



November 6, 2024

Aram Alajajian and Anoush Khachekian  
Alajajian-Marcoosi Architects Inc.  
320 Arden Avenue, #120  
GLENDALE, CA 91203

**RE: 1015 NORTH CENTRAL AVENUE**

APPEAL OF PLANNING HEARING OFFICER'S DECISION

➤ **STANDARDS VARIANCE CASE NO. PVAR-003198-2024**

**(ALSO SEE: CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT CASE NO. PCUP-002795-2024)**

[The Armenian Apostolic Church of Glendale (A Parish under the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America)]

Dear Appellant:

The Planning Commission of the City of Glendale, at its meeting held on November 6, 2024, voted to **REVERSE** the planning Hearing Officer's decision of **Denial**, and **APPROVES** the Conditional Use Permit to allow the expansion of the existing church, and **SETBACK AND STANDARDS VARIANCES** to allow, 1) the removal and replacement of the existing church tower with new domes/bell tower elements with an overall building height of 55 feet, construction of a new detached accessory building consisting of an outdoor open altar with an overall height of 48 feet, 5-inches to the top of the dome/bell tower element, construct new 24-foot high columns, arched architectural elements and an 18-foot high entry gate and fence in the courtyard area, 3) exceed the maximum allowed floor area of 500 square feet for the new accessory building (outdoor altar), and 4) expand the existing church floor area and construct a new fence within the required street-front setback, and construct a new accessory building (outdoor altar) with a zero setback from the south interior property line, in the "R-1250" (High Density Residential) Zone, located at **1015 North Central Avenue**, described as Lot C, Parcel Map 1340, Tract 4045 and 4048 as per Map Book 176, Page 16 / APN: 5636-007-075 and 076, in the City of Glendale, County of Los Angeles.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION**

The project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review as a Class 1 Existing Facilities per Section 15301(e) of the CEQA Guidelines, because the project is a negligible expansion to an existing use; specifically, it is an addition to an existing structure provided that the addition will not result in an increase of more than 50 percent of the floor area of the structure before the addition, or 2,500 square feet, whichever is less, and it is a continuation of the same land use type (place of worship). Also, the project is exempt from CEQA review as a Class 3 "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures" exemption pursuant to Section 15303 of the State CEQA Guidelines because the project involves the

construction of a new outdoor open altar. A historic assessment report was submitted by the applicant (prepared Kaplan Chen Kaplan) for the property. The report concluded that the project site at 1015 N. Central Avenue is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, or Glendale Register of Historic Resources, and has not been identified as a historic resource in any survey, and therefore, not eligible for designation at the local, state, or federal levels.

A motion adopted by the Planning Commission is attached.

## APPEAL PERIOD

The applicant's attention is called to the fact that this grant is not a permit or license and that any permits and licenses required by law must be obtained from the proper City and public agency. Under the provisions of the Glendale Municipal Code, Title 30, Chapter 30.62, any person affected by the above decision has the right to appeal said decision to the City Council if it is believed that the decision is in error or that procedural errors have occurred, or if there is substantial new evidence which could not have been reasonably presented. It is strongly advised that appeals be filed early during the appeal period and in person so that imperfections/incompleteness may be corrected before the appeal period expires.

***All appeals must be filed using the City's online permit portal: [www.glendaleca.gov/Permits](http://www.glendaleca.gov/Permits). Create an account, click "Apply," type "appeal" in the search bar, and apply for "Appeal of Planning Decision." Any appeal must be filed within fifteen (15) days following the actual date of the decision with the prescribed fee prior to the expiration of the 15-day appeal period, on or before NOVEMBER 22, 2024.***

Information regarding appeals, appeal forms and fees may be obtained by calling the Community Development Department (CDD) staff at 818-548-2140, or the case planner, Milca Toledo at (818) 937 -8181 (email: [mitoledo@glendaleca.gov](mailto:mitoledo@glendaleca.gov))

## APPEALS

Create an account, click "Apply," type "appeal" in the search bar, and apply for "Appeal of Planning Decision." Information regarding appeals and fees may be obtained by calling the Community Development Department staff at 818-548-2140, or contacting the case planner, Milca Toledo at (818) 937 -8181 (email: [mitoledo@glendaleca.gov](mailto:mitoledo@glendaleca.gov))

## NOTICE – subsequent contacts with this office

The applicant is further advised that all subsequent contact with this office regarding this determination must be with the case planner and/or Hearing Officer who acted on this case. This shall be accomplished **by appointment only**, in order to assure that you receive service with a minimum amount of waiting. You should advise any consultant representing you of this requirement as well.

1015 NORTH CENTRAL AVENUE  
APPEAL OF PLANNING HEARING OFFICER'S DECISION  
➤ STANDARDS VARIANCE CASE NO. PVAR-003198-2024

Should you have any questions regarding this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,  
Bradley Calvert  
Director of Community Development



Milca Toledo  
Senior Planner

MT:sm

CC: City Clerk (K.Cruz); Police Dept. (J.Newton/Z.Avila); City Attorney's Dept. (G. van Muyden/Y.Neukian); Fire Prevention Engineering Section (S.Partamian); Public Works ( S.Hernandez); Traffic & Transportation Section (P.Casanova/Mark Bueno); General Manager for Glendale Water and Power (M.Young); Glendale Water & Power--Water Section (G. Tom/S.Boghosian/R.Takidin/ C.Babakhanlou/D.Scorza); Glendale Water & Power--Electric Section (B. B.Ortiz/E.Olsen/ M.Navareete/M.Kouassi); Parks, Recreation and Community Services Dept. (T. Aleksanian/A.Limayo); Neighborhood Services Division; Integrated Waste Management Admin; Maintenance Services Section Admin.; Street and Field Services Admin.; Engineering and Environmental Management; H.Markarian; P.O'Connor;F.Smith; D.Sullivan; and case planner - Milca Toledo.

## **MOTION**

Moved by Planning Commissioner Lee , seconded by Planning Commissioner Fuentes, that upon review and consideration of all materials and exhibits of current record relative to Variance Case No. PVAR-003198-2024, located at 1015 North Central Avenue, and after having conducted an appeal hearing on said matter, that the Planning Commission hereby finds that one or more of the buildings and/or structures at the Project Site are not historic resources under CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a)(4), and therefore, **REVERSES** the Planning Hearing Officer's decision and **APPROVES** the setback and standards variances to permit the expansion of an existing place of worship located in the R-1250 Zone in accord with the findings A, B and D set forth in the Planning Hearing Officer decision letter of September 17, 2024, and finding C and conditions set forth in the Planning Hearing Officer staff report included as Exhibit 1 dated July 31, 2024.

### **A. That the strict application of the provisions of any such ordinance would result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship inconsistent with the general purposes and intent of the ordinance.**

The 1.2-acre site is located on the west side of North Central Avenue, bounded by Central Avenue to the east, West Fairview Avenue to the north and West Glenoaks Boulevard to the south. The existing church building was originally constructed circa 1941 for use as a church and has continuously been used as such since then. The site is developed with an approximately 7,880 square-foot two-story church building at the corner of Central and Fairview Avenue, a two-story, approximately 14,873 square-foot children's day care center and an on-site surface parking lot towards the westerly portion of the lot facing Fairview Avenue. The project does not include expansions of or modifications to the existing day care center or on-site surface parking lot. The subject site is located in the R-1250 (High Density Residential) zone. This area contains high density residential development and permits churches to operate with approval of a conditional use permit. The church use is compatible with the surrounding residential uses, providing a service to residential uses offering a low-intensity institutional/public assembly use.

The applicant is requesting four variances from the zoning code related to the expansion of the existing church building and additional improvements to the site. The requested variances are to exceed the maximum height for the existing church building to be modified and expanded, to exceed the maximum height and floor area for the new accessory building (outdoor altar), to construct new 24-foot high columns and other architectural elements including an 18-foot-high entry gate in the courtyard, and to allow the main church building, new accessory building, and new gates and fences to encroach into the required street-front and interior setbacks. The strict application of the provisions of the ordinance would result in practical difficulties that are not consistent with the intent of the ordinance to allow a church establishment that provides a service to those residential uses in the neighborhood, that is a low-intensity institutional/public assembly use. The proposed remodel to the existing church building and upgrades to the church site will serve Glendale and surrounding communities.

In accordance with GMC 30.11.030, Table 30.11-B, the maximum allowed building height in the R-1250 zone is three-stories and 36 feet. The existing church tower, which includes a main altar, currently has an overall height of 55 feet and is considered legal non-conforming. The applicant's

variance request to increase the church's building height involves removing the existing 55-foot church tower and replacing it with a new dome/bell tower at the main altar. The new dome/bell tower height of 55-feet will be consistent with the existing height and also includes two additional dome/bell towers proposed at a slightly reduced height of 38 feet. Similarly, the applicant is also requesting a variance to exceed the maximum 15-foot height allowed for accessory structures. The project scope includes a new outdoor altar with a proposed overall height of 48 feet, 5-inches and is necessary to accommodate the dome/bell tower element of the design. The proposed overall height of the primary church building and accessory building (outdoor altar) are inclusive of the dome/bell tower elements, which are a traditional design feature in Armenian architecture and are appropriately designed for the Apostolic Church. Additionally, new 24-foot-high columns, arched architectural elements and an 18-foot-high gate entry are proposed within the outdoor courtyard on and around the new outdoor altar. To deny the requested height increase of 19 feet for the main church, an approximate 33-foot height increase for the new accessory building/outdoor altar and the new 24-ft. high architectural features and the 18-foot-high entry gate in the courtyard would not be consistent with nor accommodate the needs of the church's religious use, traditions and church services.

In accordance with GMC 30.11.030, Table 30.11-B, the minimum required street-front setback for a building is 20 feet with an average of 23 feet and 20 feet for gates or fences, and the minimum required interior setback for a new accessory building is five feet and an average of eight feet along the south side of the property and measured from the property lines. The improvements to the church include an expansion of the main church building's footprint for purposes of creating a new covered entry facing Central Avenue, a new main and secondary altar and a baptismal area, as well as new fence/gates that will encroach into the required street-front setback area. The applicant's request to expand the main church building and install a new fence/gate, would result in reducing the existing non-conforming street front and average setback along North Central Avenue, ranging from 5-inches at the northeast entry corner to 12 feet, 4-inches towards the south and average setback, ranging from 4 feet to 10.5 feet. Similarly, the new accessory building (outdoor altar) is proposed to be setback from the southerly interior property line, where five feet is the minimum. Without the requested variance for reduced setbacks associated with the necessary expansion, the church will not have the necessary space and features to conduct its religious traditions and services. Additionally, requiring the applicant to comply with the Zoning Code setback requirements would result in impractical changes to the existing church that would unduly restrict the use of the site as a place of worship. It would require a large majority of the existing church building to be demolished, which is impractical and would result in a hardship on the church and impact their ability to provide services to the community that are typical of a place of worship.

The new fence/gates are intended to provide safety and security for the church, its staff, and its members. To comply with the minimum required 20-foot street front setback for the new fence/gate, would not allow the church site to provide safety and security for the church, its staff and members. If this was a commercial zoned property as is the case with the adjacent parcel to the southwest and directly across Central Avenue to the east and Glenoaks Boulevard to the south, the proposed minor expansion of the existing church building could be done without the need for a variance as there is no street front setback required in the C3 zone. This is also true of the setback request for the security fence proposed in these areas of the subject property. Development of the site as proposed is consistent with the surrounding C3 zoned properties.

In accordance with GMC 30.11.020, Table 30.11-A, the maximum square footage allowed for an accessory building is 500 square-feet, and as noted above, must be setback a minimum of 5 feet,

and an average of 8 feet from the interior setback. The church expansion includes construction of a new 1,156 square-foot accessory building that features an outdoor altar with restrooms and storage areas with a zero setback at the interior property line. Typically, accessory buildings/structures are associated with a residential use (e.g., guest house, recreation room, etc.) where they are subordinate and incidental to the main building located on the same lot. In this case, the new outdoor altar is subordinate and incidental to the church building and will be utilized by members for religious traditions and services. The location and size of the accessory building is necessary to accommodate the needs of the church's congregation as well as the religious traditions and services. Limiting the total floor area of the building to 500 square feet and requiring the building to comply with the minimum interior setback requirements would be impractical and unduly restrict the use of the site as a place of worship. Without the requested variances, the church and its members would be precluded from carrying out traditions and services associated with the religion.

**B. That there are exceptional circumstances or conditions applicable to the property involved or to the intended use or development of the property that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood.**

There are exceptional circumstances and conditions applicable to the subject property that would not apply generally to other property in the same zone or neighborhood. Firstly, the project site is larger in comparison to most properties in the surrounding neighborhood, and has frontage on three streets (North Central Avenue, Fairview Avenue, and West Glenoaks Boulevard). Secondly, the project site has been in operation as a place of worship (church) in a residential zone for approximately 83 years, with development and operational needs that differ from a typical residential use. The expansion of the church and gates/fences within the street front setback area and construction of a new outdoor altar within the interior setback will maintain the usable outdoor areas of the church site, and provide safety and security for the church, its staff and congregation members. Also, the location of the new fence/gate will allow for improvements to the site and adequately secure the outdoor courtyard area, including the new outdoor altar and the existing children's day care center. The dome/bell towers featured in the project design that require height variances are a typical and key feature of Armenian architecture and the Apostolic Church building design. Thirdly, the existing site has an irregular shape with the entire easterly property line, parallel to Central Avenue, resulting in portions of the church building originally constructed within the required setback areas, a condition that continues today. Fourth, a portion of the site is adjacent to a small (approximately 3,720 square feet, undeveloped parcel of land on the south side (adjacent to Glenoaks Blvd) that is currently owned and maintained by the City. The applicant has informed the City that the Church owner intends to purchase, maintain and merge the adjacent 3,720 square-foot parcel with the subject (church) site. Should this property be acquired, and the parcels are combined, the new outdoor (accessory building) will no longer be located zero feet from the interior (south) property line, but rather, it would be located 15 feet from the street side property line (facing West Glenoaks Blvd).

**C. That the granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located.**

Granting of the variances associated with the church expansion and site improvements, including constructing a new outdoor altar and new security gates/fencing will not be materially detrimental to

the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located. The applicant's request to reduce required setbacks (street-front and interior) for the main church building, the new accessory building, and new gates/fences, exceed the maximum allowed height for the main church building, the new accessory building (outdoor altar), and the new architectural elements in the courtyard, and to exceed the maximum allowed floor area for a new accessory building will not significantly deviate from the existing conditions. For example, portions of the existing church building currently encroach into the street front setback, ranging from 7-inches to 10-ft., 7-inches, and the existing overall height of the church building is 55 ft. The applicant's proposal requesting to expand the building footprint of the church by placing the addition, ranging from 5-inches from the street front property line (at its closest point) to 12-ft., 4-inches and constructing a new fence/gate within the street-front setback area will not significantly deviate from the existing setback conditions. Also, as proposed the existing building height is and will remain at 55 ft. high for the main church and the proposal involves reconstructing a new dome/bell tower with the same building height of 55 ft.

Similarly, construction of a new 1,156 SF accessory building with an overall height of 48 ft., 5-inches (to the top of the bell tower) for purposes of creating an outdoor altar, restrooms and storage for the existing church will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or neighborhood in which the property is located. The new outdoor altar will be located in the new courtyard adjacent to the church, abutting a 3,720 SF vacant parcel on the south side (facing W. Glenoaks Blvd.). According to the applicant, said vacant parcel is intended to be purchased by the Armenian Apostolic Church in the near future. Thus, the request to increase building height for the new outdoor altar will not conflict with adjacent properties or uses. The existing church and children's day care center are two-stories and there are similar multi-story commercial buildings with similar heights surrounding the subject site, including a two-story church and school and a three-story building across the street to the east and a four-story commercial office building located across the street, southeast of the subject site. Additionally, the subject site is located in a transition zone where a commercial zone parcel abuts the southwest portion of the site and are located across the street to the south, facing W. Glenoaks Blvd. The proposed overall height of the accessory building, inclusive of the dome/bell tower element is appropriately designed for the Apostolic Church using traditional Armenian architecture. The church remodel, new gate/fence, new outdoor altar and all improvements to the site will be required to obtain design review approval prior to the issuance of a building permit to ensure that all improvements are architecturally compatible with the existing development. Additionally, aside from the variances requested, all other Zoning Code requirements are being complied with (e.g., lot coverage, floor area ratio, landscaping, etc.).

**D. That the granting of the variance will not be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance.**

That the granting of the variance will not be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance because the purpose of setback requirements is to ensure that there is an effective separation between properties to foster compatibility, identity, privacy, light, air and ventilation, and provide for landscaped areas for visual relief. Additionally, the objective of requiring a street-front setback area is to maintain the open streetscape of residential neighborhoods. Similarly, the objective of the interior setback is to enable appropriate open space, light, and ventilation between properties. The purpose of height regulations is to mitigate design including mass and scale and the objective of the floor area ratio standard is to limit the overall bulk of the buildings and structures in proportion to a given lot size. Lastly, the objective of the regulation limiting floor area for accessory buildings

to 500 SF is to prevent overbuilding a lot with excessively large accessory buildings, which are subordinate to the primary structure. The purpose of the variance process is to assure that no property, because of the special circumstances applicable to it, shall be deprived of privileges commonly enjoyed by other parties in the same zone and vicinity.

Construction of a new fence in the street front setback area, remodel and expansion of the existing church and construction of a new outdoor courtyard with a new outdoor altar, columns, arched architectural elements and a new entry gate will allow improvements to the church site that is consistent with and accommodates the needs of the church's religious use, traditions and church services associated with the religion. The intent of the ordinance prohibiting development in the street-front and interior setback areas, limitations to the maximum overall building height and floor area for accessory buildings applies to residential uses allowing for uniformed development that provides for cohesive neighborhoods that create the same opportunity for all properties to experience access to light and air. The subject property has been in operation as a place of worship/church in a residential zone for approximately 83 years and is located on a corner lot at the end of the block, with commercially-zoned properties in the immediate context.

While the proposed expansion and remodel of the existing church and site improvements would not fully comply with zoning regulations, notwithstanding, the church will continue to comply with the intent of the regulations as it has for decades, taking into account the existing use of the site as a church and the needs of their associated religious affiliation. The church was originally developed in a residential zone where they are permitted subject to the approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and where the development and operational needs of the church differ from a typical residential use. The requested variances will be in keeping with the character of the existing church use and will not be contrary to the objectives of the ordinance. Furthermore, for the church to come into compliance with the setback regulations, a large majority of the church would have to be demolished, resulting in a hardship, requiring more investment for the church to provide services to the community. If this was a commercial zoned property as is the case with the adjacent parcel to the southwest, directly across Central Avenue to the east and Glenoaks Boulevard to the south, the proposed minor expansion of the existing church building could be done without the need for a variance as there is no street front setback required in the C3 zone. This is also true of the setback request for the security fence proposed in these areas of the subject property, and building height is limited to 90 feet in the C3 District III zone as is the case with the property developed with a church and private school across the street to the east.

**APPROVAL of the Setback and Standards Variance shall be subject to the following conditions:**

1. That the development shall be in substantial accord with the plans submitted with the application and presented at the hearing except for any modifications as may be required to meet specific Code standards or other conditions stipulated herein to the satisfaction of the Planning Hearing Officer.
2. That all necessary permits (i.e. building, fire, engineering, etc.) shall be obtained from the Building and Safety section and Public Works Department and all construction shall be in compliance with the Glendale Building Code and all other applicable regulations.
3. That the applicant shall comply with all Department/Division requirements as specified in their memos/interdepartmental communications to the satisfaction of the Department Director.



4. That Design Review Board approval shall be obtained prior to the issuance of a building permit.
5. That landscaped areas shall be maintained in good condition with live plants and free of weeds and trash.
6. That all new landscaping shall comply with the provisions of GMC 30.31.020.
7. That a lot line adjustment or lot tie covenant be submitted, approved and recorded for the subject site for purposes of combining the subject parcel with two adjoining parcels into one (APNs 5636-007-076, 5636-007-075 and 5636-007-903).
8. That the applicant shall comply with all requirements of the Public Works - Urban Forestry Division, as specified in the memo dated February 02, 2024 to the satisfaction of the Urban Forester.
9. That the applicant shall comply with all requirements of the Public Works – Traffic Engineering Division, as specified in the memo date January 29, 2024.
10. That the applicant shall comply with all requirements of the Glendale Water and Power (Water & Electric), as specified in the memo dated May 13, 2024.
11. That the applicant shall comply with all conditions of approval for Conditional Use Permit Case No. PCUP-002795-2024.

Adopted this 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2024.

VOTE AS FOLLOWS

Ayes: Lee, Minassian, Fuentes Shahbazian  
Noes: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Chraghchian