



Planning Commission Staff Report

October 25, 2006
Item 6.d.

- SUBJECT:** Work Session for PDR-561/PV-158
- APPLICANT:** John Miller Architects/Saint Elizabeth Seton Church
- PROPERTY OWNER:** Catholic Community of Pleasanton
- PURPOSE:** Work session to review and comment on a proposal to modify the Saint Elizabeth Seton Church Master Plan to construct an approximately 22,296-square-foot parish center building with gymnasium and related site improvements and for a variance from the Municipal Code to allow the proposed parish center building with gymnasium to be approximately 34-feet tall, where 30 feet is the maximum height limit.
- GENERAL PLAN:** Medium Density Residential
- ZONING:** The subject property is zoned A (Agriculture) District.
- LOCATION:** 4001 Stoneridge Drive
- ATTACHMENTS:**
1. Proposed Plans, Written Narrative, Church Parking Count Results, Church Parking Survey Results, and Tree Report
 2. Location Map
 3. Exhibit C, Comments from the October 5, 2006, Neighborhood Meeting
 4. Letter from Pleasanton Village Association dated September 28, 2006
 5. Emails from Jeff Green and Helen Whitaker
 6. 1989 and 1998 Church Master Plans

I. BACKGROUND

The subject application is the latest of several applications dating back to the original 1989 master plan approval. In 1989, the church was granted conditional use permit approval of a master plan for the construction of approximately 70,985 square feet of building area which included: a 11,165-square-foot chapel and parish office building; a 14,140-square-foot sanctuary addition to the chapel/office building; a 13,920-square-foot classroom building; a 11,900-square-foot multi-purpose/gymnasium building; a 15,000-square-foot elementary school building; and a 4,860-square-foot rectory building. The master plan would be constructed in several phases. A total of 360 parking spaces would be constructed at buildout. A 48,000-square-foot retail building was also proposed at the west end of the site, but was not approved by the Planning Commission. At that time, the church also received design review approval of its first phase, the 11,165 square foot, 200-seat chapel/office building and a 140-space circular parking lot around it. The first phase was completed in 1991. The conditional use permit granted church and related uses on the entire parcel, except that separate conditional use permit approval was required for the future elementary school use. The church was required to return for design review approval of all subsequent buildings.

In 1998, the church received design review approval to construct the second phase of their master plan, which consisted of a 14,725-square-foot, 800-seat sanctuary building addition to the existing church/office building and a 180-space parking lot on the west side of the sanctuary building. At that time, the church also received design review approval to revise their master plan to include a future 25,000-square-foot elementary school building at the west end of the site and a 13,920-square-foot classroom building, a 11,900-square-foot multi-purpose/gymnasium building, and a 4,860-square-foot rectory building on the east end of the site. The buildout building area was increased to 81,570 square feet. Two future parking lots, totaling 113 spaces, were also shown on the east side of the site, resulting in a total of 435 spaces at buildout. The sanctuary building and 180-space parking lot were completed in 2000.

II. SITE DESCRIPTION

The Saint Elizabeth Seton Church occupies an approximately 12-acre site at the southeast corner of Stoneridge Drive and Rheem Drive. Existing improvements include the sanctuary/chapel/office building, two paved parking lots, and landscaped areas. Existing driveways off Rheem and Stoneridge Drives provide access to the parking lots. The western and eastern portions of the site are undeveloped. The site topography is generally flat.



2005 Aerial of Subject Site



Parish Center Site viewed from the Stoneridge Dr./Rheem Dr. Intersection

Properties immediately adjacent to this site include: the Belvedere Neighborhood and Gatewood Apartments to the north, on the opposite side of Stoneridge Drive; light industrial/office buildings to the west, on the opposite side of Rheem Drive; the Pleasanton

Village Neighborhood to the south; and a City park (Nielsen Park) and the Mohr Park Neighborhood to the east and southeast, respectively.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Design Review Application

The applicants are proposing to modify their 1998 master plan to allow construction of a 22,296-square-foot parish center building with gymnasium for its third phase of construction. The parish center building would be located at the western end of the site where a future 25,000-square-foot elementary school building was shown on the 1998 master plan. The future elementary school building (noted as Building E on the site plan) would be relocated to the eastern end of the site. The parish center building would replace the 11,900-square-foot multi-purpose/gymnasium building and the 13,920-square-foot classroom building that were shown on the eastern end of the site in the 1998 master plan. The 4,860-square-foot rectory building would remain as a future option on the eastern end of the site. The revised master plan would result in a total of approximately 78,046-square-feet of building area on the site, which is a 3,524-square-foot reduction from the 1998 master plan. The church would like to start construction of the parish center building in the Spring of 2007. Plans for the elementary school and rectory buildings have not been included as part of this application and would be subject to separate City approvals at a later date (conditional use permit and design review approvals for the elementary school and design review approval for the rectory building). The church is uncertain when the application(s) for the elementary school and rectory buildings would be submitted to the City.

Users of the proposed parish center building would utilize the existing parking lots, which currently have a total of 311 spaces. The proposal would eliminate 20 spaces to create a drop-off area in front (west side) of the parish center and to create a pedestrian pathway through the existing parking lots. The applicants would replace all 20 of these spaces by restriping some of the existing standard-sized spaces to compact-sized spaces and by creating seven new parking spaces within or adjacent to the existing parking lots, resulting in a total of 311 parking spaces. The two future parking lots, totaling 113 spaces, would remain at the eastern side of the site as shown in the prior master plan, resulting in a total of 424 spaces at buildout.

The parish center building would be used for a variety of church-related uses, including: Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) basketball practices and games; meetings for church programs; youth group center; religious education classes; nursery for infants and toddlers during Sunday services; religious guest speakers and seminars; religious conferences; funeral receptions; banquets and dances; and after-service brunches. The religious education classes, religious guest speakers and seminars, funeral receptions, nursery, and church program meetings currently occur in the main church building and would be moved to the parish center building.

The CYO basketball practices/games would occur from October through February with one game or two practices occurring at one time. CYO basketball includes boys and girls from 3rd through 8th grades. Please see the attached written narrative for additional use details, including the number of people present and the timing and frequency of the uses. The church indicated that it has scheduled the activities such that no major events would occur simultaneously in the main sanctuary/chapel and proposed parish center building.

Sunday services held in the sanctuary building would remain unchanged: four services start at 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 4:00 p.m., and 6:30 p.m. and last from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes each. The services are currently attended by 200 to 835 people.

The parish center building would contain several rooms to accommodate the various church uses. The gymnasium would be located on the southern end of the building and would accommodate one regulation-size basketball court the length of the gym or two reduced-sized practice courts across the gym. Three-level bleacher seating for up to 85 people would be located along a portion of western gymnasium wall. A 264-seat conference room would be located at the northern end of the building. Other rooms include a kitchen, several meeting rooms, youth room, nursery, storage rooms, and restrooms. Although not needed for the church's activities, the church is proposing to install three women's and three men's showers to allow the building to be used as an emergency shelter. Entry and regular (non-emergency) exiting from the building would occur on the east (parking lot) side of the building.

Outside activities would be limited to a small fenced play area without play equipment on the east side of the building that would be used for the nursery and a patio area at the northwestern corner of the building that could be used as a break or refreshment area during events in the main conference room. There would be no outdoor basketball practice.

The contemporary styled building contains architectural elements similar to the existing church building. A feature unique to the proposed building is the eastern and western gymnasium walls, which would slightly undulate in and out and would also tilt inward at the top. The parish center would utilize the same brown- and tan-colored split-face concrete block and stucco materials/colors of the existing sanctuary building. The existing sanctuary building has a standing-seam copper roof. Due to stormwater quality concerns, copper materials are no longer desired in new construction. Therefore, the applicants are proposing to utilize a brown-colored standing-seam metal material on the sloped roofs that is similar in color to the existing oxidized copper roof. The standing-seam material would also be utilized on the eastern and western gymnasium walls and northern conference room wall. A color/materials board will be available at the hearing. The parish center building would have maximum height of 34 feet at the top of the gymnasium walls.

Pursuant to the City's Tree Preservation Ordinance, a tree survey and analysis for this project

site has been prepared by HortScience, Inc. The report describes the species, size, health, and location of the existing trees near the proposed parish center building and also recommends special precautions necessary for trees worth preservation. There are 12 existing trees over six inches in diameter near the proposed development, including two of which are defined as “Heritage Tree” by the Municipal Code (i.e., a tree which measures 35 feet or greater in height or which measures 55 inches or greater in circumference). The 10 non-heritage trees are located along the western end of the existing parking lot and were planted at the time the parking lot was installed. These healthy trees vary from six to seven inches in diameter and are deodar cedar and London plane species. The arborist recommends that these trees be removed due to their location within the proposed area of development. A heritage-sized English walnut tree is located just north of the church’s driveway off Rheem Drive. The walnut tree is in poor health and the arborist recommends that this tree be removed. A heritage-sized California black walnut tree is located in the planter area along the church’s southern property line. This tree is in fair health and the arborist recommends that this tree be preserved.

The applicants are proposing to install a variety of trees, shrubs, and groundcovers around the proposed building. Evergreen laurel (bay) trees, viburnum, euonymus, and dwarf escallonia shrubs, and a variety of groundcovers would be planted on the north end and northwest side of the building. Evergreen African sumac trees, New Zealand flax and laurustinus shrubs, and a variety of groundcovers would be planted along the western side and south end of the building. Deciduous crape myrtle and evergreen cajeput trees, viburnum and heavenly bamboo shrubs, and dwarf plumbago groundcover would be planted on the east side of the building. A new separated sidewalk would be installed along the Rheem Drive frontage of the site. Deciduous Chinese hackberry trees and pink knotweed groundcover would be installed in the planter strip between the sidewalk and street. The applicants would also install two Canary Island pine trees and seven pittosporum shrubs in a portion of the planter along the southern property line that some people use as a pedestrian short cut between the church and Bowen Street.

Variance Application

The proposed parish center building would be approximately 34-feet tall, as measured from the finished grade adjacent to the building to the top of the gymnasium walls (the tallest part of the structure). The Municipal Code limits structures in the A District to 30 feet. Therefore, a variance must be granted to exceed the 30-foot height limit.

IV. NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

On October 5, 2006, Planning Department staff conducted a neighborhood meeting for residents of the adjacent properties to comment on the proposed plan and to determine any issues they had with the proposed application. Fourteen residents attended this meeting and commented on the proposed plans. Comments from this meeting are detailed on Exhibit C, attached.

Neighbors from the Pleasanton Village neighborhood (south of the subject site) wanted adequate parking to be provided on the project site in order to prevent parishioners from parking in front of their homes, which they indicated currently occurs during Sunday services. It was noted that the parishioners who park in the Pleasanton Village neighborhood walk to the church via the dirt path at the elbow on Bowen Street which provides a short cut. It was suggested that resident only permit parking be established in the Pleasanton Village neighborhood. Noise impacts, safety/security, and screening concerns were also raised.

The neighbors mentioned several traffic-related concerns that they were currently experiencing in their neighborhood, including speeding along Rheem Drive, difficulty making left turns from Rheem Drive onto Stoneridge Drive after church services end, and aggressive driving by parishioners. The neighbors were concerned that the parish center would increase these problems. A representative of the Pleasanton Village homeowners association indicated that it had previously had asked the City to stripe a centerline down Rheem Drive and to install a flashing speed limit sign. Neighbors also questioned if the church's existing Rheem Drive driveway could be eliminated and a new driveway be installed along Stoneridge Drive or another location away from residents.

Some neighbors requested that the parish center building be relocated to the eastern end of the site on the other side of the church or "flipped" at its present location so that the taller gymnasium portion of the building would be located further away from their homes. Some neighbors also felt that the building was too tall and requested that its height be lowered.

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission receive public testimony and provide comments to the applicants and staff regarding the proposed project.

For questions or comments about this proposal, please contact: Steve Otto, Associate Planner at 925-931-5608 or sotto@ci.pleasanton.ca.us.