

Agenda Report

September 17, 2018

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW OF A NEW PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL (EF ACADEMY INTERNATIONAL BOARDING SCHOOL) AT 1539 EAST HOWARD STREET

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is intended to provide information to the City Council; no action is required.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The applicant, EF Education First (EF), has submitted a Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) application to establish an EF Academy International Boarding School at 1539 E. Howard Street (formerly the William Carey International University campus). The project site includes the entire 14.82-acre campus and the 1.42-acre recreation field on Oxford Avenue.

The proposed project consists of the demolition of three buildings (totaling approximately 30,500 square feet) at the northeast corner of the campus, constructing in their place a 72,000 square foot, three-story student residence, the rehabilitation and re-use of all other remaining buildings on the campus, and the enhancement of the existing recreation field northeast of the campus on Oxford Avenue as a regulation-size soccer field. The campus is currently zoned PS (Public, Semi-Public) and the recreation field is zoned RM-12 (Multi-Family Residential, two units per lot). EF is proposing a Master Plan for the new school.

The PPR process is established in Section 17.60.040.C of the City's Zoning Code as a process by which better projects can be achieved through early consultation between City staff and applicants. The process coordinates the review of projects among City staff, familiarizes applicants with the regulations and procedures that apply to the projects, and avoids significant investment in the design of a project without preliminary input from City staff. It also helps to identify issues that may arise during application processing, such as community concerns and consistency with City regulations and policies.

Projects that meet the threshold of “community-wide significance” (greater than 50,000 square feet in size with at least one discretionary action, 50 or more housing units, or any project that is deemed by the Director of Planning & Community Development Department to be of major importance to the City) are presented to the City Council as a way to inform Councilmembers and the public of significant upcoming projects.

This report provides a project description, identifies the anticipated entitlement and environmental review processes, and summarizes key areas of concern regarding Zoning Code and General Plan compliance.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

As shown below in Figure 1, the project site is located in the north-central area of Pasadena, adjacent to unincorporated Los Angeles County. The project site includes the entire 14.82-acre campus (currently the William Carey International University campus) and the 1.42-acre recreation field, north of the campus on Oxford Avenue.

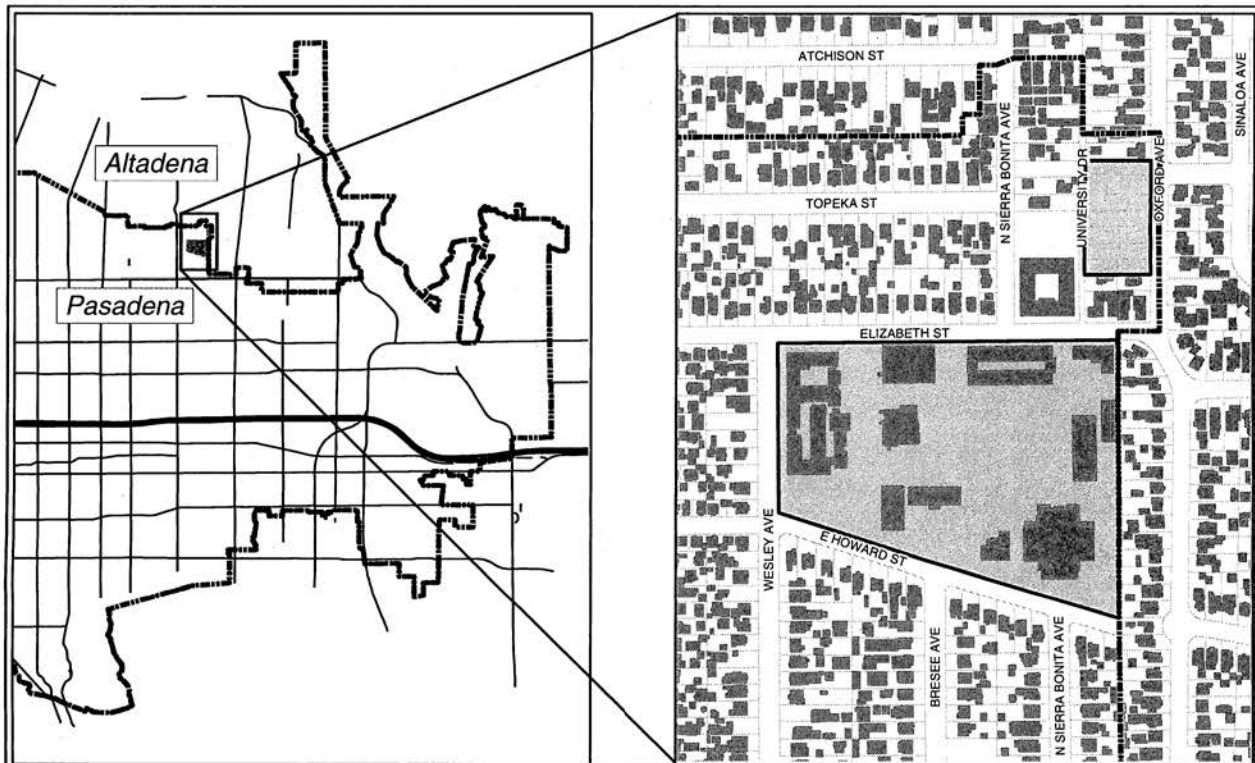


Figure 1: Vicinity Map and Project Site

The proposed project is the establishment of a private high school primarily for international students on the site. The project includes:

- Demolition of three buildings (Carmichael, Ward Workshop, and Zwemer Hall), totaling approximately 30,500 square feet, at the northeast corner of the campus;

- Construction of a 72,000 square foot, three-story student residence with 500 beds in their place;
- Rehabilitation and re-use of all other remaining buildings on the campus;
- Installation of security fencing; and
- Enhancement of the existing recreation field northeast of the campus on Oxford Avenue as a regulation-size soccer field with artificial turf and field lights for student use.

EF is an international educational company that offers language study, cultural exchange, educational travel, and academic study with 580 offices and schools in 52 countries including the United States. EF Academy, a division of EF, is an international boarding school that currently operates high schools in England and New York. At the Pasadena Campus, EF proposes to operate a high school (grades 9 through 12) with a maximum of 1,000 full-time equivalent students and 150 faculty and staff. As a boarding school, the vast majority of students would be housed on-site, in the new dormitory building as well as the rehabilitated existing dormitory buildings (Aylward House and Townsend Hall). The students would not drive as EF prohibits its students from possessing cars during enrollment.

EF plans to begin construction in Summer 2019 and to open the campus to students in Fall 2020. The existing uses on the campus, including colleges, private schools, churches, and non-profit organizations, are expected to vacate prior to that date, and EF would be the sole user of the campus and the soccer field. The plans submitted for PPR are included as Attachment A to this report.

EF is also purchasing from William Carey International University, also referred to as Frontier Ventures, 16 residential properties to the east of the campus along N. Oxford Avenue for faculty and staff use. However, these properties are across the boundary between Pasadena and unincorporated Los Angeles County (i.e. Altadena), and are therefore outside of Pasadena's jurisdiction and would not be part of the Master Plan.

William Carey International University/Frontier Ventures owns a number of other residential properties in the vicinity of the campus that may be sold in the future. However, none of these other properties are being purchased by EF at this time and therefore are not part of this project.

PROJECT APPROVALS:

The proposed Master Plan would require the following discretionary entitlements and approvals:

Master Plan:

The purpose of a Master Plan as established in the Pasadena Municipal Code Section 17.61.050 is to establish a procedure which reduces processing time and uncertainty by

consolidating several Conditional Use Permit hearings over an extended period of time and to ensure orderly and thorough City review of expansion plans for certain public, semi-public, and open spaces uses, resulting in more compatible and desirable development. The City Council is the decision making body for the Master Plan; with the Planning Commission making a recommendation to the City Council and the Design Commission making a recommendation to the Planning Commission.

Design Review:

Pasadena Zoning Code Section 17.61.030 provides thresholds for when projects require Design Review. The proposed dormitory, at 72,000 square feet, exceeds 25,000 square feet, thereby necessitating Design Commission review through Concept and Final Design Review. The Design Commission will also act as an advisory body to the Planning Commission as part of the review of the Master Plan.

Preliminary Consultation with the Design Commission:

Prior to the submittal of Concept Design Review, the Design Commission will conduct Preliminary Consultation of the proposed dormitory building. The Preliminary Consultation process is an informal discussion before the Commission to inform the applicant the applicable design guidelines, findings, and procedures and to discuss compliance of the project with the design guidelines.

PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY:

The PPR has been reviewed by staff from all applicable departments. A summary of the comments follows, and the complete set of comments are provided as Attachment B. These comments were provided to the applicant on August 15, 2018, and a follow-up meeting to discuss the comments was held with the applicant on September 13, 2018.

Environmental Review: Environmental analysis will be conducted during the Master Plan application process in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Technical studies such as traffic, noise, and air quality studies may be required. If the project is determined not be exempt from CEQA, an Initial Study will be conducted to determine the level of review (Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report) required.

General Plan and Zoning: The General Plan Land Use Diagram designates the campus portion of the school as Institutional with the corresponding zoning designation of PS (Public and Semi-Public). The Institutional designation applies for public and quasi-public entities such as civic, educational, cultural, and/or religious facilities. The proposed use of the campus as a private secondary and preparatory boarding school would be consistent with the land use designation of the General Plan.

The recreation field has a land use designation of Low-Medium Density Residential (0 to 12 dwelling units per acre), with a corresponding zoning of RM-12 (Multi-Family Residential, two units per lot). Both the land use designation and zoning are for areas that are generally characterized by a mix of duplexes and single-family residential development. Private school uses may be permitted with a Conditional Use Permit in the RM-12 zoning district.

Design & Historic Preservation: Several buildings on the campus, such as McGavran Hall and Latourette Library, may be eligible for designation as individual historic resources. In addition, the Ward Workshop, which is proposed for demolition, may potentially be historically notable. Design and Historic Preservation staff has requested a copy of a historical survey (if one has already been prepared). The project proposal also includes the installation of perimeter fencing that encloses the campus for security purposes. The site has traditionally been an open college campus, allowing the public to enter freely and walk through the campus. The proposed installation of a perimeter fence would be an alteration to the campus and surrounding community. Special consideration of the height and type of fence materials is strongly recommended.

Parking: Based on the preliminary information provided, there are currently 368 parking spaces on the campus. A total of 168 spaces would be removed to create sports courts, which would result in 200 spaces to be provided on the campus at buildout. The applicant has indicated that due to the provision of on-site student housing and the prohibition on student driving, the parking demand for the project could be less than required by the Zoning Code.

NEXT STEPS:

The next steps in the review process are as follows:

- Project Master Plan application submittal with applicable fees;
- Conduct environmental review per CEQA;
- Review of the project by the Design Commission;
- Consideration of the environmental determination and project by the Planning Commission;
- Consideration of the environmental determination and project by the City Council; and if approved;
- Consideration of Concept/Final design approvals by Design Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This report is for information only and will not result in any fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted,



DAVID M. REYES
Director of Planning & Community
Development Department

Prepared by:



Natsue Sheppard
Associate Planner

Reviewed by:



David Sanchez
Principal Planner

Prepared by:



for _____
David Sinclair
Senior Planner

Approved by:



STEVE MERMELL
City Manager

Attachments: (2)

Attachment A – Predevelopment Plan Review Plans
Attachment B – Predevelopment Plan Review Comments to Applicant

ATTACHMENT A
PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW PLANS