

PROJECT ANALYSIS AND JUSTIFICATION REPORT

Hillel 818
17729 W. Plummer Street, 91325
([Hyperlink^{1/}](#))

BACKGROUND

Hillel 818, Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, is part of a global network of Hillels on over 500 campuses worldwide. Hillel 818, at California State University Northridge (CSUN), was founded in 1960 and is one of the oldest student groups on the CSUN campus. For over 60 years, Hillel has provided services to students from CSUN, Pierce College, Los Angeles Valley College, and College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita.

Hillel 818 offers counseling and a variety of fun and exciting programs for all major Jewish holidays during the school calendar year. Students come to Hillel so they can connect with their Jewish peers for social programs and to study.

Hillel 818 prepares a kosher dinner every week for Shabbat, which is open to all students in the Valley, free of charge, and are generally themed. Hillel welcomes all students to enjoy Shabbat, meet new friends, share in a communal meal, and celebrate with other students.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The scope of work includes renovation of the existing one-story building and addition for office and assembly space. The existing building is 5,950 square feet and the proposed addition is 1,044.8, totaling 6,994.8 square feet.^{2/} The scope of work also includes resurfacing/stripping of the parking lot with the addition of eight (8) short and long-term bicycle spaces and one parking stall, new exterior facade, infill of exterior walls, new exterior doors and windows, new interior partitions and doors, and partial new roof.

REQUESTS ^{3/}

There are two requests. One is a Plan Approval, pursuant to Section 12.24-M of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, to add 1,044.8 square feet to the existing building. The

^{1/} Hyperlink enables readers to review desired documents and return to the Project Analysis and Justification Report. All files must be in the same folder (download the contents of the CD) and use Adobe Reader or Acrobat for seamless integration of the documents.

^{2/} The square feet of the addition complies with City Planning's accepted practice that a request pursuant to 12.24-M cannot expand the use, intensity, enrollment, or size beyond 20%-30% of the size or capacity of the authorized use. (*Reference ZA Memo 78, September 28, 1989*)

^{3/} The existing building and addition at 6,994.8 square feet complies with Section 12.07-C,5, (Residential Floor Area), which limits the floor area to 7,101.4 square feet.

prior approval, Case No. ZA 1985-1216(CUZ), authorized 5,950 square feet. The Plan Approval includes modifying Condition Nos. 6, 7, 11, 13, and 16 (*See REQUESTED MODIFICATIONS OF CONDITIONS TO Case No. ZA 85-1216-CUZ, below*).

The second request is pursuant to 12.24-F of the Los Angeles Municipal Code for relief from Section 12.21-C,3(b) to permit the east side yard at 12 feet - 8 inches and west side yard at 7 feet.

RELEVANT MUNICIPAL CODE SECTIONS

Section 12.21-C,3(b) Yards for Institutions, Churches, etc.

For churches, clubs, educational institutions, elementary and high schools, libraries or museums, the combined widths of the two side yards on an interior lot shall be not less than 40% of the width of the lot, but need not exceed 50 feet, and on either an interior lot or a corner lot the side yard adjoining another lot in an “RA” or “R” Zone shall be not less than ten feet in width. (*Underline added for emphasis*)

Section 12.24-M. Plan Approvals. (*Underline added for emphasis*)

1. “Development of Site. On any lot or portion of a lot on which a deemed-approved conditional use is permitted pursuant to the provisions of this section, new buildings or structures may be erected, enlargements may be made to existing buildings, and existing uses may be extended on an approved site, as permitted in Subsection L of this section, provided that plans are submitted to and approved by the Zoning Administrator, the Area Planning Commission, or the City Planning Commission, whichever has jurisdiction at the time. The Zoning Administrator, the Area Planning Commission, or the City Planning Commission may deny the plans if the Zoning Administrator or the Commission finds that the use does not conform to the purpose and intent of the findings required for a conditional use under this section, and may specify the conditions under which the plans may be approved.

The Area Planning Commission and the City Planning Commission may delegate to the Director of Planning the authority to approve or disapprove, on their behalf, plans for the development of an approved or deemed-approved conditional use site. The Area Planning Commission and the City Planning Commission shall establish reasonable guidelines and policies to be followed in the exercise of the delegated authority.”

12.24-F Conditions of Approval. (*Underline added for emphasis*)

“In approving a project, the decision-maker may impose conditions related to the interests addressed in the findings set forth in Subsection E. The decision may state that the height and area regulations required by other provisions of this Chapter shall not apply to the conditional use approved. If the Density Bonus is increased beyond the maximum allowed as defined in LAMC 12.22 A.25., the development project must also contain the requisite number of Restricted

Affordable Units as set forth in Section 12.24 U.26.(a)(1) through (5) of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.”

Section 12.27-C Request for Waived Public Hearing (*City Planning’s accepted practice is to waive a public hearing based on the following Findings made in the affirmative even though 12.24 does not include specific language stating such.*)

“Public Hearing and Notice. An application for a variance shall be set for public hearing unless the Chief Zoning Administrator or, in his or her absence, an Associate Zoning Administrator performing his or her functions, makes written findings, a copy of which shall be attached to the file, that the requested variance:

- (i) will not have a significant effect on adjoining properties or on the immediate neighborhood; or
- (ii) is not likely to evoke public controversy.”

SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SURROUNDINGS

PROPERTY

The property at 17729 W. Plummer Street, 91325 (Property) is a level interior parcel located on the north side of Plummer Street westerly of White Oak Avenue. The Property fronts on the north side of Plummer Street with a frontage of 115.28 feet and uniform depth of 285.01 feet.

The Property is 32,969 square feet and classified in the RA-1 Zone. Pursuant to Case No. ZA 1985-1216(CUZ), the Property is developed with the Hillel Student Center of California State University at Northridge.

SURROUNDINGS

(North) Adjoining properties to the north are classified in the (T)(Q)RD1.5-1 and RA-1 Zones and developed with detached condominiums (N) and single-family residences (NW and NE).

(East) The property to the east at 17729 Plummer Street is a single-family building, classified in the RA-1 Zone and currently used as a Place of Worship, pursuant to Case No. ZA-1984-83-CUZ.

(South) The property south across Plummer Street at 17700 Plummer Street (S and SE) is currently use as a Place of Worship and classified in the RA-1 Zone. The property at 17739 Plummer Street, to the southwest (SW) is a single-family residence and classified in the RA-1 Zone.

(West) The property to the west at 17800 – 17829 Plummer Street is student housing with surface parking, classified in the RA-1 Zone.

STREETS AND CIRCULATION

Plummer Street is a designated Avenue II, 86 feet right-of-way width and 56-foot roadway width standard, and improved on a variable dedication of 86 feet to 90 feet.

RELATED CASES

ON-SITE

Case No. 19375 On May 4, 1969, the Office of Zoning Administration authorized use of the property as a fraternity house.

Case No. ZA 20926 On July 25, 1972, the Office of Zoning Administration permitted use of the property for a student counseling facility for Jewish students attending the California State University at Northridge.

Case No. ZA 84-0083 On October 26, 1984, the Office of Zoning Administration permitted a 1,220-square-foot addition. However, this grant was never utilized and expired May 13, 1985.

Case No. [ZA 85-1216-CUZ](#) on December 19, 1985, the Office of Zoning Administration permitted construct a one-story, 3,000-square-foot addition on the property to join separate structures under one roof. The existing meeting room was expanded and a new kitchen and bathrooms were added. An additional 14 parking spaces provided, resulting in accommodating a total of 38 vehicles.

OFF-SITE

Case No. ZA 18284 On July 25, 1967, the Office of Zoning Administration approved a Conditional Use Permit for a Place of Worship, 17700 Plummer Street

Case No. ZA 2005-1351(ZV) On June 29, 2005, the Office of Zoning Administration denied request to use existing church parking lot for public parking purposes on weekdays to provide parking for students attending classes at cal. state Northridge. 17700 Plummer Street

REQUESTED MODIFICATIONS OF CONDITIONS To Case No. ZA 85-1216-CUZ

6. ~~That 38 on-site parking spaces shall be maintained on the site~~

Justification: Condition No. 6 should be updated as deemed necessary by the Zoning Administrator. In Case No. ZA 85-1216-CUZ, the Zoning Administrator imposed parking based on occupancy resulting in 38 required parking spaces. The current parking regulation is based on a ratio of one stall per 500 square

feet. This applied to the Project requires two additional parking stalls. When applied to the building total square feet (i.e., 6,994.8), the ratio results in 14 parking spaces.

The Project intends to continue providing 38 parking spaces, as required in Case No. ZA 85-1216-CUZ, and will add one parking stall and eight (8) bicycle parking (2 long term and 6 short term).

7. ~~That any signs displayed on the premises shall be limited to a conservative identification or directional type only, in keeping with the sign provisions of Section 12.21-A, 7 of the Municipal Code, and shall be submitted to and approved by the Office of Zoning Administration prior to the installation. The existing two (2) signs along the Property frontage may be replaced with one (1) sign similar in size.~~

Justification: The Project intends to replace two previously approved signs with one sign of similar size of those previously approved. The proposed signs will be installed on the frontage wall. (See [Exhibits](#))

11. That the occupancy of the involved counseling center shall not exceed that permitted by the Department of Building and Safety, ~~but in no event shall said occupancy exceed 160 patrons.~~

Justification: In Case No. ZA 85-1216-CUZ, the Zoning Administrator imposed a maximum occupancy of 160 persons, based on available parking. The request is to amend Condition No. 11 to allow occupancy based on Department of Building and Safety occupancy for the building.

13. That a 6-foot-high solid masonry wall shall be constructed along the northerly rear lot line, ~~and the easterly and westerly side, and front~~ lot lines of the site.

Justification: The request is to amend Condition No. 13 to permit a six-foot wall and fence with sliding vehicle entrance gate. As noted in the submitted news article (attached, [hyperlinked](#)), the additional wall/fence is proposed for security.

As cited in a recent City Council Resolution (attached, [hyperlinked](#)), the Anti-Defamation League's most recent "Audit of Anti-Semitic" incidents in the United States recorded 1,879 acts in 2018, with a dramatic increase in physical assaults, including the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, a wave of anti-Semitic robocalls targeting Jewish schools, JCCs and synagogues, and a significant number of incidents at K-12 schools and on college campuses. Further, the FBI, which compiles hate-crime data based on reports from local law-enforcement agencies, found the number of such incidents rose 29 percent in 2018 from 2015 and in California alone, anti-Semitic hate crimes surged by 21 percent from 2017 to 2018, and reports of anti-Semitic incidents have continued to make headlines in 2019.

16. ~~The use hereby authorized is conditional upon the privileges' being utilized within 180 days after the effective date hereof, and if they are not utilized or construction work is not begun within said time and carried on diligently to completion this authorization shall become void and any privilege or use granted hereby shall be deemed to have lapsed unless a Zoning Administrator has granted an extension of the time limit, after sufficient evidence has been submitted indicating that there was unavoidable delay in taking advantage of the grant. Once any portion of the privilege hereby granted is utilized, the other conditions thereof become immediately operative and must be strictly observed. Furthermore, this conditional use approval shall be subject to revocation in the manner as provided under Section 12.24, I of the Municipal Code if the conditions imposed are not strictly observed.~~

Justification: Condition No. 16 should be updated or deleted, as deemed necessary by the Zoning Administrator.

JUSTIFICATIONS BASED ON REQUIRED FINDINGS

In order for the Project to be approved, all legally mandated Findings delineated in the Los Angeles Municipal Code must be made in the affirmative. A decision-maker prepares Findings and applicant prepares Justifications.

Section 12.27-C. Request for Waived Public Hearing;

- 1. The Project will not have a significant effect on adjoining properties or on the immediate neighborhood.**

Firstly, a project that is a Categorical Exemption (CE), as described by the Secretary of the Resources Agency, usually does not have a significant effect on the environment. The Project can be approved pursuant to two Categorical Exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Article III, which are found in Section 1 of the City CEQA Guidelines under Class 1 for "existing facilities" exemption (Guidelines §15301) and Class 3 if it "consists of construction of small structures" (Guidelines §15303).

Secondly, modifying Condition Nos. 6 (parking spaces), 7 (signs), 11 (occupancy), 13 (walls/fences), and 16 (utilization of grant) are inconsequential in their impact on adjoining properties. Parking exceeds the requirement of the Code by 26 stalls. The proposed sign is not larger than the two existing signs that will be removed. Occupancy is based on Department of Building and Safety regulations and parking accommodates the number of persons. The additional wall along the frontage adjoins the three previously approved walls establishing greater security for the use. Modifying Condition No. 16 regarding utilization of the grant updates the condition to current standards.

2. The Project is not likely to evoke public controversy.

The property owner to the east submitted a letter in support (attached, [hyperlinked](#)). The property owner to the west is CSUN and affiliated with the Project. The Council Office has been apprised of the Project and has no objection. The property owners to the north are buffered from the building by the parking lot and landscape. Further, they would surely support the Project, which intends to remove the existing parking lot lighting that bleeds onto their property.

Section 12.24-M. Plan Approvals.

3. That the project will enhance the built environment in the surrounding neighborhood or will perform a function or provide a service that is essential or beneficial to the community, city or region.

The Zoning Administrator's Findings in Case No. ZA 1985-1216(CUZ) are not similar to those made today. Nevertheless, the decision-maker found that the use is beneficial by stating the following, "[i]n the opinion of the Associate Zoning Administrator, the request has merit. The existing counseling center has operated in this location serving the Jewish students of the California State University at Northridge since 1972 with no record of controversy or concern. The site is ideally located for the subject purpose fronting on a secondary highway within walking distance of the university. The student-counseling center provides a needed service for students by providing a central place for discussion groups, lectures, forums, religious services, and occasional social events such as dinner and dances. ..."

There are no changed circumstances disaffirming the Finding previously made by the Zoning Administrator. Additionally, Hillel provides an essential service and is beneficial to the community, city and region in that its services are in association the Jewish Studies Program offered at California State University at Northridge (CSUN) where students can minor in Jewish Studies and major in Modern Jewish Studies. In addition, students of all religions and ethnicities are welcome to enroll in Jewish Studies courses.

4. The project's location, size, height, operations and other significant features will be compatible with and will not adversely affect or further degrade adjacent properties, the surrounding neighborhood, or the public health, welfare, and safety.

In Case No. ZA 1985-1216(CUZ), the Zoning Administrator found the project "will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to property and improvements in the same zone and vicinity in which the property is located in relation to existing improvements on adjoining properties. The distance adjoining buildings are from the site will alleviate any possibility of affecting development thereon."

There are no changed circumstances disaffirming the Finding previously made by the Zoning Administrator. In regards to adding square feet and modifying conditions of Case No. ZA 1985-1216(CU), the proposed addition and requested modifications to Condition Nos. 6 (parking spaces), 7 (signs), 11 (occupancy), 13 (walls), and 16 (utilization of grant) would not have an adverse effect. There is no increase in height, the side yard setbacks are no less than those approved in Case No. ZA 1985-1216 (CU) and renovation of the building will give it a more modern appearance, whereby, making the design harmonious with its surroundings. Moreover, there is no significant increase in intensity of use that would have an adverse impact.

In regards to setbacks, Section 12.21-C,3(b) specifies setbacks for Hillel 818 ^{4/} The second request is pursuant to 12.24-F of the Los Angeles Municipal Code for relief from Section 12.21-C,3(b) to permit the east side yard 12 feet - 8 inches and west side yard at 7'-0".

The proposed side yard setbacks would not have an adverse effect since the west side yard is unchanged and the east setback would be nine (9) inches more than that approved in Case No. ZA 1985-1216(CU). Moreover, the addition on the east façade is not visible from the public domain.

5. The project substantially conforms with the purpose, intent, and provisions of the General Plan, the applicable community plan, and any applicable specific plan.

The City of Los Angeles General Plan (General Plan), originally adopted in 1974, is a comprehensive long-term document that provides principles, policies, and objectives to guide future development to meet existing and future needs of the City. The General Plan consists of a series of documents, including the seven elements mandated by the State of California: Land Use, Transportation, Noise, Safety, Housing, Open Space, and Conservation. The City's General Plan includes elements addressing Air Quality, Infrastructure Systems, Public Facilities and Services, Health and Wellness, as well as the Citywide General Plan Framework Element (Framework Element).

The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan divides the City into 35 Community Plans. The Site is in the Northridge Community Plan. There is no specific language in the Community Plan for this use.

In Case No. ZA 1985-1216(CUZ), the Zoning Administrator stated, the approval "... will not adversely affect any element of the General Plan inasmuch as the

^{4/} For churches, clubs, educational institutions, elementary and high schools, libraries or museums, the combined widths of the two side yards on an interior lot shall be not less than 40% of the width of the lot, but need not exceed 50 feet, and on either an interior lot or a corner lot the side yard adjoining another lot in an "RA" or "R" Zone shall be not less than ten feet in width. *(Underline added for emphasis)*

basic use of the property is consistent with the General Plan and the matter at issue is not dealt with directly in an adopted General Plan elements.”

The Planning Department implements the General Plan utilizing a variety of tools, mainly through zoning regulations and the division of land such as zoning classifications, specific plans, overlay districts, special use permits, such as conditional uses, and a variety of other instruments that regulate the use of land.^{5/}

In this instance, making affirmative findings for a Conditional Use Permit is equivalent to finding the request in conformance with the purpose, intent, and provisions of the General Plan. There is no applicable specific plan nor overlay governing the property.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)

The Project can be approved pursuant to categorically exempts from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article III, Section 1 of the City CEQA Guidelines under Class 1(e)^{6/} is the "existing facilities" exemption (Guidelines §15301) and Class 3(c)^{7/} consisting “of construction of small structures”. (Guidelines §15303)

There is no substantial evidence demonstrating that an exception to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies including:

- (a) There is no “Cumulative Impact” for the proposed wall and others in the immediate area do not exceed thresholds identified for impacts.
- (b) There is no “Significant Effect” for the proposed wall consists of work typical of a residential neighborhood. No unusual circumstances are present or foreseeable.
- (c) There is no impact to Scenic Highways for the proposed wall is not located on or near a designated state scenic highway.

^{5/} Los Angeles Municipal Code, Chapter I General Provisions and Zoning, General Planning Department Information, Functions.

^{6/} Additions to existing structures provided that the addition will not result in an increase of more than: (1) 50 percent of the floor area of the structures before the addition, or 2,500 square feet, whichever is less; or (2) 10,000 square feet if: (A) The project is in an area where all public services and facilities are available to allow for maximum development permissible in the General Plan and (B) The area in which the project is located is not environmentally sensitive

^{7/} A store, motel, office, restaurant and/or similar small commercial structures not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances, and not exceeding 2,500 square feet in floor area. In urbanized areas, the exemption also applies to up to four such commercial buildings not exceeding 10,000 square feet in floor area on sites zoned for such use, if not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances where all necessary public services and facilities are available and the surrounding area is not environmentally sensitive.

- (d) There is no impact related to Hazardous Waste Sites for the proposed wall is not identified as a hazardous waste site or is on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
- (e) There is not impact to Historical Resources for the proposed wall is not on a site identified as a historic resource or within a historic district (SurveyLA, 2015), the project is not listed on the National or California Register of Historic Places, or identified as a Historic Cultural Monument (HCM).