

*City of Albany*  
**Planning and Zoning Commission**  
**Informational Update/Staff Report**

**Meeting Date:** July 22, 2008 **Prepared by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Agenda Item:** 6b **Reviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject:** **University Village at San Pablo and Monroe Street. 1030-1130 San Pablo Avenue. Planning Application 07-100. Rezoning. Planned Unit Development. Design Review. Parking Exception.** A request for rezone to San Pablo Commercial, planned unit development, design review and parking exception for a new grocery store and mixed-use development at a site owned by the University of California.

**Applicant/  
Owner:** **Bob LaLanne with The LaLanne Group for University of California**

**Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Commission receive testimony from the applicant and members of the public. Provide direction to staff on issues related to changes in the conceptual site plan.

**Previous Action**

No recent major improvements have been made to the property.

**Project Description**

The subject property is an approximately 4.2-acre site with 2 lots located to the northwest and southwest of Monroe Street/San Pablo Avenue intersection in the City of Albany. The properties currently have two zonings, San Pablo Commercial (SPC) for the first 100' along the eastern side of San Pablo Avenue and R-2, Medium Density Residential for the rest of the property.

The original site plan had the grocery store on the south side of Monroe Street, which included a two-story parking garage that was adjacent to Cordoncics Creek. The mixed-use portion of the development was located on the north side of the lot senior housing adjacent to Village Creek.

The applicant has revised the site plan now proposes to construct a new 55,000sq.ft. grocery store at the north end of the property which includes a pervious, at grade level parking lot, adjacent to Village Creek. The parking lot is proposed to be accessed by a driveway off of San Pablo Avenue, over 200' from the intersection of San Pablo Avenue and Monroe Street. There are approximately 60 parking spaces provided in the pervious, surface parking lot adjacent to the store. There are an additional 120 parking spaces provided in a below grade parking lot, under the store, which accessed by a driveway off of 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The grocery store has a parking requirement of 137 space and is providing an excess of 43 parking spaces. The building has a maximum height of 38', which is the maximum allowable in the SPC

district. The tallest portion of the building is located towards the front of the store, closest to San Pablo Avenue.

There is a mixed-use development at the south end of the lot, which includes 30,000sq.ft. of retail and approximately 175 assisted living/senior housing units. The retail fronts primarily along San Pablo Avenue and wraps around at a shallower depth along Monroe Street. The retail portion has a maximum height of 30'. The senior housing is tucked into the area behind the retail and has four-stories at a maximum height of 50'. There is only a small portion of the four-story, senior housing that is located along the west end of Monroe Street; the majority of the building frontage along Monroe Street is retail and the four stories of housing is setback 75' from San Pablo Avenue. There a below grade garage that is proposed under the senior housing and will provide approximately 85 parking spaces. There are a total of 138 parking spaces, both angled and ninety-degree, located along Monroe Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, which are also provided for the retail and senior housing.

### **Entitlements/Approval Process**

The parking is the only development requirement that has changed with the new revised site plan. Two off-street parking spaces are required for each of the 100 senior residential units. The 75 assisted living units do not require parking, other than for full-time employees, because the assisted living units are not "residential units" with kitchen facilities. The applicant is requesting a parking exception to allow the 138 parking spaces along Monroe Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Street to be a mix of designated parking for the senior housing units and shared parking between the grocery store and mixed-use development.

MC 20.28.040(A3) states that a, "Special Reduction enacted by Measure D, 1978. The Planning and Zoning Commission may, by conditional use permit, reduce the parking requirement contained in subsection 20.28.030A to no fewer than one and one-half (1-1/2) spaces per dwelling unit upon making the finding that existing on-street parking is sufficient to justify a reduction." This project is unique in that they provide housing units, of various sizes, for seniors who have different vehicle ownership and driving habits that differ from the general population. See the study session staff report from November 17, 2007 (attachment 2) for required description of all required approvals.

### **Background on Application**

A formal application was first received on October 31, 2007. A study session was held on November 13, 2008 to provide initial comments from the public and the Commission to staff and the applicant. An environmental scoping session was held on April 22, 2008. The applicant has since revised the site plan in response to comments from the scoping session and is now presenting it to the public and Commission to inform them of the proposed changes.

### **Environmental Analysis**

An EIR was certified by the University of California for a master plan that included the entire University Village in 1998. A subsequent EIR was certified in 2004, which included the quadrant areas between Buchanan and Codornices Creek and San Pablo Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The project description/plan has been changed since the 2004 approval in that the number of residential units has been decreased and the amount of commercial space has been increased.

LSA is the consultant firm that has been selected to perform the environmental review, and were present during the scoping process when issues to be addressed during Environmental Impact Report (EIR), pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), were reviewed by the public and Commission. Some preliminary work and information gathering has been completed.

**Changes in site plan in response to Public and Commission Concerns:**

The site plan has been revised from the original proposal, in response to discussions at the study and scoping sessions held by the Commission. (See attachments 2, 3, 4 and 5 for staff reports and minutes from the public hearings.) There were a number of issues of concern raised at the hearing, which have been addressed in the revised site plan. The following are the two key issues that have been directly affected by the new plan. It does not, however, include the full breadth of concerns brought up at the hearings:

- Creeks: There were numerous concerns about focus being taken away from the creeks and the fact that they are not used as an amenity for the patrons at the site. There was originally a two-story parking garage proposed adjacent to Cordonicies Creek, which raised concerns about the aesthetics of such a large structure, the potential environmental impacts of a large structure in close proximity to the creek and if such a structure was the “best use” for a creekside.

The applicant has responded by changing the locations of the uses and eliminating the above grade parking structure. The proposed parking lot is proposed to be a “green lot” with pervious pavement, which will also be helpful with drainage and water treatment of the site. The senior housing units along the southern property line front onto Cordonicies Creek, which provide an amenity to tenants and provide a less intensive use along the creek.

- Layout and Circulation: There were general concerns about the circulation on and around the site. The concerns included pedestrian and bicycle accesses and safety. The new site plan eliminates the driveway going into the development on the south end of the lot and also eliminates the awkward turnaround in the senior housing center.

**Design Review**

Design review is the discretionary process whose purpose is to ensure that the design features and architectural details of a project are appropriate and harmonious with the site and surrounding areas. During the design review process the architectural details such as the style and materials, signage, colors, landscaping, etc are refined. The applicant may seek a phased approval process of the rezone and potential adoption of an EIR by the City Council, with a recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission, prior to approval of Design Review for the architectural details of the project by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

**Use of Earlier EIRs**

An EIR was certified by the University of California for a master plan that included the entire University Village in 1998. A subsequent EIR was certified in 2004, which included the quadrant areas between Buchanan Street and Codornices Creek and San Pablo Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The previously approved

project included a higher number of housing, solely student housing, and a smaller commercial component. There have been concerns raised about the use of analysis from the 1998 EIR and 2004 subsequent EIR, which may be archaic and not applicable to current conditions.

It has been acknowledged that ambient conditions have changed over the last few years. For example, traffic conditions and improvements have changed, hydrology has been improved, etc. There are few portions of the previous EIRs that could be used in review of the current proposal. If data from the previous EIRs is utilized it will be updated and expanded upon as needed and discussed in further detail in regards to its relation to the current proposal. In addition, all sources of data will be cited throughout the document.

### **Conclusion**

The applicant has made substantial changes to the site plan; changes that staff believes to be more conducive to a desirable project. There are still numerous site plan details, i.e. ADA parking, turning radiuses, drainage, landscaping, shopping cart location, bicycle parking, etc, that need to be worked out. However, with the introduction of a revised site plan staff recommends that at this time the Commission open the public hearing, take testimony from the public and provide feedback on the revised site plan. This is a very large-scale project for Albany. It is located on a major thoroughfare, connects to existing university housing and is bordered by two creeks.

### **Attachments:**

1. Plans
2. Study session staff report from November 13, 2007
3. Minutes from November 13, 2007
4. Scoping session staff report from April 22, 2008
5. Minutes from April 22, 2008