

Agenda Report

April 26, 2010

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Development Department
SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CHANGE TO APPROVED AMBASSADOR WEST PROJECT AND VARIANCE #11669 FOR 182 SOUTH ORANGE GROVE BOULEVARD (MAYFAIR MANSION)

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the activity described in the application for changes to the approved Ambassador West Project and related variance application was subject to environmental review in the EIR adopted by the City Council for the Ambassador West Project on April 2, 2007, and that there are no changed circumstances or new information which would trigger further environmental review;
2. Make the specific findings listed in Attachment B; and
3. Approve this application with the conditions listed in Attachment C.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On March 10, 2010, the Planning Commission recommended that the City Council approve the request for a change to the approved Ambassador West Project and Variance #11669 for 182 South Orange Grove Boulevard with the above environmental finding, with the findings listed in Attachment B, and with modifications to the conditions of approval. These modifications, which are shown in boldface font, are listed in Attachment C.

BACKGROUND:

The current property owners, Warren and Zoe Hsiau, bought the 182 S. Orange Grove Boulevard property approximately one year ago with the intent to use the 18,400 square foot Mayfair Mansion as a single family residence. In order to inhabit the building, they submitted applications for a change to the approved Ambassador West project and Variance #11669 to build a two-car garage in the front yard.

The plans submitted with the application propose a 716 square foot single-story detached garage with space for two vehicles and storage, located in the northwest corner of the site. A proposal to build new fences, gates, and trellises to enclose the

front yard is also part of the submitted plans but the property owner has agreed to eliminate these features from the project.

The Ambassador West Project was approved by the City Council on April 2, 2007. The main project proposal was to redevelop a 19.7 acre portion of the former Ambassador College campus in the block bounded by W. Green St., S. St. John Ave., W. Del Mar Blvd. and S. Orange Grove Blvd. The proposal included: 1) construction of 200 independent living units for seniors and 48 assisted living units in a six-story 450,000 square foot building; 2) construction of 70 residential condominiums in two- and three-story buildings; 3) intensification of existing apartment buildings and dorms to provide 46 apartment units; 4) conversion of historic buildings to educational, institutional, and office uses; and 5) preservation of historic buildings, significant landscape features and open space.

A significant aspect of the Ambassador West project is the preservation of thirteen historic buildings, significant landscape features, and protected trees. The central portion of the campus is dedicated to open space for public use and enjoyment, and is accessed by a network of public pathways. With the development of 270 new residential units and 48 institutional units at the periphery, the campus was envisioned to remain an open campus setting with full public access.

Major changes to the Ambassador West project require an application for a change to the approved project to be decided by the original decision making body, the City Council. The Mayfair Mansion single family residential use and new detached garage proposal involves the following changes to the approved Ambassador West Project:

Change	Recommendation	Note
Institutional use to SFR	Approve	Zoning allows residential use. Mansion was originally developed as a residence.
New detached garage	Approve	Zoning Code requires on-site covered parking for a SFR. Applicant has a practical need for convenient parking. A garage can be located to avoid encroaching on public pathways.
New encroachments into public pathways	Disapprove	Garage can be located to avoid encroaching on public pathways.
New paving in the front yard and adjoining access easement	Approve	Necessary for vehicular access to the property.
Removals of non-protected trees, and construction within the dripline of protected trees	Approve	Necessary to allow location of garage to avoid encroaching on public pathways.
New fencing, trellises, and gates to provide privacy to large portions of the property including the entire front yard <i>(Eliminated by the applicant)</i>	Disapprove	Proposed fencing and gates cut off public circulation from public pathways, public views of the front of the mansion, and diminish sense of public space. <i>(Eliminated by the applicant)</i>

These changes are considered major because they involve the intensification of physical development (a new structure) in the project area, potentially affecting the campus-like setting and public access to open space.

The proposed project includes the following requested deviations from Zoning Code development standards which are summarized in the following table:

Variance	Recommendation	Note
Floor area > 5,278 sf	Approve	New garage triggers this requirement. (17,890 sf lot. Max Floor Area= 20%+1700= 5,278 sf. Existing living area= 18,400 sf.) Neighborhood has houses that exceed floor area standard (Terrace Villa= 7,675 floor area /4,518 allowed)
Accessory structure in front yard	Approve	Cannot be located in front yard. However, there is no other location on the lot for the garage that avoids altering the historic Mayfair Mansion.
Accessory structure < 2 ft setback	Approve	Space is needed to fit garage without altering the public pathway and provide adequate room to park vehicles.
Side setback < 10 feet	Disapprove	Can relocate the garage to avoid the side yard. Relocation of garage will preserve public pathway.
Accessory structure top plate > 9 feet	Disapprove	Can revise to comply.
Length of wall at < 5ft setback >22 feet	Disapprove	Can revise to comply.
On-site covered parking < 2	Approve	The property owners would like to use the property immediately as a single family residence. It will take time to build the garage.

Based on these project recommendations, the project would be approved with conditions of approval to protect the existing structure and surrounding environment. These include construction of the garage within two years, location of the garage between the two sycamore trees opposite the secondary entrance to avoid encroaching onto existing pathways, submittal of the revised garage design to Design & Historic preservation staff for Design Review, protection of the existing house steps from site improvements, use of only the minimum necessary paving in the front yard, protection of the two sycamore trees and existing trees in the access easement, use of permeable paving in the access easement, a landscaping and irrigation plan that features new landscaping of the sides of the garage to soften the garage's appearance, and the requirement to submit an application for Landmark Designation prior to the issuance of a building permit for the garage.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

A Final Environmental Impact Report was prepared for the Ambassador West Project. It concluded that all potential impacts could be mitigated to a less than significant level, with the exception of impacts to Aesthetics (impacts on the streetscape along Green Street and St. John Avenue), Air Quality (during portions of the construction period emissions would exceed AQMD thresholds), and Historic Resources (effects on the setting of the historic Ambassador Auditorium and Manor Del Mar, effects of attaching a new building to the historic Merritt Mansion, and effects of new construction in a National Register-eligible historic district called the West Del Mar Grouping).

The proposed change from institutional use to single family residence would reduce the potential parking demand and vehicle trips generated by that portion of the project. The construction of a new garage, in the location recommended by staff, would be a less-than-significant impact on the setting of the eligible historic resources on the property, the Mayfair Mansion (1902, Frederick Roehrig) and the western (front) walkway and eastern (rear) retaining wall and walkways (1960s, Garrett Eckbo). The recommended garage location would avoid any removal of the Eckbo-designed walkways, and existing lampposts would be relocated to accommodate new construction. The proposed new paving for vehicular access on the adjoining access easement to the existing driveway and in the front yard of the property would be an insignificant addition of paved area to the project. The removal of non-protected trees for the new garage would be an insignificant change, and the construction of the garage within the dripline of protected Sycamore trees is insignificant because new construction will be at least eight feet from the tree trunks as a condition of approval. The changes to the project as a whole would not increase any of the impacts identified as significant, would not create new significant impacts, and is within the scope of the Ambassador West Project analyzed by the Environmental Impact Report.

FISCAL IMPACT:

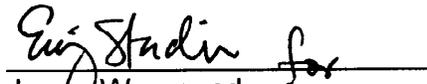
Approval of this application is not expected to significantly affect revenues or expenditures.

Respectfully submitted,



STEVE MERMELL
Assistant City Manager

Prepared by:


Jason Wasmund
Assistant Planner

Approved by:


MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments:

- A: Detailed Background and Analysis
- B: Findings
- C: Conditions of Approval
- D: Plans
- E: November 11, 2009 Memorandum
- F: Ambassador West Project Plan
- G: Ambassador West Project Approval Letter
- H: April 5, 2010 West Pasadena Residents Association Letter