



CITY OF CLAREMONT

Community Development Department

City Hall
207 Harvard Avenue
P.O. Box 880
Claremont, CA 91711-0880
FAX (909) 399-5327
www.ci.claremont.ca.us

Building • (909) 399-5471
Planning • (909) 399-5470
Engineering • (909) 399-5465
Community Improvement • (909) 399-5467
Administration • (909) 399-5321

September 1, 2020

Eric Nelson
Trumark
450 Newport Center Drive, #300
Newport Beach, CA 92660

RE: **Comments On “La Puerta” Application**

Dear Mr. Nelson:

The following are staff's initial comments on your application for the La Puerta site. We offer some of these comments with the recognition that they address specifics of the project that may change based on the results of future outreach to the community and City decision-makers.

Comments on any aspect of the project, therefore, should not be construed as staff's acceptance or endorsement of the particular issue or feature. We will provide additional comments as revised project components are submitted.

Overall Density/Intensity of Use

As we have discussed, staff is receiving a substantial number of comments about the density of development (65 homes + 9 accessory dwelling units). As you know, when a residential development on this site was proposed several years ago at a lower density (ultimately reduced to 40 homes), the developer decided to withdraw his application in the face of community opposition.

Staff does not have a suggested density, but some of the comments in this letter would directly or indirectly reduce the number of units proposed.

We look forward to discussing this issue with you more as processing of the application proceeds.

La Puerta Sports Park

As a preface to the following comments, staff offers the following recommendations:

- La Puerta Sports Park should be left in its existing size and configuration, which are the result of significant planning, discussion, and adjustments to best meet the needs of the sports leagues.
- Grading should avoid the park to leave in place the existing turf and topsoil, which are the result of several years' effort and expense and highly prized by our sports leagues.

Several issues related to park need to be resolved:

- As we discussed recently, the City has a long-term lease with the Claremont Unified School District (CUSD) for a specific acreage for the existing La Puerta Sports Park. Your proposed project would reduce the size of the park, which would require that both the City and the CUSD agree to a change in the terms of the lease. To our knowledge, this discussion has not yet begun at the City. We will be discussing internally the most appropriate time to bring this item to the City Council, which would need to agree to the change in the lease. Approval of such a change would need to happen prior to or concurrent with the City Council's consideration of the project.
- Based on our initial review, the sports fields shown in your design are too small and need to be redesigned to accommodate league play for U-19 soccer and softball leagues. When you submit a revised design, please include dimensions on the plans.
- Staff also notes that one of the most desirable features of La Puerta Sports Park is the turf and topsoil, which required several years of work and a substantial investment on the part of the City to obtain. The specific soil conditions at La Puerta make this park more enjoyable and desirable when compared to other parks in Claremont, and La Puerta is always in high demand for league play. With this in mind, City staff recommends that your grading plan be revised to leave the park in its current condition (rather than removing several feet of soil, as shown on your grading plan).
- With regard to the proposed park design, we note that our Parks Committee and, ultimately, City Council will need to approve the proposed design (and the proposed reduction in size). We appreciate that you have reached out to the sports leagues to discuss their needs, but there is a formal process at the City that will need to be followed, including review by the Community/Human Services Commission and its committees: Youth Sports Committee; the Parks, Utilities and Hillside Committee; and the Tree Committee. (Please see the discussion at the end of this letter about the various City advisory and decision-making bodies who will need to be involved in the review of your project.)
- The City will need to understand the implications of the size and number of sports fields being proposed and their impact on use by the sports leagues. We will need more detailed information on the sizes of the proposed fields and the age groups which can be accommodated for league play.
- The City will want to discuss an agreement that specifies the amenities to be provided, the timing of the improvements, and potentially other performance measures related to the updated park. Among the items that will need to be addressed in the agreement (and in the conditions of approval for the subdivision) is that the park renovations will need to be fully completed and accepted by the City prior to the issuance of any certificates of occupancy/final inspections for any homes.
- More parking is needed for the park. This has been a longstanding point of contention between sports groups and neighbors of the existing park; the capacity of the existing parking lot on Indian Hill Boulevard is quickly exceeded during league play, leading to participants parking as far away

as Forbes Avenue and beyond. The City regularly fields complaints from existing residents about park users parking in and walking through their neighborhoods.

- Please provide a parking inventory comparing the number of spaces in the existing parking lot with the number of spaces in your design. This should show the number of spaces with and without on-street spaces in your proposed subdivision.
- We suggest that you ask the sports groups about where their members park and how many vehicles are parked at offsite locations (e.g. on local streets) during league play.
- Staff recalls that an earlier version of your project included diagonal parking on the internal roadway adjacent to the park to increase the number of cars that could be parked. Why was this not included in your formal submittal?
- Related to the completion of park improvements: Have you discussed with the sports leagues where they will have their activities while the park is closed for renovation?
- Is the \$1-million figure for park improvements based on a detailed cost analysis of the proposed renovations? Or is this an offer based on Trumark's overall pro forma and the amount you can spend on this feature of your project? What if the actual cost of improvements exceeds \$1-million?

Other Park issues:

- Lights at La Puerta Sports Park are specifically regulated by the Claremont Municipal Code (11.08.010). Lighting is permitted only for "youth soccer practice sessions" and is limited in terms of hours and days. Your proposal to light all of the fields (including softball) will need to be revised to conform with the Municipal Code *or* you will need to propose an amendment to the Code, which would need to be approved by the City Council.
- The updated park will need to include modern lights, not the reinstallation of the existing fixtures. The City has had good results from modern lights that offer more exact focusing/shielding and remote control. Modern lights were installed at College Park in 2017; and we suggest that you visit this location to see the lights in operation.
- Staff is concerned that residents of the Trumark subdivision will ultimately complain about people walking from Forbes Avenue and/or internal streets to get to the park (as current residents already do). We offer this as a comment based on our experience at other locations in Claremont.
- The \$1-million for park improvements that you have discussed seems low, based on staff's experience at other parks where similar updates to parks have been completed recently. As discussed above, we look forward to discussing the proposed improvements to the park at a staff level.
- Do you propose to add lighting on the Thompson Creek Trail?

ADUs and Affordability

Staff is concerned that the proposed ADUs do not comply with City requirements for inclusionary housing. We applaud your efforts to provide alternative housing types, but the ADUs as proposed, which are smaller than the primary units to which they are attached, do not meet the requirements of the Claremont Municipal Code:

“Inclusionary units shall be reasonably dispersed throughout the residential development; shall be proportional, in number of bedrooms, to the unrestricted units. If the residential development offers a variety of unit plans with respect to design, materials and optional interior amenities, the inclusionary units shall be identical with the residential development’s base-plan in terms of design, appearance, materials, finished quality and interior amenities.” [Claremont Municipal Code 16.036.060.A]

The Specific Plan being prepared for the project could address this issue, but this would require that the City Council agree to the change.

Other ADU issues:

- As currently written, the City’s inclusionary requirement applies to “units,” without explicitly stating whether these are primary or accessory units:

*“If the residential development consists of seven (7) or more **units**, a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of all newly constructed dwelling units in the residential development shall be developed, offered to and sold or rented to moderate income households, at an affordable housing cost.”*

Therefore, the inclusionary requirement would apply to the total of 74 “units,” (65 primary units + 9 accessory units) for a total affordable requirement of 11 units. (Note that each unit affordable to low income households counts as 1.5 units affordable to moderate income households. This would require 7.4 inclusionary units.)

- If the ADUs are accepted as inclusionary units (through a change in the City’s current standards) we will need to discuss in more detail how the affordability of these units will be maintained. Keeping in mind that these units will not be available for sale and that the individual units will be controlled by the owners of the primary units, we will need to discuss strategies to ensure that 1) the units are rented, and 2) that rents are maintained at an affordable level. This may include precluding the units from being altered to become part of the primary unit.
- For a project the size of yours the only alternative to providing inclusionary units is to dedicate land, “... that the City Council reasonably determines to be equivalent or greater value than is produced by applying the City’s in lieu fee.” This option does not appear to be feasible, which means that 1) we will need to discuss how to comply with the requirement for inclusionary units, or 2) you will need to propose changes to the inclusionary requirement for your project that would be presented to the City Council.

Grading and Drainage

Staff is concerned about the proposed grading of the site, which as we understand it would place some 180,000 cubic yards of fill on the subdivision and raise the entire residential site by some 3-7 feet while lowering the elevation of the park by several feet. This grading concept is not consistent with City's desire and general philosophy of retaining natural topography and was not suggested or required by City staff. (See also the discussion above regarding the existing topsoil and turf at the park, which staff recommends be left in place.)

According to the City's Engineering Division (see the attached detailed comments), the proposed placement of drainage features for the subdivision under the adjacent public park is not permitted. Public Works' understanding is that there is no technical reason to support the placement of these facilities offsite. Drainage and water quality features will need to be placed entirely within the subdivision, either as standalone facilities (such as a basin) or within the roadways (but not under public streets).

Additional grading comments:

- To help staff better understand the grading concept, please provide an exhibit clearly showing cut and fill, changes from existing topography, and proposed grading.
- Please explain why this grading concept was selected.
- Where will the approximately 40,000 CY of imported fill come from? What route(s) will be used to transport the fill to the site? How many truckloads of fill are proposed as part of the import operation? What hours are proposed for the import operation and how long will this last?
- Also, please provide sections through the site and adjacent areas showing how the proposed grading and homes relate to existing homes. Attached to this letter is an exhibit showing suggested section locations.

Subdivision Design

Staff offers the following comments on the overall design of the project:

- As noted earlier, the original "Brandywine" residential project for this site started with a proposed 59 units, later reduced to 40, which was opposed by neighbors. The current proposal is already attracting significant opposition, as measured by correspondence from residents received at city hall.
- Although the proposed project is adjacent to a park, Planning notes that your initial designs for the park do not include a specifically family-friendly features (play equipment, picnic tables, etc.) Planning suggests that you consider these features, since the closest parks (other than the Wilderness Park) are not in close proximity to the La Puerta site. Staff notes that the recent Meadowood project was required to include an onsite minipark in response to a similar lack of nearby parks.

Parking

Staff notes, based on our experience in other areas near public parks, that residents of the subdivision may request resident-only permit parking.

Will parking is provided for the ADU units? How has Trumark handled parking for ADUs in other developments?

Please see also the discussion of parking related to La Puerta Sports Park earlier in this letter. Parking and overflow to other areas has been a longstanding concern of residents in the area.

Fire Department

The following is a summary of comments from LA County Fire:

- LA County Fire is OK with the layout of the subdivision, road widths, turning radii, etc.
- Fire is also OK with number of homes with one entry point.
- Will need to verify that all parts of homes are reachable within 150 feet of fire equipment.
- Will need to obtain will serve letter to verify availability of water for fire suppression.
- Potential issue with project's location in fuel modification area—might not be able to plant trees as planned? Need to discuss further with LA County Fire. Note: Online mapping from LA County Fire shows that the site is adjacent to, but not within the Fire Hazard Severity Zone. See attached map.
- Fire has no issues with the proposed park modifications.

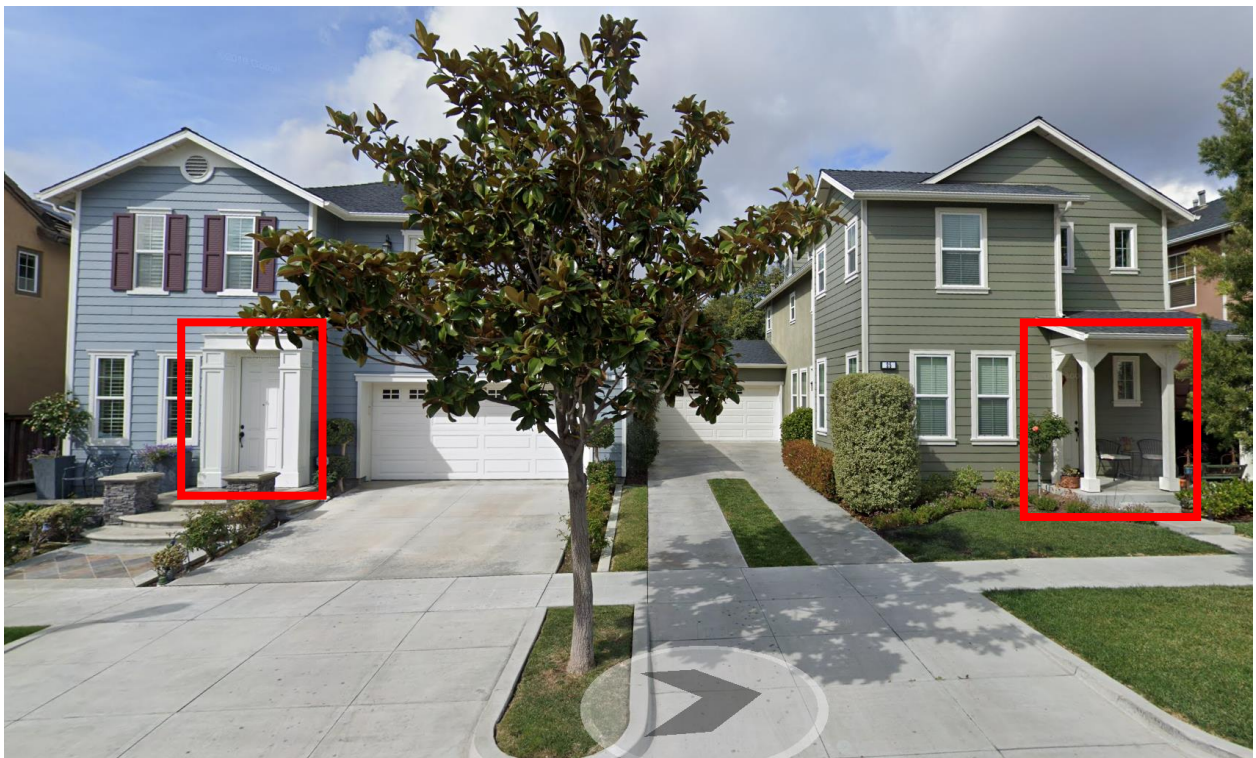
Architecture

Staff offers the following comments on the proposed architecture for the homes in the subdivision. These comments should be addressed when your consultant prepares the architectural standards/guidelines section of the Specific Plan, and in the design of the proposed tentative tract map.

Comments:

- Generally, the architecture lacks the detail and quality that is expected of projects in Claremont. Four-sided architecture treatment is expected.
- Compared to similar Trumark projects in Orange County, the homes proposed at La Puerta have less detail and architectural interest. The homes in Orange County have more detailing, including:
 - Recessed windows and doors, and windows with higher levels of trim and/or arched openings.
 - Pot shelves, wrought iron details, and other architectural details.

- See the photos below, which highlight features of the Orange County homes that are not shown in the proposed La Puerta architecture.

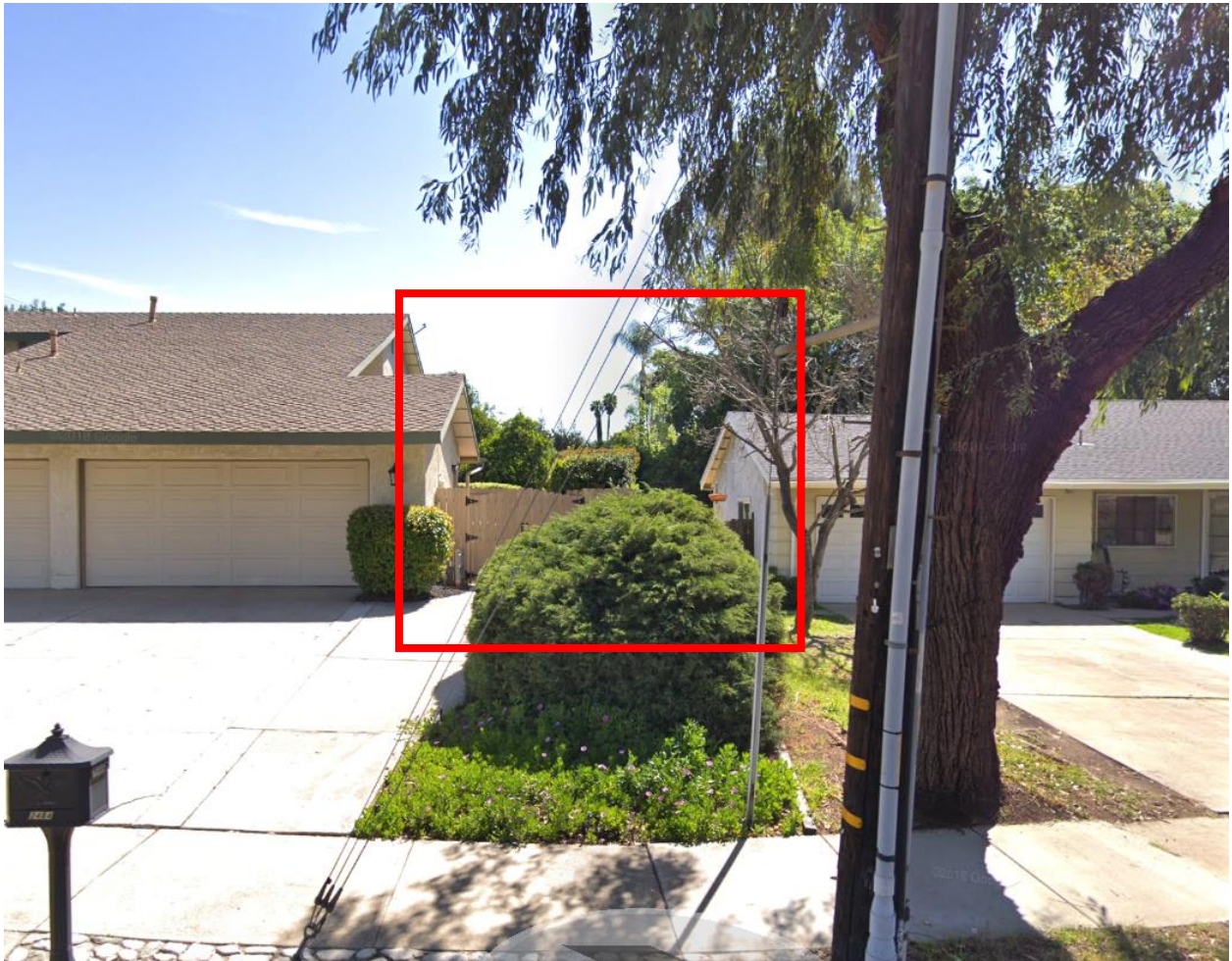




- One outcome of the “Z-lot” configuration proposed for the subdivision is the lack of sightlines between the units. The garage at the rear of the units on the Z lots overlaps with the front of the home on the other, creating a continuous façade of buildings. Compare the appearance of the streets in your Orange County projects with the appearance of the homes on Forbes Avenue:



Ladera Ranch homes—Overlapping buildings



Forbes Avenue—Space between homes

Staff suggest that you propose a different design that creates a more traditional appearance for the streetscapes within the project, with better separation and the creation of clear space (similar to the more traditional streetscape shown above) between homes.

- Although the existing homes on Forbes Avenue include one- and two-story units, the homes adjacent to the site are predominated by single-story features, as shown below (with predominantly one-story homes highlighted). Staff suggests that the units and lots on the Forbes Avenue frontage of your project be adjusted to match the lot widths, setbacks, and building mix (one vs two stories) of the existing homes on the east side of the street. This will result in a reduction in the overall number of homes.



Other Applications

We look forward to receiving additional items from you:

- As noted in our incompleteness letter of August 5, your application is currently **incomplete** until a Specific Plan is submitted.
- And, as discussed in that letter and in today's correspondence, an **agreement** between the City and Trumark will be needed to address the type and timing of improvements to La Puerta Sports Park.
- Finally, as discussed in this letter, City and CUSD approval of **amendments to the lease** for La Puerta Sports Park will need to be obtained in order for your application to be approved.

Process/Meetings

Looking to the future, here is a list of the various City committees, commissions, etc. who will play a role in the review and approval process.

- Architectural Commission – Review of Specific Plan, review of proposed homes (with Tentative Map in Phase 2)
- Traffic/Transportation Commission
- Parks Committee
- Community/Human Services Commission and its committees:
 - Youth Sports Committee of the CHSC – Review of proposed park design
 - Parks, Utilities and Hillsides Committee of the CHSC – Review of proposed park design
 - Tree Committee
- Planning Commission – May hold preliminary workshops + public hearings
- City Council

We're not ready at this point to put together a tentative schedule for these meetings, but we will work on a calendar as soon as possible.

Conclusion

We suggest that you review these comments and develop responses that address the issues raised in this letter. We will be happy to meet with you and your planners to discuss and clarify our comments.

Please feel free to call anytime if you have specific questions.

Respectfully,



Eric Norris
Contract Planner
530-574-4875

Cc: Brad Johnson

Enclosures: TTM Engineering Division Review
Section Lines