



Planning Commission Staff Report Hearing on February 1, 2024

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009 • (805) 654-2478 • www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning

EMMANUEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (CUP), CASE NO. PL23-0054

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

1. **Request:** The applicant requests approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the continued operation of an assembly use (church complex) (Case No. PL23-0054).
2. **Applicant:** Robert Steenberge for Emmanuel Presbyterian Church, 588 Camino Manzanas, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
3. **Property Owner:** Synod of Southern California and Hawaii, 8939 S Sepulveda Blvd. Ste 110 #250 Westchester, CA 90046
4. **Decision-Making Authority:** Pursuant to the Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (NCZO) (Section 8105-4 and Section 8111-1.2 et seq.), the Planning Commission is the decision-maker for the requested CUP.
5. **Project Site Size, Location, and Parcel Number:** The 3.95-acre project site is located at 588 Camino Manzanas, southwest of the intersection of Lynn Road and Camino Manzanas, in the Community of Thousand Oaks, in the unincorporated area of Ventura County. The project site is located within the boundaries of an Existing Community. The Tax Assessor's parcel number for the parcel that constitutes the project site is 663-0-300-050 (Exhibit 2).
6. **Project Site Land Use and Zoning Designations (Exhibit 2):**
 - a. Countywide General Plan Land Use Map Designation: Very Low Density Residential
 - b. Thousand Oaks Area Plan Land Use Map Designation: Urban Residential 2-4 Dwelling Units per Acre
 - c. Zoning Designation: RE-13,000 sq. ft. Rural Exclusive, 13,000 square foot minimum lot size.

7. Adjacent Zoning and Land Uses/Development (Table 1):

Location in Relation to the Project Site	Zoning	Land Uses/Development
North	RE-13,000 sq. ft.	Single Family Residential Development
East	City of Thousand Oaks	Single Family Residential Development
South	RE-13,000 sq. ft.	Madrona Elementary School
West	RE-13,000 sq. ft.	Madrona Elementary School

8. History:

The subject parcel is Lot 4 of Tract 1486-1, Miscellaneous Records (M.R.) Book 37, Page 65.

On March 1, 1965, the County Board of Zoning Adjustment approved the Emmanuel Presbyterian Church of Conejo Valley Conditional Use Permit (CUP) No. 2249 authorizing the church facility, as well as an associated variance to allow parking in the required side and rear yard setback. The site at that time was developed with a 6,800 square foot (sq. ft.) church.

On September 1966, the Planning Director approved a permit adjustment to CUP No. 2249 to add light poles (maximum 20 feet high) and lighting fixtures to be installed along the perimeter of the site.

On January 20, 1971, the County Board of Zoning Adjustment approved a modification to CUP No. 2249. The modification included an 8,700 sq. ft. addition to the church which increased seating from 348 to 568 and added new classrooms and administration offices.

On March 13, 2000, the Planning Director approved CUP-2249 Minor Modification No. 1 for the following: (1) a 20-year time extension with a CUP expiration date of March 13, 2020, and (2) an 8,294 sq. ft. addition that included a 3,900 sq. ft. multipurpose room, 90 sq. ft. maintenance/storage room, a 1,200 sq. ft. nursery room, a 450 sq. ft. sanctuary addition, and one 1,260 sq. ft. classroom.¹

On July 29, 2014, the Planning Director approved a Zoning Clearance, Case No. ZC14-0790 for turf removal and installation of low water using landscaping.

On March 13, 2020, CUP No. 2249 expired. On February 10, 2020, a courtesy letter was mailed to the Applicant advising him the permit was set to expire. The Applicant failed to request an extension prior to the CUP expiring on March 13, 2020.

¹ Time extensions were granted to obtain a zoning clearance to construct the approved additions; however, the Permittee did not apply for a zoning clearance and the additions were not constructed.

- 9. Project Description:** This is a request for a CUP to operate Emmanuel Presbyterian Church for a 30-year term. The site is currently developed with a church sanctuary, classrooms, offices, a kitchen, and storage (21,972 sq. ft.). Additionally, two existing accessory structures, a tool shed (150 sq. ft.) and a storage unit (134 sq. ft.), would be authorized by this CUP (for a total project size of 22,256 sq. ft.). The site contains 187 parking spaces. The church has two full-time and four part-time employees. Weekday hours are 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM, and Sundays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

Worship services and children’s Sunday school are conducted on Sundays between 10:00 AM and 11:00 AM with approximately 150 guests. Youth group is on Wednesdays from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM. The church hosts Bible Study to discuss faith and other religious ideologies on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and support groups and other programs such as “Life Group” on Tuesdays and Sundays. The total number of participants for these ancillary activities ranges from 10 to 35 participants. Weddings and memorial services typically occur a maximum of two times per year between the hours of 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Monday through Sunday. The church holds outdoor events for church members and the community. Outdoor events typically have between 10 to 35 participants. Outdoor events held at the church may involve the use of sound amplifying equipment for lectures or music. Amplified equipment will be shut off by 1:00 PM.

Access to the project site is from Camino Manzanitas. Water service is provided by California American Water and sewer service is provided by the City of Thousand Oaks. (Exhibit 3).

B. CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Division 6, Chapter 3, Section 15000 et seq.), the proposed project is subject to environmental review.

The State Legislature through the Secretary for Resources has found that certain classes of projects are exempt from CEQA environmental impact review because they do not have a significant effect on the environment. These projects are declared to be categorically exempt from the requirement for the preparation of environmental impact documents. The proposed project is to reinstate the expired CUP, and approve two existing accessory structures (a tool shed and storage unit (284 sq ft.)) in an area that is currently paved. Therefore, the project is determined to not have a significant impact on the environment pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) and Section 15303 (Location of New, Small Facilities or Structures). Further, the project will not trigger any of the exceptions to the exemptions listed under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. Therefore, no further environmental review is required.

Therefore, this project is categorically exempt pursuant to sections 15301 and 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines.

C. CONSISTENCY WITH THE GENERAL PLAN / THOUSAND OAKS AREA PLAN

The proposed project has been analyzed and determined to be consistent with all applicable General Plan and Thousand Oaks Area Plan policies. A consistency analysis which evaluates the project’s consistency with the policies of the General Plan and Thousand Oaks Area Plan is included as Exhibit 5 of this Staff Report.

D. ZONING ORDINANCE COMPLIANCE

The proposed project is subject to the requirements of the Ventura County NCZO.

Pursuant to the Ventura County NCZO (Section 8105-4), the proposed use (an “assembly use”) is allowed in the Rural Exclusive (RE) zone with the granting of a CUP. Upon the granting of the CUP, the proposed project will comply with this requirement.

The proposed project includes the use of buildings that are subject to the development standards of the Ventura County NCZO (Section 8106-1.1) and parking that is subject to Ventura County NCZO sections 8108-4.7 and 8108-4.2. Table 2 lists the applicable development standards and a description of whether the proposed project complies with the development standards.

Table 2 – Development Standards Consistency Analysis

Type of Requirement	Zoning Ordinance Requirement	Complies?
Minimum Lot Area (Gross)	10,000 sq ft	Yes, the lot is approximately 172,062 sq ft
Maximum Percentage of Building Coverage	35%	Yes, the lot coverage is 13%, including the two proposed accessory structures.
Front Setback	20 feet	Yes, 127 feet 11 inches
Side Setback	5 feet	Yes, 84 feet 11 inches
Rear Setback	15 feet	Yes, 129 feet 3 inches
Maximum Building Height (Principal Structure)	25 feet	23 feet
Maximum Building Height (Accessory Structure)	15 feet	Yes, the tool shed is 7.2 feet and the storage container is 8.5 feet in height.
Parking	128 vehicle parking spaces, 13 short-term bicycle parking spaces, 6 motorcycle parking spaces.	Yes, the subject property contains 190 vehicle parking spaces, of which 10 are designated American Disability Act (ADA) parking, consistent with California Building Code Table 11B-208.2. The project will be conditioned to install 13

Table 2 – Development Standards Consistency Analysis

Type of Requirement	Zoning Ordinance Requirement	Complies?
		short-term bicycle parking spaces. The required 6 motorcycle parking spaces will be met by the existing 62 surplus parking spaces. (Exhibit 4, Condition No. 2, and Condition No. 18). No long-term bicycle parking is required pursuant to Sec 8108-1.2.1.

E. CUP FINDINGS AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The Planning Commission must make certain findings in order to grant a CUP pursuant to Section 8111-1.2.1.1a of the Ventura County NCZO. The ability to make the required findings is evaluated below.

- 1. The proposed development is consistent with the intent and provisions of the County's General Plan and of Division 8, Chapters 1 and 2, of the Ventura County Ordinance Code [Section 8111-1.2.1.1a.a].**

Based on the information and analysis presented in Sections C and D of this staff report, the finding that the proposed development is consistent with the intent and provisions of the County's General Plan and with Division 8, Chapters 1 and 2 of the Ventura County Ordinance Code can be made.

- 2. The proposed development is compatible with the character of surrounding, legally established development [Section 8111-1.2.1.1a.b].**

The project involves the continued operation of an existing church. The project site is a 3.95-acre parcel located in the Lynn Ranch neighborhood. The site is already developed with a church and incidental uses. The surrounding development is comprised primarily of residential development on lots that are less than a half an acre, on average. The Thousand Oaks city limits lie along the subject parcel's eastern boundary, beyond which is a residential development with parcels averaging less than a quarter acre in size. Madrona Elementary School is located immediately to the south and west of Emanuel Presbyterian Church.

The project site has been in use as a church since prior to 1965. In March 2020, an 8,294 sq. ft. addition was approved but never built. More recently, two unpermitted accessory structures used for storage were installed on the site. The applicant is requesting approval of these structures as part of the CUP request. The proposed unpermitted structures are located behind the church and would not be visible from Lynn Road as the site is elevated approximately 10 feet from this

roadway with vegetation partially screening the church. No change in use that could create land use conflicts is proposed. Therefore, the project would not conflict with the surrounding residential and institutional (school) uses.

The infrequent temporary outdoor church and community events have existed for some time and will continue. To date, there have not been any complaints regarding noise. To ensure surrounding residents are not impacted by potential noise impacts from these events, the project has been conditioned to require the resolution of noise complaints during events and to minimize noise related impacts (Exhibit 4, Condition 15). The project has also been conditioned to designate a person responsible for responding to complaints (Condition 14) and to comply with the County's landscaping and screening requirements (Condition No. 17).

Based on the discussion above, this finding can be made.

3. The proposed development would not be obnoxious or harmful, or impair the utility of neighboring property or uses [Section 8111-1.2.1.1a.c].

The project involves the continued operation of an existing church which is compatible with surrounding residential and institutional (school) uses on properties located in the vicinity. The proposed use has not received any recorded complaints or violations. The two proposed accessory structures to be used for storage in support of the church would be located in a paved area and are not visible from Lynn Road. According to the Public Works Agency, Roads and Transportation Division, the continued use of the church is not expected to increase traffic generation and will maintain an estimated amount of 10.68 average daily trips. Existing public services (i.e. water service provided by California American Water and sewer service provided by the City of Thousand Oaks) are adequate to serve the proposed development without affecting existing development on neighboring properties. Additionally, as discussed in Section D of this staff report, the proposed project will comply with the maximum building height, maximum building coverage, and minimum setback standards for the RE zone. The project has been conditioned to provide 13 short-term bicycle parking spaces (Exhibit 4, Condition No. 18), minimize noise-related impacts and resolve noise complaints during events (Condition 15), require the designation of a person responsible for responding to complaints (Condition 14), and require that an approved Landscape Plan (dated July 29, 2014) shall be maintained for the life of the project (Exhibit 4, Condition No. 17). Therefore, the proposed project will not be obnoxious, harmful, or impair the utility of neighboring properties or uses.

Based on the discussion above, this finding can be made.

4. The proposed development would not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare [Section 8111-1.2.1.1a.d].

The project involves the continued operation of an existing church. The project has been conditioned to require the resolution of noise complaints during events and minimize noise related impacts (Exhibit 4, Condition 15), designate a person responsible for responding to complaints (Condition 14) and comply with the County's landscaping and screening requirements (Condition No. 17). Furthermore, adequate public resources and infrastructure exist to serve the proposed project. California American Water supplies water and the City of Thousand Oaks provides sewer service to the project site. The Ventura County Fire Protection District (VCFPD) reviewed the proposed project and determined that adequate fire flow, access, and response times exist for fire protection services. Finally, the project has been conditioned by VCFPD to require the submittal of Form 610B "Requirements for Construction" for any new structures or additions to existing structures before issuance of building permits (Condition No. 20).

Based on the discussion above, this finding can be made.

5. The proposed development, if allowed by a Conditional Use Permit, is compatible with existing and potential land uses in the general area where the development is to be located [Section 8111-1.2.1.1a.e].

Pursuant to the Ventura County NCZO Section 8105-4, the continued use of Emmanuel Presbyterian Church is permitted with a CUP. The project site has been developed with a church and incidental uses since 1965. The proposed use is not expected to generate additional traffic, noise, or an increase in water or sanitation services than what has been previously approved.

The applicant has requested a 30-year term for the life of the permit. In this case the term can be supported because the existing use of a church is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and has not received any complaints date. Additionally, the church is not proposing any large additions that would result in major construction.

Based on the discussion above, this finding can be made.

6. The proposed development will occur on a legal lot [Section 8111-1.2.1.1a.f].

The subject lot is comprised of one existing legal lot of record, specifically Lot 4 of Tract 1486-1, Miscellaneous Records (M.R.) Book 37, Page 65.

Based on the discussion above, this finding can be made.

7. The proposed development is approved in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and all other applicable laws [Section 8111-1.2.1.1a.g].

As discussed in Section B, above, the proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA based upon CEQA Guidelines sections 15301 (Existing Facilities) and 15303 (New Construction and Conversion of Small Structures). None of the exceptions to the categorical exceptions apply. Based on the discussion above, this finding can be made.

F. PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING NOTICE, PUBLIC COMMENTS, AND JURISDICTIONAL COMMENTS

The Planning Division provided public notice regarding the Planning Commission hearing in accordance with the Government Code (Section 65091), Ventura County NCZO (Section 8111-3.1). On January 19, 2024, the Planning Division mailed notice to owners of property within 300 feet of the property on which the project site is located. On January 19, 2024, the Planning Division placed a legal ad in the *Ventura County Star*.

The project site is located within the City of Thousand Oaks's Sphere of Influence and Area of Interest. On December 19, 2023, the Planning Division notified the City of Thousand Oaks of the proposed project and requested the City of Thousand Oaks to submit any comments that the City might have on the proposed project. As of the date of this staff report, no comments have been received by the City of Thousand Oaks.

G. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Based upon the analysis and information provided above, Planning Division Staff recommends that the Planning Commission take the following actions:

1. **CERTIFY** that the Planning Commission has reviewed and considered this staff report and all exhibits thereto, and has considered all comments received during the public comment process;
2. **FIND** that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to sections 15301 and 15303 of the State CEQA Guidelines and that none of the exceptions, as set forth in section 15300.2 of the State CEQA Guidelines, apply;
3. **MAKE** the required findings to grant a CUP pursuant to Section 8111-1.2.1.1a of the Ventura County NCZO, based on the substantial evidence presented in Section E of this staff report and the entire record;
4. **GRANT** CUP Case No. PL23-0054, subject to the conditions of approval set forth in Exhibit 4; and
5. **SPECIFY** that the Clerk of the Planning is the custodian, and 800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009 is the location, of the documents and materials that constitute the record of proceedings upon which this decision is based.

The decision of the Planning Commission is final unless appealed to the Board of Supervisors within 10 calendar days after the permit has been approved, conditionally approved, or denied (or on the following workday if the 10th day falls on a weekend or holiday). Any aggrieved person may file an appeal of the decision with the Planning Division. The Planning Division shall then set a hearing date before the Board of Supervisors to review the matter at the earliest convenient date.

County Counsel has reviewed this Staff Report.

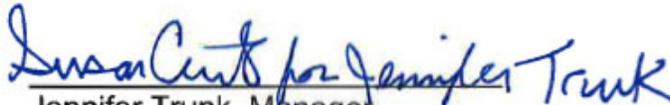
If you have any questions concerning the information presented above, please contact Aubrie Richardson at (805) 654-5097 or Aubrie.Richardson@ventura.org.

Prepared by:


Aubrie Richardson, Case Planner
Ventura County Planning Division

Reviewed by:


Dave Ward, Director
Ventura County Planning Division


Jennifer Trunk, Manager
Residential Permit Section
Ventura County Planning Division

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1 Draft Planning Commission Resolution
- Exhibit 2 Maps
- Exhibit 3 Plans
- Exhibit 4 Draft Conditions of Approval
- Exhibit 5 General Plan Consistency Analysis