

# ST. MARY'S AND NEIGHBOR MEDIATION NOTES

Prepared by Delia Horwitz, Facilitator

October 14, 2006 meeting

## BACKGROUND

On September 28, 2006, I was contacted by St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Laguna Beach and asked to facilitate a meeting with the Church and the neighbors in order to develop consensus on issues related to the proposed Trinity Center.

In order to understand the issues, I met or spoke with the St. Mary's Rector, their project manager, the architect, several of the neighbors and general community, city staff and city council members.

I reviewed all the notes and diagrams I was given from previous Planning Commission and City Council meetings, and watched a video of the City Council meeting where the appeal was discussed and the Council recommended a facilitated meeting occur between the Church and the neighbors. The total costs of the facilitation, including all pre-work and preparation of this report (approx. \$3,000) were shared 50/50 between the Church and the city.

As a result of my research, I discovered that the neighbors seemed to be upset about both the process of communication that had occurred historically as well as the facts of the proposed Center. A workshop format was customized to address those two problems. The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

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### WORKSHOP PURPOSE

A four hour workshop was held on Saturday, October 14, 2006, at the current St. Mary's Guild Hall. Invitations to owners of properties within 300 ft. of the Church were mailed on October 5<sup>th</sup>, and a second copy personally delivered to immediate neighbors around October 10<sup>th</sup>. Members of Village Laguna were invited by phone, but did not attend. A list of attendees is attached as Appendix A.

The purpose of the workshop was to find workable solutions to the neighbors' concerns, and to build better ongoing relationships and communication among the parties. I observed a high degree of good will and that consensus on most issues was achieved, with a commitment to work through the remaining issues. Neighbors particularly liked the new Spanish Mediterranean design, the reduced size, the commitment to retain some historic elements, and to use natural landscaping. There was a commitment to cooperate to minimize traffic and parking issues. Details appear below.

### WORKSHOP AGENDA

The workshop agenda was:

- Welcome by the Rector
- Explanation of workshop format by the facilitator
- A tour of the existing building and grounds
- Neighbors' agreement on the list of concerns (see the list below)
- A fact sheet summarizing St. Mary's Traffic Management Plan was distributed (Attached as Appendix B)
- Further traffic and parking solutions were discussed
- A fact sheet on the building was distributed (Attached as Appendix C).
- New changes to the project were presented, including
  - Style change from craftsman to Spanish/Mediterranean
  - Reduction in size from 7800 sf to 6950 sq feet
  - Lowering the roof so there is an approximately 20 foot view corridor for Ron Kaufman
  - Historic elements of arch, east wall and meditation garden will remain
  - Movement of air conditioners from east side to west side
  - Landscaping will be primarily native vegetation and creation of a James Dilley Memorial Garden pursued
- Consensus points were identified and solutions brainstormed

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### WORKSHOP RESULT

As facilitator, it appeared to me that considerable good will occurred during this meeting. The explanation of the City's Parking & Traffic Committee approved Parking Management Plan so that residents understand the steps being taken was well received. The cooperative tone and the expressed commitment to work together to make a difficult parking and circulation issue better was commendable. The neighbors present, while sad that the existing building will be gone, liked the new design, that the size was reduced, and that the historic arch, east wall and meditation gardens would remain.

At the end of the workshop and after considerable collaborative dialog among all present, the following statement was created and signed by almost all the neighbors present. After the workshop I received a call from one neighbor who signed the statement to tell me she was also concerned about the number of classrooms, the capacity of each classroom, and whether they would be used all at the same time

*We are committed to improve communication. We have consensus on the new design and major items, including traffic, and are committed to work together on resolving the remaining few issues." Remaining exceptions are*

- 1. Air conditioning and people noise on west side needs to be solved..*
- 2. Eliminate, move or make smaller the chimney on the new design.*
- 3. Clarify views on east side - possibly will need story poles for that side.*

*Signed by: Ronald Kaufman, Mark Woodward, Brian & Doreen Mellen, Russ Cogdill, Michael L. & Barbara Hoag, Lynn Shardlow, Dorothy Natank, Barbara C. Ring, Sue Moore*

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### NEIGHBOR CONCERNS

After a tour of the premises was conducted, I presented a summary of the list of concerns that I heard in my research, which was clarified and added to by the neighbors present while the people from St. Mary's listened. The neighbors' final list of concerns included:

#### TRAFFIC

- Residents accessing their homes across the St. Mary's parking lots
- Availability of parking spaces
- There is currently no place for residents' guests to park
- Emergency access
- Alley gets blocked by vehicles unloading

#### AESTHETICS

- Size
- Height
- Style
- Historic elements
  - Preserve the look
  - Arch
  - Fountain
- Landscaping

#### USAGE

- Frequency
- Number of people
- Number of cars

#### VIEWS

#### NOISE & PRIVACY

- Deck
- Air conditioning

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### **TRAFFIC AND PARKING SOLUTIONS – Page 1 of 2**

The following is a brainstormed list which was thoroughly discussed by all present.

A fact sheet giving details of the St. Mary's Parking Management Plan accepted by the Planning Commission was handed out and explained (*See attached Appendix D*). Two representatives from St. Mary's parking committee helped clarify what the new procedures implemented are, the rationale behind them, and how they will work. They explained the procedures were implemented beginning September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Everyone present then began to discuss possible solutions. There was a cooperative tone during this conversation. A true desire to work together was apparent, as the parking and circulation problems in the alley due to the Third Street hill are shared by all.

Subsequent to the workshop, alley neighbor Brian Mellen was invited and agreed to join the Church's Parking Committee.

1. Make sure the valets on duty adhere to the plan, particularly
  - a. Give them a copy of the written instructions.
  - b. Only stage cars in lower lot, not stack or park them.
  - c. Do not block entrance to medical building.
  - d. Valet should not park their car in the lot.
2. Give residents a Church person's name and phone number to contact if there is a problem.
3. Put up no unloading signs where cars would block residents.
4. Work together to keep beachgoers, employees and shoppers out of Church parking spaces.
5. Clarify if neighbors are allowed to park in Church's lot. If so, indicate where, when and how many.
6. Church put up a sign, or colored flag on days when there will be a large event so neighbors know not to park in the Church's lots.
7. Explore making alley resident access through the Church lots permanent – perhaps a dedicated thoroughfare by the city.
8. Create resident and resident guest identification stickers or placards for residents/ Keep a list of which resident has which ID with their name and phone number, so they can be contacted if their car is blocking something or needs to be moved to accommodate a Church parking need.

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**TRAFFIC AND PARKING SOLUTIONS – Page 2 of 2**

9. Residents and resident guests put a note on dashboard with “if this car is blocking something, call me and I will move it”, with their phone number.
10. Communicate what the Church’s enforcement policy is.
11. Emergency access
  - a. Larry talk with the Fire Department and invite them to a meeting with the neighbors to clarify what is the best parking strategy so that emergency vehicles have access to the neighbors at the lower end of the alley.
  - b. Move the fire lane to the lower lot, or maybe have a fire lane in both lots..
  - c. Clarify where fire trucks and emergency vehicles need to get to, e.g. do they lay lines from the parking lot vs. trying to drive down the alley.
  - d. Reduce hump size in the alley while accommodating pedestrian walkway.
  - e. Request that the Fire Department send a letter to affected residents regarding the emergency vehicle access plan.
12. Petition the city to close Third St. uphill, block the exit to it from the alley, or fix it to be safe.
13. Create parking spots on Mermaid.

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### BUILDING SOLUTIONS

A fact sheet about the building and the new proposed changes was handed out (Attached as Appendix E). The Church's Architect, Glen Gillatly explained with boards and drawings the differences between what the Planning Commission had approved and the new changes.

In response to the expressed regrets and concerns about losing this original building, a Church member explained that for fifteen years they have been trying to fix the existing water seepage problems, had spent over \$100,000 trying to do so, and did not make the decision lightly. However, all the professional opinions they received explained that because of original design and construction defects in the 1930's and the water seepage, repairing the existing building was not feasible.

The following is the group's brainstormed list of ideas to address the list of concerns related to the building itself. Church leaders committed to develop and implement some of the suggested solutions and then meet again with the affected neighbors to inform them of additional changes.

1. Educate users on fire hazards, e.g. BBQ use.
2. Inform residents where construction staging will be.
3. Find solutions for Mellen west side noise and privacy concerns
  - a. Acoustic windows and doors on that side.
  - b. See through glass.
  - c. Create Rules of Operation and give them to groups who rent the hall, e.g. band must set up on East wall, and the West doors must be closed when music is playing.
  - d. Notify the Mellens and Russ Cogdill when there will be a large event.
4. Assure there is an acoustic barrier for the air conditioning noise on west side.
  - a. Purchase really quiet air conditioning condensers.
  - b. Put up a retaining wall for the berm.
  - c. Look for an engineered solution.
  - d. Have windows so no or less air conditioning is needed.
5. To open up views
  - a. Work with the landscaper to prune the trees better.
  - b. Ron Kaufman remove or significantly trim his large pine tree.
  - c. Make sure the size of new trees will be manageable.

One neighbor put forth the following ideas, which were not embraced by other neighbors:

- Redo this building -- make it waterproof, put French doors all around opening onto a deck, build a deluxe outdoor BBQ/kitchen area for food prep, and put storage out under the patio floor
- Build a two story building where the lower parking lot is, and maybe also in the upper lot for parking on the bottom and meeting spaces or offices on the top floor.

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### COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS

1. All agreed to keep the lines of communication open.
2. The Rector committed to another meeting to let residents know which ideas and changes are being adopted.
3. The Church needs a list of residents – Brian will do this.
4. Church send a summary of the results of this meeting and explain the new building style and reduced size to the list of people who were invited to the meeting.
5. Write an article on the changes and the consensus that happened for the local newspapers – perhaps a letter to the editor.
6. Residents should have a list of who to contact at the church when they have a problem.
7. Find a way to inform the tenants at Mermaid Terrace (Barbara and Dorothy who live there offered to help.)
8. Find a way to communicate to residents not at this meeting about the changes and the consensus discussions. Lynn will try to talk with John Beresford, and Maria also volunteered to help.

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**APPENDIX A**

**WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE ROSTER**

Neighbors

Ronald Kaufman, 432 Park  
Mark Woodward, owns 4 units @ 485 Mermaid  
Brian & Doreen Mellen, 395 Mermaid  
Russ Cog dill, 407 Mermaid  
Sue Moore, 367 Mermaids  
Lynn Shardlow, 485 Mermaid, #722  
Dorothy Natank, 485 Mermaid  
Barbara C. Ring,  
Michael L. & Barbara Hoag, 415 Laguna Terrace  
Jane Griffith, 377 Mermaid  
Matt & Glynnis, 545 Through St.  
Steve Fairbanks, Mermaid

Church Parishioners

Elizabeth Rechter, Rector  
Carter Mudge, Jr. Warden  
Larry Gorum, Chair of Traffic Committee  
Lane Langley, Traffic Committee  
John Fleming, Mediation Committee  
Jeanette Marilees, Mediation Committee  
Tad Heitman  
Sally Debelles  
Gaspar Patrico

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### APPENDIX B – Pg 1 of 2

#### HIGHLIGHTS OF ST. MARY'S PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. Because of the difficult ingress and egress created by the Third St. hill, for many years St. Mary's has allowed neighbors free access to their homes through the Church's parking lots, and this accommodation will continue. St. Mary's also has allowed several neighbors to park on the Church's property at no charge.
2. City ordinances do not require additional parking to be provided for a Church's ancillary buildings, however at the direction of the City Council, St. Mary's created a Parking Management Plan in June 2006 which was reviewed and unanimously approved by the City's Parking & Traffic Circulation Committee. In July 2006 the Planning Commission reviewed the PTC's recommendations and unanimously recommended the City approve the Conditional Use Permit with the included condition of the new Parking Management Plan.
3. Improvements since the implementation of this plan have shown 25% lower activity in the lower lot and fire lane blockage and the number of unauthorized cars parked.
4. The average number of cars accommodated on Sundays is 45.

#### COMPONENTS OF ST. MARY'S PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. A permanent **Parking Committee** led by Vestry members who are responsible for implementing and enforcing the Plan.
2. A **person is designated** to respond to any neighborhood parking concern.
3. A **Fire Lane** has been created in the upper lot.
4. **Easier exit onto Park Ave.** by backing into fire lane
5. **Valet parking.** St. Mary's has contracted to have valet parking for Sunday 10 am services and all large events (over 175 people).

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**APPENDIX B – Continued**

**COMPONENTS OF ST. MARY'S PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN – Page 2 of 2**

**6. TOTAL NUMBER OF ALLOCATED PARKING SPOTS FOR ST. MARY VISITORS IS 203.** Off site agreements for parking are as follows:

- a. 35 on site marked spaces in Church lots.
- b. Adjacent spaces in properties within three blocks include
  - i. 31 in Medical Building next door
  - ii. 15 at Assistant League
  - iii. 122 in High School parking lot, except when they are having activities - *Note: St Mary's will not schedule large events when High School activities are scheduled and their lot unavailable.*

**7. Signs**

- a. Numerous new signs to reserve on-site parking spaces.
- b. An attendant will cordon off spaces for afternoon church service and special events.
- c. Signs in the alley to
  - i. Notify of occasional pedestrian traffic
  - ii. Clearly indicate handicapped spaces
  - iii. Indicate location of fire lane
- d. Cars will be towed.
- e. If approved by the City, St. Mary's will also stencil the upper lot with "NO EXIT TO ALLEY" signs.

**8. Parking Stickers** will be used to identify parishioner owned and other vehicles authorized to park in St. Mary's on-site parking.

**9. Enforcement**

- a. Notices of violation on unauthorized cars
- b. Cars will be towed if necessary

**10. Measurement.** The plan will be reviewed no less than annually. The congregation and neighbors' input will be solicited.

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**APPENDIX C - ST MARY'S TRINITY CENTER FACT SHEET – Pg 1 of 2**

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Original Proposal</b>	<b>Planning Commission Approved</b>	<b>Today's Proposed Revision</b>
<b>USAGE</b> ^ Major events 175+ people ^ Sm. Meetings per week ^ 8 am Sunday service ^ 10 am Sunday service ^Weddings this past year ^Funerals this past year	Avg. 12 per yr  Avg. 8/week Avg. 15 people each  Avg. 25 people Avg. 110 people  3 5		52 except Christmas/Easter	30 except Christ Christmas & Easter
<b>SIZE</b> ^ Overall ^ Chimney ^ East side setback	4500 sq. ft.	Approx. 14,000 sq. ft	7,800 sq. ft.   2'	6,950 sq. ft.  Lower & smaller  7'
<b>HOURS</b>	7 am – 10 pm			7 am – 10 pm
<b>STYLE &amp; HISTORIC VALUE</b>			Craftsman/cottage	Historic Spanish Mediterranean.  Retain historic wall, archway ruins & meditation gardens
<b>AIR CONDITIONERS</b>			East side	West side & hidden behind lower level berm
<b>DECKS</b>			12' wraparound deck on 2 sides	Reduced into covered walkway
<b>VIEWS</b> ^ Covered entryway and east side  *^From Kaufman entryway			*88.5' hi	*Roof slopes down 85.5' to 81.5' to 8.3' Historic wall stays.  *Approx. 20' wide view corridor
<b>TOILETS</b>			2' ft from east property line	7' from east property line. No bathroom windows, roof vented
<b>LANDSCAPING</b>				So. Calif. Native vegetation & James Dilly Memorial Garden

\* Added after the workshop per Church architect. At workshop this cell read "Reduced 40-60% to create view corridor."

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### ST MARY'S TRINITY CENTER FACT SHEET NOTES– Pg 2 of 2

#### USAGE

- ***WEDDINGS ARE ALLOWED FOR MEMBERS ONLY (MINIMUM 6 MONTHS).***
- Events are never doubled booked. There will never be an event in the church AND an event in the ancillary hall.
- The Trinity Center is designed to handle existing and historic use, not increased use. However, there probably will be intensified use by smaller community groups.

#### STYLE & HISTORIC VALUE

- **WATER SEEPAGE:** Over the last ten years the Church has spent over \$100,000 attempting to fix water damaged walls and ceilings and trying to keep the water from getting into the building. The age of the building (1930's) combined with defects in its original design and construction have allowed water intrusion resulting in mold and mildew.

#### CHAPEL CAPACITY

- The original Guild Hall was built as an ancillary building for the original 40 seat St. Mary's Church. The existing St. Mary's chapel was built in 1957 and seats up to 257 people.

#### VIEWS & LANDSCAPING

- In addition to reducing the height, the Eucalyptus, Acacia and Pine trees will be removed or pruned to allow for views.