

Arden Wood Neighbors Object to Towers.

Developers change Their Plans

The developers of the proposed housing project on the Arden Wood property sponsored two workshops in February to present their new vision for the 4.6 acre parcel. In Republic Urban's words, 'you talked, we listened'. Their revised scheme was a significant and welcomed departure from the original 13 and six story towers, which were loudly opposed by neighbors. The new design consists of four low-rise buildings straddling a 'village drive' culminating at a cul-de-sac.

Two existing buildings are to stay, building 701 which is currently staff housing and the director's house, and are to be remodeled as part of the development. Robert Mendelsohn, President of Republic Urban Properties San Francisco Branch, states that although a Planned Unit Development will still be needed to build the project, it will be built to existing zoning guidelines, with the height staying within the 40 foot height limit.

Some of the project specifics:

- 60-75% of the existing trees are to remain
- Green space will be maintained at the perimeter of the site
- Three walking paths were highlighted for access from the development to the West Portal transit hub, one of which was shown behind the Arden Wood Christian Science Facility
- The auto entry and exit to the development will be on 19th Ave. Cal Trans has not yet given approval for the access
- The 18th Ave. and Wawona gate will be used only for emergency vehicles
- The revised scheme plans for 141 units-down from 162
- LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certification-a rating system by the U.S. Green Building Council to promote environmentally sensitive construction (renewable resources), sustainable site development (such as collecting rain water for landscape irrigation) and energy efficient construction. Republic Urban is shooting for a 'Gold' Certification

- The developer plans on filing plans for their environmental evaluation application (pre-Environmental Impact Report) within the next month
- The developer may opt to pay a fee in lieu of providing for the city's inclusionary (or workforce) housing requirement

The neighbors I spoke to about the revised design were optimistic, but still had some concerns which are:

- Sufficient on-site parking. The anticipation is that many new residents will have multiple cars and not enough parking.
- How will site traffic go South on 19th Ave? In a previous scheme, the site's auto entry/exit at the 19th and Wawona traffic light, allowed a left turn from the site to go South and end dangerous U-Turns in front of St. Cecelia's.

To create an acceptable project, the developer, neighbors, Cal Trans and the City of San Francisco will need to remain involved and committed to resolving the issues special to this area. With neighbor involvement, the proposed project has gone far since its inception. The developer has been asked to present to the greater neighborhood in the near future. Stay informed, involved and vocal.

By Eric Castongia