

# New Parkmerced owners unveil green expansion plan

*Ambitious project will include re-routed Muni lines, new shopping district and increased density, energy efficiency*

by Rae Doyle

**C**an you go forward by turning the clock back? The new owners of Parkmerced intend to do just that. Built for returning World War II servicemen and blue-collar workers, the builders of Parkmerced in the 1940's designed the complex to replicate suburban living with buildings positioned in large open green spaces, and by accommodating automobile use.

But what was considered desirable then is considered wasteful and environmentally unsound in the 21st century, according to Craig Hartman, lead architect of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP, who speculates that Parkmerced will be one of the most environmentally ambitious projects in the country.

He explained that the two 13-story towers will not be replaced but will be refurbished. Hartman promised that smaller buildings will be replaced by buildings of the same height and size, and will be positioned to allow the streets to be bathed in sunlight for longer periods during the day and will block the westerly winds sweeping from the ocean.

The streets, originally designed for efficient car maneuverability, will be reconfigured to be more pedestrian friendly. The past suburban ideal of residential only neighborhoods, adopted by the original Parkmerced developers, will be abandoned by building a commercial district within a 5-minute walk from all housing units.

To further reduce dependency on automobile use, they intend to study more sophisticated workforce transportation plans. One option would be to move the MUNI stop at 19th and Holloway into Parkmerced.

One conservation measure will be to reduce the open green space and employ the space for recreational activity and a community center. Hartman reported that 60 million gallons of drinking water is being used now for landscaping of green areas that have no recreational use.



## Parkmerced

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The plan is to use recycled water for the reduced landscape area. Other conservation measures will be employed by installation of more efficient appliances.

It is estimated that, ultimately, energy use at Parkmerced will be reduced by 62 per cent and water use will be reduced by 42 per cent.

However, Parkmerced tenants are particularly disturbed by the plan to reduce open green areas. Aaron Goodman, Vice President of the Parkmerced Residents' Organization, is concerned that reducing the open space will drastically reduce the feel of community in Parkmerced.

The surrounding neighbors are concerned that the current 3224 units will be increased almost threefold by the time the project is completed in 20 years.

P.J. Johnston, speaking for the developer, said that the site is zoned for 11,000 units, but the developer intends to keep that number below 8,700. He said that the project has to be smart and "within reason" of what the area can support.

The previous owners have sold off pieces of the property to Summerhill Homes and San Francisco State University. The current Parkmerced developers in-

tend to keep the 115 intact and employ a comprehensive plan of development that should be acceptable to the neighborhood.

For the past year Denise LaPointe, President of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council, has expressed concerns about the City's failure to look at Westside developments as a whole and determine a mitigation plan for the cumulative impacts on traffic, infrastructure and the environment.

There is a proposed development of 200 units at Summerhill Homes, which was once part of the Parkmerced property. The Brotherhood Way development appears to be stalled at the moment with an undetermined number of proposed units.

A development of 162 to 199 units is being planned on a portion of the Arden Wood Christian Science Home Site.

Both City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University are planning housing developments.

On Twin Peaks, there are two potential developments, one on Aqua Vista Way with a potential of either 17 homes or 60 condominiums, and another on Crestmont Drive of 57 condominium units.

The Parkmerced development will require an Environmental Impact Review, but the other de-

velopments taken separately are exempt.

LaPointe expressed frustration that City Hall doesn't prescribe higher standards for developers to address and mitigate neighborhood concerns regarding the substantial level development. Modern city planning encourages density.

The Association of Bay Area Governments and the State of California are mandating more density in urban areas. San Francisco was told to add 20,000 new units to the housing stock in the period 2000-2006. And environmental groups are encouraging more density in urban areas to reduce the environmental affect of commuter traffic.

The Parkmerced developers have held community meetings in the West of Twin Peaks area of mainly single-family residences for the past year.

It is a tough sell in neighborhoods that were developed in the 1920's with the conscious ambition to reduce density by zoning changes that required large lots and minimum house sizes.

Community workshops to review and refine the various design elements are tentatively scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 21 and Saturday, Feb. 23. For more information, call 227-0630 or visit [www.ParkmercedVision.com](http://www.ParkmercedVision.com).