



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT

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DATE: January 16, 2002

TO: Orange County Planning Commission

FROM: Planning and Development Services Department,
Current Planning Services Division

SUBJECT: Public Hearing on Planning Application PA01-0024 for a Use Permit to allow the expansion of an existing church with a parking modification for off-site parking.

PROPOSAL: To expand the existing church from 42,771 square feet to 97,812 square feet, and from 830 to 950 seats. The expansion includes a new fellowship hall, a new gymnasium, a new day care use, and various other administrative and school buildings. The project also includes a new columbarium use for the interment of cremated human remains and a parking modification for off-site parking.

LOCATION: 13922 Prospect Avenue, Santa Ana, within the Third Supervisorial District.

APPLICANT: Dominy and Associates, agent for Trinity United Presbyterian Church.

STAFF CONTACT: Marta B. Crane, AIA, AICP, Project Manager
Phone: (714) 834-5144, FAX: (714) 834-4652

SYNOPSIS: The Current Planning Services Division recommends Planning Commission approval of Planning Application No. PA01-0024, subject to the attached Findings and Conditions of Approval.

BACKGROUND:

The project site is located within the R-1 (Single Family Residential) zoning district on the northeast corner of Prospect and Seventeenth Streets in the unincorporated area of Santa Ana. The property is currently developed as a church and school with a total of 42,771 square feet and 347 parking spaces in an 8.4 acre site.

The proposal consists of demolition of existing and construction of new buildings that will result in the expansion of the church from 42,771 square feet to a total of 97,812 square feet, including 130 seats added to the main sanctuary. The parking lot will be remodeled to improve circulation and add 41 new parking spaces to a total of 388 spaces. The proposal also includes 47 off-site parking spaces to be provided at the Loma Vista School directly adjacent to the north. A new columbarium use for the interment of cremated human remains is a new use proposed for the site. The columbarium will be located in an outdoor memorial garden at the corner of the site directly outside the main sanctuary building near the intersection of Seventeenth Street and Prospect Avenue.

The expansion of the proposed church use is conditionally permitted in the R-1 district subject to approval of a Use Permit by the Planning Commission pursuant to Section 7-9-74.4(a)(1) of the County of Orange Zoning Code. The columbarium use may be permitted provided the Planning Commission finds the use consistent with the purpose and intent of the district per section 7-9-150.3(e)(4).

SURROUNDING LAND USE:

The subject property is surrounded by residential uses to the north, east and southeast. Immediately to the north is the Loma Vista Elementary School, and across the street to the west and south, the project is surrounded by commercial office uses and a small private school (Exhibits 1 and 2).

REFERRAL FOR COMMENT AND PUBLIC NOTICE:

A Notice of Hearing was mailed to all owners of record within 300 feet of the subject site. Additionally, a notice was posted at 300 N. Flower, at the subject site, and as required by established public hearing posting procedures. A copy of the planning application and a copy of the proposed site plan were distributed for review and comment to various reviewing Orange County Divisions and to the North Tustin Advisory Committee (NTAC). The Committee reviewed the project in May 2001, and did not express any objections. It unanimously approved the project subject to a condition that the parking area fronting on Seventeenth Street be screened with a landscape berm (Exhibit 3). Due to minor changes to the arrangement and the footprint of some buildings on site, an updated site plan was forwarded to the committee on December 19, 2001, to which they had no objections. As of the writing of this staff report, there are no issues raised by any Orange County Divisions.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

Negative Declaration No. PA 01-0024 (Exhibit 4) has been prepared for this proposal pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). It was posted for public review and commenting from December 18, 2001 to January 7, 2002 as required. Prior to project approval, the Planning Commission must find this Negative Declaration adequate to satisfy the requirements of CEQA. Appendix A contains the required CEQA Findings.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The Trinity Presbyterian Church was established at this site in 1961. Over the years, the church has expanded and grown to its present campus operations, which include a main sanctuary with 830 seats, an administration building, an elementary school with various outdoor playgrounds and sports courts, and a small 200 seat prayer chapel. The existing campus has a total of 42,771 square feet with 347 parking spaces on 8.43 acres.

At the North Tustin Advisory Committee hearing of May 2001, the Church expressed the need for additional buildings and facilities as their congregation is growing, their music program is expanding and the adult and children education facilities are currently overcrowded serving up to 4000 people a week. The proposed master plan represents the church's goal to address their growing needs for better facilities (Exhibit 5).

Project Summary

The implementation of the master plan for the campus build out is proposed in three phases, expected to be completed in 3 years. Initially, the parking lot will be improved to increase parking and improve circulation on site. The proposed master plan is described below:

- The first building to be constructed will be the Fellowship Hall, with 23,031 square feet of space and will include an assembly room and stage on the first floor. Although this room can hold 850 people, the maximum number proposed by the church is 500 people and it will be used for wedding receptions and other social functions of the church members and the general community as well. This building also includes six classrooms for adult education on the second floor. The Fellowship Hall will be built over a portion of the existing northerly parking lot.
- The Music Ministries Hall at 9,995 square feet will also be built during the first phase of the project. This building will be adjacent to the main sanctuary and will include an assembly room for choir practice for 100 persons as well as various other rehearsal rooms and quiet study areas.
- The main sanctuary will be remodeled to reconfigure the choir area with 120 seats and to add a balcony for 80 people for a new total capacity of 950 people.
- A new columbarium use for approximately 500 niches is proposed directly adjacent to the main sanctuary hall in the far southwest corner of the site. This use consists of niches for the interment of cremated human remains in a setting similar to a memorial garden. The niches will be stacked vertically within walls that will rise from 4 to 7 feet tall.
- The existing Munzing Chapel will be remodeled to serve small religious functions such as weddings or funerals with a total capacity for 226 seats. Additionally this building will have private prayer rooms to be used exclusively for corporate prayer for groups of 10 to 12 persons. This chapel will not be used at the same time as the main sanctuary.
- The second phase will include the construction and remodeling of the Youth Ministries building with a new administration wing as well as a child day care/nursery and a bookstore. The building will be two stories high with a total of 20,940 square feet, including an assembly room with capacity for 216 students and a breakout room for 69 junior and high school students.
- A new 4,884 square feet building with five preschool classrooms with capacity for up to 120 children, to operate from 9 A.M. to 11 A.M. on weekdays, is proposed as part of the second phase.
- The last phase of the project includes the construction of a new 8,264 square foot gymnasium, which will be built on the site of the existing basketball court. The demolition of two older school and office buildings, and the remodeling and expansion of one existing classroom building will also take place in the last phase.

Land uses

The majority of the land uses proposed by the master plan have long been established at this site. However, there are two new uses proposed on the site. The first one is a preschool use, which may be established with a Use Permit approved by the Planning Commission, subject to findings and conditions to address its compatibility with the surrounding residential uses.

The other new use proposed at the site is a columbarium. A columbarium is a use regulated by the State of California, who defines it in the State Health and Safety Code, Section 9501 as a freestanding building or structure intended to be used or used for the interment of cremated human remains, which:

- (a) is constructed for use by the members of any one group, and not for the sale of space therein to any other person.
- (b) does not contain niches for the interment of more than 20 cremated human remains.
- (c) Is not constructed for occupancy by any person except in the course of making an interment.

The proposed columbarium use will be established in a memorial garden setting, in a manner that is highly compatible with the meditation and spiritual environment of a place of worship such as the existing Trinity Church, which has coexisted within its surrounding residential district for many years. This type of use is commonly found in many other Churches, as depicted in Exhibit 7, in settings similar to the one proposed for this particular church. Based on this information, the columbarium use proposed by the Trinity Church is therefore expected to blend well its garden setting and the residential district within which it is being proposed.

Parking

Staff from the County Traffic Review Section reviewed the traffic study submitted for this project, dated February 16, 2001, amended in May 3, 2001. The traffic counts provided by this study showed that the amount of traffic generated by the existing facility, before build-out, is significantly higher than that generated by a typical church. This traffic comparison is based on the trip generation rates provided by a standard source, such as ITE (Institute of Transportation Engineering). The supplied data also highlights the fact that a significant amount of vehicles attending the existing church come out to park in the street, on both sides of Seventeenth Street and Prospect Avenue. By utilizing the trip generation rates derived from the traffic data supplied, and assuming the sanctuary is the only traffic generator on Sundays, the estimated peak hour ingress volume was approximately 500 vehicles. This number is evidence that the parking demand for this particular church is indeed greater than that of a typical church and the County requirements for church parking.

Section 7-9-145.1 of the code allows for adjustments on the parking requirements based on the needs of specific types of uses and combinations thereof. In this particular case, the various uses existing and proposed by the church's master plan do result in a higher parking demand. In response to this issue, the Church is proposing to schedule services and events carefully and to manage the use of its facilities in a manner that the peak demand will not unreasonably exceed the parking available on site at any given time. Exhibit 7 includes a table with the peak parking demand, which occurs on Sunday mornings, and the proposed schedule for the use and occupancy of each building on campus. County Traffic Review staff, in

consideration of all the information provided, recommends that the required amount of parking for the Church campus be 435 spaces based on the observed peak hour volume and the schedule of uses on site.

From these 435 total spaces required, 89% (388) will be provided on site, and the remaining 11% (47) will be located in the adjacent Loma Vista Elementary School (Exhibit 8). The Trinity Church is therefore also seeking approval of a parking modification to meet part of the parking requirements by using an adjacent site. Pursuant to Section 7-9-1145.4(i) of the zoning code, said arrangement may be approved, provided an off site parking agreement is recorded in the Office of the County of Orange Recorder to ensure it is a long term commitment, and that the off-site parking will be available for the duration of the use permit. Recordation of this parking agreement is a condition of approval that is to be complied with before a building permit is issued. This condition is intended to ensure that parking for the campus is properly provided.

Although a few of the spaces will be located over 300 feet away from the sanctuary entrance, the proposed off-site parking arrangement allows for safe pedestrian circulation that will not bring pedestrians across a busy street intersection. In addition, the circulation layout of the new parking lots includes three separate drop off areas expected to further reduce pedestrian circulation from the more remote parking areas. The improved layout and safer pedestrian-vehicular circulation ensures that the site will function properly through the implementation of the master plan.

Architecture and Landscape

The architecture of the existing sanctuary building will not be affected by the remodeling, and will be the leading architectural element. The architecture throughout the church campus will be complementary to this building, and will consolidate the Church's master plan concept.

The site's landscape will be enhanced and upgraded as part of the master plan. The front area along Seventeenth Street will be redesigned to accommodate additional parking and passenger drop off areas. A condition of approval will be placed on the project to address aesthetic concerns regarding parking in the front. Therefore, a landscape berm will be built along Seventeenth Street to help screening the view of the vehicles.

The overall site plan design will be configured to establish a visual and pedestrian link to connect the main sanctuary with the remote parking areas to the east of the site.

CONCLUSION OR SUMMARY:

The Trinity United Presbyterian Church has operated at this site for many years, quietly coexisting with its residential surroundings. The proposed expansion project includes design features that respond to the requirements of the R1 Zoning district and other recommendations from the North Tustin Advisory Committee (NTAC) and County staff which are intended to address the growth proposed by the Church. The project as presented is the outcome of consensus building reached during the design review process, therefore, staff supports approval of this project, subject to the findings and conditions of approval in appendices A and B.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Current Planning Services Division recommends the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive staff report and public testimony as appropriate; and,
- b. Approve Planning Application PA01-0024, subject to the attached Findings and Conditions of Approval.

Respectfully submitted

George Britton, Manager
Current Planning Services Division

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APPENDICES:

- A. Recommended Findings.
- B. Recommended Conditions of Approval.

EXHIBITS:

1. Aerial View of Surrounding Land Uses.
2. Aerial View of Existing Site.
3. NTAC review comments.
4. CEQA documentation.
5. Applicant's Letter of Justification.
6. Photographs of another columbarium.
7. Land Use Table and Schedule of Operations.
8. Off site parking at Loma Vista School.
9. Reduced set of project plans.

APPEAL PROCEDURE:

Any interested person may appeal the decision of the Planning Commission on this permit to the Orange County Planning Commission within 15 calendar days of the decision upon submittal of required documents and a filing fee of \$ 760.00 filed at the Development Processing Center, 300 N. Flower St., Santa Ana.