

**MINUTES**  
**Regular PEQC Meeting of the**  
**Planning and Environmental Quality Commission**  
**Tuesday, January 7, 2025**

The Regular PEQC Meeting Notice and Agenda of the Planning and Environmental Quality Commission of the City of Gardena, California, was called to order at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, in the Council Chambers at 1700 W. 162nd Street, Gardena, California.

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Vice-Chair Ronald Wright-Scherr led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. ROLL CALL**

Present: Chair Deryl Henderson; Vice-Chair Ronald Wright-Scherr; Commissioner Jules Kanhan; Commissioner Steve Sherman and Commissioner Stephen P. Langley. Employees present: Director of Community Development Greg Tsujiuchi; Community Development Manager Amanda Acuna; Deputy City Attorney Rosemary Koo; and Planning Assistant Kevin La.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – *No Items***

**5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Administrative Analyst I, Georgina Placido, noted for the record that no member of the public wished to speak to the Planning Commission under Oral Communication.

**6. OTHER ITEMS**

**6.A 1818 West Redondo Beach Boulevard, the Tire House Progress Report**

As requested by the Planning Commission at the October 1, 2024, meeting, staff is presenting an update report on the Tire House Inc.'s progress with meeting the requirements of Site Plan Review #4-15.

Planning Assistant Kevin La presented the Staff Report and the Tire House Progress Report. Community Development Director Greg Tsujiuchi, Community Development Manager Amanda Acuna, and Deputy City Attorney Rosemary Koo were present to answer questions.

Mr. La provided a recap and went over the list of actions taken during previous meetings regarding Site Plan Review #4-15 and Resolution No. PC 10-24. This included updates on Code Enforcement inspections and the construction progress, - pictures were displayed on the screen. Mr. La noted that planters had been built for the landscaping in front of the property, and the property owner shared information about the construction timeline. He also mentioned that the owner was present and available to answer any questions.

Mr. La noted that the property owner would need to schedule a final building inspection for the landscaping, trash enclosure and restriping of the property. Director Tsujiuchi added that the removal of the iron fencing is required.

Mr. La stated that the Planning Commission is being asked to review the report on the progress the property owner has made and decide whether to uphold the Director's decision to revoke Site Plan Review #4-15.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Planning and Environmental Quality Commission to:

- 1) Receive the progress report from staff;
- 2) Find that the action is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to guidelines Section 15321; and
  - (a) Decide whether to adopt Resolution No. PC 10-24 reflecting the Planning Commission's decision of upholding the director's decision to revoke Site Plan Review #4-15

Chair Henderson asked if any Commissioners had questions for the staff and invited the property owner to come forward.

The property owner, Der "John" Mu, explained that he had family issues that caused him to hand over the construction project to his general contractor. He provided an update on the construction progress, estimating that it would take about two additional weeks to complete and finalize the project. Mr. Mu requested the Commission's permission to continue and finish the work to the site.

Commissioner Langley asked the property owner what tasks remained at this point. Mr. Mu replied that inspections were needed for the landscaping and the trash enclosure, and the final item would be restriping the parking lot. Commissioner Langley inquired about the removal of the iron fence. Mr. Mu replied that the iron fence would be removed, and the tenant would decide whether to install a new fence behind the landscaping, as permitted by the City. Commissioner Langley asked the staff if a permit would be required for a new fence. Director Tsujiuchi confirmed that a City permit is required and noted that the new fence is outlined in the site plan drawings. Ms. Acuna added that there is a requirement to remove the existing fence, as stated, and that the property owners have inquired about replacing it in accordance with City standards.

Commissioner Langley then asked for the estimated completion date of the project. Mr. Mu responded that it is reasonable to expect completion by the end of the month. Director Tsujiuchi stated that if the completion date is indeed at the end of the month and the Commission allowed it, the item would be continued and brought back to the February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Chair Henderson noted that it has been 10 years. Mr. Mu agreed and stated the iron gate would be removed, and assuring that the project would be completed by the end of the month. He commended Mr. Mu for the progress made thus far. Mr. Mu confirmed that the project would indeed be finalized.

Chair Henderson asked if the City staff was satisfied with the progress. Director Tsujiuchi replied that based on his experience, the remaining tasks are feasible to

complete by the end of the month unless there are drastic storms that could delay finalization.

**MOTION:** It was made by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr to Continue the adoption of Resolution No. PC 10-24 and that it be brought back to the Planning Commission on February 4, 2025:

The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:

**Ayes:** Langley, Wright-Scherr, Kanhan, Sherman, and Henderson

**Noes:** None

**Absent:** None

## **7. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS**

### **7.A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT #1-24 (MODIFICATION TO CUP #219-68), SITE PLAN REVIEW #1-24, AND ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENT #1-24**

**REQUEST:** A request to modify the conditional use permit for a high school located within the Single-Family Residential (R-1) zone, including a site plan review for the demolition of a 9,036 SF building and proposing a new 7,500 SF facility in its place, featuring two classrooms, an administrative area, and a covered canopy, to continue serving the existing school on the property. All other structures on site will remain. Additional site improvements include landscaping upgrades, parking area enhancements, and the implementation of a new vehicle circulation plan. The Applicant is also requesting an administrative adjustment to the off-street parking requirements, seeking a 12% reduction in the number of required spaces—from 104 to 93 spaces.

**Environmental Consideration:** The proposed project is being considered for a categorical exemption from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Guidelines Section 15302 and 15303, as a Replacement of an Existing Structure and New Construction of Small Structure project.

**APPLICANT:** Farnaz Golshani-Flecher, Farnaz Golshan-Flechner, Environmental Charter High School

**LOCATION:** 2818 Manhattan Beach Blvd; APN: (4067-007-005)

Planning Assistant Kevin La presented the Staff Report for Conditional Use Permit #1-24 (Modification to CUP #219-68), Site Plan Review #1-24, and Administrative Adjustment #1-24 for a high school located at 2818 Manhattan Beach Blvd within the Single-Family Residential (R-1) zone. The vicinity and zoning map were displayed on the screen.

Community Development Manager Amanda Acuna briefed everyone on the history of the previous entitlements issued for the site.

Conditional Use Permit #219-68 – Approved in 1968.

- **Modification #1** – In 1971, for landscape requirement.
- **Modification #2** – In 1986, to expand the Elementary School and establish a Middle School. Enrollment was also increased to 510 students.
- **Modification #3** – In 1996, the City Council approved an increase in student enrollment to a maximum of 540 students.
- **Modification #4** – In 2013, administratively approved a modification to allow the grade level to go up to High School and a reduction in student enrollment to 450.

Ms. Acuna stated that in previous approvals for modifications to Conditional Use Permit #219-68, the requests and analyses consistently addressed the features of both properties: the one on 2818 Manhattan Beach Blvd and the one on 15916 Crenshaw Blvd. However, the two properties were never officially tied through any entitlement requests.

Ms. Acuna informed everyone that in 2022, the Environmental Charter School acquired the property. Upon the acquisition, the combined use of both the Manhattan Beach Blvd and Crenshaw Blvd properties ended. For that reason, a new conditional use permit number has been identified for this request before the Commission tonight. For clarification it is still vested right under the original conditional use permit that allowed for the property to operate as a school at that location. What is being considered tonight is the site improvements.

Ms. Acuna stated that the Applicant, Environmental Charter School is proposing to demolish the existing chapel structure (9,036 SF), which currently contains two classrooms, and replace it with a newly constructed multi-purpose building of approximately 7,508 SF. Additional site improvements will include:

- Landscape and fencing upgrades.
- New freestanding monument sign
- Parking area enhancements; implementation of a new vehicle circulation plan.

Parking Adjustment:

- 12% reduction in the number of required spaces from 104 to 93 spaces.

Ms. Acuna clarified to the Commission and all attendees a question that staff had received regarding any removal of street permit parking as part of the project. Ms. Acuna clarified that the study indicates that there is an administrative adjustment request for the removal of 16 on-site parking spaces., Therefore, no street parking permits will be removed as part of this request.

Mr. La stated that as part of the request, pursuant to the Gardena Municipal Code Section 18.12.030.B, a conditional use permit is required for public and private schools in the R-1 zone. To reiterate Ms. Acuna's statement, this is an existing entitlement that is being reclassified as CUP #1-24. Therefore, the current proposal involves site improvements for a modification. Pursuant to Gardena Municipal Code Section 18.44.10.A site plan review shall be processed concurrently with other discretionary approvals, such as when a conditional use permit. Mr. La noted that the Planning staff was recommending a condition to require the installing of an eighth decorative block wall or fence to separate the two properties. This condition would help prevent circulation from parents entering off Crenshaw Blvd.

Mr. La displayed the Elevations for the newly proposed building; the Table Chart of the Development Standards; and the Circulation Plan on the screen. He also noted that the proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the Guidelines Sections 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction; 15303, New Construction of Small Structures Projects; and 15300.2 The project is not subject to any of the exceptions of CEQA. Public hearing notices were advertised in the Gardena Valley News and mailed to properties within 300-foot radius of the project site on December 26, 2024, and as of January 7, 2025, one public comment email was received:

- 1) [Public Comment- M. Waiss 01/07/2025](#)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

- Conduct the public hearing;
- Receive testimony from the public; and
- Adopt Resolution No. PC #1-25, Approving Conditional Use Permit #1-24, Site Plan Review #1-24, and Administrative Adjustment #1-24, subject to the attached Conditions of Approval and direct staff to file a Notice of Exemption.

Mr. La noted that there were four public speakers wishing to speak on the item.

Ms. Acuna informed the Commissioners that the applicants had prepared a presentation for the Commission.

Chair Henderson invited the applicants to come forward.

Alison Diaz, the Director of Growth & Sustainability at Environmental Charter School, introduced the leadership team: Principal Cindy Guardado, Deputy Superintendent of Instruction Danielle Kelsick, Assistant Principal of Student Services Lacey Harris, and Assistant Principal of Instruction Madison Donatoni. Ms. Diaz proceeded with the presentation and stated that they are requesting a modification to the existing conditional use permit at 2818 Manhattan Beach Blvd to undertake additional renovations. She noted that Environmental Charter High School began leasing the site in 2021, and in 2022, they purchased it from the Calvary Church. Ms. Diaz shared their mission for the new public high school campus and their renovation plans which included replacing the church assembly building with a state-of-the-art net zero classroom and office suite, enhancing access to and circulation for pedestrians and vehicles significantly improving safety and traffic flow.

Ms. Diaz handed over the presentation to Deputy Superintendent of Instruction Danielle Kelsick, who shared the mission of the Environmental Charter School: to reimagine public education in low-income communities of color, preparing conscious critical thinkers who are equipped to graduate from college and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable world. The presentation included a map of the four Environmental Charter Schools along with relevant school statistics.

Ms. Kelsick then passed the presentation to Principal Cindy Guardado, who provided an overview of the school's journey since its opening in 2021. The school currently serves approximately 400 students in grades 9-12 and is proud to graduate its first senior class in June. She highlighted the school's impressive 95% daily attendance rate and its success on the Academic Performance State Test, as well as College Readiness: 100% of their seniors applied to California State Universities, and 92% applied to the University of California campuses. Additionally, seniors have been taking college courses at El Camino College. Ms. Guardado also displayed a list of Community Partnerships on the screen.

Ms. Guardado then passed the presentation to Assistant Principal of Instruction, Madison Donatoni. She discussed the efforts made to ensure that the school remains a positive presence in the community. Ms. Donatoni outlined the improvements and adjustments implemented to address the concerns of neighbors and find effective solutions. The school conducted traffic studies and consulted with parking enforcement. Additionally, they increased on-site supervision during drop-off and pick-up times and collaborated with Public Works to limit street parking

during those periods. Lawn signs were posted for reminders, and video instructions regarding pick-up and drop-off protocols were provided to families and students. Ms. Donatoni also shared photos of the proposed Net Zero building, which will create a cohesive campus that addresses safety, effective circulation, and embodies the “E” in ECS. She concluded her presentation by displaying a list of features for the new campus.

Afterward, Ms. Donatoni returned the presentation to Ms. Diaz, who explained in detail the benefits each feature would bring to the community. She provided an overview of the New Drop-Off Proposal, which included details about the interior and exterior fence systems. Although this information was not included in the PowerPoint presentation, she brought a poster board to illustrate the fence systems. Ms. Diaz believes that these modifications will fully unlock the potential of the site, transforming it into a vibrant, innovative, and sustainable high-quality high school campus. She also informed the Commission that they are available to answer any questions.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr inquired about the type of partnership they have with El Camino College and how it benefits the students. Ms. Diaz responded by mentioning that they recently received a grant to help establish a new environmental design pathway. This initiative will allow students to begin their course of studies at El Camino College while still in high school. She then invited Mr. Guardado to elaborate on the topic. Ms. Guardado added that their 11th-grade class has been taking their Spanish class at El Camino and that they are able to utilize the college's facilities for various activities.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr asked about the on-site drop-off proposal and its potential impact on street traffic. Ms. Diaz confirmed that substantial efforts have been made to reduce traffic congestion and provided detailed information.

Chair Henderson inquired whether they had engaged with the community regarding the proposed drop-off plan and what feedback they received. Ms. Diaz responded that they had not held an official meeting with community members; however, some community members had approached them to express their concerns. In response, they have collaborated with the neighbors and the City to address these issues. Additionally, they have informed the parent community about potential fines that could be enforced. As a result of these efforts, they have seen increased compliance from parents.

Ms. Acuna added that one of the project design being proposed to improve traffic circulation is the introduction of a new queuing lane that will run parallel to Manhattan Beach Boulevard. This is being done to help alleviate traffic congestion. As a part of the proposal presented tonight, there will also be a condition to have monitors throughout the queuing lane in order to facilitate traffic.

Commissioner Langley pointed out that their use to be an exit at the back of the property leading to Atkinson Ave and if that access is still available for parents during pick-up. Ms. Diaz responded that no pick-ups occur in the back, and many people are unaware that this area is accessible. She clarified that it is only available for staff use. He also requested an explanation regarding the outlined blue area and questioned the need for parking there if it is not being utilized. Ms. Diaz explained that portion of the parking lot is not currently being used and it is only intended to

be used in case of a special event. He further asked about the additional parking spaces required for the 12th graders. Ms. Diaz replied that most students do not drive, and for the few student drivers, they are working on getting them permit parking at El Camino College.

Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr asked how long the construction will take to complete. Ms. Diaz responded that, according to the current lease agreement, they anticipate securing the necessary permits within one year. Construction is expected to commence in January and be completed before the school year begins in August.

Commissioner Langley noted that the site was previously a church sanctuary and asked if any arrangements have been made with Calvary Baptist to preserve any historical elements of the church. Ms. Diaz confirmed that she had reached out to them regarding the project and proposed plans. They indicated that some church members may have sentimental attachments to the building. Ms. Diaz communicated that the church members would like to find a way to memorialize the church's long-standing commitment to the community. Commissioner Langley mentioned that the church has been in existence since 1945. Ms. Diaz acknowledged that no decisions have been made yet but expressed her willingness to explore ways to honor the church's legacy. She also pointed out that similar memorials have been established at their other campuses.

Commissioner Langley shared that his father was the treasurer of the church and that the sanctuary was built in 1960. He mentioned that his father raised all the funds for the sanctuary as a volunteer starting in 1958. Additionally, his brother and sister were married there, and he grew up attending that church while his mother served as its secretary. He stated that he would abstain from the vote on this project, not because he opposes the project—he believes it is a good one—but due to his emotional ties. Ms. Diaz asked if he would be willing to help lead the effort to memorialize the church. He expressed his desire for former members to collaborate on a plan, to which Ms. Diaz agreed.

Ms. Acuna informed the Commissioners that five members of the public have requested to speak on the item.

Commissioner Sherman expressed concerns regarding the queuing lane. Ms. Diaz explained that currently, all vehicles travel the full distance of the lane. Ms. Acuna added that a condition has been drafted by staff to require at least four monitors along the queuing lane: one at the entrance, another at the turnaround section, and the remaining two near the drop-off area and the exit. If the commission identifies any additional monitors that are necessary, they can be added to the draft.

Chair Henderson announced that the Public Hearing was open and informed everyone that comments would be limited to two minutes.

#### Public Speakers:

- 1) Austin Walcher, a resident, is not opposed to the proposed project; however, he expressed concerns about the exemption from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because he believed that the building could contain asbestos.
- 2) Emma Garcia, a parent, expressed her support for the proposed Environmental Charter School (ECS) project in Spanish.

City staff briefly summarized and translated her comments. Director Tsujiuchi noted that the information would be translated into English and provided to all the Commissioners.

- 3) Camila Sasa, a student, expressed her appreciation and support for the Environmental Charter School expansion.
- 4) Guadalupe Badillo, another student, shared a little about her journey in ECG and voiced her support of the project.
- 5) Danielle Marquez, mother, spoke about the partnerships with ECG and expressed her support for the project.

Ms. Acuna read into the record the translation of the comments from Public Speaker 2) Emma Garcia.

Chair Henderson commended the students and the school administration for doing a wonderful job.

Chair Henderson announced that the Public Hearing was closed.

Commissioner Langley expressed his desire to propose a friendly amendment to the motion. Director Tsujiuchi offered clarification regarding the friendly amendment.

Chair Henderson inquired whether any of the artifacts could be incorporated into the school. Ms. Diaz responded that it is possible, but it will require further consideration to determine the details.

**MOTION: It was made by Commissioner Langley and seconded by Vice-Chair Wright-Scherr to Adopt Resolution No. PC #1-25, Approving Conditional Use Permit #1-24, Site Plan Review #1-24, and Administrative Adjustment #1-24, subject to the attached Conditions of Approval and direct staff to file a Notice of Exemption with a Friendly Amendment for the Applicant to be Required to work with Local Church Leaders in order to Memorialize the Building or to Preserve any Historical Elements of the Church, and Report back to Staff the Plan so it can be brought back to the Commission; with a Condition that it be done prior to the issuance of any Demolition Permit:**

**The motion was passed by the following roll call vote:**

**Ayes: Wright-Scherr, Kanhan, Sherman, and Henderson**

**Noes: None**

**Absent: None**

**Abstain: Langley**

## **8. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Community Development Director, Greg Tsujiuchi announced upcoming City events and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

- 1) Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Commemorative Parade & Celebration, Saturday, January 18, 2025; 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM.



Director Tsujiuchi informed all the Commissioners that if they are interested in participating in the parade to please make staff aware of

**9. PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS**

- 1) COMMISSIONER SHERMAN – No items to report
- 2) VICE-CHAIR WRIGHT-SCHERR – No items to report
- 3) COMMISSIONER KANHAN – Ask if Commissioners are provided a ride for the MLK Parade.

Ms. Amanda confirmed that the Recreation Department is in charge of the event and that a vehicle will be provided for each Commissioner who wishes to participate.

- 4) COMMISSIONER LANGLEY – No items to report
- 5) CHAIR HENDERSON – No items to report.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Henderson adjourned the meeting at 8:17 PM.

APPROVED:



DERYL HENDERSON, CHAIR  
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission

Respectfully submitted,

By: 

GREG TSUJIUCHI, SECRETARY  
Planning and Environmental Quality Commission