



# MATER DOLOROSA

## PASSIONIST RETREAT CENTER

The Passionists of Holy Cross Province, 700 N. Sunnyside Avenue, Sierra Madre, CA 91024-1023  
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### **Informational Statement for Sierra Madre City Council Meeting on July 8, 2014**

Good evening Mr. Mayor and Councilmembers. My name is Cameron Thornton and I am the immediate Past Chairman of the Board of Directors of Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center. I have been an involved Lay Passionist at Mater Dolorosa for over four decades. Also with me tonight is Father Mike Higgins, Mater Dolorosa's Retreat Director.

The Passionists of Holy Cross Province, who own Mater Dolorosa, have made a decision to sell and develop the lower unused and vacant field of property they have owned since 1924, in order to raise funds to provide dignified retirement and care for our aging clergy who have dedicated their lives to serving others. Also, we must continue to support our ongoing ministries both locally, nationally and internationally in places like Alabama, Kentucky, Haiti and India.

We know that building on our property is no one's first choice—we understand that, and appreciate that, given that we have been a part of the community of Sierra Madre for 90 years, and we intend to be here for many, many decades more. We would like the community to understand that we have no choice.

We have exhausted all the alternatives to raise the needed funds—both locally and nationally.

Our ministry at Mater Dolorosa has never been stronger and it continues to grow. I want to be very clear that the retreat center—with our Stations of the Cross, the Garden of the Seven Sorrows, Amphitheater, Fiesta grounds, existing retreat center buildings, and the hillside above, will remain untouched and will continue to be used as they are today—only the lower unused and vacant field will be proposed for re-use.

We have engaged in a lengthy decision-making, planning and selection process to determine a use that we believe will be the least impactful neighbor to the retreat center and also our residential neighbors.

We are currently working with New Urban West, Inc. We chose New Urban West because we believe they can execute our decision in a sensitive and responsible manner. As our program manager, New Urban West's professionalism and willingness to listen will help them create a project that we believe, in the long run, will benefit the entire community of Sierra Madre.

New Urban West's intent is to build a small community of new homes, un-gated and open to the community that incorporates trails and will be compatible and complementary in design to the uniqueness that is Sierra Madre.

Finally, New Urban West is confident that the new homes can, through advanced design and conservation techniques, achieve no net new water use.

New Urban West and Mater Dolorosa are committed to engaging with the community and are just beginning our public outreach. Our goal is to hold two small group meetings weekly.

I invite all who wish to share their opinions and meet with us in small group settings of 5 to 6 citizens to contact me directly. These small group meetings will allow citizens who wish to be heard the opportunity to understand more of our thoughts, and to voice concerns and address desires. My cell phone number is 818-281-2360 or e-mail [info@materdolorosa.org](mailto:info@materdolorosa.org).

Mater Dolorosa is a concerned neighbor and we are committed to Sierra Madre. Thank you.