

# VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

## Public Meeting

September 10, 2008

7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

### COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Village Festival will be on September 13<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 – 2:00. There will be pony rides, a petting zoo, entertainment, singers, face painting, and cheap food. For \$2 residents can purchase a hot dog, chips, and a drink. Hot dog types include: vegetarian, halal, beef, chicken, and apple.

### SAFETY AND SECURITY

Brian Parsley, the UCPD officer assigned to the Village, addressed us about safety, security, and parking issues in the Village:

- Don't park second cars in guest spots. You can park for 72 hours on 10<sup>th</sup> street, Monroe, and non-reserved spots on Jackson.
- There have been a few auto break-ins and thefts this month.
- The VRA is performing a survey about whether to keep the 6<sup>th</sup> street gate open or closed.
- All guest parking is 72 hours.

### AFFORDABLE STUDENT FAMILY HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT NEAR THE VILLAGE

Kevin Hufferd, Project Manager/Senior Planner for Capital Projects, addressed us:

- The current plan for the land at the intersection of San Pablo and Monroe is a mixed commercial/residential development. There will be senior housing, a grocery store, and smaller shops. This is a good place to generate revenue because of exposure to San Pablo.
- At one time this area was going to be developed in conjunction with building more family housing apartments. There are no current plans to build any more family housing, but the land between 10<sup>th</sup> St and Jackson is being held in reserve for possible future housing needs. Right now the University is not proposing any changes to the Master Plan.
- The Gill Tract is planned to be "Recreation / Open Space". Long-term plans for the area include:
  - A new Village Community Center (with the current one being displaced by new faculty housing)
  - Relocation of the Little League fields
  - Relocation of the current recreation facilities (basketball courts, etc.)
- Campus is continually monitoring the needs for faculty and student housing.

- The planned infant care center is a new use of land that was not originally included in the 2004 Master Plan. The infant care center was later included as an answer to a need that was seen in the Village community.
- An overview of the current development plans at the corner of San Pablo and Monroe:
  - The EIR will be reworked during the next 9 months, with the final construction design coming out in about 1 to 1½ years. (It will probably be 3 years to completion of the construction.)
  - In response to community input, the development plans have switched the sides of the street for the Whole Foods grocery store and the senior housing development. (This will have Whole Foods on the north side of Monroe, and the senior housing on the south side.)
  - The current plan places the Whole Foods parking lot underground.
  - There will be a traffic study in planning process. The planners will use traffic-slowing methods.
  - The sale or lease of the land will generate revenue to support the Chancellor's family grant program.
- Concerns brought up by Village residents:
  - Where is buffer zone between retail and residential? We are concerned about additional traffic and about the Village being opened up to the larger community.
  - Traffic: even after the opening of West Village, there has been much more traffic. One resident mentioned having seen children almost get run over.
  - It seems natural to assume that non-Village residents will figure out that the best way to avoid San Pablo is to drive through Village.

Kevin then answered questions from residents:

*Q: How much space in the Gill Tract will be left open?*

A: It is hard to say exactly how much space would be left. It would depend on how things were configured.

*Q: Why is the plan for senior housing instead of for family housing?*

A: The City of Albany asked us specifically to have senior housing in order to prevent overcrowding in Albany School District.

*Q: Were there community meetings when the 2004 Master Plan was created?*

A: Yes, there were many meetings about it.

*Q: How can we find out more about those meetings?*

A: They are in the 2004 Master Plan's EIR public comment section. The section includes many comments from Village residents.

*Q: Has Whole Foods signed an agreement for this project?*

A: They have signed a lease agreement, but it needs to get city approval.

*Q: How many units of senior housing are planned?*

A: About 150 – 175 units, some of which are assisted living units.

*Q: How much of revenue will go back to family housing?*

A: I don't know, but a good portion of it.

*Q: Albany doing some visioning of what the community might like to see on the Gill Tract. Is the University open to suggestions?*

A: The University doesn't think the 2004 Master Plan needs to be changed, but is willing to sit down with the community to discuss what residents have in mind. Administrators are currently having meetings with representatives from the City of Albany to discuss that very topic.

*Q: Are there any Village residents on that committee?*

A: Yes, there are members of the VRA Board on the committee.

*Q: Will there be any security gates around the Village?*

A: That question would be better addressed to Peter Hoenig. Some residents might prefer gates, some might not.

Dara Birnbaum, the Village Community Liaison, spoke briefly about the importance of having more collaboration between the City of Albany and University Village. She said that there are lots of pieces to this puzzle, and her job is to help support everyone and foster good communication.

Peter Hoenig, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor - Student Affairs, then addressed us.

- This project has been in discussion for many years. There are a number of campus departments that are involved in this issue. In addition to Kevin and me, we also have Emily Marthinsen, Assistant Vice Chancellor - Physical & Environmental Planning who would be willing to come speak to the VRA in the future.
- A long time ago we started planning what to do with the 1940's and 1960's housing [Section A and Section B]. Residential and Student Service Programs is a campus auxiliary and does not get any state funding. All costs for RSSP come out of rent. That means that we had to pay for the construction of East and West Village through revenue bonds of \$60 million and \$120 million, respectively. That translates to \$10 million in debt service per year (think of it as a mortgage). On top of that, you have to add the cost of electricity, repairs, and so on. Because of this, we have to increase rent by 4.5% per year for 4-5 years. After that, the cost of rent will level off.
- There already exists a grant program [the Single Parent Grant] that provides 17 grants of \$300 - \$400 per month. This was created a few years ago by the sale of a piece of land.
- Our current proposal is to take \$4 million from the lease or sale of the San Pablo/Monroe land to create an endowment that would supply another annual 50 grants of \$4000 each. This proposal has been given preliminary approval from Chancellor. When this grant program receives the final approval and goes into the planning stages, we will be sure to have significant input from Village residents in drafting the details of the grant. I am very optimistic that we will get this money and be able to set up this endowment.

Peter then answered questions from residents:

*Q: What percentage of development income is \$4 million?*

A: I don't know. It will depend on what the final market price of the property is.

*Q: When would those 50 grants come into play?*

A: We are hoping it will be sometime in the next year or so.

*Q: Has anyone considered splitting the money into smaller grants for that could serve more families?*

A: How the grant is designed will be totally up to Village residents to determine.

*Q: There must be ways that Village residents could reduce the cost of maintaining the Village, perhaps by not having cable TV or by conserving on utility costs. If we do that, will our rent be reduced by the amount we save?*

A: If the Village conserves electricity or water, those savings would be passed on through rent.

*Q: The original intent of having commercial development on former Village land was to offset the cost of housing. Period. Nothing has happened on the financial aid side to offset the increasing cost of housing. The reason there are single parent grants was because financial aid said that there was no way that single parents could make rent. It looks to me like the commercial development is now an end in and of itself, to get revenue for the University. How can we all get on the same page?*

A: Much of the history that we are talking about was before West Village was built. The new family grants from the endowment is intended to better the situation.

*Q: Is there any money intended to rebuild the Community Center?*

A: A significant amount will be put aside for the development of the Community Center.

*Q: Will some of the money from the development be used for an Infant toddler center?*

A: I don't know.

*Q: What is the chancellor doing about fundraising?*

A: There is a development office that develops fundraising programs.

*Q: What about the fundraising position in RSSP that we have been requesting for several years?*

A: That position has not yet been filled. Fundraisers are very much in demand these days, and we have been competing with other campuses for people.

*Q: Will the land be sold or leased?*

A: It will be a 40 year lease.

*Q: Why are Village apartments being rented to single students and staff?*

A: Many of the apartments are not filled right now. We have rented to 16 single students and 7 lecturers. The Village has a high turnover rate: 30% of the Village turns over every year. Families are the highest priority, and if there are families who want to rent, they will get the apartment over the single students or staff. We have also tried to group non-student families in one area in the Village. When East Village opened, we allowed couples without children to rent 2 or 3 bedroom apartments. Within a year, almost all of them had moved out.

*Q: What is being done to advertise to families?*

A: If you have recommendations, we are open to them.

*Q: Is financial aid being increased in proportion to rent increases?*

A: No. The housing portion of the financial aid package is tied to a survey done every 3 years. If you live on campus, financial aid increases in proportion to dorm cost. That is because of federal regulations.

Prepared by:  
Maile Urbancic  
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