

Nativity Church Parking Improvement Plan (Triangle Park)

6:00 PM - Refreshments served

6:30 PM – Meeting

A special Old Torrance Neighborhood Association (OTNA) meeting was held on Monday, April 25, 2005 at the Nativity Parish Annex, 1415 Engracia Avenue. Its purpose was to discuss a proposed Nativity Church parking improvement plan that involves Triangle Park, located within the boundaries of historic Old Torrance (Crenshaw Boulevard to Western Avenue, Dominguez Street to Plaza Del Amo.)

President Debbie Hays called the Old Torrance Neighborhood Association (OTNA) Special Meeting to order at 6:35 PM and noted that Nativity Church had graciously provided the *hors d'oeuvres* for this informational, educational meeting.

[Transcript of taped proceedings follows]

OTNA President Debbie Hays: Thank you for joining us here tonight. By now you have heard that Nativity Church, in an effort to help alleviate parking problems in the neighborhood, is proposing a parking improvement project that would incorporate "Triangle Park" and the portion of Manuel Avenue that runs between Engracia and Cota.

Before the church goes to the City with this proposed plan, they first want to talk to the neighbors about this idea. At this point, nothing is set in stone, or should I say, "Spanish Tile."

The church felt the best place to start was by creating a rendering, so that the neighbors had something on which to base an opinion for this proposed idea. Understanding the historical significance of their church & neighborhood, they selected an architect who would create an actual "workable" design that would incorporate the character of the neighborhood.

This property is actually owned by a third party, however, the City was deeded "permanent easements" way back when the City was formed. That means this park belongs to the City until they ever decide to vacate the land.

So that you may see Nativity's plans and hear from the architect, the Old Torrance Neighborhood Association, in conjunction with Nativity Church, is hosting this open forum for community input.

If you'd like to speak, please raise your hand and state your name and address. I know many of you are impassioned about this subject, so I'm just going to state this for the record: Please remain respectful and polite to all parties involved. We are the guests of Nativity Church, and we are simply here to discuss an idea. As I said, nothing is set in "Spanish Tile." With that, I'd like to introduce Rob Hardin. He works with the church and he and I worked together on pulling together this meeting. He and his team also distributed the flyers to help start the educational process on this idea. Rob?

Presentation by Nativity Church

Rob Hardin, Nativity Church Plant Manager: Thank you very much, Debbie, and thank you everybody for coming out tonight. This is an incredible turnout and, from what I hear from Debbie, it's the largest gathering of your association. So, I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know there's a spaghetti dinner on May 7 [crowd laughter] and the cost is \$5 a plate for all-you-can-eat. I'm just going to say a few things and then I'm going to turn it over to Jerry, who really is more versed in this than I am.

I wanted to say that there are no petitions here tonight. We're not asking you to sign anything. This meeting is to be your input, to get your feedback, to get your feelings on what we've proposed. Like Debbie said, we didn't want to come to the neighbors with an idea of a parking lot but not have something to really show. So yes, this process started some months ago and this is what we came up with. By no means is this a finished drawing or kind of a working drawing.

And secondly, we probably maybe reversed a little bit of how this procedure would normally work. Father Alfred felt that the parish should be notified of our intent, since they will be shouldering the financial burden of the entire project. Obviously, the city's role in this is huger than anybody else's. We have complete respect for the city and we hope in no way did we insult them by not bringing them in. We just wanted to get our ducks in a row: Yes, this is a rendering, and yes it's buildable this way and hopefully, the neighbors are supportive of it. If any of those things don't happen, maybe we don't even go to the city at that point. But, enough for me. I just wanted to let you know who I was. My (phone) number is on that flyer. Feel free to call the church at any time if you have any questions in regards to this. I'd be happy to meet with you. Father Alfred Hernandez would be happy to meet with you on an appointment basis. And the church just wants to maintain an open dialogue with everybody and make sure we're taking in the concerns of the community as a whole, and not catering to any individual's specific needs. So, I'm very happy, speaking for the church, to introduce to you Jerry Rodin who...we're just very thrilled with his work and his attitude, and what he's been able to do for us. And Jerry's going to give a short presentation and then we'll take your questions. And we agreed with the board that we would do a question and answer session up until

8:00 PM. So until 8:00 PM, we're wide open to entertain your thoughts, ideas...and everything that you give to us we'll be giving every serious consideration. All right, thank you, and here's Jerry.

Jerry Rodin, Architect for Nativity Church: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name's Jerry Rodin and I'm an architect with Rodin Associates; I'm local. I was born and raised in the area. And I live in Rancho Palos Verdes. I attended USC, if there's any Trojan fans out there, and attended UCLA, if there are any Bruins fans out there, and also had Pre-Med at Long Beach State, if there's any Long Beach State fans out there [laughter.] What I want to do here, is read some things that were prepared.

I think the first thing, step we should do is do a little history lesson. I'm talking to the choir here. You all live in this area and I'm sure you're all theologians of the history of the area, but I think I can probably mitigate a lot of questions and bring to light a lot of items by reading a lot of this information. We spent a number of months, six to be exact, researching the area and coming up with design solutions.

As everyone has mentioned, this is "begin the beguine." This is the gestation process. Every person in this room is a part of this; you're all architects tonight. There's not a question here...in fact, Murphy stated it a long time ago: "There's no such thing as a stupid question, only one you don't ask...If anything can go wrong, it will. If it hasn't, it already has but you just don't know it yet." We're going to prevent that problem here. We're going to bridge to the design solution of this. Nothing is in concrete. A picture is worth a thousand words. I'm going through all these cliches, but they really do assist and they generate ideas.

It's so hard to come up with an idea unless you have experience. That's why I was brought into this process. But a very intelligent person knows that experience goes on and on and on. *Stadies emi* in Croatian, *estadi baba*, that means somebody who's a teacher, and you're always learning. So, please, take this with an open mind. Information gathering. And everything we're going to do tonight is going to be constructive and this is for *your* future. This is a "we" thing; it's not an "I" thing.

Anyway, I'm going to read a little bit of the history of the area, so you can get a feeling for why this property came to fruition. The story begins with a cataclysmic event in California politics, not Grey Davis and it's not Arnold, but it was the election of Hiram Johnson as governor in 1910. Hiram Johnson ended the corrupt stranglehold that the railroad had on California from 1880 to 1910. Governor Johnson and his slate of reformists were elected to the legislature, board of supervisors and city governments. They swept out the railroad corruption and enacted wave after wave of reformist laws and policies.

Just about that time, Jared Sidney Torrance, who was on the board of directors of several railroads, was about to create his own modern industrial town. Mr. Torrance bought the land from the Dominguez family and proceeded to subdivide his own town to generate lots for sale. Unlike other subdivisions in 1912, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors refused to take control of the streets in the Torrance tract subdivision. Perhaps the board didn't like the railroad men and wasn't eager to help Mr. Torrance. Mr. Torrance was desperate to start selling lots, so he made all of the streets privately owned separate lots. He also made the alleys and parks private lots.

Finally, ten years later, in 1922, Mr. Torrance was able to incorporate the City of Torrance and turn over the streets, alleys and parks to this new city by means of an *easement deed*. Remember that word. Mr. Torrance retained ownership, however, of these streets, alleys and parks.

In 1946, the Remco Corporation purchased the ownership of those streets, alleys and parks from the Dominguez Land Company and Remco still owns them today. [To OTNA Board: I'll furnish you guys with a copy of this so you have it for your records.] This applies to the Torrance Tract and Tract Numbers 1684, 1952, 2381, 2675, 2761 and 2807. Of course, the city easements are just as strong as ownership and the city has absolute control of this process.

So, let's talk about the parking improvements. The reason that these lands came available were because of what happened over the history. The bottom line, here, is that we want to go ahead and create a parking area that is an area that everybody thinks was open space park.

The project actually was created back by the Law Olmsted brothers. They were brought in by Mr. Torrance and what I'll do is I'll read some information on that.

We're attempting to add 72 additional parking spaces and landscaping to the neighborhood and the church as the sole purpose of our project. The key element of our project is the vacation of a short section of Manuel Avenue and the vacation of a grass mowstrip known as Lot P4. The underlying owner of this land has already deeded the land to the church and the next step is vacation of easements of this land. The section of Manuel Avenue has to be one of the least used streets in Torrance, if you discount parking use on the street. After vacation, the parking efficiency of the area can greatly be increased with the design plans that you see before you. Fortunately, there are absolutely no utilities in this short section of Manuel Avenue. Lot P4 is a triangular-shaped lot left over as a design residual from the existing street pattern. Lot 4 is classified as a grass mowstrip and is maintained by the Public Works Department. Lot P4 is not classified as parks by the Park & Rec Department, and they don't maintain it.

This section of Torrance was created in 1912 with the Torrance Tract. Mr. Torrance went first class and hired the famous Olmsted brothers to lay out the town. Unfortunately, Mr. Torrance had to carry out this project on his own dime for ten years. As a result, the beautiful wide streets shown on the Torrance Tract were built very narrow. This saved Mr. Torrance some money, but made circulation and parking difficult in the area. Although the Olmsted Brothers laid out a nice schematic plan for the Town of Torrance in 1912, the town was actually built from the Torrance Tract map created by city engineer Frank Leonard in 1912. These two documents are quite different, but it's interesting to note that the Olmsted brothers showed our subject P4 not as being open space at all, they wanted to build a building on it. And if you look at one of the original tract maps there, it actually dedicates that space for a public building. It's really interesting, I'd like to get more into that to see really what they had planned for it.

Right now we're averaging about three to four complaints a week on this property for parking. Complaints range from blocking driveways to disturbing pets. Clearly, something needs to be done to improve the parking situation in the neighborhood.

The solution presented here involves...changes the grass mowstrip and short pieces of existing street into a beautifully landscaped parking lot. No one likes to see open space go away. In fact, I think we've gone full circle. When I was a kid, the song was, "They've paved over paradise and built a parking lot." Well, that's not the goal here. The goal here is to actually increase the open space and maintain the open space. Also no one likes to see landscaping paved over with a parking lot, but in this case we will be constructing 9,400 square feet of landscaping to replace the existing 8,500. We're actually increasing the landscaping area 1,000 square feet. It's amazing; it's how I did those calcs. And remember this is all done on AutoCAD, it goes down to the square inch, and we've actually increased the landscaping area 1,000 square feet.

Torrance requires five percent landscaping in parking lots, and we're providing much more. This grass mowing strip is not classified as a park and we keep going over that. It's pretty dangerous. The funny thing is, tonight when I was coming in here I parked in the upper church parking lot and kids were playing baseball over there and they were using a tennis ball. And the kid hit a great shot and it hit the car right in front of me and that bounced off of that car and went down in the intersection of Engracia and Cota. Two cars crisscrossed that ball and if that kid would have followed it, he would've been hit. This is an opportunity for a solution. I think what we're trying to do is not create a dangerous environment. What we're trying to do is mitigate it before somebody gets hurt. And that's obviously a reaction in the positive of our creation of this area. I just would hate to see anybody hurt on that lot.

The grass area is a significant maintenance cost to the city, as watering must be done by hand and grass requires frequent cutting. If our project is approved, all maintenance would be handled by the church, saving the city considerable expense. They've actually got two men out there hand mowing and hand watering, so we'll probably save them about 1-1/2 man days.

The residents of this section of Torrance are justifiably proud of the historic nature of their neighborhood and Nativity Church is proud of the historic nature and design of its church. We believe our design complements the preservation efforts in Old Town Torrance. Most of the homes in this area were built in the 1920s and 30s as was the church. Our goal is to make the improvement look as if it were built at the same time as the church itself. And that the neighborhood would be proud of that. We're therefore going to a California Mission look to match the exterior architecture of the church building. Walls around the parking lot are designed in Mission style. We actually did a lot of investigation all the way down to "height and classic summer" (inaudible) on adobe, which the finish on the wall is going to emulate that. The church is very sensitive to the historic nature of the neighborhood and is willing to spend the funds to make the effort to be more than just fitting in. About two years ago, the church remodeled the interior of the main sanctuary and you are invited to see how beautifully and tastefully that was accomplished.

As you can see, Nativity does not intend just to slap an asphalt parking lot with code minimum landscaping. The church is proposing to spend at least double the amount and create beautiful parking lot improvements that fit in the neighborhood at the tune of half a million dollars. I've never seen a developer come into a neighborhood and say: To maintain the existing open space, to increase landscaping, security, ingress, egress; we're willing to spend half a million dollars to help the neighborhood. Obviously, the parking will help the church but, at the same time, that eases this incredible parking problem that we have out here.

I have a list of Q & As, and if I go through these, these might help you...and I'm not trying to take any power away from you; that's not the point here. But I know you're all sitting there with a bunch of questions and maybe I can ask those right now, give our answers, and then maybe quicken up the evening for you.

One of the questions was, I've heard that the city owns this land. How can the church use it? Well, first of all, the city is in complete control of this process. They definitely hold the easement for the street and the triangle. Furthermore, the church must obtain Planning Commission permits, in other words we need to get a CUP. We're not going anywhere without your input and we're not going anywhere without going through the city process. The city is not going to back our project without your backing. So you're definitely a part of this project. The city has vacated dozens of these Torrance Tract easements in the past and the ownership of these other vacated parcels was held by a third party that is a successor of the

ownership interest of the Dominguez Land Corporation. We're confident this parcel is the same position. However, ultimately a title report costing about \$8,000 needs to be done in order to substantiate this. A deed has been secured by the church from that third party, and then the next step would be the vacation of the street. With those two items, we then will legally possess the property. At that point in time we can go with the next step which will be the Conditional Use Permit with the city, which you will be an integral part of.

Doesn't this change the historical design by the Olmsted Brothers of Old Torrance? We've gone over this. Actually the schematic plan by the Olmsted Brothers pointed out this triangle shape piece to be used for a building rather than for open space. Our project actually keeps the space open to the sky. Also, the Olmsted Brothers had intended the downtown streets to be wider than they were eventually built by Mr. Torrance. We propose to widen our half of the street to give more space for traffic, as originally designed. By utilizing the City of Torrance parking code, what we're doing now is, we're increasing that lane to 12 feet and 7. Plus, the parking being on an angle now secures the ability for somebody to get in and out of their car protected by the other cars down the row. In other words, you're not parallel to the curb, your door's not opening into the street, thus, you're not getting hit as you're coming in and out of your car. So it's creating a much better ingress and egress from the vehicles. Also, the angle to the parking, when you're backing out, the angle of the parking is already looking down that street, so it's much easier ingress and egress and it's a much safer solution.

How could you change this part of historic Torrance? That's probably the biggest question, and you guys gotta' understand something. I love the Olmsted Brothers. Frederick Law Olmsted was a part of my thesis when I graduated college up on the hill. It's amazing what they've done with the peninsula. The Olmsted Brothers designed a schematic plan for Torrance in 1912. There were a dozen of these throughout the area. We talked about this. These 45-degree angles in the streets created these remainders and the pieces that were too small to be useful. They are indeed open space, and this will remain open space. We will just be getting two uses out of this space. We don't think the Olmsted Brothers would object, especially if they saw the beautiful landscaping we're proposing. We're actually going to take those trees that are there right now, the large palm trees, and we're going to have an arborist check the condition of them and we're going to relocate them along Cota, creating a visual path down that street. Right now there're stalks everywhere that are dying. They're in really bad condition. By relocating these trees, which is very easily done, we actually can save them and make them a healthier tree.

Why are you taking away our park? This grass triangle is not classified as a park and it's not maintained by the city at Parks & Rec. It's classified as a grass mowstrip and it's maintained by the Public Works Department.

Unidentified woman from audience: It may be classified that way, but we definitely use it for a park.

Rodin: Absolutely. I agree with you 100 percent.

Unidentified woman from audience: Then don't talk to us nonreality, talk to us reality (inaudible.)

Rodin: Thank you, ma'm. I'll go on, then, I'll get off that subject. I covered what will happen to the trees...

Won't these new public parking spaces attract undesirables to the area? We will ask the parking to be posted for 24 hour maximum. This will enable the police to move along those who might overstay their welcome. We don't think parking meters will be necessary. Obviously, we're going to ask the neighbors not to put their Winnebagos out there. That's not the goal. The goal is to give 35 extra stalls to the neighborhood. All the stalls in the perimeter of the parking, the L shape along Engracia and up Cota, all the neighbors will be able to utilize those on a 24 hour period. You won't need a pass, you won't need any kind of a permit. But they will be available to you.

Who is paying for all of this? The cost is about a half million dollars and the church is assuming full responsibility. That's how serious the church is about solving this parking problem. No public funds will be used in this design.

Who is going to maintain this? Currently the city hand waters and mows this space. After the parking improvement project is complete, the church will maintain the entire project at its usual high standards.

Won't this parking lot encourage more people and traffic to come into the neighborhood? This church seats right now 408 people and I think this will bring some light to you. Furthermore, adding 72 spaces will just bring the church up to code minimum. It's about 8 stalls short. If I had to go in and put that church there today, at the current standards, I'd still need 8 more parking stalls. But right now, we're 72 plus 8, we're 80 negative. So we're improving the situation by 72 stalls. The church could not be enlarged without adding additional parking spaces, so don't worry. This isn't designed so that the church in the future can grow. It absolutely cannot. The city standard will not allow that to occur. Therefore, the church is maxed out. Actually, the amount of traffic circulating through the neighborhood searches aimlessly for parking spaces, which will reduce project size.

What will the lighting be like? Will that create a problem? The lighting which we're proposing will be similar to the downtown mission bell style lamp. If you want,

I can print that out and everybody's welcome to see what they're going to look like. It'll be a high efficiency lighting, it'll be directed downward so there'll be more of an ambient lighting and it won't be directed to the adjacent homes; it'll be shielded. So you absolutely will not have that reflected into your living rooms.

Let me give you some statistics on what's going to happen here and then I'll open up the forum. Right now, we're proposing 73 [sic] parking spaces to be constructed by the church, of which 37 will be dedicated to the public. The mission-style design of the parking area will match the exterior architecture of the church. The city will save a third man on maintenance of the grass triangle. All future maintenance will be performed by the church. The existing P4 lot is 8,500 square feet. The new landscaping, as I said before, will be 9,500. So we're actually increasing landscaping. The reduction of traffic and parking problems, the landscaping—hopefully, this will add to your property values in the neighborhood. [Crowd laughter] I knew you would enjoy that. But really, I think the way we should open this up now is, I think, this isn't a gripe session. I think what this is, is a constructive criticism session. And really what you want to do right now is you want to come up with ideas that you have that can further perpetuate this design. Again, this is not a design in concrete; it's just open to you right now.

Community Forum

[Inaudible questions and comments from various audience members and OTNA board members.]

President Hays: What is your name?

Woman in Audience: Michelle Martinez.

Rodin: I'll repeat the question. It'll make it easier. Michelle asked the question, "If this project does not go through, then what would happen to the land?" Well, obviously, it would stay As-Is. (Audience applause and inaudible comments.) ... refrain from doing that because I'm a professional and everybody up here is dedicating his time, and let's keep decorum here. We're all friends here; there's nothing to be rude about so, please...(inaudible audience comments)...no, it's out of order.

Sue Walker: My name is Sue Walker. I live on Sonoma Street. I am totally and completely against this project for several reasons. Our children use the park to play in and in 30 years I believe not one child has been hurt. People romp with their dogs. It's a very beautiful little triangle, and we'd like to offer an alternative. An alternative would be taking the half million dollars that it would cost and invest in minibuses. I believe the Presbyterian Church on Crenshaw uses the Wilson Park parking lot on Sundays. The alternative would be to get permission to use the

Wilson Park parking lot and have minibuses bus the people in to the church.
(applause)

Rodin: Thank you. I appreciate that.

President Hays: One thing I forgot to mention in the beginning is that we're only going to go until 8:00PM this evening. So if you could maybe hold your applause until the end, or what have you, then we can get through more questions and make sure everyone is heard. Okay, I think Pauline had a question.

Pauline Greer: I just wanted to ask one question. Have you thought of going down a couple of levels below the parking lot that you have next to the church now? I suppose it would cost more than \$500,000, but that would be I think a really wonderful way of handling it.

Rodin: Absolutely, Pauline. There are nine different schemes on this project. All the way to feasibility cost analysis. And the prohibitive cost of subterranean was...this project also, you need to understand, is a neighborhood church. And I'm giving you the Con side. The cost analysis totally blew the project out. It was not feasible to go subterranean. We also had the idea of going down two (levels) and up one-half. A half level up, a half level down, and then a third option to that would be to go a full level below that. And we have costs and numbers on that here.

Hardin: I think that her question was, when you were talking about the designs we had for this and what we chose to do. I think Pauline's question was, could we do this in our own lot that exists right now and could we go subterranean there? What we found to do that is that there would be so much space taken up...About three years ago, when we remodeled the interior of the church, we spoke with our contractor about the possibility of subterranean parking using our existing lot. Having nothing to do with the park or Manuel Avenue. To start off with, it's completely cost prohibitive. It would have been over a million-dollar project, and it probably would have landed us an additional 24 spots on top of this 30-some we have. We would have had a total of probably 50, almost 60. So much of it would be made up of ramps, and with ADA codes brought into it and access. It just didn't seem at that time that the church would be willing to try and raise over a million dollars and only net 20- some spots. So, yes, it was a consideration. We didn't take any steps past that once we knew those numbers and the small numbers of our existing lot; it just didn't seem like it was a way to go. As to busing, you thought about maybe busing our parishioners in. As you all know, we have the school over on Carson Street. And the school would provide for us plenty of parking and we could bring our parishioners over there. To incorporate something like that would take the goodwill of our parishioners who would be willing to do that. We don't know if we would purchase or lease or rent these shuttles or vans, or how that would work. There is one interesting little picture over there of Sonoma Avenue,

looking at the point of the park looking down Sonoma Avenue, toward the railroad tracks, and there's cars parked on both sides of it, and I can't imagine that we'd drive too big of a minibus up that street.

Greer: (inaudible)...go up and down that street.

Hardin: I understand that. But it is a narrow street. And it's something we could definitely look into. We're certainly open to talking to the Presbyterian Church. I know they used the Wilson parking lot. My feeling is, our parishioners, unless they're required to do that, unless they absolutely have to, I don't think they're going to want to park in Wilson Park. But we may get them to park at our school. We may be able to work out something there. Yes, sir.

Richard Rose: My name is Richard Rose and I live on Engracia Avenue. Respectfully speaking, I have done parking surveys for the last two weeks on Sundays. I started at 7:00 in the morning and finished at 12:30. The farthest you are going to have to walk, this is done anywhere from five to fifteen minutes after mass, I'm going to present this to you tonight. The farthest that anyone would have to walk is two blocks to two-and-one-half blocks. You're telling me as a homeowner that you're not sensitive enough to my property and my property value to walk two-and-one-half blocks, one day per week. I'm sorry, I'm not going to be very happy with you. That is just really disrespectful. And to have the gentleman, with respect, stand up here and tell me that my property values are going to increase is downright insulting. I'm sorry. (applause) Jerry wouldn't have that place at his home in Palos Verdes.

Hardin: Okay. First of all, I think when we do that we're getting a little bit personal and I think... (inaudible).

Rose: (inaudible)...this *is* a little bit personal. You've not proved a thing (inaudible)...think you have a big parking problem and you don't have a big parking problem. We bought our house here, sir, we knew the church was here. We are Catholics. We knew that was going to happen on Sunday in one part of the day. And so what happens is, now you are asking us to say, "You've been a good neighbor and have not had a problem with this. All of a sudden, we're going to take this whole thing away six-and-one-half days a week just because we are inconvenienced for three hours. And it's not (inaudible), it's just three hours. That's just not fair.

Hardin: Our parishioners, they're not complaining.

Rose: We're your parishioners.

Hardin: We didn't invite our parishioners to this meeting. If our parishioners live within this area, then they were invited here. Our parishioners did not come to us and say, "Can we do something about the parking?" They did not come to us and say, "This is something we want or we're not coming to church here." It was the church's feeling that the neighbors had more of a problem with the parking than our parishioners.

Rose: That is not true.

Unidentified Woman: Which neighbors? (inaudible audience comments.)

Hardin: Okay, well, you're here tonight and you're letting us know.

Rose: Don't say things that are not true.

Hardin: I don't think I've come up here and lied intentionally about anything. Honestly, I don't know...(inaudible.)

Rose: (inaudible)...parking problem, and that's the difference.

Hardin: Yes, we do have a parking problem.

Rose: (inaudible)...We don't think you do.

Hardin: Okay. Okay. All right. Right here in the front row.

Cameron Agnew: (youth) My name is Cameron Agnew of Amapola Avenue. For me, Triangle Park is the closest park to my house where I can feel safe and have fun. We understand that you need parking and we have come up with a solution. You could rent parking somewhere close, like Torrance High, and have a shuttle such as a 15-passenger van for the elderly or for people with young children. Too many people in this country are overweight, so some people could walk. (audience laughter and inaudible comments)...children also need to exercise. If you take away all of our parks, slowly but surely all the kids will be stuck inside playing brain-sucking videogames and watching TV (audience laughter.) We need more grass and trees. More grass and trees equals more oxygen in the air for our growing brains and bodies. Please don't take it away. Can you just take the smiles off our faces like that? Thank you for your time and may the Lord bless you. Good night. (applause)

Hays: Thank you, Cameron.

Denise Beggs: Hi, folks. I am Janet Payne's proxy this evening. What a pleasure for me. Janet has a prepared statement. I am Denise Beggs of Amapola, Janet is on Engracia Avenue; a 30-year resident. [Reads prepared statement.]

Good evening, community members, I am unable to attend the meeting tonight due to my family's annual get-together in Louisville, Kentucky. There is not too much that would keep me away but this is one case where the commitment was already made. Since hearing of this proposed idea of turning Triangle Park and green space into a parking lot for Nativity Church, I have pondered many scenarios. The most prevalent in my mind has been a song that keeps popping up by Joni Mitchell from her "Blue" Album: "Yellow Taxi Cab." I would sing it for you if I were there, but....here goes...

"....Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
'Til it's gone?
They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot...."

[applause] How appropriate these words are for this situation. Let's appreciate what we have...Triangle Park...a green space in OUR neighborhood for EVERYONE. Once we lose green space we never get it back. In this historic part of our original town designed by Frederic Law Olmsted, Jr. and his brother John C., parks and open space were an integral part of living in this modern industrial garden city where people could live, work and play. Let's never change that!

I am currently in the town where my family lives and where my husband and I were both raised. Mr. Olmsted designed ALL the parks and parkways where the Louisville residents have markers on every park indicating the prestige of such a renowned landscape architect and his involvement with this town and their parks. We could take a lesson from their pride regarding our own parks and open spaces in Torrance.

Nativity Church could encourage all their local parishioners to walk to church and perhaps consider an out of area parking lot with a small shuttle bus providing an alternative to overcrowding the local streets around the church. That very same bus could be used for other parishioner activities.

In a time where we are craving open space, I should think it is a time to take action and keeping what green space we have by keeping Triangle Park. Perhaps we could even band together as a community and do some improvements to the park in a joyful community spirit. The City of Torrance has an Adopt-A-Park program already in place and I am sure the Old Torrance Neighborhood Association could

organize the "adoption" efforts. I stand ready and willing to roll up my sleeves and pitch in. How about each of you?

Respectfully submitted by Janet Payne. Thank you. (applause)

Kim Akhavan: Good evening, I am Kim Akhavan of Sonoma Avenue. I want to thank the church for inviting us, first of all, to share our two cents on this. I do appreciate it. I'm really not concerned with the uses of the parking lot. The parking lot's utility is already clear to me. It's the misuses of the parking lot that I don't think we've examined carefully enough. Basically, I feel that parking lots, in my experience as a Torrance High graduate and I've been a high school student, I've been a high school teacher and I am a high school teacher, I pretty much know that parking lots are where people gather to exchange drugs. Parking lots are where people gather to figure out where the next big party is going to be. They loiter. They play their music in the wee hours of the morning. They leave their (inaudible) and trash all around their cars and drive away and, quite frankly, I live close enough to that park where that trash is probably going to roll onto my property before anyone, even (inaudible) scheduled maintenance, has the opportunity to pick it up. So, quite frankly, I also think that, in view of the fact that we've had a lot of recent break-ins, the last thing we need is easy access parking where people can stop near our homes, take what they want and have a quick getaway without having to deal with the narrow streets and parallel parking which has probably been part of our protection thusfar. So, really, I want to urge you not to "pave paradise and put up a parking lot" simply because parking lots breed trash, breed crime and you only invite the wrong elements to not only come into our neighborhood, but to hang out there and to trash it. So that's something I think we really need to think about with regard to these plans. (applause)

Gene Schelest: Gene Schelest of Cota. I don't have as much to say as all you folks; I'm just a renter. I am a Torrance resident almost (inaudible) it goes all the way back to (inaudible.) I have a small gripe, I guess. On Sunday morning my truck, it's new to me, was hit. No note, no nothing. And it was hit on Sunday morning. The damage was minimal, it cleaned up, but I still would say no to the parking lot for a problem for three hours, once a week. I mouthed off a second ago and said the parishioners were lazy. I'm sorry about that, but it's right. It's two-and-a-half blocks to walk and it's like everything everywhere, everyone's always running late, even to church. So they get in quick mode and people are blocking other people's driveways and you're getting the phone complaints on that. Talk to the parishioners once in a while, "Please don't block the residents' driveways." Please pay a little more attention.

Unidentified Woman: Or the crosswalks.

Schelest: Or the crosswalks. The walking thing, there's a lot of parking around here where they can walk (inaudible.) So what (he) said about the safety thing, if it's a parking lot, I've still got skateboards. Okay, so then the kids are going to be on skateboards. So they can't really say...if they ran in the street because the kids didn't look, it's the parents that need to say, "Look both ways." They still need to say that. So, I'm against it.

Hays: Thank you.

MaryAnn Reis: I'm MaryAnn Reis of Engracia.

Hays: MaryAnn, maybe you'd better come up here to the microphone so people can hear you better. And while MaryAnn's making her way up here, I'm sorry I forgot to introduce the OTNA board. This is Michael Peterson, he's our Treasurer; this is Liz Fobes, she is the OTNA Secretary; and this is Trish Stewart, she is our Vice President. MaryAnn?

Reis: MaryAnn Reis of Engracia. We walk. The thing is, we just live up the next block. We see everything and our parish is...quite a few elderly people in our parish and they can't walk that far. And they drive around and around; half the time I'm standing saying, "Don't go there, go there. No parking up there. There's parking back there." We have a terrible parking problem. Our schoolchildren, you know where our school is, over on Carson, a lot of times they walk to the church and back. It would make it a lot safer for them if the crosswalks...and without the trying to park there. And, well there are quite a few...well, it would make it a lot safer and more convenient for the elderly. The elderly and the children at the school. It would make it a lot better for them, too. Besides (inaudible.) And when we have visitors, you can have your visitors park over there.

Hays: Thank you, MaryAnn.

Steve Izzi: (Inaudible)

Unidentified Woman: We can't hear you.

Hays: Do you want to come up here, Steve?

Izzi: Hello, my name is Steve Izzi and I live on Cota, and I'm representing my property owner, Wajejan, and the rest of my neighbors. I'm a person who's complained about the parking in the past to the church. But to be honest with you, it's not really a problem. Someone here said it's a "we thing." I think this parking lot is self-serving for the church. (inaudible) here in Torrance don't have a problem parking. I mean, I'm here all day long and the streets are pretty much empty. So

when he said this is a “we thing,” it’s really a church thing. And I totally disagree with it and I don’t want to see this go through. (applause)

Hays: (inaudible) has just suggested if you would like some air time, then you can form a line over there and that might help speed things up to get people up to the mike.

Pam Carnesi: Good evening. My name is Pam Carnesi. My husband Tom and I live on Manuel, which is one house over from the church. Our little house was built in 1924 for the first postmaster of Torrance. I know about our history; we’re members of OTNA and also the Historical Society. Just a few positive things that have happened to me. I’m the “mad gardener” out there with the kneepads, you’ve probably seen me, because I have arthritis. And I’ve had the chance to talk to a lot of the parishioners. I’ve enjoyed their company. Right now I have flowers blooming that were gifts, we’ve exchanged plants and so on. I recall the day my battery died on Sunday. Even though my husband was there, three different men from three different groups, dressed up to the nines, stopped and offered to help me. So I’ve had very positive experiences.

Having said that...first of all, I’m an old refugee from the sixties, I’m a tree-hugger, I admit it. Okay? It may be open space on the side, Jerry, but if it’s paved, we don’t more Southern California pavement with runoff, no water absorption, no oxygen exchange. Even the little pieces, we’ve got to save the ones we have left. Secondly, in the matter of the trees, I became interested in that a couple of years ago because from my kitchen window I could see the first one, it was dying. I believe this is correct, I talked to the city arborologist and to the head of the crew who came out to remove that tree when it finally toppled. Unfortunately, a few years ago somebody used a non-disinfected chainsaw or something when they were pruning the tree. Those trees have a virus, so a lot of them are going to go anyway, and I’m already noticing across the street and over on Post some of the other palms are starting to look the same. So, I know you did it in good faith, literally, but you can’t promise to keep those trees there because they’re going to need total replacement.

I also very much resent hearing that the charming little area called a “dog park.” We have lived here for seven-and-a-half years, most of our neighbors have been here twenty years or more. Tell them it’s a dog park. By the way, as far as we’re concerned, it has a name. It’s called Triangle Park. And please try and tell people it’s a dog park when they raised their kids watching fireworks there on the Fourth of July. You know, our neighbor across the street, he watched his son grow up playing catch with him in that park. We got to enjoy it as observers. That park’s a little treasure, and why shouldn’t people have a chance to enjoy their pets over there, talk to other people, interact?

The other thing I noticed, and I'm getting into hot water here, but I just want to point it out. I think we may be addressing the wrong problem. In the course of talking with a large number of parishioners, I have noticed that a large number of them are guests and to me that implies a certain degree of manners in our community. They do not live in this area, and I'd like to see an actual analysis of how many people actually live in the area (applause.) This is not just a neighborhood church. It's almost like a cathedral in the way it draws. I've never seen anything like it. The other churches in this area don't have that kind of turnout and turnover. Two things that have come up in conversation often when I'm talking to people. One is that a large number of people come from Lomita, and they have the beautiful St. Margaret Mary over there. But they tell me that they prefer this church because the sermons are better and they feel more supported. Perhaps somebody within the church needs to address that issue with the staff of St. Margaret Mary. (laughter) The other thing I've noticed is that many of them, don't squeal and give names, people do come in by automobile from, I don't know, a lot of people from the Torrance P.O. and I've met people from San Pedro. Perhaps what you need is to take this half million as a down payment towards a church in their own neighborhood. Okay? Then you'd have two neighborhood churches instead of the neighborhood church which is overwhelmed from the outside. Thank you. (applause)

Ricky Villarosa: Good evening, my name is Ricky Villarosa. I live on Amapola Avenue. I used to live, I still live in the Torrance P.O. but I like the neighborhood so much that I bought the house on Amapola. I haven't moved in, I've been working on it, but I'm really looking forward to being a part of this neighborhood. That's one of the things, the park...this church, was one of the reasons I moved my family here. I got married at Nativity Church and there are beautiful pictures of my wedding at that park. So, Jerry, you are an intelligent man, you did your research, you know, it's part of your education at USC. You studied historical communities and you probably realize that one of the benefits of a well-planned community is a nice, usable open space. And with all the development that's going on, we are losing that. And I think that's one of the appeals we have here in Triangle Park is that little surprise you get. You drive Manuel and, lo and behold, there's Nativity Church with a nice, big open space.

And you know...you did your homework, you did analyze that the park area is 8,500 square feet and with your design you were able to yield 9,500 square feet of open space landscaping. But my question is, how much of that is usable open space? I mean, we have 8,500 square feet of usable open space. You look at the site plan, you have little pockets of landscaped areas, but you can't throw a ball in it, you can't kick a soccer ball, you can't (inaudible) your kid. So let's not try to be a (inaudible) thing. You're taking away usable (inaudible.) It is a parking lot. It was never intended to be a parking lot. It was intended to be a building, that's what they had planned it to be. But let's talk about what it's being used for now. It's a park. And I think the neighbors are speaking out quite clearly.

I'm also a Nativity parishioner, and I bought that house so my mom could walk to church and my wife could walk our son to school. And I think that, as you know...you probably keep track of the real estate market, homes in Pasadena, Altadena, even Riverside, all these communities that were planned in the 1920s and the 1910s, all have these bungalows, Spanish-style, very much like our community here. Those areas are over their value. Now, you take away the park, I think that you're taking away something special that really belongs to the community. And I respect your responsibility; the church went to you as a client. They asked you to design this. Economics are involved. You probably saw the site and thought to yourself, I hope, at one point in your evaluation of whether to get this contract signed, "Is this really the right thing for me to do? As an architect, as a professional, you evaluate your...(inaudible.)"

(Inaudible cross-talk between church representatives and speaker.)

Hays: We need to give him a little time...(inaudible, multiple voices speaking at once.)

Villarosa: ...already had his time. (inaudible) Your cost factor, I don't think you probably talked to a parking lot contractor. It would probably cost around \$15,000 (a space?) for subterranean parking. So if you want to hire a parking consultant, then you can evaluate different options.

Hays: Jerry, is there anything that you want to say?

Rodin: (inaudible)

Hardin: I just want to catch up on a few things. Certainly, we want everybody here to be able to voice their opinions. And I think we probably should be considerate of the time so everybody does get a chance. I just want to address a few of the things that've been brought up. You know, yes, we do have a lot of people from other areas, neighborhoods and cities that visit our church, but ultimately the church is in the business of making everyone welcome. It's very hard for us to say, "I'm sorry, but you can't come to our church." And as many as the people from Lomita, San Pedro and Carson are coming to here, people who live in the Torrance area that our parish serves are going to St. James, St. Lawrence, St. Margaret Mary. There's crossover that exists certainly throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and there's just not a lot that can be done about that. I just wanted to throw that out there.

We did talk about the palm trees that might be nearing the end of their life and the city is (inaudible.) Any tree that could not be relocated would be replaced with a suitable palm tree.

The church's stand on cars that are parked in driveways and crosswalks, it's the church's stand that you're the owner; have them towed away. Really, we tell our parishioners, "please be courteous of our neighbors." And the ones that are courteous, they're the ones that listen. Really, we could tell the people in church, "somebody's blocking the crosswalk; please move your car." And I guarantee, whoever's driving that car is not going to get up and move their car. It's just the nature of people, it's not the nature of Catholics or religious people (laughter), it's the nature of people. We see it everywhere. People park their cars where ever they want to park their cars for whatever reason (inaudible) where they think they're going to, and we're no different. So really, if those cars are blocking your driveway, hitting your cars and you have the license, report that to the police. Because certainly the church is not protecting these people who are doing that. And it's not just from Nativity Church. You know, there's a church across the street, there's the Woman's Club...who knows where all this traffic is coming from and going to but, yes, it does exist. And I guess I just wanted to catch up on that and let the next person come up and talk.

Hays: Thank you, Robert.

Dayna Berman: Dayna Berman from Post. I've lived in downtown historic Torrance for 25 years, and I've only lived on two streets. I've lived on Engracia and most definitely I now live on Post. For the first two years I was here, I lived directly across the street from Nativity Catholic Church, cater-corner from the Triangle (park) on Engracia. I can tell you from personal experience, we have a big problem with the parishioners from Nativity, and two or three times a month, my husband or I or one of our other neighbors would go to the church to actually complain—not about the parking situation—but about individual parishioners. There would be times when there would be a wedding on a Saturday that people that were in the wedding at Nativity Church would park three deep in our driveway. I would call the police, they would get towed, the Torrance police were wonderful. They would be there right away. But I work on the weekend, and when I don't get to work on time, it's a problem. And I couldn't wait for the police to come (inaudible) the cars and get them towed away. So I am in many wedding videos (audience laughter) getting people to move their cars.

On Sundays, there was also a big problem that cars would be parked on Manuel and the men would change their oil while the women and children went to church, and the oil cans would remain along the side of our house. The stories just went on and on and on. We could deal with the parking, the times that the Annex had Nativity School meetings on the first Tuesday when school starts, whatever. But it's the individual inconsiderate parishioners that, I think, if anyone was complaining about, that's who we were complaining about.

I also did a little research myself. Some of the research that I found was slightly different. One of the things I found was a city meeting on December 5, 1922. It was Resolution No. 97 which was a resolution accepting a deed to the city streets, alleys and parks and instructing the City Clerk to cause same to be recorded...it goes on and on and on...filed by the City Clerk, and seconded and so forth. Also, we checked with the Assessor's office, and the Assessor's office shows this plot of land as actually deeded to the City of Torrance. Something that's been said a lot about the building on this lot, that Olmsted allowed a building. Well, it was not any building, it was a public building on the original plot map. And as far as the notice that was sent to the neighbors, I really don't consider this park to be, and I quote, "a dog run." It is a park that many of our children play in, throw balls in, play kickball in, have picnics in, spend a lot of time in. At one point, a few years back, I think it's now about 10 to 15 years ago, the lawn started not to look as good as it was. The neighbor on Engracia, which was directly across the street from the park, went to the city and found out that the people that were maintaining it happened to have personal problems and the neighbors themselves took turns turning on the sprinkler system to water the park and to mow it. And it wasn't that big of a problem. We can certainly do that again.

Rodin: Just a few points. And this isn't rebuttal or anything; it's just information. There are three open spaces that are larger than just planters in this area (Parking Improvement Plan.) And if you notice, there's one that we are calling a Serenity Court and we put a fountain in and it's a large, open grass area. So that is adjacent to the church. One of the problems with the site is there's a very large change of grade between the sidewalk and the church. What we've done is we've actually brought up the site gradually and you don't even notice it because it's two percent or less. But we've basically brought down the dominance of the church to the area and created a court up there which everybody can utilize. The parking situation: There would be no parking in that lot except for the outside 30-some stalls. We have operated gates on all the ingress and egress points of location. So there wouldn't be partying there at night. Obviously, anybody can go into your yard and jump the wall and party there, too. Come on, I mean, this is reality. But we would prohibit vehicles from actually going in to the main body of the parking lot at night. Just a little note for you guys, the parking around the area of the church needs 82 spaces, we have 32. The Episcopal Church down the street needs 60 stalls; it has two. The Woman's Club needs 50; it has zero. So, you're right, it is a parking problem. And it's obviously a negative of parking. If you're willing to deal with it, that's...(interrupted.) We're not creating things here. If you were a parking analyst, you'd say, yeah, there was a parking problem. And again, this is an opportunity for solutions guidance. This isn't, we're not shoving things down your throat. Please, this is very helpful.

Bill Sutherland: First of all, I will be brief. Bill Sutherland of El Prado. (Inaudible) for 25 years. The last three years, Jerry, I've been to a lot of city council meetings

beside developers. This is kind of typical. Somebody who does not live in Torrance, nor probably willing to live in Torrance, nor will the people who are using the park live in Torrance. We live here seven days a week, 360-some-odd days a year (inaudible.) We do not want the parking lot. I'm not...(applause.)

Hays: (inaudible)...be brief as well...(inaudible.)

Kami Akhavan: Hey, there, folks. My name is Kami Akhavan, I live on Sonoma Street. I want to make a few disjointed points. And one of them is, I used to live on El Prado Street, now I'm on Sonoma Street and, as everyone in this neighborhood knows, there's a lot of churches and there's a lot of traffic on Sundays. (Inaudible) for the church across on Carson, and the one down Sonoma Street, there's this one across the street, there's Nativity Church, there's a lot of churches out there. So guess what? Church is on Sunday and that's one day out of the week. I've walked past that park, I drive past it every single day on my way home. I've seen nuns playing ball in the park. They're using it. (Laughter, applause.)

I want to talk about Manuel Street. Manuel Street is not just a small stretch of road, it's not someone's personal driveway, it's a throughfare that people go in and out of to get through this neighborhood. Whenever you take away that throughfare, that means that many more cars are going to go right in front of my door. I also don't see cars circling the block looking for a lot. The sermons are timed well enough where, when one ends, there's a good chunk of time before the next one begins. So that means, you're not going to go around the block ten times before you find a spot, you're going to keep going until you get to your ultimate empty area. So there's not a lot of repeat traffic at my point.

I also wanted to talk about another solution. First of all, I loved Sue's [sic] solution about getting the shuttle bus. This is just my off-the-head estimate and, trust me, I don't know anything about this. But I'm figuring \$500 a day is what it costs to get a shuttle bus for three hours. That seems overpriced to me, but let's say it's \$500 a day. Well, when you do the math, folks, it comes out to about 20 years of shuttle service. That, in my estimation, is a pretty good chunk of change toward solving the problem, not to mention that the church has already said that they're going to take up the cost of maintaining the lot, which is an ongoing cost which they could use to offset the shuttle service as well.

Another solution is because there's four churches in this neighborhood and because they all use the same parking areas, why not coordinate those times of those sermons with those other areas? So that way you could space out the sermons and you could alleviate some of the congestion that way. So, those are my disjointed points. I am definitely against the parking lot and I love the park. (applause)

Lisa Shive: Hi, my name is Lisa Shive and I live on Amapola. And of course I'm trying to not be selfish here, I do have five children ages 11 and under. And when the man who came to show me the plans yesterday came to our house, he said, "Oh your house is very tight for five children."

And I said, "Interestingly enough, they're at Triangle Park right now playing." (laughter) So it was kind of funny, he chuckled a little bit. I will not belabor that. I do go to a very large church in Hermosa Beach, and we have extremely large...we have had huge problems with parking. Because we're right at the Pacific Coast Highway, Hope Chapel for those of you who have been in this area for any length of time. We own the Albertson's building on the corner, but it's been in a 99-year lease and they have quite a few years left. We've been trying to (inaudible) our parishioners to not take up parking at Albertson's. So what we have done, and it's been...we've done this for many years, and I wanted to offer this as a viable solution for you tonight.

We have what we call a "Parking Ministry" and it's an option...(inaudible) the men and women who volunteer for this orange little vests, we invested \$2,000, is all, in walkie-talkies and they let everyone know as they drive up, "This is the place where you can stop and let off the elderly," like it could be right here on Manuel. But the elderly...have to know in Southern California it rarely rains but on the occasion it does, my husband stops, drops us off and takes off. And we go to church and he goes to park sometimes a block, two blocks away. And you've kind of got to be responsible in planning your day and be on time to church. And that's another thing. We're sensitive to the fact that a lot of times we're not running on time. So then this is just your great opportunity to the family members of the...parishioners and drop their families off and then shuttle on over, or park a few blocks over and walk. So that's an option.

Also there is so much parking in downtown Old Torrance. I know, I drive it six days a week to Lauridsen Ballet Centre; that's four times a day back and forth. And there're swarms of parking. On Saturdays, oftentimes, I work in a little boutique in Beverly Hills, and I see all the trams and everyone with their yarmulkes on and they're all walking and sometimes there're eight blocks (inaudible) having the time of their life walking to synagogue. So it's really not a lot to ask for people coming into the area to park a few blocks away. And I think I have covered it. So the orange vest for the Parking Ministry, what a great opportunity for some parishioners to get involved...(inaudible), so if walkie-talkie (inaudible,) we'll be happy. (laughter, applause)

Maureen O'Donnell: Maureen O'Donnell of Beech. In 1977, I made an offer on the house on the corner, the little brown house, directly across from Nativity Church. I thought it was a charming little house. I made an offer on it, it was on the corner; very nice. And then I started to look around. And then I realized. Not only

did the church have activities on Sunday, they've got funerals through the week, they've got daily mass through the week. And, by the way, I am a parishioner of this church. In addition to that, there's the Women's Club. Daytime functions, nighttime functions, the weeknights, weekends they have functions...the Episcopal Church has functions. I thought, "Wait a minute. I would be crazy to buy that house." My friends and family would never be able to park near me to come and visit. I'd have to go to all of them. What I'm suggesting to you is that not only is this parking a nuisance, but some of these suggestions are unrealistic. For example, a shuttle. A shuttle to take the parishioners, have them park over at the Nativity School yard. Have you seen that yard? It doesn't have enough capacity to park all of the cars on Sundays.

Unidentified Woman: (Inaudible)...Wilson Park.

O'Donnell: Talked about...well, Wilson Park, if you're there, you'll know Wilson Park is crowded day to night. Wilson Park has lots and lots of activities. (many inaudible voices in audience) Now wait a minute. The idea of parking blocks away and infringing on neighbors' streets is not a good thing, either. I really think that you would be really well served to give serious thought to this plan. I truly believe it would raise property values in this neighborhood. Who wants to buy a house where you can't even park your own car in front of it because there's so much activity going on on your street? (inaudible comments from audience) It doesn't make a lot of sense, it's not esthetically pleasing and it would take the load away from the Woman's Club. The Episcopal Church now has grown into a very large Korean congregation. They have a very, very large congregation. They bring far more cars in than the Episcopal Church has on hand for its own services. So there's a lot to consider here. And I think if you really give some thought to this I think you will be very well served. This will not only be a parking lot, but it would be a pretty thing with lots of lovely landscaping and it would alleviate the neighborhood problem. (applause, inaudible comments)

Hays: Okay, we're going to continue to be respectful of the speakers no matter (what) their opinion. That would be good, and we're just trying to get through to the end of this. It's almost 8:00 PM but I just wanted to make sure everyone (inaudible.)

Serena Beggs: (youth) Hello, my name is Serena Beggs. I live on Amapola. And I have lived here for nine years with my parents, they came here, they love the landscaping of our neighborhood (inaudible) and they also thought they had a park, too. I have played there for many years, since I have been born. I was just there today with some of my friends (inaudible) and played with them for about two or three hours, and I thought it was beautiful. And I really think that even though we may have some problems, but it may be beautiful. Thank you. (applause)

Mary Steinkamp: My name is Mary Steinkamp. I live on Acacia. And I would like to see an alternate plan. Something maybe utilizing Manuel. To me, it seems like that street is not really, even though it looks like they just paved it, but maybe there's some way that could be used for some kind of parking that would increase...? And I would like to see an alternate plan. The plan as is stands now is, "No." Thank you.

Rene Asosti: My name is Rene Asosti and we've lived here in Torrance for 35 years. My beautiful mother is in the back there and I see a lot of my neighbors here. First of all, I want to thank all of you for coming out here because this is what it takes to make us all a community. And we should be doing more of this and we should be doing more of this at the City Council because as I'm sure, you all have seen, our Mayor and City Council are turning Torrance into a whole other city-within-a-city. So, please, if you could all show up there more often, too, because we've got a whole lot more problems than just this. We'd very much appreciate it. Thank you to all of you. I just want to briefly say here that the 73 spaces that you're proposing here really does not solve the problem at all. We've got a much bigger problem than 73 spaces and the absolute solution for this is that Torrance and the Wilson Park shuttle service...(applause.) There are plenty of spaces, there are plenty of churches that absolutely bus their people in and out; it's an extremely viable solution.

Something else that most of you probably aren't familiar with, and Daniel McCama, my neighbor, if you could help me out with some of the specifics, because I know you have it better than I do, most of you probably don't realize that all of these homes built right next door to you...this property was offered to this church, Nativity Church, a number of years ago by their parishioners at a very reasonable price. They turned it down, and one of the priests, Daniel McConnaughey, can verify this to you and one of the priests himself told it to me that one of the other priests who turned it down boasted that he saved the church, wasn't it a great thing that he saved the church, so much money by turning that property down and the priest said to me, he even admitted that that was not a good thing, but he did (it.) So I don't feel that we, now the community, should have to bear the responsibility and the cost of the (inaudible) having made that decision. And now you want to come in and you want to go ahead and take our property away from us. That is definitely not the answer. You made a bad mistake and we should not be the ones to pay for your bad mistake. You have an absolute viable solution, but (inaudible) parishioners think it's a viable solution, and if you're serious about wanting not going forward unless you have the approval of your community, your plan tonight, it's being very well said to you, that no one, the majority of people here, do not want this to happen. And we're tired of showing up at the City Council meetings, 97 percent of the people asking them not to do something, and then (inaudible) you people do something anyway.

Let's all make sure that doesn't happen. Because this country is a democracy and the voice of the people tonight says, "We don't want this." And I'm sure you don't want me to keep talking to you like this, (inaudible) but if you people want this not to happen, let's make sure that this doesn't happen. Okay? (applause)

Hays: Okay, we've got just a little bit of time left, so we'll have to keep this short. Bonnie Mae?

Bonnie Mae Barnard: Hi, I'm Bonnie Mae Barnard, in case you don't know me yet. I'm a co-founder of Save Historic Old Torrance and we're in a very wonderful historic neighborhood. I, too, am very glad that we came out tonight, because this is our neighborhood. Tonight we were given a proposal of the parking lot, to lose some open space that technically isn't a park but, gosh, it is a park. And quite frankly, I'm a little insulted because, gosh I keep hearing this from developers—for those of you who don't know, I spend a lot of time at City Council--and we're hearing over and over how "this is *our* neighborhood" (the developer, the architect) and that this will help our neighborhood and improve our property values when, in fact, historic preservation raises property values across the board, across the nation. In every community where historic preservation is in effect, property values are soaring. There was also some discussion about that the city has vacated dozens of properties in the past. Well, so, let's not make the same mistake again. (inaudible)...also said something about, gosh, we've got this deeded to you from a third party and after the city vacates city streets, then you will legally own the property. Which says the city has some say in it already. And we are the city; we are the people and this is our community.

You talked about safety and how a parking structure, although beautiful for a parking structure, would create a safer place. Any time there's more cars, it's less safe for our community and for our children. I looked at several (inaudible) things by the National Trust on Historic Places and they repeatedly say that if you widen a street, property values go down, traffic is increased, it's a less desirable place to live.

You've heard several alternatives tonight...a minivan, shuttling. We have a (inaudible) in North Torrance and they do that all the time. People park in one place, then they shuttle. I, too, have been a past member of Hope Chapel – Torrance and seen how the Parking Ministry works. It works very well. People can and will be shuttled. To say that "our parishioners won't do that unless they choose to," well that's true. They won't. But the community chooses not to have her park destroyed and a parking lot put in its place. So I just think that, you know you talked about reality, and I think reality is that this is not something our community looks forward to, not something we want and you will not find the community support that you hoped to find when you take this before council. Thank you. (applause)

Shane McCarter: (youth) I'm Shane McCarter and I live right next to the Annex. And I think that...well, actually, I've been playing at the Triangle Park for like almost ten years now. Today when we were playing baseball, like nobody was in the street. Yeah (inaudible.) Well, really, I just want to keep it because like I'll just be stuck in and I'll just keep getting fatter (laughter.) And I just want to, yeah, I want to play with friends...play baseball. Yeah. I think this really bites, what they're doing. Okay, thanks. (applause)

Tim Birbeck: Hi, my name is Tim Birbeck and I live on Acacia. And I think that the church started off by saying the genesis of the park, excuse me, the parking lot idea was to solve the problem of parking for the neighborhood. I think if you guys are sincere about that, you would give a survey to the neighborhood and find out if everyone shares your opinion. I don't think we do, based on the input today. So please consider that. And I think you guys would go a long way if you were a little more sincere about it. Please don't come to this meeting and tell us that you chose not to buy a house in this neighborhood because of the parking situation and then tell us what's the solution for us. At please don't come to this meeting and tell us that you're going to protect our own children from playing in a park, what we consider a park. That's not sincere to me so, please, listen to the people. Take the survey and, if you're sincere, you'll see that the people of this neighborhood don't like the solution that you have proposed. Okay. (applause)

Unidentified Woman: I will be very quick. That little brown house on the corner? That's my house, and I love it. (laughter) I love it, and I think it's the cutest house ever, and I just love that house. But a parking lot is not going to solve my problem. It's not. I bought that house knowing that there is a church across the street. It's a busy church, but it's a beautiful church and I also have a park. And I love both aspects of that. And I love my house, even though everybody else has already lived in it when it was a rental. (laughter) But this parking plan will not solve my problem. I bought it knowing I live across the street from the church. And so, we need to really find some alternate solution if this is what the parishioners are complaining about. (applause)

Patrick Vargo: My name is Patrick Vargo. I've lived here for three years right across the street from the church. I went out on Sunday and just counted how many cars parked around the triangle and on the street going between the park and the church, there was 33 cars parked there already. So if they're proposing 73 parking spots, take away those 33, we're only going to add 40 new ones. And then you also have the problem with parking the cars heading in. And now you've got traffic with people in those 37 parking spots where people are going to have to back out. And that's another safety issue. (applause)

Judy Weber: Hi, my name is Judy Weber and I live on Border Avenue. And I just wanted to say real quickly that it was stated that, "who wants to live with people

parking in front of their house all the time? That's an unjust way to live in your neighborhood." Well, it's Old Torrance, we don't have much parking, some houses are built with no garage, so that's an accepted fact. The overcrowding usually happens one day a week; the parking lot is forever...a concrete, hard (inaudible) forever. We lose our park. And our Olmsted District is chiseled away at little by little by little. Please be a responsible member of the community as a church, and save our Olmsted District. And not let things get whittled away just because of convenience.

Unidentified Woman: Hear, hear. (applause)

Hays: Okay. Jerry, the architect, is going to come up and close for...(inaudible discussion involving multiple voices.)

MaryAnn Reis: My name is MaryAnn Reis of Engracia...(inaudible)...forgot something, very important. I'm not only a member of Nativity Parish, I'm also a member of Save Historic Old Torrance. And I would like to remind our members of some of the videos that they've shown us at our meetings. They have shown parking lots here with trees, parking lots here without trees, and this, I'd say, is a lot prettier than any of those that had trees. (Inaudible comment from unidentified woman in audience, followed by applause.)

Rodin: Hi, how do you guys feel? I'm exhausted. (laughter) But I've got a ton of notes here. And they're very well received. I'm seeing about five major issues that you're bringing up tonight. Hopefully (inaudible). If I missed anything, you're more than welcome to write a letter...send it to the church or send it to my office. Maybe we can continue, obviously we can continue this discussion. First thing, I see an constructive plan. First of all, you want to survey the area. That makes a lot of sense to me. The second thing is, it's sort of a really neat idea was the walkie-talkie idea. You called it a Parking Administrator. Also, you're coming up with ideas of using shuttle buses. Reviewing alternate areas outside the local area for parking. In other words, create some sort of a radius around the area where we can actually take people to and back. That would obviously take a lot of different coordination between other properties, other ownerships, that type of a thing. Stanford, the gentleman in the Stanford shirt came up with the idea of surveying the area, which I very much appreciate. And, obviously, I think the biggest thing here that I see is, you absolutely love your park. There's no doubt about that. And I think really the shuttle is really a two-part system. And there's another solution, too, it's walking that you're coming up with. It's park out of the area; you don't mind people parking on the street...walk to the site. So I will review these notes and I'll come up with a couple of other ideas, but also the alternate design is also another idea.

Unidentified Man: ...I have a pretty extensive survey started of the area... (inaudible) homeowners with their names (inaudible.)

Rodin: It would be very much appreciated. Now all this information is going to be put together and it's going to be digested. So you haven't spent your energy here, obviously there's been a lot of energy here in this room, and you haven't wasted your time.

Unidentified Man: (inaudible)

Rodin: I think that's the same idea, but yeah, absolutely. Understand this also, that's not an asphalt parking lot. I think everybody is under the understanding that that parking lot is asphalt. It is not. It's fulminite. And also we had an idea of grasscrete. A woman made the comment here tonight about the oxygenation. We seriously looked at that, and we do have that in our portfolio. We've done the research with the grasscrete companies and, although it doesn't solve your problem of the baseball field or the golfing, chipping, that type of a thing, it does bring back the greenness and the openness of the park area. So, I don't know if anybody...I appreciate everybody coming tonight (inaudible) finish up. Thank you.

Unidentified Man: So what's the next step? Will there be another meeting?

Rodin: Absolutely. This is not...again, remember folks, this is the beginning, not the end. (inaudible)

Hardin: I just wanted to say, first of all, the offer for the spaghetti dinner still stands. (laughter) It's wide open, \$5 a plate, and that money does not go to the parking fund, okay? So you're very welcome to that. Absolutely you will be kept up to date on any developments. I know a lot has been said, I think in some, maybe we took some things out on Jerry that, you know we came to Jerry and said, "Help us." He didn't come to us. And Jerry gave the church what the church was looking for.

It's very obvious to us that what Jerry gave us is not what you want. I mean that's...believe me, we got that loud and clear. We will do another meeting. And we'll let you know exactly what we've come up with and what we're working on.

Obviously, we want to be good neighbors. The church feels we've been a good neighbor. You know, someone talked about the weddings we have on Saturdays. I can't make the excuses, but I know at weddings that 75 percent of the people there are not our parishioners. They come from out of town and out of state and you know, I wish we had more control over that. Some of the things we do, we never rent this hall for wedding receptions. Never. It would just cause a huge traffic jams. We don't do it. The only use this hall gets is through our own school or through our own parish, you know, people come (inaudible), if you're not a community service

group, you know what? You can't use the hall. If you run a little league program, yeah, you can use the hall. If you're in AA, you want to have a meeting, yeah, you can use the hall. If you want to set up and vote here, yes, you can use the hall. But we don't rent the hall out. And that's really in sensitivity to you, as neighbors.

And I really want to say that the church is not the bad guy here; the church saw what could be a possible opportunity. We were going to bring it to you guys, no matter what happened. And we did. And we're glad you came out. And we're glad you shared with us. And I apologize for the sound system. And maybe we can put some of our money into new speakers. (laughter) Thank you very much for coming and (inaudible.)

(applause)

Hays: Thank you everybody.

President Hays adjourned the special OTNA meeting at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Fobes, Secretary
Old Torrance Neighborhood Association