



[Modernization Project Overview](#)

The Academy of Our Lady of Peace has completed its 127 year as a premier, all girls' college preparatory high school serving the San Diego region. Throughout its history in San Diego, the school has provided high quality education for many generations of San Diegans.

OLP occupies twenty three acres above Mission Valley, most of which are canyon slopes. Less than six acres are suitable for development. Originally constructed in 1917, the estate consisted of three buildings to which another three were added in the 1920s. Those original structures comprise the core of OLP's campus as it exists today. St. Joseph Hall, built in 1965, is the only new academic building added to the school since the 1920s.

The demand for excellent private schools has increased substantially in our region over the years. Meeting San Diego's growing need for the education of young women has challenged OLP's physical resources. Since 1965, OLP has met increasing demand by stressing its existing facilities beyond their capabilities. The Academy has converted cloakrooms into offices, basements and dormitories into classrooms.

After years of consideration and planning, the Academy sought approval from the City of San Diego for an updated Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and campus master plan. The Academy hired a team of leading architects to design a plan which would optimize the constrained property to modernize its facilities, improve the library and expand it with a media center, add needed science labs and classroom space, add a full service cafeteria and expand parking, while maintaining the architectural integrity and tradition of our campus.

OLP had operated since 1995 under a CUP which allowed 640 students. The region's growth in recent years has increased the demand for private high school education, and each year applications for enrollment to OLP grow as does the number of students we are not able to accommodate. The Academy is committed to maintaining the culture of a small private school that it has nurtured throughout its 127 year history and does not intend to increase student population beyond the current level of 750. At this enrollment level, the Academy is able to fulfill its

mission of providing a high-quality educational experience while continuing to provide financial aide to approximately 35% of its students.

OLP recognizes that educating our youth in computer science is essential to their advancement and success at university and in their chosen vocations. In 1995, OLP transformed a former sitting room from boarding school days and two other rooms into one unorganized and broken-up computer science facility. Currently there are structural pillars that obstruct the students' views of the teacher's screen at the front of the class. A properly designed media center will enhance OLP's ability to provide this region's young women with training in this field which is necessary to excel in university and at the professional level.

OLP presently has two science labs for 750 students, thus having a 375:1 student to lab ration. Under the proposed master plan, the school will add two new labs, improving the ration to 187:1 which is in line with other public and private schools in the region. For example, Lincoln High School has a 125:1 ration, Cathedral has a 167:1 ration, and St. Augustine has a 178:1 ration.

The proposed campus improvements will permit OLP to continue to provide high quality educational facilities in a small, private school setting for the region's young women well into the 21st century. The Academy is committed to create a campus that the immediate neighborhood as well as the entire San Diego region will cherish as a regional asset for many generations to come.

[Campus Improvements](#)

New Campus Parking

We need to address the parking needs for 750 students.

Traffic-flow

At the end of the 2006-2007 academic school year, OLP hired a traffic engineer to survey the traffic patterns within the neighborhood surrounding the school. Recommendations from the neighbors and from the traffic engineer have been used to create a traffic-flow plan for this school year. These steps include employing traffic facilitators on the street to manage traffic-flow during peak pick-up and drop-off times. Also, during heavily attended special events, OLP will employ parking enforcement officers from the City of San Diego in an attempt to improve traffic-flow and security in the immediate area.

[Enrollment](#)

The current CUP authorizes an enrollment of 750 students.

[San Diego Planning Commission](#)

On October 9, 2008 the Academy received a unanimous vote of 5-0 from the San Diego Planning Commission to approve our request to modernize our campus and amend our Conditional Use Permit.

[San Diego City Council](#)

On March 3, 2009 the San Diego City Council voted 5-3 to allow OLP to amend our CUP and **not** allow OLP to modernize our campus.

We are pleased that the San Diego City Council granted OLP an amended Conditional Use Permit allowing the school to retain its current enrollment and faculty/staff. However, we are deeply disappointed that we were denied permission to modernize and add to our deficient facilities.

[OLP's Action/Response to the San Diego City Council Decision](#)

Under the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA), religious institutions are protected from religious discrimination and unnecessary burdens on religious expression imposed by local government zoning requirements. Our modernization plan is necessary to further the mission of the school. We believe that the City's decision unfairly discriminates against our Catholic identity; the denial of the implementation of our modernization plan places a substantial, if not impossible, burden on us to carry out our mission. Because of this, we believe that challenging the City's decision under this statute is our best alternative. While we don't relish the idea of litigation, we must be true to our call to provide our students with the best education possible.

As a Board, we don't believe that the modernization plan approved by the San Diego Planning Commission is inherently flawed. We are very disappointed that the San Diego City Council did not approve it as well when they granted us an amended Conditional Use Permit (CUP). **Instead, they chose to put the needs of a small constituency of neighbors ahead of the much larger Catholic community of San Diego.** We occupy a unique niche in the San Diego Catholic community. *What we are asking for is a modernization plan that will give us the flexibility to meet the needs of both today's students and those of the future.* Fifty years ago, there were eleven private Catholic high schools located in the San Diego diocese. Today there are only five, one of which is in Calexico. OLP must be allowed to update and modernize if we are to fulfill the mission begun here more than 127 years ago.