

VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Public Meeting

April 11, 2007

7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Officer Brian Parsley addressed us:

- There have been a couple of stolen cars recently. There have been thefts in the construction site, and sometimes that does spill over into the Village. On the plus side, there have not been a whole lot of bike thefts recently.
- Parking issues are the same as the always are: there are few guest spots, and Villagers continue to park second cars in guest spots. Please do NOT park your second car in a guest spot.
- As more and more people move out of Section A, there are more and more free parking spots. Brian will perhaps be working with the Village Office to obtain some of the vacant spaces as guest spots.
- General information about the Gill Tract fire: it was arson. It is currently being investigated by UCPD, but because it is an ongoing investigation, Brian cannot release any more information about it. UCPD does not believe there is any threat of repeated arson.
- If you park along the Gill Tract fence across from Ocean View Elementary School, please move your car in the morning so that parents and teachers can park there. It is Village property, but we want to be good neighbors to the school.

CABLE TV UPDATE

Nancy Jurich, Director-Administrative and Business Services for Residential & Student Services Programming, is working on a response to our repeated call for an optional fee for cable TV (as opposed to a mandatory fee). She will attend our meeting in May to give us an update.

Tavie Tipton, Village Manager, is forming a committee of residents to determine which channels should be in the Village cable TV "Basic Family Package."

WEST BERKELEY ALLIANCE FOR CLEAN AIR & SAFE JOBS

Janice Schroeder, a representative for the West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs, addressed us regarding Pacific Steel Casting:

- Janice has been involved in the struggle against Pacific Steel Casting for 28 years. When she is exposed to toxic emissions, she gets headaches and feels nauseated. When wrote

to the State Health Department, she was told that her symptoms were indicative of exposure to formaldehyde and other chemicals. She believes these toxins originate with Pacific Steel Casting, and she is very concerned about the particulates being emitted.

- Pacific Steel Casting has air filters, but they leave their factory doors open frequently, allowing air to be released without going through the filters.
- West Berkeley and North Berkeley have much higher rates of childhood asthma-related hospital visits. The West Berkeley Alliance can't link Pacific Steel Casting with this, but a professor at UC Berkeley has done research showing that in 2004, 76 tons of toxic pollutants was released into the air by Pacific Steel Casting, at the rate of 240 pounds per day.
- Michael Wilson, research scientist at UC Berkeley's Public School of Health published information regarding this issue. After he did this, Pacific Steel Casting had lawyers subpoena his work. It takes many hours of his time to comply, and he believes these are harassment tactics. Feel free to email or call Council Member Mao or Mayor Bates, of Berkeley about this matter.
- What can the Village do?
 - Walk or drive by the Pacific Steel Casting plant on Gilman and smell the fumes (smells like a burning pot handle). When you smell that odor in the Village, call 1-800-334-6367 and say you believe the smell is coming from this plant.
 - If an inspector comes and verifies that the smell is coming from this plant 5 times in 24 hours, they can issue a notice of violation to Pacific Steel Casting.
 - If you would be willing to help translate West Berkeley Alliance material to different languages (other than Spanish), please contact them at westberkeleyalliance@yahoo.com.

SECTION A HOUSING REPORT

In response to Village resident concerns and at the request of the Village Residents Association, a large group of administrators from campus met with the VRA Board to discuss the plans for Section A. The meeting with the VRA Board was intended to provide information which the Board could then relay to Village residents. As the most effective way of communicating those plans, the VRA Board is sharing the minutes from that meeting to all VRA members. After these minutes is a list of residents' concerns that were brought up at the April 11, 2007 public VRA meeting after hearing a summary of the plans for Section A. The minutes from the VRA Board's meeting with campus administrators:

Meeting Between VRA Board and Campus Administrators RE: Section A Demolition and Redevelopment

April 4, 2007
7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

Meeting attendees:

- Eddie Bankston – Executive Director, Housing & Dining, RSSP

- Chris Harvey – Director, Capital Projects, RSSP
- Bob Hatheway – Assistant Vice Chancellor, Real Estate Services, Facilities Services, RES Group
- Peter Hoening – Interim Associate Vice Chancellor - Student Affairs, Residential and Student Services (RSSP)
- Nancy Jurich – Director - Administrative and Business Services, RSSP
- Emily Marthinsen, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Physical & Environmental Planning, Facilities Services
- Kate MacManes – Ocean View PTA President
- Yael Perez – VRA architecture consultant
- Tavie Tipton – Village Manager
- VRA Board Members: Ron Bialkowski, Annie Ingamells, Lisa Monson, Ginelle Perez, Maile Urbancic

The following minutes are a summary of the dialogue between campus administrators and the VRA Board.

BACKGROUND: PAST SECTION A / GILL TRACT REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

- A previous master plan for redeveloping Section A and the Gill Tract involved building single graduate student housing and commercial developments along San Pablo and Monroe, and relocating the Community Center and baseball fields to the Gill Tract. An infant/toddler care center was included in the plans.
- Under the original plan, an outside developer would have built the Community Center facility and would have carried the debt of building it.
- Around that time, general accounting rules changed such that the debt the developer was undertaking would have to be counted as debt by the University. The amount of debt required to go forward with the development was beyond campus' allowed limits, and so the development agreements fell through.
- When the original development plans fell through, the campus began looking at different options for developing the land.
- During the original planning process, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared by consultants to the campus and certified by the UC Regents. The EIR process required community input, which was done.
- The VRA Board was pleased to hear that the previous development plans had involved community review and input, but was unhappy that there had not been more communication between campus and Village residents regarding the new plans. The VRA Board emphasized the need for residents to be informed and consulted regarding major changes to our community. Campus representatives expressed regret that they had not been able to come to the March 2007 VRA meeting, but also a desire to get feedback from Village residents and have better communication on this matter in the future.

REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

Q: What are the plans for Section A?

A: Section A will be closing on June 30, 2007. There will not be an extension in the amount of time that residents are able to live in the buildings. The land on which Section A currently stands will be redeveloped in two stages.

Q: What happens during Stage 1?

A: Stage 1 involves all the land between 10th Street and San Pablo. A grocery store (currently expected to be Whole Foods) will be built on the south side of Monroe, with a parking garage behind it, to the south. Primary parking access will be from San Pablo. The plans for the north side of Monroe are not as firm, but preliminary planning includes 20,000 square feet of retail development (small shops like Peet's Coffee), and 100 – 120 units of housing, possibly divided between 50 – 60 units of assisted-living senior housing and 60 units of 2 - 3 bedroom for-sale condos.

Q: The PTA for Ocean View Elementary School is very concerned about having more families move into the area. Right now the district is stretched to the limit in terms of enrollment. Superintendent Dr. Wong is still accepting out of city student transfers to the district, which means that if a large unplanned group of families move in, classes will be overflowing with students. Has the University consulted with the School District on this matter? What will be done about school overcrowding as a result of families moving in to the new condos?

A: The University understands that the City of Albany is concerned about the impact of this development on their schools. The University will need to find a solution that satisfies the city, for example, by providing them with additional money to build more schools or phasing the construction in a way that lessens the problem. The concern about school enrollment is one of the reasons for considering a senior housing facility.

Q: What is the timeline for Stage 1?

A: The University is just starting the process of receiving entitlements from Albany. The CEQA, California Environmental Quality Act, process is the one that is just beginning. Albany will be the lead agency and will approve the EIR—prepared by a consultant. The sales process involves receiving bids and accepting the highest bid. In January or February of 2008 the development companies will take ownership of the land. Construction on Whole Foods will start in the spring or summer, after Section A is demolished. Section A demolition is anticipated to take 6 months from start to finish. Construction on Whole Foods will take 18 months.

Q: What happens during Stage 2?

A: Stage 2 involves the land west of 10th Street and the Gill Tract. There are no set plans for this land. Possibilities include 200 units of residential housing (non-student housing). The University may be selling this land in two separate sections.

Q: What will happen to the ball fields and the Community Center when the land is developed?

A: When the land is developed, the ball fields will probably be moved to the Gill Tract. Eventually the land on which the Community Center resides will be sold, at which point the Community Center will be relocated to the Gill Tract.

Q: What is the timeline for Stage 2?

A: There is a 2 – 5 year time frame for formulating plans, finding developers, and beginning construction.

Q: Will the land be sold or leased?

A: The land will be sold, NOT leased, to outside developers.

Q: Who is the architecture firm creating the building plans?

A: Pyatok & Associates.

Q: Increased development will worsen an already bad traffic problem in the Village, particularly near Ocean View Elementary School. What are the plans regarding traffic flow, and how can congestion be avoided?

A: The paving of the streets will be redone along with the construction process. The original development plans included widening Jackson Street and building an island in the middle of the street. Entrances and exits to Whole Foods will primarily be from San Pablo. Traffic impacts will be studied by an engineer hired by the city of Albany and the University will seek to mitigate traffic issues that arise.

Q: What about the community-proposed plans to build an educational farm on the Gill Tract? The Ocean View PTA and the VRA both strongly support such a plan.

A: Current plans for the Gill Tract do not include an educational farm. There will be a need to relocate the ball fields and the Community Center, and those will have to go on the Gill Tract. Zoning of that area has city prescriptions, and the way the urban farm has been presented is not compatible with those uses. The College of Natural Resources continues to use the Gill Tract growing fields, but, in the long-term will move these operations to a new location. Until the Gill Tract land is developed, there may be interim uses for the land, possibly portables for temporary relocation of city and/or campus programs. There will be opportunities for community input as development plans move forward.

Q: What are the plans for demolition of Section A?

A: The current plan is to ask campus leadership to lend the funds to pay for demolition of Section A before there is a buyer for the land. It is likely, though not certain, that this loan will be approved. The decision will be made by the end of May by VCAC, the Vice Chancellor's Administrative Council, and must be approved by the Chancellor. If the funds are approved, demolition will start within 2 – 6 weeks of June 30, 2007.

Q: What if the funds are NOT approved?

A: We believe that the loan will be approved, however, if it isn't, then demolition of Section A would begin immediately when the land is sold.

Q: Section A is by far the most affordable housing available to student families. Additionally, vacant buildings are a danger to our community. We would like the Section A buildings to remain inhabited if they are not going to be demolished.

A: The June 30 vacate date is final, and no extensions will be given. Part of the demolition process involves taking samples from 50% of all apartments, evenly located throughout Section A, to test for hazardous material. The apartments cannot remain inhabited during this period.

Q: How long will demolition take?

A: 24 weeks – about 6 months.

Q: What is the demolition process?

A: The demolition will be done by the same company that took down the oldest group of Section A buildings several years ago. They will put giant tents over each building to prevent asbestos and other hazardous materials from escaping. They will also be misting the air with water to minimize dust and pollutants.

Q: Village residents are very concerned about the potential hazards involved with having vacant buildings left standing. When Section B was vacated, vandalism and thefts increased in the areas near Section B because the buildings attracted people looking to take copper. We do not want that to happen again, especially for an extended period of time. Vacant buildings also pose a danger to children who may get in to play or explore. This is why we want the buildings demolished as quickly as possible. We would also like an additional police officer to be posted to the area, particularly at night.

A: We will ask the UCPD police chief about the need for additional policing. We will look into adding the cost of additional policing to the demolition budget.

Q: What will happen to the parking spots along Monroe during demolition and construction?

A: It is unclear whether the current parking spaces will become available for guest parking during the construction process. They might be opened up for guest parking, and they might be used as buffer space for demolition and construction.

Q: What is the objective of selling this valuable land instead of leasing it out?

A: The University's strategic goals include investing in buildings and/or real estate closer to the central campus. This is consistent with the Academic Plan. None of the money is slated to be used for family housing purposes.

Q: It seems very unfair to student families that the last affordable housing in the Village will be torn down and sold for commercial development, while all the money earned from the sale of the land will be given to other, non-family housing related projects. Residents are not benefiting from this sale at all, and in fact, many families will face severe financial hardship by the loss of affordable housing.

A: All land is owned by the Regents. The University considers its land use decisions holistically and sells its land and use proceeds as needed. A while back, the University sold some land for a post office and gave the money to family housing. The decisions are made through a process that involves much discussion and evaluation. This particular decision was made 3-4 years ago and approved by the Chancellor.

Q: It is essential that Village residents be given an opportunity to provide input and feedback about the development plans. Can we arrange for this to happen?

A: The CEQA process will begin shortly with the City of Albany as lead agency. As part of the process there are open meetings at which the public can review the plans and provide feedback. Emily Marthinsen will discuss the process with the VRA Board at a future meeting so that the

Board can pass the information on to residents. Additionally, Bob Hatheway will plan a meeting in the near future at which residents will be able to view the preliminary plans for Stage 1. As development moves forward, there will be a sequence of meetings in the Village allowing residents to provide feedback and input regarding the plans. Campus administration is resolved to work towards better communication with Village residents regarding construction plans.

Approved by all meeting attendees

Prepared by:
Maile Urbancic
VRA Secretary/Treasurer
April 10, 2007

SECTION A HOUSING REPORT – RESIDENT CONCERNS

Following is a summary of concerns and responses to the information regarding Section A:

- Students did not have a voice in making this decision. They should have consulted with us or had a student involved in the planning process. It is unacceptable that the current level of non-communication with residents continue. They need to involve us in the planning and decision-making process.
- Grad students are barely paid what rent costs through GSI work, research, or fellowships. Small grants are available, but it is still very hard to make ends meet. It is particularly hard for international students, who can only work 50% time. That barely even covers rent, not to mention living expenses. When Section A is gone, so goes the last chance to live with some dignity as a grad student.
- Aren't they worried about enrollment? Students with families will stop coming to Berkeley based solely on the cost of living. Could we get access to information from the Graduate Division? They had an online questionnaire that asks whether money was an issue in deciding to attend Berkeley or not.
- The wealth of students in East/West Village is obviously higher than that of Section A students. The University is no longer catering to the same types of students in their housing goals.
- When East Village was built, students responded by saying it was too opulent and was more than they wanted to pay for. Students want this type of apartment when they graduate. West Village was scaled down to be a little more affordable than East Village.
- We can't change their mind for selling the land. A more realistic strategy is to ask what we can get from the sale of the land. Can we get some of that money to lower our rents, perhaps apply it to the bond for the Village?
- What about rent accountability? How quickly is the rent going up? How can we make the University be more responsible to the students by keeping rents from going up so much each year?
- Housing is autonomous from the rest of the university—GSI salaries and housing rents are different departments. The Dean of Graduate Affairs is sympathetic, but can't raise

salaries with the highest cost of housing. We need to publicize that this land is being sold and make the University use some of it to make housing more affordable.

- One possibility is to request that the money from the sale of the land be used to establish a “Housing Grant” similar to the Family Grant. It could provide money to low-income student families who are having a hard time paying rent. We could also base a fundraising campaign on the Housing Grant and ask Village alumni to contribute. We could also encourage recipients of the Housing Grant to contribute to the fund after they graduate—we could frame it as a way of paying forward the help they received.
- The University is preparing for a fundraising campaign, so they are hiring for many fundraising positions. RSSP hopes to hire someone this spring specifically to work on fundraising for the Village. This job has been listed since January.
- All of the development and construction must be approved through the Albany City Council. This Council is very small and “family like.” We can use the City Council as a venue.
- We have some sway than in Albany—it is a small place and there are a non-trivial number of Albany voters here in the Village. We have a chance to influence the University this time in asking for money, but it will be an uphill battle. Residents need to be willing to become involved. The VRA needs more Board members, so if you are interested, please contact them.
- Section A residents should demand to be kept on the waiting list for Smyth-Fernwald, even if they take a housing offer while waiting for an opening at Smyth.
- We need to gather information into one place. Gather the history from older residents and housing, along with information about GSI income as related to rent.

Prepared by:
Maile Urbancic
May 4, 2007