a large multi-purpose room for events and learning, computer-smart boards for learning, and the privilege to share the stages of growth and development with the families. Just remember that when a center for childcare exists and successful, the community in which they serve will also show success and a positive influence.

## (2) Staff Feedback

### A. YOLITE STREET CONNECTION

- Development of this site *could* trigger the construction of a 275' public roadway connection (known as Yolite Street)--which would connect Sunwood Drive with Veterans Drive. Yolite Street is the only potential public mid-block connection between Zeolite and Sapphire Street in The COR (which are a half mile apart). Requiring the construction of Yolite Street is a policy question for the City to answer—and is very important to this proposed development. Direction is needed in order to move this project forward on this particular site.



- Stone Brook Academy is proposing to pay for 20% of costs related to Yolite Street (if the City requires this road). Stone Brook would like to use the City's previously utilized cost share arrangement on public roads located in commercial areas in The COR--which is a 60/40 split (60% City, 40% developer). Stone Brook is proposing to pay 20%, as they are only utilizing one side of the road. They are proposing the user on the other side of Yolite Street pay for the remaining share of the 40% developer portion (i.e. 20%).
- Another option to consider is a private drive/ road connection (much like Casey's). It appears, based on initial comments from the EDA/ PC/ CC, this is an option worth pursuing. In this case, Stone Brook would propose a 50:50 cost share.
- The current COR Master Plan (left) does *NOT* call for a public road connection at Yolite Street. The original COR Master Plan (right) *DOES*.
- Yolite has *NOT* been platted (ROW has not been secured) on the south side of Sunwood Drive (property currently being considered by Stone Brook). Yolite *HAS* been platted (ROW has been secured) on the north side of Sunwood Drive (to service a potential parking ramp).

- Sunwood Drive and Veteran’s Drive were constructed ahead of development, based on the original COR Master Plan. Yolite Street was stubbed in on both Sunwood and Veteran’s Drive. An intersection has been constructed on Sunwood (for the anticipated Yolite Street).
- There is an existing stormwater line that runs through the proposed Yolite Street connection (between Sunwood and Veteran’s Drive). Therefore, even if the Yolite Street connection is not made, this storm water line will effect where buildings can be constructed (i.e. cannot be built over the stormwater line).
- From a traffic flow/public safety perspective, staff recommends the City make the proposed connection of Yolite Street between Sunwood Drive and Veterans Drive. At this point, there is no road connection for about a half mile. In the event of an emergency or heavy traffic in The COR, having this connection, to allow for detours/ alternative routes, will be very important.
  - i. Furthermore, if the Yolite Street connection is not made, and one of the two existing connections is blocked (in the case of an emergency/ major event/ construction), the next available connection will be more than a half mile away (which is a great distance in a dense/ walkable/ transit oriented development).
  - ii. Staff is also concerned that existing private driveways (such as Residents at The COR) will continue to experience significant public through traffic, due to the lack of public road connections. As The COR develops, this problem is expected to worsen—especially if connections like Yolite are not made.

## B. REMNANT PARCELS

- If Stone Brook was allowed to move forward with this proposed 1-acre site, it would create two remnant lots.
- The **first remnant lot** is roughly 1/2 acre, rectangular shaped, remnant parcel, located just east of the proposed 1-acre Stone Brook Academy site (just east of the potential Yolite Street connection). The lot would be roughly 85' wide and 275' deep.



This size of lot is not ideal/ and is not something the City should be seeking (staff would not recommend for standard practice). This size of lot will reduce the pool of potential projects/ users. This risk factor should be known.

However, considering it's location (within The COR), this remnant site still carries merit/ marketable value. The COR allows for zero setbacks/ green spaces, significant lot coverages, on-street parking, and does not require storm water on-site. In fact, density is strongly encouraged in this development. These COR development characteristics allow for this particular remnant site to be viable and usable.

Staff anticipates a 4,000-8,000 sf "foot-print" building could be placed on this site (could be two stories). Water/ sewer stubs are available to this site. Furthermore, staff would like to note, this type sized lot/ building foot-print is not uncommon for downtowns/ urban developments in cities across the country.

In many ways, the 1/2 remnant parcel is the result of two previous decisions: (1) the Common Bond project, not extending their site to Yolite Street created the 1/2 parcel, and (2) the location of pre-installed/ pre-determined infrastructure on Sunwood and Veterans. These issues will need to be addressed, now or in the future (by the City as current master developer, or by a future master developer).

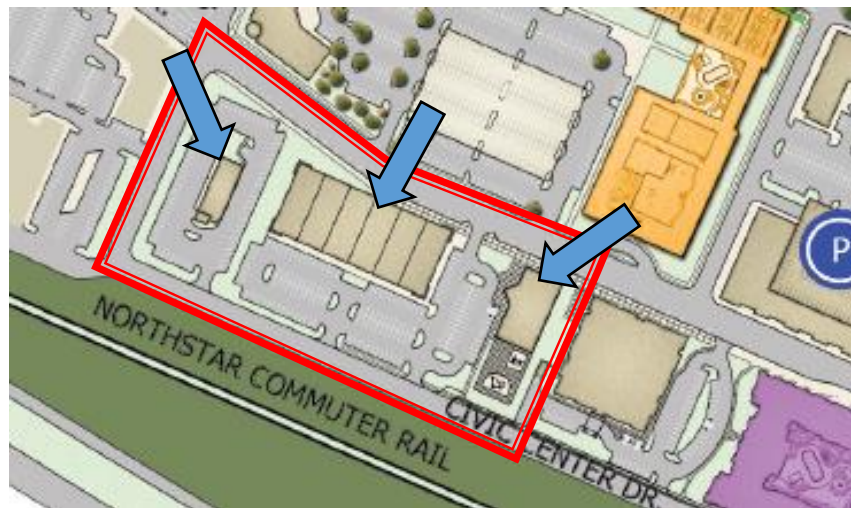
- The **second remnant lot** is roughly 3-acres, located just west of the proposed Stone Brook Academy 1-acre lot, and is generally rectangular shaped.



Although this lot is smaller than the original larger 5-acre lot, this remnant 3-acre parcel is still of considerable size, and holds strong merit to be marketed/ developed. Sewer/ water stubs exist. Good access points exist. Location is good.

### C. PROPOSED USE/ SITE LOCATION

- The COR master plan coincidentally shows a childcare center in this general location. The COR master plan generally shows three buildings on this site, pushed up against Sunwood Drive, at the following estimated sizes: 20-40K sf, 3-5k sf, and 4-8K sf. Stone Brook is proposing a 10K sf building, pushed up against Sunwood Drive. Therefore, the proposed project appears to generally fit The COR master plan.
- This proposed use (childcare center) generally appears to be an allowed use in the The COR-2 zoning district. This site is located in The COR-2 zoning district.
- From an objective perspective, this project appears to be in an acceptable location, and an acceptable use (based on zoning and master plan). However, the City retains ultimate discretion as property owner/ master developer to pick and choose which projects they want, or don't want; and how property should be developed.





## **(3) EDA Feedback**

- The EDA reviewed this case 12/08/2016 and 01/12/2017. The EDA is generally supportive of moving forward with Site #1.

### **12/08/2016 NOTES**

- The EDA is very interested in this project, and would like to welcome Stone Brook to Ramsey (and The COR). The EDA wants this deal to happen, and is excited to work with Stone Brook to find a solution. The EDA understands the many benefits this project can bring to Ramsey.
- The EDA was generally interested in obtaining more information from staff (RE the Yolite Street discussion/ the remnant lots), and hearing back from Stone Brook (on other potential site locations), before making a final recommendation on this particular site.
- The EDA was generally concerned about this specific site location/ site layout. The EDA is most interested in a comprehensive approach to developing this larger site (nearly 5 acres). The EDA generally believes a master developer can most effectively/ efficiently plan around the current site limitations/ challenges (listed below). The EDA would rather have Stone Brook located on another site, to avoid solidifying the development challenges for this site (listed below).

- **Yolite intersection/ connection.**

The EDA was concerned this connection is un-needed, and a waste of public dollars (originally \$394K total cost, now about \$284K). The COR master plan no longer calls for the Yolite connection. The EDA was generally open to discussing a private connection/ and or private stub road solution.

- **Remnant Parcels**

The EDA was concerned with the relatively fixed location of existing public infrastructure. These items create development layout/ lot size limitations—which restrict future development options. Please see “Staff Feedback Section” for details/ background.

This proposed Stone Brook 1-acre site will solidify two remnant parcels. The EDA is generally concerned about the potential affects these remnant parcels will have on future development projects. Please see “Staff Feedback Section” for details/ background.

### **01/12/2017 NOTES**

- EDA supported moving forward with this site, with a 5-1 vote. The EDA felt that this project was a real project. Stone Brook is here today. It appears to be an acceptable use of Site #1. The user appears to be quality, and the proposed building should fit The COR. This site can be sold to Stone Brook without providing a formal business subsidy.
- The EDA supported making a counter offer to Stone Brook (@ \$3.30 psf). The EDA supported the Planning Commission’s request, that if a project was to move forward on this particular site, that a connection be made from Sunwood to Veterans Drive. The EDA understood the significant traffic Stone Brook will create, and wants to avoid the drop off/pick up taking place on Sunwood. The EDA does not think a public road connection should be required, the EDA does support a private drive connection (like Residence at The COR). Generally, the EDA understood Stone Brook would likely desire to split the cost of a private drive with the City (50:50).

- The EDA did have a robust discussion. Many topics were covered. In most situations, the EDA acknowledged there was no single clear/ correct/ easy way to move forward with this project, and address all individual concerns. This was a very challenging discussion for the EDA.
- Some EDA members felt that this use was a good fit for this site—considering it's proximity to apartments, and the Northstar Rail. Some EDA members felt this use was a good transition user, from the apartments to traditional retail. Some EDA members believe that having a master developer/ large 1-time project for this site is ideal—however, were concerned that alternative has never occurred in reality, and will likely take a long time before it ever does (if at all). Some EDA members were concerned that, to make the project work on other sites, the level of subsidy needed could not be justified. Some EDA members indicated that getting this project moving forward will result in land proceeds, jobs, tax base, will provide a good service to the community, and will generate traffic in The COR. Some EDA members believe that the several development issues with Site #1 (remnant lots, Yolite, the well, etc.) are the result of previous decisions, and at some level are now a moot point—those issues are not Stone Brook issues.
- Some EDA members were concerned with allowing Stone Brook on this site. This action will confirm/ solidify many development issues: remnant lots, Yolite, the well, etc. These issues limit the City's ability to market sell remaining lots (specifically, the remnant half acre lot), and will eliminate the option for a master developer to take the entire site (and deploy creative solutions to address the issues of this site). One EDA member formally opposed Site #1 for this reason.
- Generally, the EDA was unclear what the City's vision was for this property. Below is their concern.

What is the vision for this parcel?

1. Is the vision traditional retail, as the adopted zoning district indicates?
2. Is the vision apartments/ COR-1 density, to be consistent with the block?
3. Is the vision a large, mixed-use, master planned, significant project(s), as the Planning Commission suggests?
4. Is the vision large, multi-tenant retail/ commercial buildings, master planned, as the EDA has contemplated?
5. Is the vision the current COR Master Plan, which shows three individual buildings/projects, one being a daycare center.
6. Is the vision the old COR Master Plan, which shows 3-4 commercial (potentially mixed use) buildings?

## **(4) Planning Commission Feedback**

### 01/05/2017 NOTES

- By consensus, the Planning Commission was opposed to the project being located on this site (Site #1).
  - The Planning Commission is uncomfortable with the many development issues that encumber this site (remnant lots, storm sewer, well, Yolite, etc.). The Planning Commission is uncomfortable with Stone Brook etching out a 1-acre parcel on this site, and further solidifying the various encumbrances on this site.
  - The Planning Commission believes great opportunity exists for the City on this site, and this project may remove the ability to make a large project(s) happen. The Planning Commission believes this site is better suited for a larger project(s), and/ or a master developer to take down the site all at once. The Planning Commission discussed several better-suited options for development on this site (including many larger destination users). One option discussed included destination type attractions, such as a ferris wheel. Another option included building a skyway/ or building over the Yolite connection. Another option included a mixed use building (living above and commercial below).
  - The Planning Commission does not agree with Stone Brook, that this project is best fit on this particular site (Site #1). The Planning Commission believes Stone Brook is best suited on other sites: (i.e. #2, #3, #4, #6, #7, #8).
- The Planning Commission indicated that, if this project moved forward on this site, they would recommend a connection be made between Sunwood and Veteran's drives. The Planning Commission was concerned about the large amount of traffic this user will generate, and that having direct access to Sunwood Drive would be problematic. The Planning Commission appeared to be open to discussing an private or public connection.
- Assuming this project is classified as a "daycare" user specifically (and academy as a secondary use), the Planning Commission believes this site generally works form a zoning/ COR master plan perspective.
  - Staff did check into this item (classification of user). Stone Brook will have a daycare/ childcare license through the State of Minnesota (Department of Human Resources). They are technically considered a childcare center. Daycares are technically a home based business (per the State of Minnesota).
  - The City of Ramsey uses the terms "childcare" and "daycare" interchangeably throughout zoning code.
  - To have a childcare center, Stone Brook must develop a written child care program plan, along with a plan for daily access for interest activities, plan for naps and rest, behavior guidance plan, proper furnishings/ equipment/ materials/ supplies for each age group, have a program for special needs, drop in programs/ supervision, sick child program, food/ snack program, parent information, emergency and accident policy, protective personal records program, health records, facility inspection (floor plan, occupancy, fire inspection, hazards, hygiene).
  - With the above in mind, Stone Brook will also be providing/ specializing in early childhood education services. They want to be more than simply a childcare center—education is very important to their brand/ strategy.

## ***(5) City Council Feedback***

### **01/24/2017 NOTES**

- The City Council has indicated more information is needed before a final decision can be made (RE site location). The Council was concerned about the ramifications this single project (about 1 acre) would have on the development of the larger parcel/ block (about 5 acres). The Council desires to know more about how the various development challenges associated with this site will play out in various development scenarios (i.e. Stone Brook proposal vs. single developer master planned site).
  
- Per Council direction, various professional development scenarios were drafted for consideration/ discussion. The Council requested this case be reviewed one more time by the Planning Commission before the Council made a final decision. The Council would like to receive feedback from the Planning Commission on the attached four concepts.
  
- The Council was generally very supportive of the use/ proposed project. The Council would like to explore options on how to make this project work on Site #1. However, the Council remains undecided about site location.