

Agenda Report

March 30, 2015

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
**SUBJECT: PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW OF POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL
MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

RECOMMENDATION:

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

BACKGROUND:

Polytechnic School has submitted a Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) application for a new, 15-year master development plan (year 2015 to 2030). It includes demolition of two existing gym structures and construction of two new, replacement gym structures in the same general footprint and an increase in enrollment capacity from 861 to 941 students.

Polytechnic School is a private, co-educational school serving students from kindergarten through high school that was founded at the present site in 1907. Polytechnic School was limited to kindergarten through eighth grade students until the 1950s, at which time the program was expanded to include high school students. The school's campus is located near the California Institute of Technology. The campus is bounded by California Boulevard to the north, Wilson Avenue to the east, Arden Road to the south and Catalina Street and abutting residential property to the west. Cornell Road bisects the campus.

Since its inception, Polytechnic School obtained several use permits from the City to complete various improvements to its campus until 1992, when the first of two previous Master Development Plans for Polytechnic School was approved. The 1992 Master Development Plan allowed for the expansion of school facilities by 33,890 square feet with an increase of enrollment capacity to maximum 861 students. While the enrollment of the school almost reached the maximum capacity by end of 2003 with 856 students, only 9,135 gross square feet of net new construction was completed; therefore, 24,754 square feet of planned new construction was not realized.

In 2005, a second Master Development Plan was approved, which allowed for 20,000 square feet of new construction in the North Campus, an underground parking structure, 10,000 square feet of new construction in athletic fields and gym areas, a new swimming pool, and 20,000 square feet of new construction in the South Campus. The 2005 Master Development Plan did not modify the previously approved maximum enrollment capacity from the 1992 Master Development Plan (861 students). All improvements approved under the 2005 Master Development Plan have been completed, and the school has been operating near its maximum enrollment capacity (836 to 859 students depending on the school year).

A PPR is required for all Master Development Plan applications. The PPR process was established to achieve better projects through early consultation between City staff and applicants, to identify issues that may arise during application processing such as community concerns, to achieve consistency with City regulations and policies, and to avoid significant investment in the design of a project without preliminary direction from City staff. Importantly, the PPR process also serves to inform the City Council and the public of development projects that are of community-wide significance. This presentation is an informational item only and is not intended to be used for the purpose of discussing the merits of the proposed project.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The proposed Master Development Plan consists of two components, described as follows:

1. Increase in student enrollment from 861 students to 941 students (80 students) over three to four year period, starting in the 2016 school year.
2. Demolition of two existing, 35-foot high gymnasium structures and construction of two new, 40-foot high gymnasium structures that will encompass a similar footprint of the existing buildings but with the addition of basement level, which will result in a net increase of 38,214 square feet in floor area. The overall footprint may also increase up to 4,600 square feet (an approximately 2.9% increase) if determined necessary to accommodate the programmatic needs. It should be noted that the timing of this improvement is unknown at this time as it is subject to fundraising planning.

Project narrative and project plans are Attachment A and B, respectively.

Project Approvals:

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

Master Development Plan: The purpose of a Master Development 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 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 Development Plan; however, the Design and Planning Commissions will assume an advisory role and make recommendations to the City Council.

Design Review: Design Review will be required for the new gym structures at a later date since the gross floor area of the new gym structures meets the established threshold. The design of the new structures will be evaluated against the Citywide Design Principles and Criteria.

PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW SUMMARY:

In February 2015, City staff discussed PPR comments with the applicant. Review and comments on the proposal identified the following issues:

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

General Plan: The General Plan designation for the project site is Institutional. This category is used to designate public land uses such as schools, colleges, governmental offices, and hospitals. Through the Master Development Plan process, staff will work with the applicant to ensure the project is consistent with goals and policies of the City's General Plan.

Zoning: The project site is zoned PS (Public and Semi-Public). In the PS zoning district, private school uses are a conditionally permitted use, and the development standards are established through a Conditional Use Permit or Master Development Plan process.

Transportation/Traffic: A traffic analysis is required to be prepared for the proposed project. Such report must analyze the potential impacts of the Master Development Plan on the following:

- Ingress and egress;
- Increases in traffic volumes and/or speeds on adjacent residential streets;
- Pedestrian and bicycle quality within the project vicinity;

- Transit use, including identification of existing nearby transit stops, potential/proposed location changes to existing amenities (i.e. bus benches, receptacles)
- Multi-modal corridors and/or de-emphasized streets.

Parking: Staff's initial analysis indicates that the existing parking supply exceeds the amount of off-street parking spaces required per the City's zoning code. Based on the projected faculty and staff population, grammar school classrooms and high school student population, approximately 250 parking spaces are required per City's zoning code. Currently, Polytechnic School provides a total of 355 parking spaces in three locations, which includes one subterranean parking garage and two surface parking lots. In addition, the existing athletic field provides approximately 100 additional parking spaces to accommodate special events.

Design and Historic Preservation: Two existing gym structures are proposed to be demolished. These structures are not designated as historic resources and do not appear to be eligible for such designation. Therefore, review of the Master Development Plan by the Historic Preservation Commission is not required and a Certificate of Appropriateness is not required to demolish the existing structures.

As stated above, the design of the new gym structures is subject to Design Review at the Design Commission level since the gross floor area of the new gym structures meets the established threshold. They will be evaluated against the Citywide Design Principles & Criteria in the Land Use Element of the General Plan when Polytechnic School is ready to move forward with the new gym structures. Preliminary design issues include how the new gym structures are integrated with the existing historic and newer construction on the campus, the presentation of the new gym structures as viewed from the street, integration of the proposed landscaping areas, and incorporation of sustainable building practices.

Tree Removal: The project proposal includes the protection of one protected oak tree, and the potential removal of four other non-protected trees at this time. The future submittal of the Master Development Plan will include a final determination on the number of trees proposed to be removed.

General: The proposed Master Development Plan is intended to replace the existing gym structures to meet the programmatic need of Polytechnic School and to increase the current enrollment cap by 9%, from 861 to 941. The Master Development Plan must be carefully prepared to balance the need of Polytechnic School with the protection of the neighboring single-family homes in the vicinity of the campus. The project plans related to the new gym structures are very preliminary at this time due to the unknown schedule of the proposed improvement. However, additional information such as design concept and/or an imagery survey may help facilitate a better understanding of the new gym structures' contextual relationship with the existing campus and the streetscape.

PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION WITH DESIGN COMMISSION:

On February 10, 2015, the Design Commission conducted a Preliminary Consultation for the proposed Master Plan. The Commission's comments focused on the new gym structures, which are as follows:

1. Study the manner in which the new project engages the street.
2. Closely consider the proposed architectural style for the new buildings.
3. Study the final design logic for the new buildings, including pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns for the site, and ingress and egress.
4. Review how the new building design is a contextual fit with, and is an integral piece of, the entire campus.
5. Provide information on the types of neighborhood impacts the new building project will have and elaborate on the collaborative efforts undertaken with the neighbors to ease traffic issues in response to the proposed building plan. Construction staging for the project will be important to reduce impacts.
6. Elements of the campus' physical plant are currently located right along the sidewalk edge, along with a trash enclosure, and this does not help in creating a walkable City that is pedestrian friendly. Study how the new buildings can repair this existing damage to the street edge.

NEXT STEPS/PROCESS:

The following list identifies next steps in the review process:

- Submittal and review of the Master Plan
 - Interdepartmental review
 - Neighborhood meeting
- Environmental review subject to CEQA
- Review of Master Plan by the Design Commission
- Review of Master Plan by the Planning Commission
- City Council consideration of the Master Plan

FISCAL IMPACT:

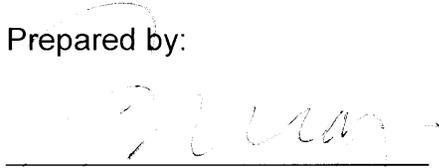
This report is for information only and will not result in any fiscal impact. Any cost associated with the Master Development Plan application and associated environmental review will be borne by the applicant.

Respectfully submitted,



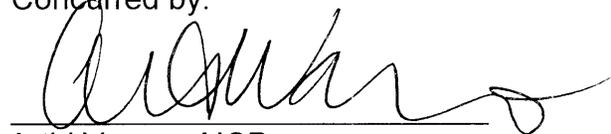
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Attachments:

- Attachment A – Project Narrative
- Attachment B – Project Plans