

FINDINGS

Conditional Use Findings

- 1. 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 request herein is for a Conditional Use Permit to allow the construction, use, and maintenance of a new public charter middle school, Girls Athletic Leadership Schools (GALS) Los Angeles, in the R1 Zone. At completion, the school will have a maximum enrollment of 330 students in Grades 6 through 8. The subject property is currently developed with a one-story, single-family dwelling with a detached garage. The property also contains several accessory structures, as well as five (5) shipping containers located at the northeast corner of the site. The project will result in a modern school campus with landscaping and hardscape enhancements.

The proposed project will enable GALS Los Angeles, an existing public charter school operating since 2016, to vacate its current co-location at Panorama High School, and establish an independent and permanent campus, thereby providing a stable learning environment for its students. The new campus will be comprised of a two-story school building containing 17 classrooms (including a dance studio), a multi-purpose room, offices, conference rooms, and a staff lounge, as well as, an outdoor patio/lunch pavilion, an outdoor athletic field and running track, and educational garden, and surface parking lot with a designated student drop-off/pick-up area.

Furthermore, GALS Los Angeles will reserve a portion of its enrollment for students that live within the community. As charter schools may enroll students from a wide geographic region, the project will enable GALS Los Angeles to provide an additional neighborhood school option for the community and serve a greater population across the entire region. Quality schools are an essential part of any community. The project will enable GALS to better serve the community and provide a valuable service of high-quality education in a safe and stable environment. Therefore, the project will provide a service that is beneficial to the community, city, and region.

- 2. That 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.**

The project site is a level, rectangular-shaped through-lot comprised of three (3) parcels, totaling approximately 53,265 square feet (approximately 1.22 acres) in size. The subject property is bound by Runnymede Street to the north, having a street frontage of approximately 194 feet, and is bound by Valerio Street to the south, with a street frontage of 194 feet, having a lot depth of 275 feet. The subject property is currently developed with a one-story single-family dwelling with a detached garage that will be demolished as part of the project.

The proposed school is a use that is permissible within the R1 Zone per LAMC via approval of a Conditional Use Permit. The project will result in a new two-story, 23,157 square-foot building with a maximum height of 24 feet 3 inches, an outdoor athletic field and running track, an outdoor lunch pavilion, and a surface parking lot with 38 vehicular parking spaces and a designated drop-off/pick-up area for students. The project will additionally provide a total of 70 bicycle parking stalls: 68 short-term; and two (2) long-term parking stalls. The project includes 8-foot masonry walls and wrought-iron fencing with integrated vehicular and

pedestrian access gates, along the campus' perimeter. The project proposes approximately 10,471 square feet of landscaped area throughout the interior and perimeter of the site, including a 500 square-foot educational garden at the northwest corner of the property, and "finger island" planters within the parking lot. The project's height, setbacks, landscape, and parking requirements are all being complied with.

The subject property is located in the Van Nuys area, an established suburban neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley developed mostly in the early- to mid-20th century. The project site is located midblock between Tyrone Avenue to the west, and Hazeltine Avenue to the east. The neighborhood primarily consists of Low to Medium Residential uses. Properties within the immediate vicinity of the project site are zoned R1-1 and are developed with one-story, single-family dwellings.

The project has been thoughtfully designed in order to minimize the school's impact on surrounding residential properties. The proposed building will have a maximum height of 24 feet, 3 inches, which is well below the height limit permitted by the site's underlying zone and height district. The building observes a 20-foot side yard setback from the westerly perimeter of the site and utilizes clerestory windows and green screens along its westerly façade in order to maintain privacy and compatibility with adjacent residential properties. In addition, the project incorporates extensive landscaping and 8-foot block walls along the easterly and westerly perimeters to further maintain privacy and reduce impacts of noise on abutting residential properties and the surrounding neighborhood. Furthermore, the school is designed to alleviate traffic congestion during student drop-off and pick-up periods by proposing a one-way, two-lane driveway for vehicular ingress and egress that will accommodate up to 20 on-site vehicle queuing, thereby reducing vehicular buildup along Runnymede Street.

Operation of the school will not result in a significant impact to the community. The project has been conditioned to minimize impacts of lighting and noise on the surrounding properties. The proposed school will not have bells, loudspeakers, or PA systems, which may cause potential noise impacts. In addition, both the school's schedule and the site layout has been designed to accommodate all student pick-up and drop-off on-site. The project's before- and after-school programs will further stagger student drop-off and pick-up reducing peak traffic in the neighborhood. The school will provide a minimum of five staff members to monitor vehicle and pedestrian traffic during student drop-off and pick-up periods, including one monitor stationed at the egress driveway to ensure that students do not enter the campus from Valerio Street. Student use of the campus will only occur during school hours on weekdays, special events have been limited, and the school will be required to monitor and keep clean the entire property and sidewalks along the property's street frontages, all of which will minimize any potential adverse impacts the project may have.

In summary, the school is a desirable use in the proposed location. The project's physical features and operation will be compatible with the neighborhood and will not adversely affect the community. The proposed school use is permitted by Conditional Use in the underlying zone and the project has been designed and conditioned to minimize any potential impacts associated with these features and use. Therefore, 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.

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

The subject property is located within the Van Nuys – North Sherman Oaks Community Plan Area which is one of the 35 Community Plans that make up the Land Use Element of the

General Plan. The Community Plan Area Map designates the subject property for Low Residential land uses corresponding to the RE9, RS, R1, RU, RD6, and RD5 zones. The subject property's R1 zoning is thus consistent with the General Plan's land use designation of the site. The property is not located within the boundaries of or subject to any specific plan, community design overlay, or interim control ordinance.

The Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) permits the use of public charter schools within the R1 Zone with the approval of a Conditional Use Permit subject to certain findings. Therefore, the requested Conditional Use Permit for the proposed school use is permissible per the underlying zone and land use designation of the project site. The project is consistent with the following specific goal, objective, and policy of the Van Nuys – North Sherman Oaks Community Plan:

GOAL 6: APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS AND ADEQUATE FACILITIES FOR SCHOOLS TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF EXISTING AND FUTURE POPULATIONS.

Objective 6-1: To site schools in locations complimentary to existing land uses and in locations which will enhance community identity.

Policy 6-1.1: Encourage compatibility in school locations, site layout, and architectural design with adjacent land uses and community character, and as appropriate, use schools to create a logical transition and buffer between different uses.

The project is further consistent with other elements of the General Plan, including the Framework Element. The Framework Element was adopted by the City of Los Angeles in December 1996 and re-adopted in August 2001 and provides guidance regarding policy issues for the entire City of Los Angeles, including the project site. The Framework Element also sets forth a Citywide comprehensive long-range growth strategy and defines Citywide polices regarding such issues as land use, housing, urban form, neighborhood design, open space, economic development, transportation, infrastructure, and public services. The project supports the following goals, objectives, and policies of the Framework Element:

GOAL 3A: “A physically balanced distribution of land uses that contributes towards and facilitates the City's long-term fiscal and economic viability, revitalization of economically depressed areas, conservation of existing residential neighborhoods, equitable distribution of public resources, conservation of natural resources, provision of adequate infrastructure and public services, reduction of traffic congestion and improvement of air quality, enhancement of recreation and open space opportunities, assurance of environmental justice and a healthful living environment, and achievement of the vision for a more liveable city.”

Objective 3.1: “Accommodate a diversity of uses that support the needs of the City's existing and future residents, businesses, and visitors.”

Policy 3.1.1: “Identify areas on the Long Range Land Use Diagram and in the community plans sufficient for the development of a diversity of uses that serve the needs of existing and future residents (housing,

employment, retail, entertainment, cultural/institutional, educational, health, services, recreation, and similar uses), provide job opportunities, and support visitors and tourism.”

GOAL 3B: Preservation of the City's stable single-family residential neighborhoods.

Objective 3.5: “Ensure that the character and scale of stable single-family residential neighborhoods is maintained, allowing for infill development provided that is compatible with and maintains the scale and character of existing development.”

Policy 3.5.2: “Require that new development in single-family neighborhoods maintains its predominant and distinguishing characteristics such as property setbacks and building scale.”

GOAL 9N: “Work constructively with LAUSD to promote the siting and construction of adequate school facilities phased with growth.”

Objective 9.32: “Work constructively with LAUSD to promote the siting and construction of adequate school facilities phased with growth.”

Policy 9.32.1: “Work with the Los Angeles Unified School District to ensure that school facilities and programs are expanded commensurate with the City’s population growth and development.”

Policy 9.32.2: “Explore creative alternatives for providing new school sites in the City, where appropriate.”

The project will enable GALS Los Angeles to continue to provide and expand a valuable public service for the region. The existing public charter middle school currently shares a campus with Panorama High School, approximately 1.2 miles northwest of the project site, operating on a year-to-year lease agreement. The proposed project will enable GALS Los Angeles to vacate its current location at Panorama City High School and establish an independent and permanent campus. The new campus will provide additional amenities, all of which will enhance the quality of education that is available to the community. The project site is located in a well-established residential neighborhood in a central location in the San Fernando Valley with few other suitable infill sites.

The proposed project is consistent with the applicable provisions of the LAMC and the General Plan. The proposed school use is permissible in the R1 Zone subject to discretionary approval of a Conditional Use Permit; such approval will not change the land use designation or zoning of the project site and nor restrict or prohibit any other future uses of the site. The proposed project is a compatible and desirable use in the subject location and is consistent with the goals of the General Plan. In addition, the operation has been carefully conditioned to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations and to ensure that there will be no negative impacts on the surrounding community. Therefore, the project substantially conforms with the purpose, intent, and provisions of the General Plan.

Zoning Administrator's Determination Findings

- 4. 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 project site is a level, rectangular-shaped through-lot comprised of three (3) parcels, totaling approximately 53,265 square feet (approximately 1.22 acres) in size. The subject property is located in the Van Nuys area, an established suburban neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley developed mostly in the early- to mid-20th century. The project site is located midblock between Tyrone Avenue to the west, and Hazeltine Avenue to the east. The neighborhood primarily consists of Low to Medium Residential uses. Properties within the immediate vicinity of the project site are zoned R1-1 and are developed with one-story, single-family dwellings.

The proposed project involves a request for a Zoning Administrator's Determination to authorize a maximum 8-foot-high fencing with integrated vehicle and pedestrian gates in the front yard in conjunction with the operation of a new public charter middle school campus for GALS Los Angeles. The proposed fences and gates along the property's northerly and southerly street frontages on Runnymede Street and Valerio Street, will be constructed primarily of a decorative wrought-iron material, with a block wall base. The project proposes 8-foot block walls along the westerly and easterly perimeters of the site. The fences and walls surrounding the property will have a combination of vine cover and or green screens to further enhance the appearance of the school as well as maintain privacy for adjacent properties.

The request for increased fence height along the project's street frontages is intended to provide adequate security for the school, as well as to provide added privacy to neighboring residents. Although the project is requesting 8-foot high fencing in lieu of the maximum 3 feet 6 inches otherwise permitted in the front yard, the proposed fences and gates will be primarily of a decorative wrought-iron material, which will provide transparency and security and will enhance the street frontages of the subject property, consistent with similar requests relating to new schools in residential neighborhoods.

As such, the approval of the requested 8-foot fence height, in conjunction with the operation of a new public charter middle school, will allow the school to enjoy an added sense of security and safety while also providing nearby residences with additional privacy. Therefore, the proposed project will enhance the built environment in the surrounding neighborhood as well as perform a function that is beneficial to the community.

- 5. 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.**

The existing zoning regulations limit fence, wall, and similar structures height on residentially-zoned properties to provide visual consistency in neighborhoods and to limit bulk and mass in the front of properties. Such regulations, however, are written on a citywide basis and cannot take into account the unique characteristics that a specific use and surrounding area may have, especially when dealing with public schools in residential neighborhoods. In this instance, the subject property is located where single-family homes exist. As such, a Zoning Administrator's Determination to allow an increase in maximum fence height to 8 feet in the front yard, in lieu of the maximum height of 3 feet 6 inches otherwise required per code along the project's street frontages is requested.

The project will not have a significant impact on adjacent properties. Physically, the request to permit fencing in the front yard of eight (8) feet along the project's street frontages will not have a significant impact because the proposed wrought-iron material will be see-through, decorative, and in keeping with typical fences that would be expected to be found in a typical residential neighborhood. Operationally, the proposed fence will enable the proposed school campus to be entirely self-contained and secured, thereby providing security while minimizing any potential impacts on the surrounding single-family homes. The proposed fence will provide safety and security for the school, add value to the community, and enhance the appearance of the site.

The requested deviation in fence height is a permissible request, and the project has been designed and conditioned to minimize any potential impacts associated with this feature. Therefore, 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.

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

The subject property is located within the Van Nuys – North Sherman Oaks Community Plan Area which is one of the 35 Community Plans that make up the Land Use Element of the General Plan. The Community Plan Area Map designates the subject property for Low Residential land uses corresponding to the RE9, RS, R1, RU, RD6, and RD5 zones. The subject property's R1 zoning is thus consistent with the General Plan's land use designation of the site. The property is not located within the boundaries of or subject to any Specific Plan, Community Design Overlay, or Interim Control Ordinance. The General Plan and Community Plan do not address fence regulations; however, the Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 12.24 X.7 permits the requested over-in-height walls, fences, and gates within the R1 Zone with approval by the Zoning Administrator. The use of the property as a public charter school will be compatible with surrounding residential properties and has been found to be in conformance with the purpose, intent, and provisions of the General Plan and Van Nuys - North Sherman Oaks Community Plan to protect surrounding residential uses.

The requested increase in fence height will provide security for the new campus and thus facilitates the provision of a new school site, in keeping with the goals of the General Plan. As the entire region has experienced increased population growth, and the requested deviation in fence height facilitates the provision of a new and enhanced educational facility to better serve the growing community. The project site is located in a well-established residential neighborhood in a central location in the San Fernando Valley with few other suitable infill sites.

The proposed project is consistent with the applicable provisions of the LAMC and the General Plan. The requested deviation in fence height will not change the land use designation or zoning of the project site nor restrict or prohibit any other future uses of the site. The proposed project is a compatible and desirable use in the subject location and the requested increase in fence height facilitates the provision of a safe and secure school in this location; thus, the project is consistent with the overall goals of the General Plan. In addition, the operation has been carefully conditioned to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations and to ensure that there will be no negative impacts on the surrounding community. Therefore, the project substantially conforms with the purpose, intent, and provisions of the General Plan, and applicable community plan.

7. Consideration has been given to the environmental effects and appropriateness of materials, design and location of any proposed fence or wall, including any detrimental

effects on the view which may be enjoyed by the occupants of adjoining properties, and security to the subject property which the fence or wall would provide.

Consideration has been given to the environmental effects and appropriateness of materials, design and location of the proposed walls and fencing, including any detrimental effects on the view which may be enjoyed by the occupants of adjoining properties, and security to the subject property which the fence will provide. The project proposes 8-foot-high block walls along the site's westerly and easterly perimeters allowed by-right, and 8-foot wrought-iron fences with integrated vehicle and pedestrian gates along the project's street frontages on Runnymede Street to the north, and Valerio Street to the south, subject to discretionary approval. Whereas the otherwise permitted fence height of 42 inches in the front yard setbacks along Runnymede Street and Valerio Street is easily scalable, the requested increase in fence height along the property's street frontages will provide additional safety and security which are essential for a school campus. The proposed wrought-iron fencing material will be decorative and will enhance the appearance of the subject property; as the proposed fence and pedestrian gate will be highly transparent, they will not have a significant impact on views to and from nearby properties. This material is further appropriate for an established residential neighborhood and will enhance the appearance of the streetscape and the community. The proposed fencing alone is not likely to have any significant environmental impacts. Therefore, the proposed 8-foot high wrought-iron fences along the property's street frontages will be of an appropriate material and design, will provide essential security, and will not have a significant detrimental impact on views or any other environmental factor.

Environmental Findings

- 8. Environmental Finding.** The project has been determined to be categorically exempt from CEQA, pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15332 (Class 32), and there is no substantial evidence demonstrating that an exception to a categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, Section 15300.2 applies. The Categorical Exemption Study dated February 1, 2021 and attached to the subject environmental case file (ENV-2020-4419-CE) provides the full analysis and justification.
- 9. Flood Insurance.** The National Flood Insurance Program rate maps, which are a part of the Flood Hazard Management Specific Plan adopted by the City Council by Ordinance No. 172,081, have been reviewed and it has been determined that this project is located in Zone C, areas of minimal flooding.