

September 22, 2015

Mayor Capoccia and members of the City Council, I'm Cam Thornton and I'd like to update you on the activities of the Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center's Development Task Force.

As you may be aware, Mater Dolorosa was purchased by the Passionists in 1924, and has hosted religious retreats for over 90 years, currently drawing 10,000 retreatants annually and another 4,000 on Good Friday who visit and walk our Stations of the Cross. We will continue this religious ministry in Sierra Madre for decades to come.

In 2007, we were directed by our leadership in Illinois to sell the 20 unused acres at the bottom of their 88-acre parcel in order to raise funds to support Passionist ministry work across America and cover health care and retirement costs of our many aging priests and brothers. The research we've conducted since convinces us that the best way to raise funds for the Passionists while protecting the retreat experience and being a good neighbor to those who live nearby is to sell the 20 acres to a homebuilder.

For the last several months, we have been explaining our vision to groups around town, our near-neighbors and Preserve Sierra Madre. It is just a vision at this point, but we know a lot about what the neighborhood will be like, and here's what we are committing to in our meetings:

- Lot sizes will be similar to those around us, so there would be somewhere between 40 and 50 homes.
- The design would protect the village character of Sierra Madre, with a mix of lot sizes, home sizes and styles.
- Natural open space would separate our neighborhood from adjacent homes to our south and west, and
- The neighborhood would be ungated, with a park and paths that connect to Bailey Canyon Park and its trails to the Angeles National Forest.

Many of the folks we've met with agree that a modest, organic extension of Sierra Madre could be a good thing. To date dozens of residents have signed a statement that says:

[QUOTE] I recognize the potential benefits to Sierra Madre of a new, well-planned residential neighborhood that is compatible with the existing look and feel of our town, and encourage the City Council to give the proposed development of 20 acres of the 88-acre Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center their fair and impartial consideration. [UNQUOTE]

We should be selecting a homebuilder partner soon, and the builder will then do his own outreach to help design a plan that works for Sierra Madre. I'm certain they will want to talk with you as part of this effort, and trust that you will be as open-minded as most of the people we've met with, and give them your fair and impartial consideration.

Also, we will soon be hosting a website associated with our project. Once the website is active, I will send you an e-mail with the link. If you would like more information on our vision, feel free to call me at (818) 281-2360.

Thank you.