

Letter of Explanation

June 29, 2026

**Anna Pehoushek,
Assistant Director of Community Development,
City of Orange Planning Division
300 E. Chapman Ave.
Orange, CA 92866**

**RE: Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Application
California Republic Leadership Academy
1937 – 2011 W. Chapman Avenue, Orange, CA 92868**

Dear Assistant Director Pehoushek:

Please find herein the Letter of Explanation for the California Republic Leadership Academy's ("CRLA" or "Applicant") Conditional Use Permit ("CUP") Application for the proposed new charter school for grades Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through 8th Grade ("Project") within two existing buildings located at 1937 and 2011 W. Chapman Avenue, APN 039-331-40 ("Project Site") in the City of Orange ("City"). CRLA is a tuition-free public charter school that proposes to provide quality education to families in the City of Orange and surrounding areas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Site is presently occupied by several educational use tenants within two existing buildings. Each building currently contains various educationally focused classrooms and associated administrative offices. The two story 23-foot-tall buildings each have 13,478.30 square feet of floor area per floor, with each building totaling 26,956.60 square feet. In total, both buildings cumulatively have 53,913.20 square feet.

CRLA proposes to establish a new charter school with grades TK through 8th Grade beginning in the 2027-2028 school year within the existing buildings. This is a tenant improvement project with limited exterior construction proposed and no proposed exterior façade changes to the existing buildings. To enhance the appearance of the existing building facades without modifying them, a new paint color palette is proposed and depicted in the building elevations. A neutral color paint would be applied to the exterior building walls, with a crimson accent color around the doors, the top portion of the window casing and the exterior stairs. A unifying horizontal line between the first and second floors would have a navy blue color.

This interior tenant improvement will involve a reconfiguration of the interior space to contain 45 total classrooms, including specialty program rooms for music and art, and 11 Breakout Rooms as small meeting places for individual or small groups of students. There will also be one multipurpose room adjacent to the warming kitchen room, and 10 associated offices and school support spaces.

Behind the two existing buildings, the Applicant proposes to provide two new play areas, one 9,210 square feet behind 1937 W Chapman Avenue, and the other 10,760 square feet behind 2011 W. Chapman Avenue. The play areas will include striping for hopscotch, four-square and other recreational activities. Six-foot high ornamental fencing around the perimeter of each play yard is proposed along with a sliding gate and a Knox Box to allow access to the Fire Department at the fire lane hammerhead turnaround. Additionally, to the south of the sliding gates and adjacent to the back of the buildings and associated exterior stairwells, pedestrian gates on either side of a marked crosswalk would provide controlled access from one play area to the other.

To accommodate the new play areas, the Applicant proposes to remove 111 of the 211 existing parking spaces from the surface parking lot, leaving 100 parking spaces available. Access to the on-site parking spaces would be available for staff and guests only. Landscape planters would be added between the rows of parking stalls in the middle of the remaining portion of the surface parking lot in addition to the new trash enclosure. The new trash enclosure will comply with the City’s Trash Enclosures Standard Plan No. 409.

At full build-out, the Applicant proposes to have 20 TK students per classroom, 26 Kindergarten students per classroom, and 30 students per classroom for grades 1 through 8. There will be 3 classrooms per grade. There will be 35 total teachers across all grades and 10 non-teaching/administrative staff on-site. Of the 45 staff members, 5 to 8 staff will operate as traffic control coordinators during pick-up/drop-off. More details regarding the pick-up/drop procedures are in the “Operations” Section below, beginning on page 5.

CRLA proposes school hours as follows:

Grade Levels	Start Time	End Time
TK a.m.	8:30 a.m.	12:00 p.m.
TK p.m.	11:30 a.m.	3:00 p.m.
K, 1 st grade, 2 nd grade	8:00 a.m.	2:30 p.m.
3 rd , 4 th , 5 th grade	8:30 a.m.	3:00 p.m.
6 th , 7 th , 8 th grade	9:00 a.m.	3:30 p.m.

To provide an appealing and enjoyable outdoor space for students, the Applicant proposes a total of 9,657 square feet of landscaping and a total of 60 trees.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPERTY

The Project Site is located at 1937 – 2011 W. Chapman Avenue and abuts Chapman Avenue to the south/front of the Site and W. Maple Avenue to the north/rear of the Site. Adjacent to the middle of the Site’s westerly property line is W. Arbor Way. The rectangular-shaped, relatively flat Site is approximately 2.7 acres in size. It is in the C2 (General Business) Zone with a General Plan Land Use Designation of General Commercial.

The Site is currently improved with two existing buildings, 1937 and 2011 W. Chapman Avenue, and a surface parking lot. The buildings are bifurcated by the singular vehicular access point on-site, coming from Chapman Avenue, and traveling to the rear of the Site, which is improved with the surface parking lot currently containing 211 vehicular parking stalls. There is a freestanding “arch” that is located at the transition point from the vehicular entry drive to the surface parking lot that will be removed to accommodate the Project’s site improvements.

The Site’s two buildings currently feature a cream stucco material palette with accents around the windows and building corners. The facades along Chapman Avenue each include an existing architectural element consisting of a decorative gable supported by pilasters that create visual interest along the street frontage. A sloped red tile roofing around the edge of the building is consistent with the surrounding commercial corridor. The Applicant does not propose any exterior façade modifications to these buildings.

Existing landscaping includes approximately 5 street trees, 50 on-site trees, and various shrubbery along the surface parking lot’s perimeter and along the pedestrian pathways between the buildings.

An existing 3-foot-tall wrought iron fence atop a 5-foot-tall brick wall along the northerly property line, will remain. An existing 3-foot and 11-inch-tall wrought iron fence atop a 5-foot and 5-inch-tall brick wall along the easterly property line, and 5-foot and 7-inch-tall concrete block wall along the westerly property line, will remain.

EXISTING USES

The uses in the existing building located at 1937 W. Chapman Avenue include Unity Middle College High School and Santiago Canyon College. Unity Middle College High School is a public charter high school that vacated the site in July 2025. Santiago Canyon College Division of Continuing Education offers adult education courses.

South Coast College occupies both floors of 2011 W. Chapman Avenue. South Coast College is a vocational school with programs in the paralegal, court reporting, and medical assistant fields.

SURROUNDING PROPERTIES

North: North of the Project Site, across from W. Maple Avenue, are single family homes zoned R1-6 with a General Plan Land Use Designation of Low Density Residential.

South: South of the Project Site, across W. Chapman Avenue, are other commercial businesses that share the Project Site's C2 Zone and General Commercial Land Use Designation. These sites are occupied by commercial/retail uses, and surface parking lots.

East: Abutting the easterly property line of the Site is a lot sharing the Project Site's C2 Zone and General Commercial Land Use Designation fronting W. Chapman Avenue, and lots zoned R3 (A) with a General Plan Land Use Designation of Low Medium Residential fronting W. Maple Avenue. The C2 lots are improved with a motel business facing east, away from the Project Site. The R3 (A) lots are improved with single-story multifamily residential units.

West: Abutting the westerly property line of the Site is a lot sharing the Project Site's C2 Zone and General Commercial Land Use Designation fronting W. Chapman Avenue, and lots zoned R1-6 with a General Plan Land Use Designation of Low Density Residential, fronting on W. Maple Avenue and W. Arbor Way. The R1-6 lots are improved with single family homes.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT PHASING

The Applicant proposes to open the school beginning with the 2027-2028 school year at an enrollment of 520 students. Enrollment will increase incrementally over the first three years. The Applicant expects enrollment to reach its maximum capacity with 864 students in the 2029-2030 school year and remain consistent thereafter. The school will be prepared to implement all requirements and conditions of approval relating to the Conditional Use Permit prior to the opening of the school if the full student enrollment is achieved in 2027.

Please refer to the table below depicting the proposed student enrollment in the first 3 years of operation:

School year	Student Enrollment
2027-2028	520
2028-2029	700
2029-2030	864

Note: It is possible that CRLA will achieve full enrollment of 864 students when the school opens in the 2027-2028 school year.

OPERATIONS INFORMATION

CRLA

CRLA is currently operating schools in San Juan Capistrano and in Yorba Linda, California. CRLA provides a tuition-free public charter model which provides classical liberal arts instruction, geared around sparking curiosity for knowledge in their students. Their curriculum is focused on a “Core Knowledge” program to build a shared knowledge community, “Leader in Me” leadership modelling, a “Well-Ordered Language” building literacy, “Literacy Essentials” programming with the Orton-based literacy program, and the “Singapore Math” method.¹ All teachers are credentialed by California law.

Pick-up and Drop-Off Logistics

All queueing associated with the drop-off and pick-up of students will occur entirely on-site. The Project’s drop-off and pick-up queuing system is accessed from the existing vehicular entry along the north side of W. Chapman Avenue and proceeds north through the drive aisle between the two existing buildings and the outdoor play areas, with one lane in each direction. The on-site vehicular queue begins to the north of the fire access lane which encompasses the vehicular aisle between the two existing buildings and hammerhead turnaround to the north of the two existing buildings.

The vehicular queue follows the path around the surface parking lot’s outer drive aisles in a counterclockwise direction. The designated pick-up and drop-off zone is located at the farthest point along the vehicular queue facing southbound and adjacent to the westerly play area, just north of the 2011 W. Chapman Avenue building and adjacent to the associated play area. The pick-up/drop-off zone can accommodate 6 cars at a time, with students proceeding to the play yard in the morning before school, and students gathering in the play yard for pickup after school. Once the students are picked up or dropped off, the vehicle will proceed south through the fire access lane and will exit the Project Site through the existing driveway on W. Chapman Avenue using right-turn egress. The queue will accommodate approximately 58 total cars at once. Pick-up and drop-off times are staggered as follows:

[See next page]

¹ <https://crlacapo.org/curriculum>

Drop Off/Pick-up numbers		
Timeframe	# of Students	Grade Level(s)
7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.	252	K, 1, 2
8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	316	TK a.m., 3-5
8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	276	6-8
11:30 a.m. (drop off)	20	TK p.m.
12:00 p.m. (pick up)	40	TK a.m.
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	252	K, 1, 2
3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	296	TK p.m., 3-5
3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	276	6-8

CRLA has successfully implemented this pick-up and drop-off system at its other campuses over the past three years. Using Raptor Technologies’ driver’s license screening and Pickup Patrol’s automated dismissal software, CRLA employs a digital system to ensure safety and efficiency. Each vehicle receives a numbered placard corresponding to the student’s class, allowing staff to prepare the student for pickup as the vehicle approaches. This process ensures that students are ready at the curb upon arrival, minimizing waiting times and congestion.

Five to eight traffic control coordinators, wearing vests for identification purposes, will assist at the loading zone and will encourage drivers to depart promptly upon drop-off/pick-up. Linscott, Law & Greenspan (LLG) Transportation Engineers and Planners’ traffic analysis will include an assessment of this pickup and drop-off system.

School Events

CRLA anticipates hosting approximately 13 school events each year, including three events during school hours, eight events after school, and one to two events on weekends. Major annual events include Back to School Night (indoor, September), the Fall Festival (outdoor, October), and Open House (indoor, January). Additional events may include parent–teacher conferences, fundraising activities, PTA and advisory board meetings, student showcases, promotion ceremonies, and school plays. Please see LLG’s Traffic Impact Analysis for traffic and parking assessments of proposed special events.

Security

Security is of the utmost importance to the Applicant. A vehicular and pedestrian gate will be located 63 feet north of the Chapman Avenue driveway to secure the school building entrances, play yards and surface parking lot. The entry gate will deter unauthorized visitors from entering

along the Chapman Avenue frontage. The vehicular gate will be secured, except during the pick-up and drop-off windows. An electronic access control system will be located at the entry gate to monitor, identify, and authorize entry to the campus. During operating hours, controlled entry through the primary entry doors in each building will utilize another electronic access control device. Each building's primary entry doors are located on the northern side of each building to facilitate easy access to and from the pick-up and drop-off location, the surface parking area, and the bicycle parking racks. Additionally, there will be a decorative metal maintenance gate on the Northeast corner of the site, not for public use.

Security cameras are proposed on the exterior of the buildings, the driveway, along the hallways within the buildings, along the play yard, rear fence, and front entrance.

CRLA will have a school safety plan that is administered by the school's safety coordinator who is responsible for assigning staff to the safety response team and implementing the protocols for fire, earthquake, intruder, and other emergencies.

ZONING CONFORMANCE REVIEW

The Project complies with the applicable development standards of the C2 Zone. The two buildings where the proposed charter school will be housed will have a cumulative floor area of 53,913.20 square feet and the lot area is 117,792.79 square feet. The General Plan's maximum allowed Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for the Commercial Land Use Designation is 1.0 FAR and the expected FAR is 0.35 FAR. The existing buildings' FAR that will remain unchanged is 0.46 FAR and will not exceed the maximum allowed FAR. The maximum allowed building height of 32 feet exceeds the height of the two existing buildings, which is 23 feet. The yard setbacks of the existing buildings comply with the C2 Zone requirement as the front yard setback required is 10 feet and a 15-foot front yard setback is provided along W. Chapman Avenue. The side yard setback requirement for interior lots is zero feet, and zero side yard setbacks are provided due to the location of the existing buildings. The rear yard setback requirement is 10 feet, and a 10-foot rear yard setback is provided. The required parking for a school with grades Kindergarten to 8th grade is 1.8 parking spaces per classroom. The proposed 45 classrooms, including Breakout Rooms and specialty program rooms for art and music, require 81 parking spaces. CRLA proposes 100 parking spaces, exceeding this requirement. Of the 100 proposed parking spaces, 4 are required to be accessible, and 4 accessible spaces are proposed.

CONCLUSION

We appreciate the opportunity to present CRLA's proposed charter school project. We look forward to receiving your feedback and collaborating with you throughout the entitlement process. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Best Regards,



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