



Agenda Item

December 15, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: MARANATHA HIGH SCHOOL MASTER PLAN – 169 SOUTH SAINT JOHN AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Adopt the Findings in the draft Initial Environmental Study (Attachment G), that with the incorporation of mitigation measures, the Master Plan will have no significant or unavoidable impacts and adopt the Mitigated Negative Declaration;
2. Adopt by Resolution the Specific Findings (Attachment F) for the approval of the Maranatha High School Master Plan (Attachment A) finding that the Master Plan, as conditioned, is consistent with General Plan and Zoning Ordinance;
3. Approve the Private Tree Removal Permit, finding that the replacement tree canopy is sustainable over the long term by adhering to the adopted replacement matrix; and
4. Initiate a Parking Study of the area defined in Attachment D, to determine the feasibility of implementing parking prohibitions, restrictions, or a preferential parking permit (PPP) in adjacent residential areas that may be affected by activities on the Maranatha campus.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On October 22, 2014 the Planning Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend approval of the Master Plan to the City Council. The Commission adopted staff recommendations related to the temporary use of the southeast lawn for parking as well as creating a parking study area for streets potentially impacted by events on the

Maranatha campus or at Ambassador Auditorium. The Commission requested that the applicant explore the use of vegetation or other “greening” elements to mitigate the visual impact of the proposed perimeter fence. Also, it reviewed and affirmed the environmental findings and mitigation measures for the project.

DESIGN COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On January 14th, 2014 the Design Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend approval of the Master Plan. The recommendation affirmed staff’s environmental findings, findings for tree removals, and consistency with the applicable design guidelines. The Design Commission critically examined the design and placement of the perimeter fence and the placement, orientation, and contextual relationship of the proposed structures to the existing structures.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On November 18th, 2013 the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to recommend approval of the Master Plan. The Historic Preservation Commission’s recommendation to City Council affirmed the environmental findings, the findings for tree removals, the identification of a new historic resource (the Student Center, formally the Ambassador Dining Hall) and the related finding that the implementation of the Master Plan would not adversely affect the eligible historic resource. The Commission requested changes to the site plan in order to retain protected trees. The applicant agreed to site plan modifications that resulted in the retention of three protected trees.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The proposed Master Plan would take place in three phases over a period of twenty years. The Master Plan will allow a total of approximately 29,000 square feet of new construction and 15,500 square feet of remodeled or converted space. The project also includes the installation of a perimeter fence around the campus, after-the-fact permitting of facilities identification and directional signage, and the future construction of two new sports courts and an outdoor swimming pool. The Master Plan does not increase student enrollment or faculty/staff beyond the currently entitled limit. It proposes the new and remodeled physical facilities needed to serve the 800 students and 120 full-time employees approved under the modification to the existing 2008 Conditional Use Permit which established the school at this location. The Master Plan does not propose changes to vehicular access related to drop-off/pick-up areas.

BACKGROUND:

In 2005, Maranatha High School (MHS) obtained a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow the establishment of a private high school on the former Ambassador College Campus and a Minor Conditional Use Permit to allow shared parking between Maranatha High School and Harvest Rock Church (HRC). The shared parking agreement entitles Harvest Rock Church, which began operations at the Ambassador

Auditorium in 2005, access to Maranatha's on-campus parking facilities for a certain period of time weekly, and for certain events annually. Maranatha's parking facilities include a 306 space subterranean parking structure and a 54 space surface parking lot. This agreement is still in place.

In 2008, Maranatha was granted three modifications to the conditions applied to its CUP related to the established use:

- To increase the total number of enrolled students allowed from 650 to 800;
- To increase the total number of school employees (administrative, faculty, other related staff) from 84 to 120; and
- To allow signage as permitted by the Zoning Code for the school.

The proposed MHS Master Plan does not include an increase in student enrollment or faculty/staff beyond the currently entitled limit, but would result in the build-out of the physical facilities needed to fully realize the school's long term vision for the campus. The Master Plan is not proposing permanent changes to the drop-off/pick-up areas. Lastly, as proposed and approved, per the Zoning Code the school would require a total of 220 off-street parking spaces and continues to provide a total of 360 parking spaces.

Location

Maranatha High School occupies the southeast quadrant of the former Ambassador College site located at 169 South St. John Avenue (see Attachment B). The campus is 4.14 acres in total area and is bounded by South St. John Avenue/Interstate 710 to the east, West Del Mar Boulevard to the south, the historic Manor Del Mar and garden areas of the Ambassador Campus to the west and the Ambassador Auditorium to the north.

The areas to the west of the Maranatha campus are a mix of historic single-family residences (including the Ross Grove Landmark District) and early and mid-20th century apartment blocks. A pedestrian pathway along vacated Terrace Drive runs north-south the full length of the former Ambassador College and provides the primary circulation route through the campus.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The proposed Master Plan would take place in three phases over twenty years. The Master Plan will result in a total of approximately 29,000 square feet of new construction and 15,500 square feet of remodeled or converted space. The project also calls for the installation of a perimeter fence around the campus, the construction of an outdoor swimming pool and sports courts, and the after-the-fact permitting of directional signage at several locations.

Phase I

- New, 4,500 square foot, two-story administrative structure (shown as building “B” on Attachment B);
- Improvements to the existing northern surface parking lot striping, landscaping and exterior lighting; and
- Installation of a new solid steel perimeter fence (see Attachment B).

Phase II

- Relocation of the existing indoor swimming pool from the Natatorium (shown as building “F” on Attachment B) to the south lawn which would allow for the conversion of 13,500 square feet of buildings “E”, “F”, and “G”;
- Upgrades to electrical, plumbing, and mechanical equipment; and
- The construction of two new sports courts, next to the new outdoor pool, in the southeast corner of the campus (see Attachment B).

Phase III

- A new 16,000 square foot, two-story class room building (shown as building “H” on Attachment B);
- 6,500 square feet of expanded football related facilities including new bleachers, offices, and locker rooms;
- A new 1,500 square foot planetarium (building “D”) atop the existing academic center (building “C”); and
- A new 500 square foot greenhouse.

ANALYSIS:

The Maranatha High School campus is characterized by large open spaces, density of trees, historic gardens, and a variety of architecture, from large-scale period revival single-family residences to iconic mid-century institutional buildings. The variety of architectural styles and building types, as well as the individual quality of these varied resources contribute substantially to the visual character of the site.

The site has a General Plan designation of Specific Plan, which directly references all development and use standards in the West Gateway Specific Plan. The project site is zoned “West Gateway Specific Plan Area Sub-district 1-A” and the following standards apply:

- Maximum site coverage does not apply within this zoning district;
- Minimum front set back of 20 feet; and
- Maximum height of 72 feet.

Transfer of Development Rights

The West Gateway Specific Plan allows for 250,000 square feet of institutional uses to be built in the plan area. Upon acquisition of the property, and based on the area of the site, Maranatha was allocated 125,341 square feet of development rights. The school sold 107,841 square feet of development rights to Sunrise Senior Living, one of the development partners in the redevelopment of the former college campus. The school retains 17,500 square feet of development rights. To build out the Master Development Plan as envisioned (29,000 gross square feet), the school needs 11,500 square feet of additional development rights. There exists (within the other former campus properties) potential for the Maranatha to purchase development rights to build out the Master Development Plan as envisioned.

On April 29th, 2013, the City Council took preliminary action authorizing staff to study the environmental impacts of a series of recommendations related to the General Plan Update. One of these recommendations was to sunset the West Gateway Specific Plan. If the West Gateway Specific Plan is sunsetted, the development standards which apply to the sites within the plan area will revert to the base zoning standards. The base zoning standards do not contain provisions for the Transfer of Development Rights, nor do they contain references to residential and non-residential development caps. As such, neither of these standards would be applicable to sites within the plan area. Development standards for the Maranatha campus would be dictated by the standards approved in this Master Plan.

If the specific plan is still in place when applications for design review entitlements for new construction are submitted to the City, a condition of approval associated with this Master Plan will ensure that the transfer of development rights are secured in accordance with the standards outlined in the Zoning Code.

Design & Site Planning

The applicant commissioned a design study (see Attachment C) of the campus, its adjacent structures, and open spaces. The study did the following:

- Defined the project area and its surroundings as a variety of unique spaces along a garden path with small pockets for intimate interaction and expansive open spaces for public interaction;
- Focused on the proposed new building sites; their location and their interaction with adjacent green space;
- Completed a building context analysis that identified the character defining features of the existing structures, elements like elevated roof planes supported by columns, exterior materials and colors; and
- Concluded that the visual and physical relationship between the buildings shall be distinct and compatible by adhering to a number of specific standards to guide future development proposals.

Proposed Buildings “B” & “H”

The locations of the new building sites have been selected to:

- Preserve the maximum amount of open space and mature tree canopy on the site;
- Ensure minimal impacts to existing historic and non-historic structures; and
- Design new construction that is compatible with existing structures.

Building “B”

The new “Administrative Building”, building “B” (4,500 square feet) will be sited immediately to the east of the existing Student Center, an eligible historic resource. It will be a separate, stand-alone structure. The location of the building pad does not visually interfere with the formal setting in front of the Student Center and the Ambassador Auditorium. The Administrative Building’s proposed massing and maximum height of 24 feet will be smaller and subordinate to the main Student Center. The east-facing façade will be the buildings primary elevation. The building will be designed to consider its relationship to the Student Center’s 1983 addition to facilitate pedestrian and disabled access from the new building to the existing structure.

Building “H”

The new “Classroom Building”, building “H” (16,000 square feet) will be sited immediately south of the existing gym and immediately north of the classic amphitheater. It will be two stories with a proposed maximum height of 24 feet.

Fencing

The proposed perimeter fence has been designed to utilize existing structures to create a securable exterior barrier for the campus. Its placement has been specifically designed to minimize its impact on the sense of continuity and openness that defines the former Ambassador Campus while providing the perimeter security that is a necessity for the school.

The fence design and location have been revised throughout the process to respond to input from the Historic Preservation Commission and Design Commission. The proposed fence meets Maranatha’s security needs and minimizes the impact to pedestrians traversing the north-south spine of the former Ambassador College campus. This north-south corridor will be open to public access with limitation, operating between 7:00 a.m. and sunset. Further, the interconnected elevated plaza will remain freely traversable and the fence will not affect the ability for pedestrians to move between the entrances of the Student Center, the Administration Hall, and

Ambassador Auditorium. While a security fence is necessary for the campus, the proposed configuration does not obstruct or otherwise make inaccessible the plaza-facing (north elevation) and it also maintains open site lines and access paths among the critical structures that surround the plaza.

Environmental Analysis and Mitigation related to the New Outdoor Pool and Sports Courts

The environmental analysis of the project evaluated the impact that the construction and operation of the new outdoor pool and sports courts on the southwest lawn would have on the adjacent residential properties. The southwest lawn is currently used as an active sports area, and although the introduction of the swimming pool and additional sports activities will represent a change to the frequency and type of noise produced, it is anticipated that this change will comply with the standards in the Noise Ordinance.

However, to ensure that the new swimming pool and sports courts do not exceed the standards within the noise ordinance, a mitigation measure is included in the initial study that states that prior to building permit issuance for the new outdoor pool and sports courts, a noise study be prepared to determine if there are any impacts and identify potential mitigation. Further, staff has included two conditions of approval which prohibit the use of outdoor lights or any amplified sound systems associated with the use and operation of the outdoor pool and sports courts.

Sign Program

The Maranatha campus is a large site with multiple structures. To aid students and casual pedestrians in finding their destination, the applicant seeks to legalize five existing free-standing and six wall-mounted directional signs and a campus directory through the Master Plan. Only two of the free standing signs can be seen from the public right-of-way. The free standing signs are composed of a metal panel supported by two individual metal poles anchored in the ground. Vinyl graphics are applied to the metal surface. The wall mounted signs are acrylic panels with applied vinyl graphics.

Parking

The use of the southeast lawn at the corner of South Saint John Avenue and West Del Mar Boulevard to accommodate overflow parking for special events at Ambassador Auditorium has been identified as a concern by staff and residents. Although inconsistent with the shared parking agreement, the additional on-site parking reduces parking impacts on adjacent residential streets. The eventual implementation of Phase Two of the Master Plan calls for the construction of a new outdoor pool and two sports courts on the southeast lawn. Until Phase Two of the Master Plan is implemented, the southeast lawn will have the capacity to continue accommodating overflow parking. MHS instituted this measure in an effort to accommodate its neighbor, HRC and its assignees, and to retain all school related parking activities on-site and limit impacts to adjacent residential streets.

Staff is recommending that the current standards applied to parking on the southeast lawn, which prohibit its use, be modified to allow parking on an intermittent and temporary basis until the construction of the outdoor pool and sports courts commences. Maranatha would be allowed to utilize the southeast lawn 18 “Parking Days” annually for special events, which could include Maranatha extracurricular activities, Harvest Rock Church events, or Pasadena Symphony performances. To aid Maranatha in regulating access and use of the southeast lawn, the perimeter fence, which is described in Phase One of the Master Plan’s proposed scope of work, will be erected around the school perimeter as soon as design review entitlements and building permits can be obtained, in a period not to exceed three months from City Council approval of the Master Plan. The design of the fence will be reviewed and approved by staff before building permit issuance, and any decisions would be subject to call for review by the Design Commission. The fence would be designed with gates that would allow vehicular access to the southeast lawn anticipating its use until the implementation of Phase Three of the Master Plan. Finally, Maranatha would be required to obtain approvals from both the Department of Public Works and the Department of Transportation for the construction of two new permanent curb slopes at locations where vehicles would enter and exit the southeast lawn.

Upon implementation of Phase Two of the Master Plan (the construction of the new outdoor pool and sports courts), the southeast lawn will no longer accommodate any vehicles for parking. At that time, City staff will evaluate the parking situation and direct Maranatha, and/or its assignees, to engage in a limited or long-term lease agreement to provide off-site parking as needed, prior to the issuance of building permit for the construction of the new outdoor pool and sports courts.

To further limit the impacts on residential streets adjacent to Maranatha, staff is recommending that the City Council initiate a parking study of the area shown in Attachment D. The parking study will verify the issues documented and described by home owners and City staff, and identify all possible mitigation measures, including parking prohibition, restricted parking, and parking by permit only. Adoption of a preferential parking district would require that more than 50% of the property owner’s concur with the recommendation.

Tree Removals and Landscaping

The Master Plan would require the removal of 41 trees out of 139 surveyed on the Maranatha campus. Of these 41 trees, 13 are protected under the City’s tree protection ordinance and would require replacement canopy at the prescribed ratio in the tree protection ordinance. Six non-protected mature trees (with Diameter-at-Breast-Heights’s over 19”) are also being removed and will be replaced at one half the ratio of native or specimen trees (Attachment G – Biological Resources).

The Ambassador/Maranatha campus has a significant number of mature trees that qualify for protection under the City Tree Protection Ordinance. The proposed building

pads presented in the Master Plan are at locations that have the fewest protected native and specimen trees, and have the least impact on the park-like setting for which the Ambassador/Maranatha campus is known. Those trees that are being removed are being done so only because of the direct impact of new construction. A preliminary analysis has determined that there is sufficient land area on the campus to accommodate the required replacement trees (see Attachment H). A condition of the Master Plan requires the applicant to submit final landscape plans for review and approval by the Planning Director.

Neighborhood Meetings and Correspondence

A neighborhood meeting was held on November 7, 2012. There was no participation other than school administrators. A school sponsored informational event was held for neighbors on July 26, 2014.

Written correspondence received pertaining to the project is included as Attachment I.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

Providing adequate services is a stated objective in the General Plan: Objective 13 – Adequate Services: Provide adequate support for businesses and institutions that serve the needs of Pasadena’s diverse residents and families, including schools, hospitals, parks, child and adult day care centers, libraries, shelters, public auditoriums, clinics, social clubs and recreation centers.

Policy 13.4 – Education: Promote public and private schools, support quality education for all students.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The Initial Study (Attachment G) found that, with the incorporation of mitigation measures, the Master Plan will have no significant or unavoidable impacts and that a Mitigated Negative Declaration be adopted. The mitigation measures are related to biological resources, cultural resources, noise, and aesthetics. These mitigation measures are incorporated into the Conditions of Approval. A mitigation monitoring report has been prepared and is attached to the Initial Study.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the budget as a result of this project.

Respectfully submitted,



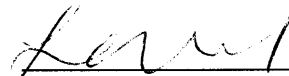
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Attachments (8)

- Attachment A – Maranatha High School Master Plan, December 2014
- Attachment B – Site Plan
- Attachment C – Master Plan Design Study
- Attachment D – Parking Study Area
- Attachment E – Conditions of Approval
- Attachment F – Master Plan Findings
- Attachment G – Final Initial Study, Mitigated Negative Declaration, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP)
- Attachment H – Tree Replacement Matrix
- Attachment I – Correspondence