

Clare Lin

From: Vincent Gonzalez
Sent: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 11:07 AM
To: Clare Lin
Subject: Fwd: Meadows at Bailey Canyon Project
Attachments: image001.jpg; Passionists - Ltr to City of Sierra Madre re Meadows At Bailey Canyon Project.pdf

See below.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Vasquez, Susan" <SVasquez@bwsllaw.com>
Date: May 24, 2022 at 10:32:01 AM PDT
To: Vincent Gonzalez <vgonzalez@cityofsierramadre.com>
Cc: "Murphy, Gregory M." <GMurphy@bwsllaw.com>
Subject: Meadows at Bailey Canyon Project

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

Please see the attached letter from Greg Murphy regarding the above-reference matter. Thank you.

**Susan Vasquez | Legal Secretary to Joseph P. Buchman,
Lisa W. Lee, John E. McOsker, Gregory M. Murphy, and Alan A. Sozio**
444 South Flower Street, Suite 2400 | Los Angeles, CA 90071-2953
d - 213.236.2780 | t - 213.236.0600 | f - 213.236.2700
svasquez@bwsllaw.com | bwsllaw.com

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May 24, 2022

VIA E-MAIL AND U.S. MAIL

Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission
City of Sierra Madre
232 West Sierra Madre Boulevard
Sierra Madre, California 91024
vgonzalez@cityofsierramadre.com

Re: Meadows at Bailey Canyon Project

Honorable Chair and Members of the Commission:

This office represents The Congregation of the Passion, Holy Cross Province (the "Province") and, by extension, locally, The Congregation of the Passion, Mater Dolorosa Community (collectively, the "Passionists") as local land use counsel for the above-referenced project. The Passionists have asked that we clarify certain issues raised at the May 5, 2022, Sierra Madre Planning Commission hearing relative to the project. Specifically, we have been asked (i) to reaffirm the willingness of the Province to subject a certain portion of its land to conservancy covenants as part of the City of Sierra Madre's approval of the proposed project, and (ii) to delineate the scope of certain additional restrictions which the Passionists are willing to accept as a permanent encumbrance of additional land owned by the Province.

As the City of Sierra Madre is aware, the Passionists have been an integral part of the fabric of the Sierra Madre community since 1924; just short of 100 years. In that time, the Passionists have cared for the spiritual and corporal needs of the surrounding community by offering retreat services and providing a place for private prayer and reflection. They also feed the hungry and serve the needy, with much of this work being done within the City's geographic limits. The disposition and development of the "Meadows Parcel" is intended to ensure that the Passionists' ministries throughout the Province remain sustainable for the next 100 years. Given their longstanding role as members of the Sierra Madre community, the Passionists have been determined to meet their financial goals while also endorsing a carefully planned single-family residential development that would complement the adjacent, existing housing stock.

Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission
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Make no mistake, under the City's Zoning Code, the Passionists could have undertaken the development of a high school with ballfields and lights or a dense congregate-care facility on the Meadows parcel. But given their intent to continue their local ministries for another century, the Passionists determined that supporting their purchaser in seeking approval for a low-density, single-family residential community would best manifest their long-term commitment to their neighbors and to the City. As part of this commitment, and specifically through the Meadows at Bailey Canyon application, the Passionists agreed to donate a 3.5-acre park to the community. This is a City park and not a private park, though its upkeep will be paid by special assessments on the new residences; it is essentially a gift from the Passionists to their neighbors. And it will combine with Bailey Canyon Park to serve all of the recreational needs of the western half of the City.

Further, and most germane to the May 5 meeting, since the onset of the project, the Passionists have agreed to conserve in perpetuity the two (2) "uppermost" or "uphill" lots that are included within the campus property that they have owned for nearly 100 years (with such uphill lots totaling approximately 35 acres in area). This conservation would take the form of a traditional "negative" conservation easement granted to the City which would prohibit the Passionists from building or developing *anything* on those two uphill properties. By virtue of this transaction structure, the Passionists will continue to own the encumbered parcels and would retain the right to prohibit other parties from building, trespassing, or developing on them. In the aggregate, this will guarantee that the uphill properties will remain natural, wild, and unspoiled (i.e. no new trails or cuts would be installed on these parcels), thereby protecting the natural landscape views from downhill while also preserving the privacy and tranquility of Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center. Through this mutual benefit, the Passionists ensure their alignment with the interests of the Sierra Madre community.

The foregoing, voluntary conservancy offer notwithstanding, the Passionists have been asked to encumber *even more* land behind the retreat center. As you are aware, the Passionists own land totaling approximately ten (10) acres in size which is situated between the rear of the largest retreat center building and the two "uphill" parcels described above (the "Middle Parcel"). At the May 5 meeting, some members of the Planning Commission asked that the entirety of the Middle Parcel be subjected to conservancy restrictions identical to those contemplated for the uphill parcels. Such a restriction would totally eliminate future opportunities for the Passionists to use portions of the Middle Parcel in the service of their mission and to support the operations of Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center.

Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission
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Despite entertaining grave reservations deriving from the reality that acceding to such further restrictions could materially impact the ability of the Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center to fulfill its future ministerial obligations, the Passionists are nonetheless willing to embrace some further restriction of the Middle Parcel. Of note, the elimination of any possibility that habitable structures would be constructed within this area of the Middle Parcel was a concept initiated and suggested by the City of Sierra Madre.

Approximately 260 feet north of the principal retreat center building, the hillside begins a steep ascent. It is at that point, which is at approximately the same elevation and latitude of the uppermost developed parcel in the neighborhood to the west, that the Passionists would be amenable to restricting the portion north of which so as to prevent themselves from building habitable structures thereon. Please see the attached map for a depiction of this area. The Passionists propose utilizing the development agreement (which already contains language to restrict the "uphill" parcels) to effectuate this restriction. After careful thought, and in light of their desire to remain in place for the long term, the Passionists agree that accepting this type and scope of additional restriction in the northerly part of the Middle Parcel would not interfere with or prevent the Passionists from accomplishing any goals or plans that they could conceive of at some point in the future.

South of the new lot line, the Passionists must retain the potential for future ministry expansion, though at present no such extension is actively planned. We note that the unrestricted portion of the Middle Parcel in question has limited visibility from points south and that any active use of the unrestricted portion that might take place in the future would be subject to conditions and constraints based on then-applicable City and State of California laws.

It is our understanding that there have been requests that the Passionists relinquish land use rights with respect to the entirety of the Passionists' land holdings above the existing Mater Dolorosa retreat center building. The Passionists, after careful thought and reflection, simply cannot relinquish their right to respond to the future needs of their ministry by accepting a wholesale and blanket restriction which completely forecloses all options upon a significant portion of their remaining property. And after agreeing to the conservation of the 35 acre "uphill" parcels, and in addition to the agreement to restrict building on yet another large portion of the Middle Parcel, and in addition to the donation to the City of an enormous new public park, we believe the aggregate of the Passionists contributions is eminently reasonable and should not disrupt the Meadows at Bailey Canyon project approval process.

Honorable Chair and Members of the Planning Commission
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Again, the Passionists are proud to be part of the Sierra Madre community and are dedicated to spending another 100 years working with the City serving the spiritual needs of their neighbors in Sierra Madre and the surrounding communities. They look forward to approval of the Meadows at Bailey Canyon project and the securing of a sound financial future for all of their ministries in the Province so that they can return to serving the needs of the people who they encounter through Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center. The Passionists ask that the process respect their need to allow for future, as-yet-unplanned, expansion possibilities in order to respond to future needs.

As a final note, and as should be obvious but must be stated clearly, if the Meadows at Bailey Canyon project is not approved then the gift of the park, the dedication of the upper conservation parcels, and the newly offered restriction affecting the northerly portion of the Middle Parcel would not materialize and the Passionists' obligations to conclude those transactions would be nullified. The same must happen if the "Stop the Housing Project" initiative in current circulation were to be adopted as it would place onerous, unique, and unfair restrictions on Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center. We ask that this letter conclude discussions and negotiations of dedications and restrictions at the Planning Commission level and we urge the City of Sierra Madre to process expediently the Meadows at Bailey Canyon project applications in order to confirm the foregoing agreements and to secure the benefits of the project for your citizens and for the Passionists.

Thank you for your consideration of the Passionists' position on this. We look forward to your recommendation and to this matter moving on for City Council consideration and approval.

Best,



Gregory M. Murphy

GMM

cc: Members of the City Council (by mail)
City Manager Jose Reynoso (by mail)
City Attorney Aleks Giragosian (by mail)
Planning & Community Preservation Director Vincent Gonzalez (by mail)

Clare Lin

From: Laura Aguilar
Sent: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 10:20 AM
To: Clare Lin; Vincent Gonzalez
Cc: Jose Reynoso
Subject: FW: Is Sierra Madre endorsing Greed or Need?

[For public comment.](#)

Laura

From: Claire McLean [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Tuesday, May 24, 2022 7:45 AM
To: PlanningCommission <PlanningCommission@cityofsierramadre.com>
Subject: Is Sierra Madre endorsing Greed or Need?

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

Dear City of Sierra Madre Planning Commissioners -

This Monastery Project, the one called The Meadows at Bailey Canyon, has truly been the focus of my attention of late. You see, I am that person that tries to go up to Bailey Canyon Wilderness Park every day. Why? At the end of the day, after babysitting my 10-month old granddaughter, it offers me the serenity and the quiet solitude to reset my being. It allows me to escape to a natural place filled with the sound of birds and the quiet laughter of other humans. It touches my soul and refreshes me.

From what I have read and learned, the Monastery Priests have decided that they need money, so they have decided to sell off a portion of their property to a developer. Out of curiosity and concern, I have been attending the Sierra Madre City Council and Planning Commission meetings. The proposed developer, New Urban West, has definitely done this before. They have all the slick words and wear the proper clothes and have all of the fancy folders that make them look official. This is definitely all about the money and has absolutely nothing to do with the location. I am guessing they chose the color green (for their t-shirts) because green is the color of money.

According to the World Health Organization (Oct. 2021), "Between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double from 12% to 22%. Beyond biological changes, aging is often associated with other life transitions such as relocation to more appropriate housing." Think about it. Many aging people will need some kind of care and a place to live.

On my walk to Bailey Canyon a few nights ago, I met a man that was staying at the Retreat Center at the Monastery. He was out for a walk and trying to find a way into the Retreat Center from Carter Avenue. I explained to him that there was no entrance at that point. I also told him about the proposed housing project on the Monastery's property. He was genuinely upset about it. He told me that he used to be on the board at the Monastery, and that they had been talking about selling this property for years. He told me that years ago he had proposed a Nursing Home/Center (Senior Living Center) as a way to meet the needs of many. He agreed that marketing to a few (the multi-million dollar homes) was a bad idea. He also said that he thought a Nursing Facility/Senior Living Center would be a great idea. He added that the thought of clear cutting all of the trees on the property was truly a very bad idea.

Taken from Wikipedia, "Catholic social teaching emphasizes voluntary support for the sick, the poor, and the afflicted through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy". Wouldn't a Nursing Facility/Senior Living Center fall under that category? Wouldn't this be a better choice? This would definitely meet the needs of many, provide a wonderful place for those that needed care, and give them (and their families) the peace of mind of living in a beautiful place surrounded by nature (created by God).

How many of you reading this have an aging parent or partner or relative or friend? If you could not directly help that person out by having that person live with you, wouldn't you love to be able to recommend a place like the Monastery property for them to live?

Looking further into this project, I read the EIR and saw that New Urban West is planning on cutting down 117 trees. The names of these trees are: Sugar Gum, Morten Bay Fig, Jacaranda, Hollywood Juniper, Fruitless Olive, Coast Live Oak (**protected**), Holly Oak, Southern Live Oak, American Elderberry, Peruvian Pepper, Brush Cherry, and Chinese Elm. Each one of those trees has a story. They are there for a reason.

Let us remind ourselves about the value of a tree. Not only do trees provide much needed shade, but by the process of photosynthesis, they **provide oxygen that humans and animals breathe.**

Wikipedia describes the Catholic's relationship with God as, "The Catholic Church teaches that 'The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God'". Have we forgotten God's Creation of our Earth and the order of the Creation (by God)?

Day 3: God created TREES

Day 5: God created BIRDS (who live in these trees)

Day 6: God created Man (in the image of God)

Man was created AFTER the trees and the birds. And, man is responsible for the current destruction of this beautiful place we call home. We are currently in a crisis with global warming. I am sure God would not be in favor of clear-cutting the Monastery property in order to build multi-million dollar tract homes for only a few. I am certain He would support a facility that supported helping people with their aging path and giving them a peaceful place to live that has trees and birds (His creation). Few, if any, trees would have to be cut down.

What would God say? Whose side do you think He would be on? I know you know that God would NOT approve of the proposed Housing Project. This is wrong in so many ways. There is definitely a need for Senior Housing facilities or Nursing Homes or Assisted Living places. There is NO need for multi-million dollar homes for only the few.

Is Sierra Madre going to be part of the solution or part of the problem? Is Sierra Madre endorsing Greed or Need?

Sincerely -
Claire McLean
Resident and Concerned Citizen

--

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." ~ John Muir

Clare Lin

From: Vincent Gonzalez
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 4:56 PM
To: Clare Lin
Subject: FW: 6/2/2022 Planning Commission
Attachments: 53122Letter from 501 Crestvale Drive re Proposed Meadows Project.pdf

Clare,

Please upload to public comment transparency portal.

Thanks,

Vincent Gonzalez, Director | Planning & Community Preservation

City of Sierra Madre

232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.
Sierra Madre, CA 91024
VGonzalez@cityofsierramadre.com
626.355.7135 (Office)
626.355.4239 (Direct)
Hours: Mon. -Thurs. 7:30am - 5:30pm

From: Blonde and Brunette Productions [mailto:]
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 4:30 PM
To: Public Comment <publiccomment@cityofsierramadre.com>
Cc: Jessica Sarber < 'Natalie Peterson' < PlanningCommission
<PlanningCommission@cityofsierramadre.com>; nshollenberger@cityofsierramadre.com; Vincent Gonzalez
<vgonzalez@cityofsierramadre.com>; jrietze@pw.lacounty.gov; TDUONG@dpw.lacounty.gov;
chairman@gabrielenoindians.org; admin@gabrielenoindians.org; bpalmer@strumwooch.com; jfrankel@antlanissd.com;
Aleks Giragosian <agiragosian@chwlaw.us>
Subject: 6/2/2022 Planning Commission

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

Honorable Commissioners:

We request your consideration of the attached as you review the Specific Plan and the proposed Meadows at Bailey Canyon Subdivision at the June 2, 2022 Planning Commission meeting.

We also request that the attached be made of record for the June 2, 2022 Planning Commission meeting.

Sincerely,

Sally Shore

on behalf of Queenie Shore, Sally Shore, Natalie Shore Peterson and Jessica Shore Sarber

Sally Shore

May 31, 2022

VIA EMAIL AND US MAIL

Commissioner Peggy Dallas
Commissioner Tom Denison
Commissioner John C. Hutt
Commissioner William Pevsner
Commissioner Bob Spears
c/o City of Sierra Madre Planning Commission
232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.
Sierra Madre, CA 91024

Re: 501 Crestvale Drive, Sierra Madre, CA 91024
New Urban West/Meadows at Bailey Canyon Monastery Development Impacts

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

We are the daughters of Queenie Shore, resident and owner of the above-referenced property (the "Residence") which directly abuts the southeast border of the proposed Meadows at Bailey Canyon Subdivision (the "Subdivision") located at 700 N. Sunnyside Ave.

Thank you for your continued consideration of our concerns and for your decision to review the Subdivision's proposed Specific Plan with care at the May 5, 2022, Planning Commission Meeting.

We met via Zoom with the Subdivision's representative, Jonathan Frankel, on April 20, 2022. At that time, we shared our concerns and asked our questions regarding impacts on the Residence. As of the date of this letter, we have not received the written response we requested, nor have we received any other follow-up.

As such, we request that the Commissioners, commencing with the Specific Plan review during the June 2, 2022, Planning Commission meeting, require the Subdivision to address the following issues with specificity before approving any part or the whole of the Specific Plan:

1. Construction Dust Mitigation: Given the [April 27, 2022 Metropolitan Water District water shortage emergency declaration](#) and the drastic water use cuts mandated by the MWD, it is critical that the Specific Plan set clear remedies for dust mitigation during construction to avoid damage to the Residence, the adjoining properties and the health of all residents in the immediate vicinity.
2. View Blockage: No variance of SMC Ordinance Chapter 17.20.010 should be allowed in the Specific Plan. Blockage of the Residence's view will significantly damage the Residence's property value. The Specific Plan at Section 2.5, Site Planning 5.4 proposes a "slump" wall extending 3-8 feet upward, which violates the mountain view protection of the Ordinance.

3. Use of Proposed Dedicated Park: The Specific Plan currently proposes a parking lot directly above the residence. Creation of a parking lot adjoining the Residence will negatively impact the Residence's property value. At the May 5, 2022, Planning Commission meeting, it was determined that plenty of additional street parking is already incorporated into the Meadows subdivision and no parking lot is needed. Regarding the space itself, a setback and landscape buffer is the best way forward for all parties concerned. The Subdivision has already designed a setback between the homes along the western border of the development. Likewise, a setback with a landscape buffer should be established between the Subdivision and homes along the southern border of the project. We support a walking path set back to the northernmost edge of the space with low native landscaping.
4. Sewer Line and Construction Damage: The Residence is at the lowest elevation point of the Subdivision. The Subdivision's proposed 75-foot sewer line puts the Residence at high risk of both immediate drainage damage and cumulative harm over a period of years. The sewer line needs to be relocated. Additionally, the Subdivision should provide and pay for an independent civil engineer's assessment of the retaining wall and agree in writing to fully compensate the Residence for any and all damage to the Residence caused by the Subdivision construction and its related activity, as well as any and all future damage to the Residence caused by the Subdivision sewer line and drainage therefrom. In our Zoom conversation with Mr. Frankel, he verbally offered to name our mother and her property as an additional insured on relevant policies. This would address some of our concerns and we are amenable to this action. However, we have yet to see any follow-up in writing.
5. Discrepancies in Subdivision Diagrams: There is a discrepancy between the Conceptual Plan Views #3-6a and #3-8 (Exhibit A): the existing homes and streets along the southern boundary are placed differently in each rendering. Also, Sunnyside Avenue does not appear to align with the existing main Mater Dolorosa entrance in one of the renderings, which raises questions about the overall layout. We ask that the Subdivision identify the governing Conceptual Plan View. The commission should not act on any proposed changes and/or amendments to maps, zoning and plans that contain discrepancies.
6. Wildfire Mitigation: The Specific Plan should contain a schedule of brush and debris clearance during construction. As of this writing, Mater Dolorosa has not cleared the current buildup of dry brush from the property and has not returned our calls requesting attention to brush clearance. This has been a problem in the recent past. In 2021, Mater Dolorosa stacked flammable plant debris on the property directly bordering the Residence and did not respond to our repeated requests to remove flammable material. They acted only after we contacted City of Sierra Madre and CalFire code enforcement. Debris will significantly accumulate during construction. It is imperative for the safety of the entire City of Sierra Madre and neighboring communities that the Specific Plan set forth regular debris removal during construction.

The Commissioners have repeatedly urged the Subdivision to engage with the community. During public meetings, Mr. Frankel has represented he is committed to doing so. This has not been our experience. Despite our efforts to resolve our ongoing concerns, neither he nor anyone else representing the Subdivision or the Applicant has made further contact with us.

In closing, we again thank the Planning Commission for its attention to our family's concerns about the proposed project. We believe mitigation is preferable to litigation to protect the value and physical integrity of our mother's property and the safety of Sierra Madre.

Sincerely,

/s/Sally Shore
Sally Shore

/s/Natalie Shore Peterson
Natalie Shore Peterson

/s/Jessica Shore Sarber
Jessica Shore Sarber

cc:

VIA EMAIL

jfrankel@antlanissd.com

agiragosian@chwlaw.us

planningcommission@cityofsierramadre.com

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chairman@gabrielenoindians.org

admin@gabrielenoindians.org

bpalmer@strumwooch.com

VIA US MAIL

500 N. Sunnyside; 490, 496, 501, 507, 513 and 523 Sierra Keys, 502 Crestvale Dr.

Clare Lin

From: Barbara Vellturo <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 2, 2022 1:49 PM
To: PlanningCommission; Public Comment; Rachelle Arizmendi; Gene Goss; Edward Garcia; Kelly Kriebs; Robert Parkhurst
Subject: Fwd: Considerations before amending the General Plan land use to Residential
Attachments: Monastery AD.jpg; Gabe Slide.jpg

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

To the Planning Commission

Misinformation re Alternatives

Although many of us (including the Monastery) were aware of a lower impact institutional project, with less environmental impact to the neighbors, trees and wildlife and more public open space (parks) that had been proposed, the Monastery and the City both misrepresented all potential alternatives to the Citizens of Sierra Madre.

The Property owner

The Monastery's FAQ from their website, posted after they and the City showed their negotiated plan for the housing development, states:

"The site is currently zoned 'Institutional' and we continue to evaluate proposals for various institutional uses, in case it becomes necessary to pursue this option....." "However, because the institutional proposals we have received appear likely to have a greater negative impact on the serenity we seek for retreatants who visit the site and on our immediate neighbors, we have decided to pursue a single family home residential development at this time."

(This was after they had reluctantly received the less impactful Nexus Plan - which they had previously refused to accept)

They never had a project similar to Nexus' evaluated in the DEIR, and **since then they have posted the attached advertisement to the people.**

The City

Then City Manager Gabe Engeland, in the presentation to the people, in August 2020, made this comment:

“On this slide you will see the types of development that can take place today and every portion of the 20 acres is covered in concrete or building or some hardscape structure. This can be built today with little ability of the city to stop it.”

(See photo attached of slide that was shown as he spoke)

(That's when they said the 42 homes would be built on 20 acres not 17+)

CM Engeland had told the City Council, before he argued that the housing development was the best option, that he had studied the codes. Presumably he knew of the requirements for an Institutional development that the City would be able to use to regulate a development's impact.

https://library.municode.com/ca/sierra_madre/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT17ZO_CH17.38_INZO

Among those requirements - Any Institutional development would require both a Conditional Use Permit and a Master Plan. One Master Plan requirements is:

7. Any development of a site located north of the "Hillside view line" defined in [Section 17.52.080](#) of this title or adjacent to R-H-zoned property shall protect the natural environment from change, preserve and protect views and preserve and maintain the identity, image and environmental quality of the R-H zone;

The ordinance also limits heights to 33 feet and requires 30% of the 17+ acres (about 5+ acres) to be open space. (The project submitted by Nexus would meet that criteria, the ones shown by CM Engeland would not)

The misrepresentations made to the people and to the City Council were designed to convince them that any rejection of the housing plan would result in a much larger and more impactful development. The City, the monastery and the developer all knew that was ONLY the case if the City ignored its existing regulations as they hope will happen with this development.

IF the General Plan is amended to change the land use to residential, it is a tacit agreement that the proposed development would be less impactful than an Institutional project could be.

We all know that is not necessarily the case - if our well-considered General Plan policies and Ordinances are fairly applied, as they would be for any other citizen, a reasonably sized Institutional project is a possibility



Support the Monastery



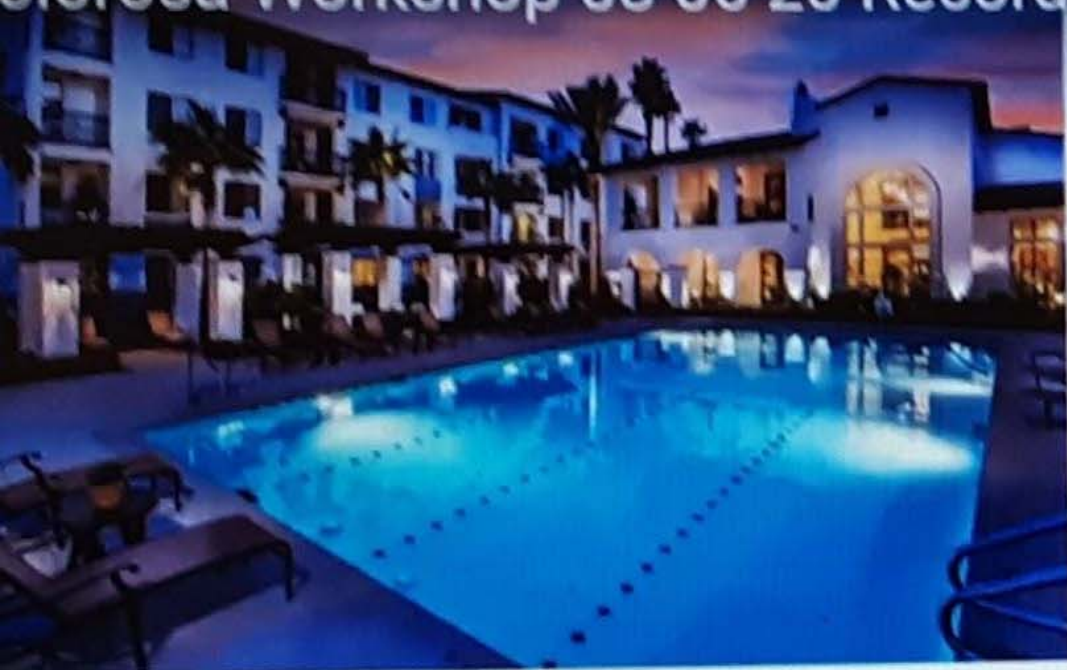
Sponsored • Paid for by Support the Monastery | The Meadows at Bail... • 

A large institutional development at the Monastery doesn't make sense for Sierra Madre. Support public parks and sustainable family homes today – not large institutional development!



Support the Monastery





Clare Lin

From: Barbara Vellturo <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 2, 2022 1:40 PM
To: PlanningCommission; Public Comment; Rachele Arizmendi; Edward Garcia; Kelly Kriebs; Robert Parkhurst; Gene Goss
Subject: Fwd: Meadows Project - Alternative Ignored including proposal diagrams
Attachments: Mater Dolorosa_Assisted Living Package.pdf

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

Sierra Madre Vivante - For the June 2 PC meeting

Alternatives IGNORED

To the Planning Commission Members

At your May 5, 2025 meeting your Chair questioned the representative of Mater Dolorosa, Cameron Thornton, about a comment the Commission received concerning an alternative proposal for the parcel. The commenter Clyde Stauff owns a second home in Sierra Madre. Although he does represent a developer, he also believes in, and has convinced residents of, the clear benefits of the unconsidered alternative. Chair Pevsner asked if there was any factual basis to the claim that a developer was willing to pay \$25 million for the land to build a senior living facility that would include a park. He said that this was “like a smoking gun” to him.. for a park... And that a park and public access was an important concern. He asked the monastery if they were aware of that and if anyone had presented it to them.

Monastery representative, Cameron Thornton, stated in response “Mr Stauff called me in March 2020, in the height of negotiations for the MOU” and said that he told Mr Stauff that they were in the process of completing an MOU with the City and with New Urban West and that they had determined that single family residential was the best use for the property. He stated that at no time did Mr Stauff present a contract or a specific offer. He said that “It was all after the point of our negotiations with the City and with New Urban West” (at 3:52 of the PC video) Mr Thornton did present the true facts about that phone call, but not of his many interactions with Mr. Stauff in the previous years. Nor did he indicate that he had refused to look at, discuss or consider the plan that Mr Stauff tried to present to him several times in the years before that point.

The FACT is that the developer, through Mr. Stauff, had been trying since 2017 to present its proposal to Cameron Thornton and other monastery representatives, for a luxury senior development, which would be consistent with our General Plan and our ordinances as written and would be much less impactful to the residents, the City and the environment. The monastery refused to even look at

their proposal. The developer was told to "wait until it comes up for bid" (even though the property owner already had an agreement with New Urban West)

In an email sent before the MOU was signed Mr Thornton wrote:

From: Cameron Thornton

<[REDACTED]>

Date: April 21, 2020 at 10:43:39 AM

PDT

Subject: RE: Monastery / Nexus Development - Vivante

Pat,

Thanks for forwarding. FYI, I've had multiple conversations with Clyde, both years ago and within the past couple of months as "word got out."

.....

The diagrams of the proposed "Sierra Vivante" project (they have developed similar projects in Costa Mesa and Newport Beach) are attached .

It would provide much more open space and public park land, much less hardscape, shorter construction time and much more of the "serenity we require for our retreats" that the monastery website claimed. The side view shows how little impact the project would have on views. It would have added to the City's RHNA numbers, provided needed senior housing and additional residents to support our downtown businesses. It would also have provided many needed jobs at all levels for our area.

These are the possibilities that the Monastery rejected without ever seeing the concepts or discussing price. Rather, they - and the City - repeated the unsupported claim that the best option was one that packed larger homes than are in the surrounding neighborhoods, on smaller lots than in the surrounding neighborhoods, that removed 100+ mature trees, graded the entire acreage by removing 5 to 18 feet of topsoil and that removed and relocated Sunnyside Ave. That included constructing several tiers of land raised above the existing grade and building oversized homes on those tiers, while never presenting any plan to show the citizens or the Planning Commission how that could possibly avoid impacting the views of surrounding neighbors. A project that is a phased development requiring years of construction, that provides less public park space and that requires the City to maintain and manage a Community Development district..

Nexus timeline in 2020

The City Council voted to rescind the water moratorium in February 2020 - a few meetings later, on March 10th, Gabe asked approval to continue negotiating with the Monastery. On March 17th the City enacted a state of emergency due to Covid and on April 28th 2020 signed the MOU with the Monastery to build the development and improve Carter Avenue.

That was the first notice that the Developer Nexus and the citizens had that a development was again planned and that no alternative had been allowed to present a proposal. At that time Nexus, again, tried to convince the monastery and the City to at least consider its alternative.

THE SENIOR LIVING PROJECT WAS NEVER STUDIED AS AN ALTERNATIVE IN THE DEIR. (Though the City is "Lead Agency" for the EIR, the consultant who prepared it was hired and paid by the developer who clearly did not provide him with a project they KNEW wanted to submit a proposal) If fairly analyzed, that alternative would have shown a lesser impact to all environmental issues.

The housing project has been pushed through while the Citizens were sidelined by Covid, and although New Urban West never even submitted an application to the City until almost a YEAR after the MOU was signed.

Although the Commission may have accepted the Monastery's statement as "the whole story" and dismissed the submitted comment of a resident, we can present facts that should be considered. Emails during 2020 about the Citizens' attempt to have the alternative considered are below. Showing the facts - not the Monastery's redacted version of the facts.

From: Clyde Stauff
Date: April 8, 2020 at 9:28:39 PM PDT
Subject: Mater De La Rosa

thx for your e mail..We have tried repeatedly to introduce the Monastery people to a development group that proposes a low density, Santa Barbara style senior care facility. Very little traffic, no sirens allowed, and they would design it with walking trails and a park to be shared with the community. It would be a great place to go when the time comes for assisted care..we have been ignored for the last two years by the business people representing the monastery, and were surprised how far along this is with the City, even though single family residential does not comply with the zoning, whereas assisted living does...the development group we work with builds very high quality, attractive projects, but we can never get any response from either the Monastery people or the City...there is definitely a lot more going on behind the scenes.

From: "Stauff, Clyde" <[REDACTED]>
Date: April 14, 2020 at 9:39:57 AM PDT
Subject: RE: The status of the Monastery project

Cory Alder of Nexus is putting some information together. Based on our conversation this am, the structures will be 2 story, approximately 180 living units spread out with lots of

landscaping. Plan is to include a vineyard/orchard park on the east side next to Bailey Cyn Park. The look is to go Mission Style to blend with the Monastery.

From: "Stauff, Clyde"

<[REDACTED]>

Date: April 21, 2020 at 9:58:23 AM

PDT

S

Subject: Monastery / Nexus Development - Vivante

Pat-

Attached is information regarding the Nexus Development Vivante project by Hoag Hospital in Costa Mesa (<https://vivanteliving.com/>). Nexus is building a second facility in Fashion Island in Newport Beach.

Nexus is working on a conceptual plan for a two-story campus-like assisted living facility for the monastery. There would be no more than 180 units, no traffic, no sirens, no skilled nursing, no hospital, no clinic, etc.. Nexus would build mission style architecture in order to blend in with the monastery. They will dedicate a park on the east side of the project for an orchard vineyard and have a walking trail to be shared by all dog walkers, hikers, etc. The goal is to make it appear like it has been there forever with heavy landscaping and low density. This would be a great amenity for all Sierra Madre/Pasadena residents because the existing retirement facilities are all full and they do not offer the setting or amenities that Vivante would provide.

We are a little behind the curve in getting the message out because we did not anticipate that the residential plan was being fast tracked. I have had one recent conversation with Cameron Thornton and Gabe Engeland at the City of Sierra Madre. They seem convinced that single-family residential is the way to go regardless of the fact that it will require a zone change, a CEQA hearing, and lots of neighborhood opposition which will stall the CEQA process out at least two or three years.

Our use fits the zoning, and Nexus will pay fair market value. The transaction could close much sooner than trying to fight the residential through. The Nexus project would have far less impact on the neighbors than the single family residential plan.

(This Email from Monastery Representative Cameron Thornton shows that he knew about the project years earlier but inferred to the Planning Commission that it just came up for the first time while they were working on the MOU)

From: Cameron Thornton

<[REDACTED]>

Date: April 21, 2020 at 10:43:39 AM

PDT

Subj

Subject: RE: Monastery / Nexus Development - Vivante

Pat,

Thanks for forwarding. FYI, I've had multiple conversations with Clyde, both years ago and within the past couple of months as "word got out."

Clyde does not listen very well. He's been told in the past to work with our broker, but did not like that direction. He just keeps pushing and pushing to "close" his deal without taking the time to understand what our goals are.

I've had direct conversations with the two principals Clyde is representing at Nexus. They listened to me and understand what we are attempting to do. Their firm has been added to our "back-up list" and will be contacted, via Clyde, if the project, as envisioned, does not move forward.

For the life of me, I can't get Clyde to understand this simple statement of fact. He just does not listen nor does he respect the process that I've communicated to him that needs to be followed.

Feel free to share this with him. Also, please ask him to support our MOU request, even if it does not generate a payday for him.

Thanks, Cam

From: Tony & Barbara Velturo <[REDACTED]>

Date: May 21, 2020 at 6:27:25 PM PDT

Subject: Re: some activity in coming days on the Meadow area of Mater Dolorosa

Does Clyde know if the assisted living developer can pay whatever the present asking price is? I think that will be the argument against even a very favorable presentation. Is that development financially viable at the present asking price?

In 2014 Cam said the monastery wanted 20 million for the property. Assume Nexus is aware of this?

<https://www.pasadenastarnews.com/2014/04/21/sierra-madre-monastery-declines-10-million-offer-for-20-acres-of-unused-land/>

From: "Stauff, Clyde" <[REDACTED]>

Date: May 21, 2020 at 8:36:11 PM PDT

Subject: Re: some activity in coming days on the Meadow area of Mater Dolorosa

Nexus can pay the same as the resi developer. Cameron Thornton refused to give us any guidance on what an acceptable price would be, and the City made a statement that an assisted living developer could not pay enough without extreme density..not the case..Nexus

knows the price will be in the \$25 mill range...we should have some graphics soon, but COVID has caused Nexus a lot of problems..hotel and retail closures, etc.

From: "Stauff, Clyde" <[REDACTED]>

Date: August 3, 2020 at 5:21:38 PM PDT

Subject: Mater Dolorosa - Nexus Development / Vivante Sierra Madre

Attached is a conceptual schematic for the proposed Vivante Sierra Madre project. Nexus Development (www.nexusd.com) is the developer of Vivante.

There are elements of the Vivante plan that are important considerations as follows:

1. There are two parks that would offer public access including a 2.5 acre park on the west side of Sunnyside which includes a vineyard and garden.
2. The project is set 243 feet back from the residents to the south. This area will be attractively landscaped and will provide a much greater buffer to existing residents than the proposed residential project.
3. There are 192 senior units proposed.
4. The total height is 37 feet. Maximum allowable residential height is 32 feet. Although this is slightly higher than residential it is concentrated in a much smaller area and will have less visual impact than the proposed houses terraced up at the top of the site.
5. This development does not require a street loop, driveways, patios, etc. There is much less hardscape than the proposed 40 residential dwellings.
6. There is no required low income component or separate dwelling unit requirement (as there is with the residential plan).
7. The traffic impact would be much less than residential. The residents do not drive. Any emergency vehicles would have instructions that there are to be no sirens when approaching the development.
8. The developer understands the economics of what the monastery's pricing is. They are not looking for a discount.
9. There is room for discussion on the preliminary site plan. The developer would most likely remove the parking area on the west side of Sunnyside and relocate it.

This information has not been submitted to the City of Sierra Madre. The developer thinks it is best for neighborhood stakeholders to understand that there is a viable alternative to the residential plan and request that the City consider the Vivante project.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

.....

The Developer Nexus invited some of the residents who were opposing the residential project to a meeting to explain the Vivante project and answer all our questions and concerns. They said they did not want to pursue it with the City and Developer unless the citizens approved. (It is the same type of dialogue that we have been trying to get - unsuccessfully - with NUW)

We all agreed that the alternative to the proposed project, which requires rezoning and ignoring of our GP and ordinances, should be pursued and at least considered.

This update from Nexus after the meeting:

From: Robert Eres <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2020 12:33 PM
Subject: Mater Dolorosa and Nexus Update

Cory and I greatly enjoyed meeting everyone a little over a week ago and wanted to thank you all again for taking the time to hear what our concept for the Mater Dolorosa site includes. As we discussed, we wanted to provide you all with the copy of the plans that we had up on boards at the front outlining the concept for our Vivante Senior Living Project.

Additionally, we have now had the opportunity to talk by phone with both the City of Sierra Madre and the representative for the monastery. Please see conversation summary below:

City of Sierra Madre:

1st Cory spoke to the City Manager, Gabe Engeland. Gabe was not that excited to hear from us and gave a very brief general overview of where they are in the process with the monastery. He then quickly directed us to the Planning Director, Vincent Gonzalez.

Cory then had a separate conversation with Vincent where he went into more detail about the process that the City is currently undertaking and stated that he expected the draft EIR for the proposed housing project to be released for public review in the next 2 weeks. We asked to send him the site plan of our proposed concept and get feedback and he agreed.

After sending Vincent the site plan, Cory had a follow up conversation with Vincent asking if he sees any challenges or planning issues. He seemed to look favorable on the large amount of open space and didn't see any issues other than mentioning that the monastery may not like having some of our surface parking face them to the north. Cory discussed the fact that the city code typically drives the amount of parking we must provide even though we typically would need much less than such amount to operate and that we could see a potential for some shared parking with the monastery, which Vincent seemed to also like.

In closing with the City, Vincent said that they are under the MOU with New Urban West and that they need to keep marching down the path outlined. We would need to talk with Mater Dolorosa who is the owner and applicant and they would have to be the one to make any adjustments to the current process.

Mater Dolorosa:

Cory had a conversation with their representative, Cameron Thorton. Cameron did not seem excited to hear from us either, however he ultimately said we can email him our site plan and that he would forward it to the monastery, but that we should not expect a response. We have sent the site plan to Cameron and will see if any response is given.

.....

Once Nexus was told that the monastery had a contract with New Urban West, of course, Nexus backed off.

If the monastery had chosen an alternative proposal such as this one - that they refused to consider....

They would have needed no General Plan amendment or zoning change, no change to land use or zoning maps... The Planning Commission would have reviewed the plan's Consistency with the terms of the Conditional Use Permit and Master Plan required by the Institutional Ordinance.

We hope that the Planning Commission will continue to allow the citizens to present pertinent information to help in your deliberations. We have been deeply involved in this since the beginning and have much factual information to share. We know you don't need to hear more "opinions" - but when we have facts that are responsive to your questions, as in this case, we appreciate being able to share them for your consideration.

The response given by Cam Thornton to your question, while true, was far from the complete story. What he did not say was even more important. ALL the facts matter.

As a result of continual misinformation, misleading statements and half-truths, from both the monastery and the developer, we citizens no longer trust that, even if the current project were rejected, the monastery would choose a project with the City's values in mind.

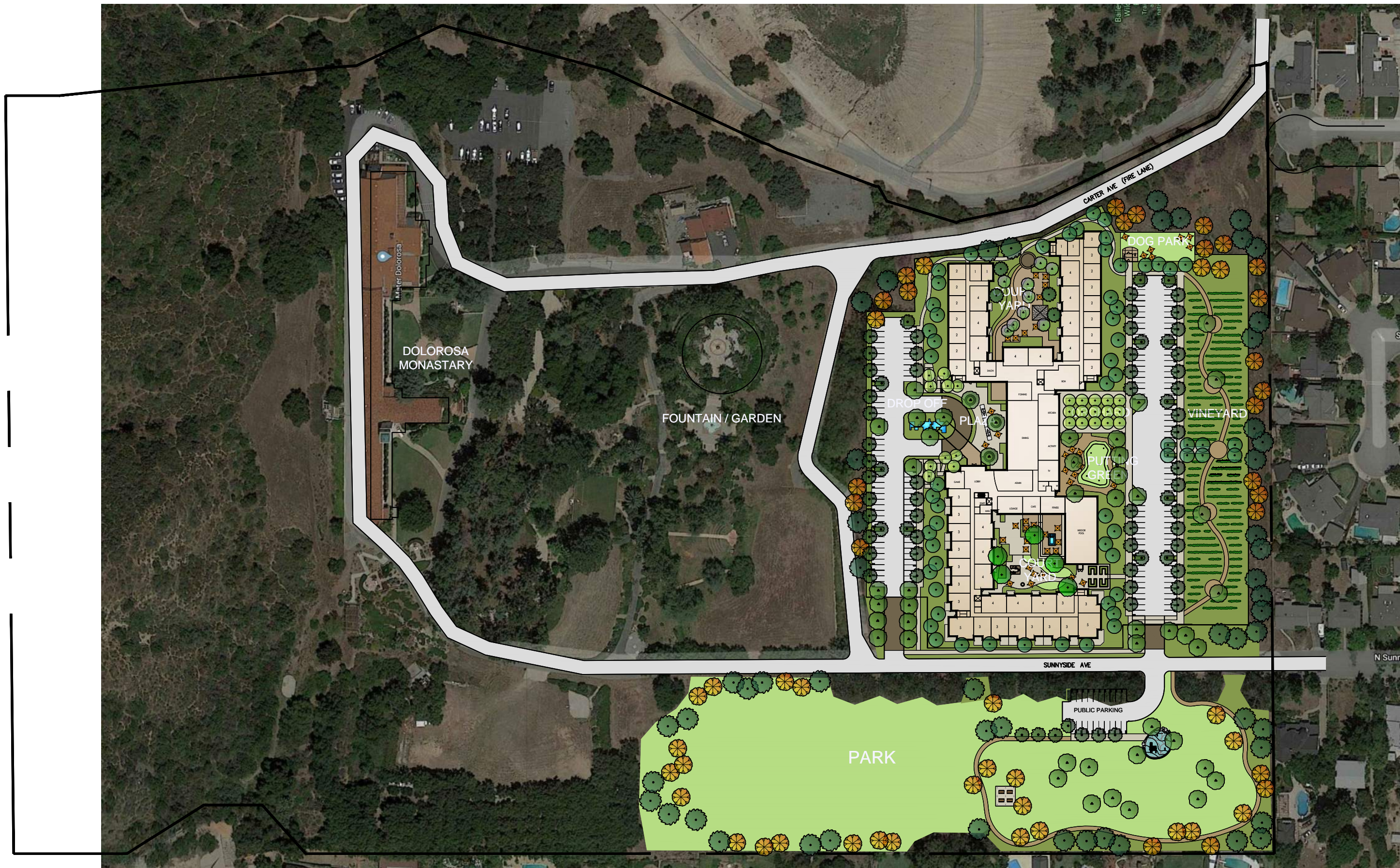
The present project is entirely inconsistent with the values of our General Plan and should be rejected.

Thank you, as always, for your careful consideration of the facts before you.

Barbara Velturo
Steering committee
Protect Sierra Madre - Stop the Housing Project

PS This is what the property looked like before the monastery building was demolished after it was damaged in the 1991 Earthquake. Sierra Madre Vivante would be in approximately the same location and with a similar Mission style design.





700 N SUNNYSIDE AVE
SIERRA MADRE, CA

ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

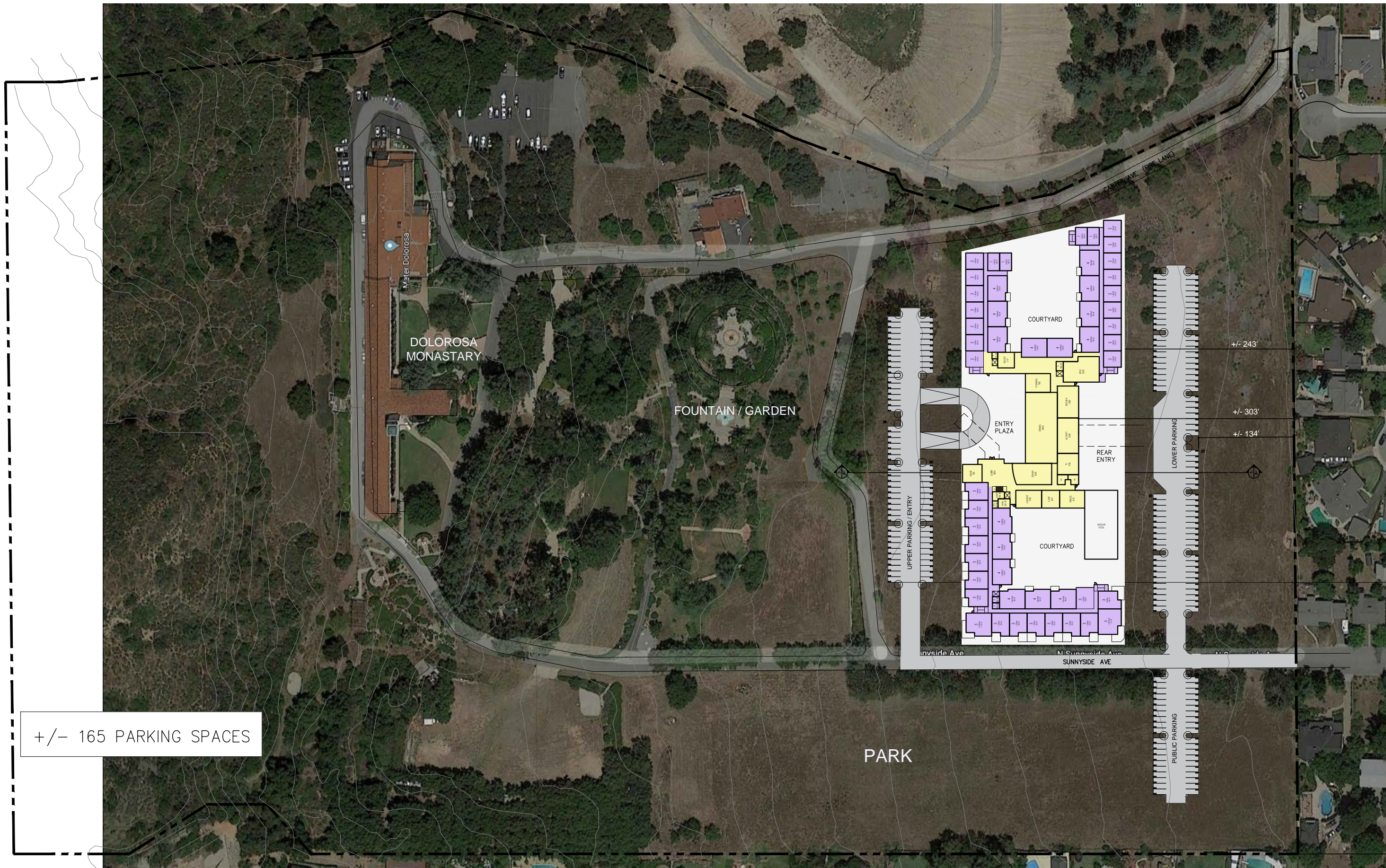
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DATE: 09/02/2020
JOB NO.: 19528

AXIS GF/ 
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ORAY RESEARCH DR
50116-1000
IRVINE - CA 92618
949.207.2323
MIDDLEA.COM



+/- 165 PARKING SPACES

SITE PLAN / GROUND FLOOR
SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

700 N SUNNYSIDE AVE
SIERRA MADRE, CA

 DATE: 05/05/2020
JOB NO.: 19528

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FLOOR	ROOMS
1	+/- 48
2	+/- 72
3	+/- 72
TOTAL	+/-192

SITE PLAN / TYPICAL FLOOR

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

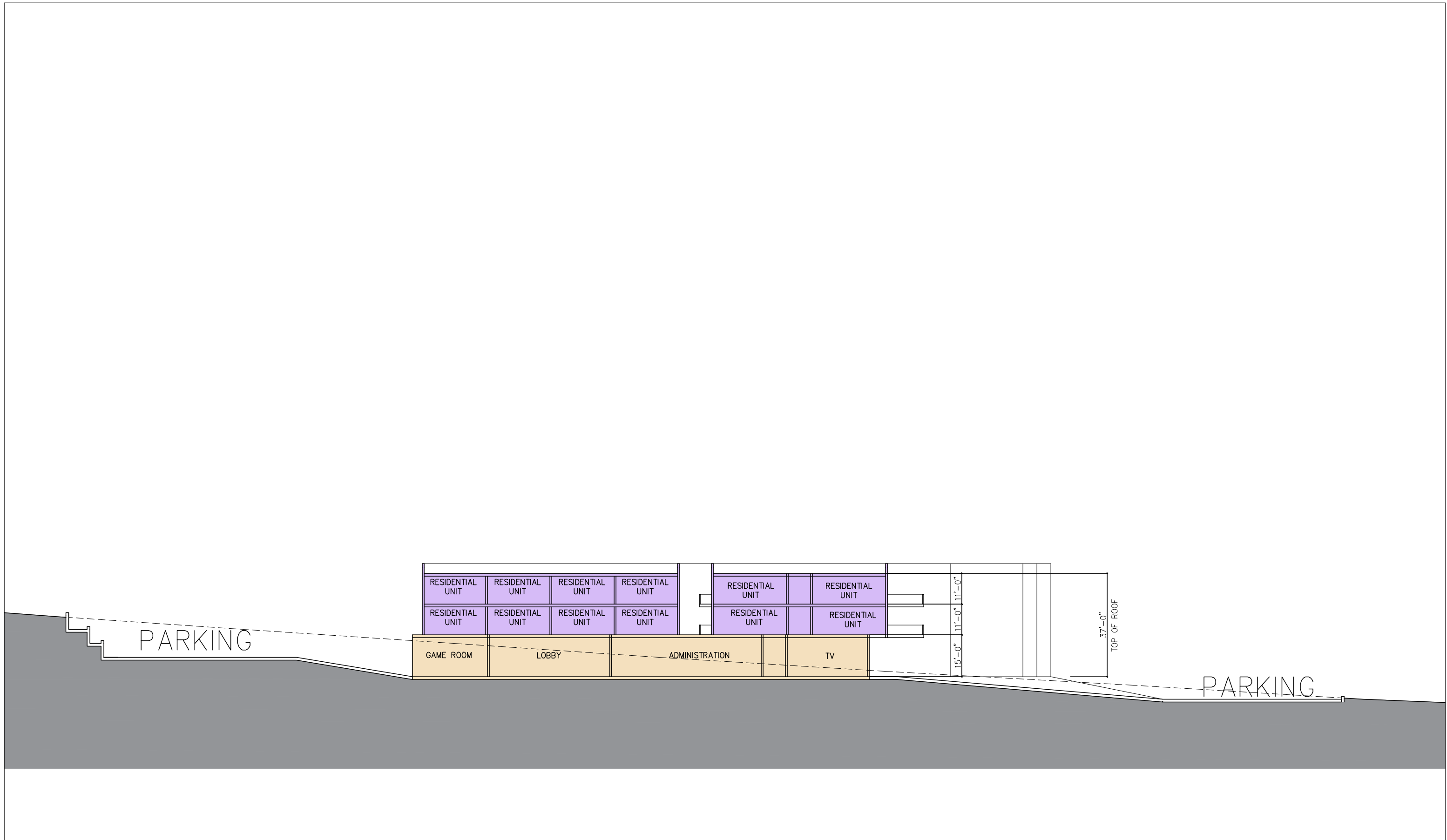
700 N SUNNYSIDE AVE
SIERRA MADRE, CA

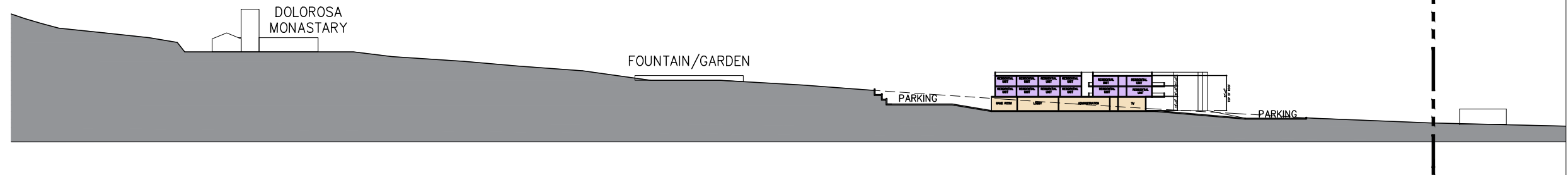


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700 N SUNNYSIDE AVE
SIERRA MADRE, CA

SITE SECTION

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

DATE: 05/05/2020
JOB NO.: 19528

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Clare Lin

From: Barbara Vellturo <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 2, 2022 2:28 PM
To: PlanningCommission; Public Comment; Rachele Arizmendi; Robert Parkhurst; Kelly Kriebs; Gene Goss; Edward Garcia
Subject: Questions re Discrepancies

CAUTION: This message is from an EXTERNAL SENDER - be CAUTIOUS, particularly with links and attachments.

1. The Planning Commission is being asked to change the General Plan land use designation of the Parcel to Low Density Residential and to amend the land use map to show that designation.

However, the Park, when it is given to the City, will be a MUNICIPAL land use. Will that require additional amendments to the General Plan and the Land use map??

2 The Lot Line Adjustment in all documents until the present time is shown to result in two new Lots, the Retreat Center and the Development Parcel.

However the Agenda Report for the Planning Commission's first consideration of all the entitlements of the project says that:

"5. Lot Line Adjustment

Consider a Lot Line Adjustment. Although the Lot line Adjustment is a ministerial action, the application is included as a component of Phase One Proceedings. The Lot Line Adjustment will alter lot lines but will not result in any new lots. The intent is to delineate **the Retreat Center, the residential development and the park** as individual lots."

It seems that the parameters of what the Planning Commission may approve should be what has been proposed in every document of which the citizens have had notice and have reviewed. Both the EIR and the Specific Plan (and the figures in those documents have shown only two parcels.

There are MANY discrepancies between the EIR for the Specific Plan, the Specific Plan itself and the Staff description of what is to be approved by the Planning Commission and the City Council. These must be reconciled before documents with conflicting language or depictions can be adopted.