

To: TIMOTHY
ALTADENA BLOG
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ARROYO PACIFIC ACADEMY

ALTADENA CAMPUS UPDATE : April 30, 2011

We are proceeding with the detailed reports needed by the Conditional Use Permit process for the County of Los Angeles. We have also begun outreach to the local community in Altadena by distributing our first newsletter flyer to the neighbors within 1000' of the proposed project.

Our analysis of the neighbors' concerns - as revealed by previous blogs and feedback conversations with many local residents along the roads along E. Palm Ave - shows that there are four major concerns that we should address seriously.

1. Traffic impact of a high school campus on E. Palm St.
2. Noise impact on local residents from student and staff numbers on the site.
3. Property values of neighboring residences as a result of the proposed use on this site.
4. Privacy issues for adjoining neighboring residences.

We have also completed the required water will-serve agreement with Lincoln Ave. Water Company as well as an extensive sewer service analysis and study done by appropriate engineers. These have all been submitted to the County of Los Angeles as required by the CUP process.

TRAFFIC AND NOISE ANALYSIS SO FAR

As part of the CUP process we have engaged the services of a very reputable firm which specializes in traffic and noise studies for projects of this type (and other major construction projects). Kunzman and Associates have produced two detailed reports which we have submitted to the County of Los Angeles.

We asked them to perform the study and analysis based on a maximum projected enrollment of 250 without any mitigating factors such as busing or special noise abatement programs. This gives us the maximum possible impact on the community with the worst case scenario for traffic and noise impacts.

These studies and analysis are part of the public record with the County of Los Angeles. Essentially the studies found that even at maximum impact (which we propose to mitigate significantly), our project falls well below permitted thresholds for E. Palm St. and its adjoining streets. The traffic ratios fall within a very acceptable category for projects of this kind at this site.

The noise study reveals that the impact of this project on the area would be 2.8 dBA CNEL (less than a 3dBA increase which is the threshold for barely audible to the trained human ear. The increase on existing ambient noise levels would not be significant according to the scientific analysis and will not exceed the State of California or the County of Los Angeles suggested residential CNEL of 65 at neighboring property lines. Measurements were made at the site and also at our existing school in Arcadia to measure actual noise levels at the peak times before and after school (traffic noise and the sounds of students saying hello and goodbye) as well as the lunch period activity time.

MITIGATION SUGGESTED BY US

We, ourselves, proposed that we should actively implement mitigation even more than minimum requirements because we are committed to being respectful neighbors and because we believe that a quiet campus is a good educational environment for our students. Some of our proposals (which may become part of the acceptable CUP recommendations) are:

1. Keep all senior students at the Arcadia campus to eliminate student drivers entering the Altadena site on a daily basis. If seniors take part in arts, technology or environments studies programs in Altadena, they must be bused in and many not drive to this campus.
2. All other students going to the Altadena campus would be driven to the site in specific buses which would be as quiet as possible (electric/hybrid) along E. Palm St. with no crashing of gears or idling noise. Students would be picked up at the gold line stations, at the Arcadia campus, or at specific pick-up and drop-off locations along the major arterial roads Lake, Fair Oaks, Lincoln, etc). The goal is to reduce the actual number of cars entering and leaving the site each day. These would be limited to staff (15-20 max) and occasional parents picking up kids for medical appointments etc.
3. We would increase enrollment incrementally to allow for real time impact on the neighborhood. The first year would not exceed 120 students and perhaps only 60 to begin. If our program successfully addresses the traffic concerns, we would increase to 180 and then 250 max by the third year.
4. There would be NO outdoor bells, public address system or other noise making systems used at the Altadena campus (same as in Arcadia at present). The students learn to check campus clocks and their own cell phones/watches to know when classes begin and end. We have four classes per day with one morning break (20 mins) and a lunch break (40 mins). These are the only times when students would be outside the classrooms apart from the other two 5 minute passing periods. There is an indoor fitness and recreation building.
5. Because we have facilities for sports and PE elsewhere (as well as theatre performances etc) the only outdoor sports activities would be limited to short intramural activities at lunchtime in the middle of the day and perhaps a short period after school (20 mins.). These activities would be limited in scope (volleyball, basketball, badminton) and involvement since many students would be having lunch, meeting indoors for clubs, arts and student activities planning. The noise impact on the community will be kept to a minimum.
6. No off-site, on-street parking will be allowed at any time for our students and/or parents.

IMPACT ON PROPERTY VALUES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Informal consultations with realtors indicates that property values actually INCREASE if there is a quality private school in a neighborhood. Obviously this is a subjective analysis but based on real experience.

To ensure that we are doing our best to maintain our property to ensure the value, safety and cleanliness of the neighborhood, we have removed dead trees (dangerous) and out of control bushes (fire hazard) as well as cleaned the buildings, exterior and interior. We will keep our property in good condition and there are no plans for construction projects on this site apart from regular maintenance (painting etc).

When the CUP is approved, we will have a landscaping proposal ready for implementation. This will provide bushes and tall trees at perimeter points to act as sound mitigation and to protect the privacy of our neighboring properties. We will be seeking professional input from landscapers and perhaps the Arboretum before we implement these plans to ensure environmentally appropriate planting.

PRIVACY ISSUES FOR NEIGHBORS

When we removed the overgrown brush and dead trees from the perimeter of the property, some neighbors spoke with us about their enjoyment of privacy in this neighborhood toward which the overgrown brush contributed. Since we had no plans to use the property until the CUP is granted, the issue of maintaining privacy from our property was not urgent. We have no objection to neighbors planting trees and shrubs along their fences to maintain their individual seclusion.

We have consulted with landscape companies and are prepared to grow new hedges and bushes around the perimeter as part of our beautification of the property and to assist in noise reduction and mitigation where possible. We have also investigated the use of taller trees along the perimeter of neighboring properties where the elevation difference is substantial. This will continue to be studied and implemented when the CUP is approved and before we occupy the premises for school purposes.

The villa will not be used for school activities and this provides a further acoustic and privacy buffer to the neighbors on Raymond Ave.

In the coming months, we will continue our outreach program toward the local community and immediate neighbors. We will hold a series of open houses and meetings to clarify our responses to their concerns as articulated in many conversations with us, our survey company representatives (who are engaged to give an "objective" listening service to community members who might not, yet, want to speak with us directly). We have established a Facebook page and a dedicated e-mail response page for communications purposes related to this project.

We will also ask for and prepare an analysis of the concerns expressed to the County of Los Angeles, the Altadena Town Council and the Altadena blog (among other local media outlets). We are prepared to address each issue brought to our attention and become a respectful member of the community toward our neighbors. We have met with Gino Sund, President of the Altadena Town Council, to introduce ourselves and to hear his concerns on behalf of the community. He was very clearly attuned to the issues in the neighborhood and we assured him of our desire to respond in a meaningful and respectful way. We will ask for an appearance at the Altadena Town Council to present our positions and responses to what we understand to be the clear and strong issues involved with this project.

We have already developed a great affection for the property (and its potential for our students), the neighbors who have expressed support for us with the reservations as outlined above, and we totally respect the neighbors who are in opposition to having any kind of traditional day school on this site because of previous experiences. We hope to see "welcome AP to Palm St" on their signs some day but we take no offence to their stated position and have no objection to the current signs. There was an unsubstantiated allegation that someone from our organization may have interfered with some neighborhood signs. We categorically deny this. Period.

Phil Clarke
5/2/11