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February 16, 2021

Los Angeles City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: PLUM Committee

Dear Honorable Members:

**APPEALS FOR A PROPOSED PROJECT AT 1608-1636 WEST PICO BOULEVARD AND
1321-1331 SOUTH UNION AVENUE; CASE NO. CPC-2020-4095-ZV-CU-SPR; CF 21-0015**

At its meeting of November 19, 2020, the City Planning Commission (CPC) approved the conversion of an existing commercial building for two (2) charter elementary schools (Grades K-4) totaling 53,262 square feet with a combined maximum enrollment of 1,000 students. The building will include 38 classrooms, a multi-purpose room, administrative office, and an open play area on the second level. Parking will be provided in an adjacent surface parking lot at 1321-1331 South Union Avenue with 54 parking spaces. The CPC determined that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301 and 15332. The approved the entitlement requests as follows:

- 1) **Approve** a Zone Variance to allow off-site parking to be located across the alley at 1321-1331 South Union Avenue in lieu of on-site parking as required by LAMC Section 12.21-A,4(f);
- 2) **Approve** a Conditional Use Permit for the construction, use, and maintenance of two (2) charter elementary schools (grades K-4);
- 3) **Approve** a Conditional Use Permit for the construction, use, and maintenance of a charter elementary schools (grades K-4) with deviations in height and area requirements, as follows:
 - a. A 1-foot, 1.5-inch front yard setback, and
 - b. To maintain the existing side and rear yard setbacks;
- 4) **Approve** a Conditional Use Permit to maintain the existing public parking areas in the R Zone,

- 5) **Approve** a Site Plan Review for a change of use which results in a net increase of 1,000 or more average daily vehicle trips;
- 6) **Adopted** Modified Conditions of Approval; and
- 7) **Approve** the staff recommended Findings.

Following this action, eight (8) appeals were filed in a timely manner.

Traffic and Circulation

Appellants claim that the project operations and traffic queueing will block access to the adjacent surface lots, properties along the alley, and back up traffic to Constance Street. As discussed in the staff recommendation report and the project's traffic consultant, the maximum queue at the "peak minute" will be 14 vehicles. The surface parking lot can accommodate up to 31 vehicles without affecting the alley. This is discussed in further detail within the Transportation Assessment, prepared by Linscott, Law & Greenspan, dated September 18, 2020.

In consideration of this, the two-way alley will continue to permit access to and from the surface parking lots during school pick-up and drop-off times.

Conditions of Approval for Equitas 1

Appellants contend that conditions of approval for Equitas 1, the adjacent school across Constance Street were not incorporated into the subject project's determination letter. The determination letter for the subject project incorporates conditions of approval that addresses potential concerns that are project specific. The conditions of approval that were approved are similar to the adjacent project and includes additional conditions that were volunteered by Equitas in consultation with the Council Office.

Community Outreach

Appellants contend that there was lack of community outreach and lack of outreach in Spanish. According to the applicant, the project was presented to the Pico Union Neighborhood Council's Zoning, Planning and Land Use Committee on August 5, 2020 and then to the full Board on August 12, 2020. On October 1, 2020, Equitas presented the project to Pico Union Project. A noticed community forum was held by Equitas on October 8, 2020. Shortly after the Hearing Officer Hearing on October 21, 2020 that provided Spanish translation, Council Office 1 hosted another community meeting on October 26, 2020.

Following this meeting with the Council Office, and in response to community concerns, enhanced conditions of approval were provided and ultimately incorporated into the staff recommendation report.

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Equitas committed to providing effective community outreach by translating City public hearing notices, Spanish interpretation at community forums, distributing bilingual flyers to the community, and a bilingual website for the project. Additional outreach discussion is provided within a letter from the applicant submitted to the Council File, dated February 3, 2021.

Sincerely,

VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

Alexander Truong

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City Planning Associate