

Proposed Mikveh at 5300 Mecca Ave

Proposed Project:

Mishkan Torah Valley Community Kollel, located at 5552 Reseda Blvd, Tarzana, CA 91356, is proposing a Mikveh for women, an ancillary, satellite location at 5300 Mecca, approximately .4 miles and an eight-minute walk from their main location on Reseda Blvd and a residential unit. The approximately 7,961.6 SF lot is occupied with a 1,380 SF vacant, single-family residence and detached garage (SF is not included) that will be demolished and replaced with an approximately 3,580 SF, two-story building and seven, at-grade parking spaces. The first floor will include an approximately 2,362 SF Mikveh (bath) for religious ritual practices and a lobby. The required parking for the Mikveh is $2,362 \text{ SF} / 500 = 4.72$ or rounded up to 5. The second floor will include an approximately 1,218 SF living quarters for the on-site caretaker. The required parking for the living quarters is two. Parking, per LADBS and Planning would be 1 space per 500 SF. As such, parking is provided as required. The proposed bicycle parking includes a 30% reduction for a total 5. The allowed floor area ratio (FAR) is 45%, 3,582.72 SF and the proposed project is 3,580 SF, which is slightly less than the allowed FAR. The front setback is 15', the rear setback is 15' and the side setback is 5'. The allowed height is 45', and the proposed building height is 28'.

The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow the use of a religious ritual and practice in a R1 zone and a Waiver of Dedication.

The existing single-family residence has been vacant since May 2019.

Use and Operation:

The primary purpose is a Mikveh, for women. The Mikveh is a ritual bath for the Jewish rite of purification. The observance of this ritual is an important element in the ritual practice of many Jewish women and continues to be an important institution of Jewish life.

A Mikveh would start at sundown, approximately 5:00pm, at the earliest to 9:00pm during winter solstice, and 8:00pm to approximately 11:00pm, during daylight saving months. The ritual of a Mikveh is quiet and will not be a nuisance to the community.

There will be 10 rooms dedicated to women for their ritual. On Friday, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Passover and Shavuot women must walk. Otherwise, driving to and from would be typical.

Security and a caretaker will be on-site. Married women between the ages of 18 and approximately 60 will be the primary occupants. Over the course of the evening, a maximum of 20 women could use the facility, with not more than 10 women maximum at the same time. The average time a woman will spend at the Mikveh is approximately one-hour.

Summary of Requests:

The proposed project is to allow the use of a religious ritual in a R1 zone.

The following items are the requested discretionary actions:

- **CUP - Conditional Use pursuant to LAMC Section 12.24-W.9:** To permit Churches (except rescue mission or temporary revival) in the A, RE, RS, R1, RU, RZ, RMP, RW1, R2, RD, RW2, R3, C1, C1.5, CM or M Zones.
- **WDI - Waiver of Dedication and/or Improvement, Authorizing Code Section: 12.37-I, 1:** To waive all dedication and improvement requirements associated with the development of the religious facility and apartment unit.
- **Approval of a Categorical Exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act "CEQA"**

FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL:

The proposed project will serve a much-needed and essential demand for the community. The closest Mikveh for women is located in Valley Village, approximately 12 miles from the project site. The Mikveh practice, for observant Jewish women is part of daily life. Valley Community Kollel is a religious organization with several hundred local members. Each month, for several days at a time, women who can only travel to Valley Village for a religious ritual, is an inconvenience and burden. On Shabbat and high holidays walking is only permissible. Which means traveling to Valley Village is not permissible. Having an establishment, to walk, during these times especially, allows women to fulfill their ritual responsibilities for Shabbat and the Mikveh. Thereby allowing the Mikveh in the neighborhood that is accessible and convenient would be a life-changing benefit for Valley Community Kollel women and their families.

The proposed project is located within a residential area that is immediately adjacent to retail and commercial. The location is pedestrian-friendly and yields a short walk to amenities for dining, shopping, and basic living needs.

The proposed project includes a residential unit. There is an existing, vacant residence on the project, and with the demolition of that unit and detached garage, there would be no residential loss if the project were to be approved. In fact, because the residence is vacant, the proposed project would be adding housing to the community.

The other use of the proposed project are the baths for the Mikveh. The Mikveh is a place for purity. It is a quiet and discreet practice. It's a time for self-awareness, calm and tranquility.

The proposed project would be suitable for the neighborhood. The building would only be 28' in height, which is approximately 17' lower than what is allowed by code. The proposed project maximizes the allowed floor area ratio and will be adequately and sufficiently landscaped in size and scale with the neighboring residences. Additionally, the residential use would be consistent while the bath would be quiet and an amenity to the women and families who live in the area.

The proposed project allows religious institutions to operate in residential zones through the use of a conditional use permit. Therefore, the Mikveh, if approved, would be an allowed use and consistent with applicable zoning regulations.

Furthermore, there is a need for such a use, one that does not exist in the immediate or surrounding area. The proposed project will serve a much-needed and essential demand for the community. The closest Mikveh for women is located in Valley Village, approximately 12 miles from the project site. The Mikveh practice, for observant Jewish women is part of daily life. Valley Community Kollel is a religious organization with several hundred local members. Each month, for several days at a time, women who can only travel to Valley Village for a religious ritual, is an inconvenience and burden. On Shabbat and high holidays walking is only permissible. Which means traveling to Valley Village is not permissible. Having an establishment, to walk, during these times, allows women to fulfill their ritual responsibilities for Shabbat and the Mikveh. Thereby allowing the Mikveh in the neighborhood that is accessible and convenient would be a life-changing benefit for Valley Community Kollel women and their families.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS APPLY TO APPLICATIONS FOR CHURCHES OR OTHER RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS.

- a. What is the number of fixed seats (if no fixed seats, then the amount of square footage) for sanctuary (or auditorium or gymnasium, if applicable).

The proposed project is a mixed use project with a total 3,580 SF, two-story building and seven, at-grade parking spaces. The first floor will include an approximately 2,362 SF Mikveh (bath) for religious ritual practices and a lobby. The required parking for the Mikveh is $2,362 \text{ SF} / 500 = 4.72$ or rounded up to 5. The second floor will include an approximately 1,218 SF living quarters for the on-site caretaker. The required parking for the living quarters is two. Parking, per LADBS and Planning would be 1 space per 500 SF. As such, parking is provided as required. The proposed bicycle parking includes a 30% reduction for a total 5. The allowed floor area ratio (FAR) is 45%, 3,582.72 SF and the proposed project is 3,580 SF, which is slightly less than the allowed FAR. The front setback is 15', the rear setback is 15' and the side setback is 5'. The allowed height is 45', and the proposed building height is 28'.

Current Site Conditions:

The project is identified as 5300 N Mecca Avenue, Tarzana, CA 91356 located between N Mecca Avenue and Reseda Blvd on a triangular-shaped lot. The property is considered a through-lot since it touches two streets. The project has one APN, which is 2161017019.

The site consists of one-lot which is approximately 7,961.6 square feet (SF), and was built in 1944. There is an existing, but vacant, approximately 1,380 SF single-family dwelling with a detached garage on property.

Surrounding Conditions:

This neighborhood is predominately developed with single-family houses and residential landscaping.

The site is approximately 450 feet (FT) from commercial and retail along Ventura Boulevard. Immediately north, east, and west are single-family residences. South of the proposed project is Mecca Avenue Park.

Zoning Conditions:

The proposed project is located within the Encino – Tarzana Community Plan Area, South Valley Area Planning Commission, Tarzana Neighborhood Council, and Council District 3, which is represented by Councilman Bob Blumenfield.

The subject site is zoned R1-1 with a Low II general plan designation and associated General Plan footnote (see below). The site is also subject to the Hillside Area Regulations, dated March 17, 2017.