

BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS

Acton Faith Bible Church

32643 Gem Way

Acton, CA 93510

Prepared by APEX LA

REV: June 15, 2023



Background

The Applicant is requesting renewed authorization for the continued construction, operation and maintenance of a church, including facilities for incidental educational and social activities, as well as a school for kindergarten through eighth grade for a maximum of 275 students. Acton Faith Bible Church is an independent, non-denominational, Protestant, evangelical church established in 1977.

Construction as currently planned consists of two phases: Phase I includes the construction of a one-story 16,497 square foot Assembly and Christian Education building. Phase II includes the construction of 7,200 square-feet of building area, comprised of six one-story modular classroom buildings, with 2 classrooms in each building. Phase II also includes the construction of outdoor sports courts.

The Applicant request is a continuation of Conditional Use Permit Case 97-141, first approved March 2002 and has since expired during COVID-19 protocols. The construction plans outlined above are a reduction in scope from the prior approval, which originally contained two more development phases (Phase III and IV), that the applicant will not be proceeding with at this time.

While the previous grant was utilized to begin construction of Phases I and II, construction is still ongoing and has not been completed prior to the expiration of the prior grant, hence the need for a grant renewal.

B.1 The proposed use will be consistent with the adopted General Plan for the area.

The subject site falls within the Antelope Valley General Plan, adopted 06/16/2015 by the LA County Board of Supervisors. The stated goal of this plan is to “guide development and conservation within the unincorporated communities of the Antelope Valley”. Within this regional area plan, Community-Specific Land Use Concepts are described for individual communities within Antelope Valley, including Acton:

“The Land Use Concepts (Concepts) attempt to provide expectations for how each rural community may change and grow throughout the life of this Area Plan. The Concepts specify the desired land uses for each area and identify potentially incompatible land uses that would not be desirable.”

And specifically with regard to Acton, the following qualities are endorsed, within the RL designation the subject site falls in:

“The rural town centers shall continue to be the focal point of the community and shall be linked to the surrounding rural town area through trails and pedestrian routes. Pedestrian routes shall have permeable paving, consistent with rural community character, instead of concrete sidewalks. Public amenities, such as plazas and community bulletin boards, are encouraged in this area.

The majority of new residential development in Acton shall be directed to the rural town area instead of the surrounding rural preserve area, provided that such development is consistent with existing community character. New land divisions shall maintain a large minimum lot size. Various types of agriculture, equestrian, and animal-keeping uses should be allowed through the rural town area, provided that lots meet Zoning Code requirements for those uses. Home-based occupations may also be permitted throughout the rural town area, provided that they meet Zoning Code requirements.”.

The applicant request is therefore consistent with the most relevant language designating land use in the area. Previously approved building plans have proven to be aesthetically consistent with the description above with regard to permeable paving and consistency with rural community character. The church aims to amplify public amenities and community involvement, maintains a large lot size, and is proposing no additional construction from the previously approved Conditional Use Permit.

B.2 The requested use at the location proposed will not:

a. Adversely affect the health, peace, comfort, or welfare of persons residing or working in the surrounding area;

The subject site is located in a rural community, on a near 10-acre lot and significant area buffer from residential uses. Commercial/industrial abutting uses across Soledad Canyon Road are limited to low traffic businesses - a storage facility and tow service/lot. Construction as previously approved has and will continue to be limited to daytime hours.

Lighting will comply with the Rural Outdoor Lighting District requirements of Chapter 22.80 of the County Code, including a maximum height of 20 feet for any outdoor light fixture, a maximum output rating of no greater than 400 lumens for any outdoor light fixture over 15 feet in height, avoidance of light trespass on surrounding areas, and shielding of outdoor light fixtures.

The initial Conditional Use Permit approval was issued in light of the fact that, based on the initial study and project revisions as recommended by the County and executed by the applicant, there is no substantial evidence that the project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment. These revisions included submission and approval of detailed striping/signing plans as well as a landscape plan incorporating and featuring local biota.

With regard to regular church operations, the applicant and project will indeed positively affect the peace, comfort and welfare of persons in the surrounding area by providing community oriented services to Acton residents.

b. Be materially detrimental to the use, enjoyment, or valuation of property of other persons located in the vicinity of the site; and

Similarly to the above, regarding regular church operations, the applicant and project will indeed positively affect the use and enjoyment of the area for property owners in the surrounding area by providing community oriented services to Acton residents, free of any ecological, noise or traffic concerns.

During the original Conditional Use Permit filing process in 2001, one opposing letter to the request was received from a nearby resident, citing that this development would detract from the rural environment of the area. After meeting with the Acton Town Council, and in light of the fact that the subject site is, with appropriate conditions of approval, compatible with the land classification assigned, the Council issued a letter stating that it did not oppose the project as proposed.

No such opposing commentary has since been issued.

c. Jeopardize, endanger, or otherwise constitute a menace to the public health, safety, or general welfare.

The proposed use seeks only to provide a positive hub for the community, such that it will improve the general welfare of the community. Some of the ways the applicant intends to continue this goal include social activities such as church picnics, youth game nights, community meetings and more.

No additional construction or change of use is proposed from the previous approval that would endanger public health and safety.

B.3 The proposed site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the yards, walls, fences, parking and loading facilities, landscaping, and other development features prescribed in this Title 22, or as is otherwise required in order to integrate said use with the uses in the surrounding area.

The findings of fact can still be made of appropriateness in size and shape to accommodate the yards, parking and other development features appropriate to the use.

Automobile Parking:

- The Phase I Site Plan identifies 112 parking spaces required and 130 parking spaces provided, of which five parking spaces are handicapped-accessible, as required by code.
- The Phase II Site Plan identifies 6 additional code-required parking spaces and 30 provided in order to accommodate the 12 classrooms. Total parking provided after Phase II are 160 spaces, of which 153 are standard, 5 are handicapped and 2 are van accessible.

Bicycle Parking:

- The Phase 1 Site Plan (See page A-1.1.0) identifies the location of 2 2-position long term bike lockers (that can accommodate 4 long-term bicycles) and a 9-position bike rack that can accommodate 9 short-term bicycles for the church building. This exceeds the 4 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 8 short-term bicycle spaces required by current code.
- The Phase 2 Site Plan (See page PS-2.0) identifies the location of 2 2-position long term bike lockers (that can accommodate 4 long-term bicycles) and four 13-position bike racks that can accommodate 52 short-term bicycles parking spaces for the 12 proposed classrooms. This exceeds the 1 long-term bicycle parking space / 10 classrooms and 4 short-term bicycle parking spaces / classroom required by code.

Landscape and irrigation plans have been provided and well-integrated into the site development plan. All such development features described, with regard to proposed and ongoing construction, have been approved under the original Conditional Use Permit. The lot is extremely spacious relative to the sites still to be constructed as proposed. See attached building plans for complete detail.

As stated above, initial Conditional Use Permit approval was issued in light of the fact that, based on the initial study and project revisions as recommended and executed by the applicant, there is no substantial evidence that the project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment. These revisions included submission and approval of detailed striping/signing plans as well as a landscape plan incorporating and featuring local biota.

B.4 The proposed site is adequately served:

- a. By highways or streets of sufficient width, and improved as necessary to carry the kind and quantity of traffic such use would generate; and**

Due to the reduction in scope requested in the grant reapproval, following the removal of development Phases III and IV, road traffic would likely be even further reduced from the previously approved grant.

b. By other public or private service facilities as are required.

An unpaved service road borders the subject property, allowing any vehicles related to construction to adequately service the site without impeding traffic along Soledad Canyon Road. To address the needs of any nearby single-family residences where horses are kept and ridden adjacent to the property, the applicant has also provided bridle paths on the subject property available for use by the neighboring community. No additional strain on public or private service facilities from the previously approved grant are anticipated.

For these reasons, we humbly request continued approval of the applicant's request.