

Arden Wood makes some progress

Homes near completion; 200-condo project stalled

by Eric Castongia

Lately, Arden Wood's development projects have seemed like a mixed bag of simultaneous stop-and-go. With seven homes nearly finished and a proposed 200-condo project completely stalled, Mark Nelson of Mark Nelson Development LLC recently reviewed the status of the current and proposed Arden Wood developments.

In addition to developing the seven homes currently under construction at the corner of 15th Avenue and Wawona, Nelson serves the liaison for the Arden Wood Christian Science Organization. He has been work with parties interested in developing a portion of Arden Wood's land, which to date includes about four acres on the western side of the main building, bounded roughly by 17th and 19th avenues and the Grove condominiums and Wawona Street.

Since August of 2006, there have been several designs proposed to build a condominium development with approximately 200 units.

The current development – seven houses now under construction at the corner of 15th Avenue and Wawona – is in full swing. Nelson expects the two homes closest to West Portal Avenue to begin being staged within the next several weeks and to go on the market shortly thereafter.

An eighth home lot, facing Wawona, is currently not being built upon. Neighbors have been told in the past that Arden Wood plans on keeping that parcel for a director's house to be built at some point in the future.

The proposed 200-condominium development is currently stalled. According to Nelson, Republic Urban Properties LLC (RUP), the developer selected for the parcel, elected not to continue their pursuit of the property in October of 2008, stating the combination of an extended entitlement process and the current economy as factors in their decision and consequently, gave up their option to purchase.

Republic Urban Properties was the second developer seeking approval to build housing on the site, beginning neighborhood meetings in the early part of 2007, after Union Property Capital LLC elected not to pursue the property, citing the length of time necessary to secure neighborhood and planning department approval.

According to Nelson, both private and senior housing developers remain interested in developing the western portion of the parcel and although it is not currently being marketed, the property is still being shown. According to the planning department there haven't been any planning reviews regarding the property this year (the last inquiry was December of 2007). I expect that to change as the economy recovers.

In addition to an enormous budget deficit, San Francisco is faced with continuing requirements to build additional housing to secure state and federal funding. In order to generate needed funds at the city level, housing needs to be built. Experts agree that when the economy picks up, so will development.

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