

**CITY OF ALBANY  
PLANNING AND ZONING AGENDA  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: 11/11/08  
Prepared by: AC  
Reviewed by: JB

**ITEM/ 6a**

**SUBJECT: 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.

**SITE: 1030-1130 San Pablo Avenue (University Village at the corner of San Pablo Avenue and Monroe Street)**

**APPLICANT/**

**OWNER: Bob LaLanne with The LaLanne Group for University of California**

**ZONING: SPC (San Pablo Commercial) & R-2 (Residential)**

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**STAFF 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 revised/refined project plans. **No action on the project is to be taken at this meeting.**

**BACKGROUND/PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The approximately 4.2-acre project site consists of two lots located to the northwest and southwest of the Monroe Street/San Pablo Avenue intersection. The applicant would like to construct a new 55,000 square foot grocery store at the north end of the property and a mixed-use development at the south end of the lot, which includes approximately 30,000 square foot of retail space and approximately 175 independent/assisted living senior housing units.

Because the uses are not related to the educational function of the University, city land use policies apply to the proposed project. The properties currently have two zonings, San Pablo Commercial for the first 100' along the eastern side of San Pablo Avenue and Medium Density Residential for the rest of the property. A rezone to San Pablo Commercial for the entire area would be required to consider a project with commercial uses. A planned unit development is requested to allow an increase in height and a parking exception is requested to allow a reduced number of required parking spaces. See attachments with previous staff reports and minutes for more detailed discussions of the project, required environmental review, and required entitlements.

Public notice of this application was provided on October 31, 2008 in the form of mailed notice to property owners and occupants within a 300-foot radius, applicable agencies and any persons submitting contact information in previous correspondence or hearings, and posted in three locations.

## **REVISED PROJECT PLANS**

At previous public meetings, the public and Commission have asked questions and asked for more information on many elements of the project. This study session is an opportunity for the applicant to update the community on the project, present more refined project plans, and address some of the questions posed at previous study sessions. It is also an opportunity for the Commission to provide the applicant direction on any additional items not yet addressed or that may need further refinement.

Some of the questions, such as traffic impacts, are best addressed in the CEQA environmental review process. The preparation of a draft environmental impact report is underway, and a detailed discussion of the broader environmental impacts, such as traffic, will be thoroughly discussed at a future meeting.

At this time, staff suggests that a particular focus be placed on the site plan, including location of buildings, internal site circulation, etc. For example, the applicant has made an effort to anticipate needed improvements in regards to bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicle safety, water run-off/treatment, and creeks.

On November 5, 2008, staff provided the applicant with a letter (attached) listing site-planning items that need to be included or addressed. In order to be efficient in the direction given to the applicant, staff would like to review with the Commission some of the main site planning issues raised, and both staff and the applicant would welcome any feedback before the applicant further revises the plans.

### ***1. Bicycle and pedestrian access, circulation, and safety.***

San Pablo Crossing - The applicant is proposing a to connect the future bike/pedestrian path along Cordonicies Creek with Dartmouth by removing the southwest corner of the mixed-use building to a crosswalk. The street median along San Pablo will be widened and improved to provide a “safety island” for pedestrians crossing San Pablo Avenue to Dartmouth.

Buchanan Bike Path - The City is currently in the planning stages of the Buchanan Bike Path, which includes options for a Class I (heading east) and Class II (heading west) bike path along Buchanan/Marin Avenue. Staff’s recommendation is that the Bike Path planning process should guide the design process, and once completed, be incorporated into this project as appropriate. For example, as part of the vehicle circulation, the applicant is proposing a right hand turn lane at the corner of Marin Avenue and San Pablo Avenue. Thus, while an element of the retail project, the

precise configuration of the right hand turn lane will be determined as part of the Bike Path project.

Another challenge for the design of the proposed project is that many bike and pedestrian improvements will not be completed until future phases of the project are implemented. Thus, interim solutions may be necessary, such as on Monroe.

The applicant is also reviewing AC Transit bus stop standards to provide the best locations for bus stops, including a sheltered stop along either San Pablo Avenue or Monroe Street.

2. **Creeks.** The applicant is proposing to stabilize and landscape Village Creek. The site plan has been revised to bring focus to the creeks and better integrate the creeks into the design of the project. The Whole Foods at the north end of the lot will likely have large windows on the north facing elevation, facing the Village Creek. The elimination of a parking structure provides visibility and focus to Village Creek. The applicant is also proposing a small ancillary commercial building at the northeast corner, which could potentially be used as a café or coffee shop with a seating area looking onto Cordonicies Creek.

The senior housing along will likely have units fronting onto Corodonicies Creek or windows and recreation areas focusing on the creek. Studies have indicated that when residential housing faces a creek, the creek becomes a more prominent part of day-to-day living and in turn, results in better maintained, healthier, and more enjoyed creeks.

3. **Monroe Avenue.** Staff intends to explore alternative travel lane and parking configurations for Monroe Avenue at the entrance to the project from San Pablo Avenue. In particular, the principles of “Complete Streets” that serve not only auto needs, but pedestrian, bicyclists, transit, and enhance urban design, should be applied. Currently, the configurations on the plans show one inbound travel lane (west) and two outbound travel lanes (east). Beyond the intersection, angled parking is shown. No bike lane is indicated. As a possible alternative, it may be possible to accommodate a bike line by shifting parking from angled to parallel. In addition, two travel lanes in each direction, merging into one on Monroe, may be necessary to accommodate traffic into University Village. In addition, while ultimately there are anticipated to be better bike and pedestrian routes, initially at least, Monroe will continue to be used by bicyclists, and thus some accommodation for bicyclists would be useful.
4. **Drainage and water treatment.** The applicant has provided preliminary hydrological calculations, both existing and proposed, for University Village in its entirety. The proposed plan shows Phase III of the University Village Master Plan from 2004 included to provide a comprehensive idea of the increase impervious surface. This project is NOT a review of Phase III. Phase III is only used in hydrological calculations as a base to provide a comprehensive drainage plan, which needs to be designed with potential future impervious surfaces designed into the plan.

The overall drainage area is approximately 17.2 acres, and based on preliminary plans, it appears the increase in impervious surface would be approximately 0.62 acres or approximately 27,000sq.ft. The drainage plan has been revised to use bioswales running north/south along 10<sup>th</sup> Street, rather than previously proposed bioswale along the western half of Monroe Street.

The introduction of the pervious lot at the Whole Foods store provides a more natural drainage solution, which is preferable.

5. **Fire Access.** The Fire Department continues to review the plans and work with the applicant to provide the required access along the south side and interior areas of the mixed-use building, and to provide adequate turn around space for fire engines and trucks at all necessary areas. At this point in time, the Fire Department believes the Whole Foods area to be fully accessible as proposed. Additional analysis is underway with respect to Fire Department access to the senior housing area and to the rear of the retail buildings adjacent to the senior housing.
6. **Aesthetics/Elevations.** The applicant is aware that all four elevations of each building will be required but would like some more feedback at this study session to hopefully result in a more definitive site plan before executing into a detailed level of design work.
7. **Whole Foods.** The applicant has spoken with staff about having Whole Foods provide a presentation and to hold a discussion on the stores mission, goals, and policies. This hearing will occur at a later date.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposed project has been reviewed at previous study sessions where both the public and Commission have provided the applicant feedback and concerns. The applicant has revised plans to address some of the concerns, but as previously stated some of the questions that have been posed in the past will not be able to be fully addressed until the environmental review is completed. This is an appropriate time for the public and Commission to review the progress and revisions of the project and provide the applicant additional feedback for consideration in further refinements.

## **Attachments:**

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