



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA

Community Development
Planning

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May 23, 2024

Rodney Khan
Khan Consulting Inc.
2033 Oak Valley Drive
Glendale, CA 91208

&

Ms. T. Kargodorian
Principal – Chamlian School
4444 Lowell Avenue
Glendale, CA 91214

Owner: Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America

**RE: 4444 LOWELL AVENUE
USE VARIANCE CASE NO. PVAR 1880-2023**

Dear Mr. Khan:

The Planning Commission of the City of Glendale, at its meeting held on May 15, 2024, conducted a public hearing for Use Variance Case No. PVAR 1880-2023, whereby the applicant is requesting approval of a Use Variance to allow the continued operation of a private school (Chamlian Armenian School), in the "R1" - (Low-Density Residential) Zone, described as Lot 1, Tract 17100; Assessor Parcel No. 5604-011-023, located at **4444 Lowell Avenue**, in the City of Glendale, County of Los Angeles.

No changes to the operation or enrollment of the school are proposed.

On April 16, 2014, the Planning Commission approved a Use Variance for the operation of Chamlian School. This approval expired on April 16, 2024, thus requiring the present use variance application.

Environmental Determination

The Planning Commission adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the previous use variance on April 16, 2014. The current use variance proposes no expansion or change to the enrollment or operation of the school. Because there are no substantial changes to the project or project circumstances, and there is no new information that could not have been known at the time the

MND was adopted that would require major revisions to the previously approved MND because of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects, no additional environmental review is required for the proposed use variance. (Pub. Res. Code § 21166; CEQA Guidelines §15162(a).)

After due consideration, the Planning Commission, **APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS (26 Conditions)** Use Variance Case No. PVAR 1880-2023.

A motion adopted by the Planning Commission are attached.

Under the provisions of Chapter 2.88 of the Glendale Municipal Code, any person affected by the decision of the Planning Commission has the right to appeal said determination to the City Council if it is believed that the decision is in error or that procedural errors have occurred, or if there is substantial new evidence which could not have been reasonably presented at the hearing. Any appeal must be filed within fifteen days, following the actual date of such action, as outlined by the Chairman of the Planning Commission at the public hearing. Information regarding appeals and the appeal forms will be provided upon request and must be filed in the Building and Safety Division, 633 East Broadway, Room 101, together with the required filing fee for such appeal, no later than 3:00 p.m. on **MAY 30, 2024.**

All appeals must be filed using the City's online permit portal: www.glendaleca.gov/Permits. Click "Appeals," "Planning/Zoning." Any appeal must be filed within fifteen (15) days following the actual date of the decision with the prescribed fee prior to the expiration of the 15-day appeal period, on or before MAY 30, 2024. Information regarding appeals and appeals and fees may be obtained by calling the Community Development Department staff at 818.937.2140 or contacting the case planner, Roger Kiesel at rkiesel@glendaleca.gov or 818.937.8152.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (818.937.8152).

Sincerely,
B. Calvert
Director of Community Development Department



Roger Kiesel
Senior Planner
RK:sm

CC: City Clerk (K. Cruz); Police Dept. (A. Krikorian/Z. Avila); Police Dept (Lt. T.Topadzhikyan) City Attorney's Dept. (G. Van Muyden/Y. Neukian); Fire Prevention Engineering Section-(J. Diaz/S. Partamian/D. Stimson); Traffic & Transportation Section (P. Casanova/S. Roudsari); Dir. of Public Works; General Manager for Glendale Water and Power (M. Young); Glendale Water & Power--Water Section (S. Boghosian/E. Hakoupiani/ /K. Runzer); Glendale

4444 LOWELL AVENUE
USE VARIANCE CASE NO. PVAR 1880-2023

Water & Power--Electric Section (C. Babakhanlou/S. Boghosian/E. Hakoupiani); Parks, Recreation and Community Services Dept. (T. Aleksanian/A. Limayo); Neighborhood Services Division (J. Sada); Integrated Waste Management Admin. (D. Hardgrove); Maintenance Services/Street and Field/Urban Forester (L Klick/, C. Linares/ O. Urquidez); Engineering and Land Development (A. Avazian/S. Oganesyian/R. Villaluna); J. Baghdanian; and case planner Roger Kiesel.

MOTION

Moved by Planning Commissioner Chraghchian, and seconded by Planning Commissioner Fuentes, that upon review and consideration of all materials and exhibits of current record relative to Use Variance Case No. PVAR 001880-2023, located at 4444 Lowell Avenue, and after having conducted a hearing on said matter, that the Planning Commission hereby **APPROVES WITH CONDITIONS**, said Use Variance Case No. PVAR 001880-2023 in accord with the findings set forth below:

A. That the strict application of the provisions of any such ordinance would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.

Strictly applying the permitted uses to the subject site, which is zoned R1 will result in practical difficulties and unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the intent of the ordinance because the site has been a school use for over 60 years and there are no proposed changes to the operation or the school campus or increases in enrollment of Vahan and Anoush Chamlian Armenian School ("Chamlian School"). The general purpose of the R1 zone and the ordinances which regulate the development and uses in this zone is to provide a high-quality residential environment for a "traditional low density residential zone". The zone includes development standards that "allow new low-density development in order to promote the public health, safety and general welfare." The subject site has existed as a school use since 1960. Initially, the site was developed as a public school, Lowell Elementary School. Since 1983, Chamlian School, a private school, has operated on the site after the public school closed and the site was sold. While continuation of the existing private school, as contemplated in the requested use variance, is not a typical use in the R1 zone, the school's maximum enrollment of 700 students will be consistent with the intended use of the site when it was first developed. The enrollment will be similar to most public elementary schools, which are commonly located in residential zones. Also, the school proposes no increases in the maximum enrollment allowed nor changes to the operation of the school as a result of the use variance application. Conditions of approval, including limitations on enrollment and grades taught at the school, traffic management, phasing student start and end times and designating a school employee/school e-mail for area residents to contact with concerns, will ensure that the quality of the surrounding neighborhood will be maintained.

B. That there are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood.

There are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other properties in the same zone or neighborhood because an elementary school has existed on the site for 60 years and the site exhibits unique characteristics. The subject site has contained an elementary school for approximately 60 years. Chamlian School has operated on the site for approximately 40 years. The subject site is zoned R1. It is unique to have a private school located in this zone. The size of the subject site is 4.5 acres, which is rare for the R1 zone. The topography of the surrounding area is such that land terraces down from the commercial neighborhood along Foothill Boulevard to the school site. The area further terraces to the single-family neighborhood immediately south, which is at a lower elevation compared with the school. The area's topography and the large site size allow the existing school to operate with fewer impacts in close proximity to residential uses.

C. That the granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located.

The granting of the variance would not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located because a school has operated on the site for over 60 years, no changes are proposed in the operation of Chamlian School, nor in enrollment requested, and no new buildings are proposed and conditions of approval of the project will address adverse impacts. The requested use variance is simply to "renew" the existing use variance, which recently expired (but the application for renewal was timely). The operation of the school will remain the same as present. Enrollment at the school is presently capped at 700 students. The present use variance request does not seek to change this. No new buildings are proposed on the site. A school has been located on the site since 1960, first as the public Lowell Elementary School and, since 1983, as the private Chamlian School. Schools have certain impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, unique to their use. Given the length of time the subject site has been utilized as a school, these impacts, to varying degrees, have been around for a long time. Chamlian School does an admirable job mitigating these impacts. Conditions of approval assist in reducing, regulating, and smoothing the flow of traffic created by dropping off/picking up students from the school campus. These conditions of approval include: limiting grades taught at the school from transitional kindergarten to eighth grade, undertaking morning and afternoon traffic management, offering incentive-based carpooling/ridesharing programs (which are proposed to be enhanced), phasing student start and end times and providing student shuttle services. Additionally, a school

employee/school e-mail shall be designated for the surrounding community should concerns arise related to the operation of Chamlian School.

D. That the granting of the variance will not be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance.

The granting of the variance would not be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance because objectives of this zone include protecting single-family residences from deleterious impacts and promoting the health, safety and welfare of residential neighborhoods and the conditions of approval will address this. To protect single-family residences in the R1 zone from adverse impacts, uses allowed in this zone are very limited. The request to renew the existing use variance seeks no changes to the enrollment or operation of the school and no new buildings will be constructed. The school will run the same as it has the past 10 years, since approval of the previous use variance (PVAR 1403259). Conditions of approval including, limitations on enrollment and grades taught at the school, undertaking morning and afternoon traffic management, implementing car-pooling/ridesharing/shuttle programs, phasing student start and end times, and providing a school point person/e-mail for neighborhood concerns will ensure smooth school operations and meeting the objectives of the R1 zone.

APPROVAL of the Use Permit shall be subject to the following conditions:

1. That the development shall be in substantial accord with the plans submitted with the application and presented at the hearing **except** for any modifications as may be required to meet specific Code standards or other conditions stipulated herein.
2. That Chamlian School enrollment is limited to a maximum of seven hundred (700) students.
3. That grades taught shall be limited to transitional kindergarten through eighth grade only.
4. That in order to document and monitor compliance with student enrollment maximums and grade level limitations, the Chamlian School and/or its Board of Directors shall furnish the Director of Community Development with attendance records and attendance affidavit(s) by grade once a year for each school year. Such attendance records/affidavit(s) shall contain a signed declaration under penalty of perjury that the information is true and correct to the best of the declarant's knowledge.
5. That Chamlian School shall continue to undertake afternoon pick-up traffic management through the walkie-talkie/bullhorn system instituted in the 1991-92 school year, including sending parents out of the circular driveway to try again if the child has not arrived when the parent is ready. In addition, for the first four (4) to six (6) weeks of each semester, parents shall place an index card on their dashboard, visible through the front window, with the

student name (or names) clearly visible in large block letters, to assist school staff in matching students with parents during the afternoons.

7. That the Board of Directors/School Principal of Chamlian School shall institute an incentive-based car-pooling/ride-sharing program, offering an incentive of at least \$75.00 a month per family for a two-household carpool and at least \$100.00 a month per family for a three-household carpool.
8. That there shall be a minimum of 30 minutes between the first student start times and the last student start times and the first student end times and the last student end times in the school day phasing schedule. There shall be phased recess times and lunch times such that no more than 50% of the maximum enrollment is permitted outside at any one time.
9. That the Board of Directors/School Principal of Chamlian School shall designate a school employee as the "point person" (and provide contact information for such person) and/or shall designate a dedicated school e-mail address for neighborhood residents to contact when concerns arise. The school shall send letters to property owners and occupants within 500 feet of the school by the beginning of the 2024 – 2025 school year announcing this point person/e-mail and its purpose. Additional letters shall be sent when the school point person/e-mail changes.
10. That the two slope/irrigation access openings in the south side playground perimeter block wall shall be equipped with locked gates of opaque and durable material, satisfactory to the Director of Community Development.
11. That the premises be maintained in a clean and orderly condition, free of weeds, trash, and graffiti.
11. That landscaping areas shall be maintained in good condition with live plants and a functioning irrigation system. Drainage devices shall be kept clean and all weeds and trash rapidly eliminated.
12. That any proposed exterior lighting shall be directed away from adjacent properties and the public right-of-way to the satisfaction of the Director of Community Development.
13. That the four (4) parking spaces in front on the northwest corner of the site and the proposed fifty-three (53) parking spaces in the eastern portion of the site shall be for staff use only during school hours. The four (4) parking spaces with access directly from the drop off/pick up driveway shall be used for visitors. The School Principal shall continuously encourage all staff to use the on-site parking at all times.
14. That the facilities shall not be rented, leased or otherwise occupied by any use other than a private school for grades transitional kindergarten through eighth only.

15. That there shall be no expansion of facilities or enrollment without reconsideration of this variance and its conditions by reapplication.
16. That all licenses and permits as required or approvals from Federal, State, County or City authorities including the City Clerk shall be obtained and kept current at all times.
17. That, with the exception of an on-site caretaker household, no sleeping accommodations shall be permitted for children or adults.
18. That all accessory activities on the premises shall be clearly incidental to the school's primary educational function and shall be limited to back-to-school night for parents, open house events, graduation programs, two to three special holiday programs annually, sporting events and two to three annual fund-raising events. The abovementioned activities shall not be permitted to continue beyond 10:00 p.m. in any instance.
19. That access from Second Avenue shall be limited to maintenance vehicles and pedestrians only.
21. That Chamlian School shall provide parking attendants to safely direct cars to the surface parking lot and asphalt play area when events, such as graduations, parent meetings, opening ceremonies, sports tournaments, school festivals and similar gatherings are scheduled for exclusive use by Chamlian School. Refer to conditions No. 18 above.
22. That Chamlian School shall comply with the mitigation measures contained in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, dated March 26, 2014 for the project.
24. That Chamlian School shall use its best efforts to implement other programs, including, but not limited to, "walk to school" events, aimed at decreasing traffic and/or parking impacts.
25. That Chamlian School shall annually publish (including online/on their website) and distribute to parents and students of the school, guidelines and rules regarding traffic, parking and safety issues.
26. That Chamlian School shall explore the effectiveness and feasibility of a mid-block crossing of Lowell Avenue adjacent to the school with the City's Public Works Department. Should this mid-block crossing be found potentially effective and feasible, the school shall implement this crossing.

Adopted this 15th day of May 2024.

VOTE AS FOLLOWS

Ayes: Chraghchian, Fuentes, Minassian, Shahbazian
Noes: None
Absent: Lee
Abstain: None