

# Neighbors weigh Arden Wood's current proposal

## Major decisions still remain regarding proposed Arden Wood development

by Eric Castongia

The proposed condominium development planned for the 4.6 acre western portion of the Arden Wood Christian Science property between West Portal and 19th Avenue is continuing to show signs of progress.

The developer of the parcel, Republic Urban Properties, held two "by-invitation" workshops in February to present their current scheme, which reduces the previous 13-story and six-story towers to four low-rise buildings.

As part of the plan, two existing buildings on site are to stay and be remodeled – the director's house and Building 701, which currently serves as staff housing.

The Neighbors of Arden Wood (NOA) are encouraged that the current scheme represents a vast improvement to the earlier plans. The NOA working group has been meeting to study the current proposal to identify areas of concern before plans are submitted to the city for review.

The group has identified several positive aspects of the latest development plans. The project will be built to existing 40 foot height limit and the number of condominiums will be reduced from 162 to 141. The group maintains that the reduction of density in a single family home neighborhood is appropriate.

Mitigating traffic safety concerns and potential congestion, the developer has agreed that there will be one central entry/exit drive, which will be accessed only off 19th Avenue.

Green space will be maintained at the perimeter of the site, "softening" the development and maintaining the existing "green" feeling of the neighborhood.

The developer has also made a commitment to conduct a full Environmental Impact Report for the project.

Several project "negatives" identified by NOA have yet to be worked out by the developer to the group's satisfaction.

At present, only 168 parking spaces are planned for the entire development. The anticipation is that many new residents will have multiple cars, since many residents commute out of the city for work. As such, the group believes the currently planned 1.2 spaces per unit is insufficient. A rough calculation by NOA based on the expected bedroom count of the development suggests the project should include a minimum of 240 parking spaces. Inadequate parking on site is expected to create overflow parking and traffic onto neighborhood streets.

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Neighbors feel the 19th Avenue entry/exit needs to be modified to allow the development's residents the ability to go north or south on 19th Ave. A north-only exit will exacerbate the existing problem of dangerous U-turns in front of St. Cecilia's Church and school, executed to allow north-bound traffic to turn around to go south on 19th Avenue. Cal Trans and traffic engineers need to establish a workable design and obtain the necessary approvals prior to moving forward.

The developer plans on getting approvals for the site under a Planned Unit Development. This is expected to allow flexibility in the planning process that may also allow "looser" development outside current zoning rules.

Two footpaths to the West Portal transit hub are proposed by the developer – one

near 18th Avenue and Wawona, and the other to 15th Avenue and Wawona. The only path supported by neighbors is one going behind the Arden Wood Christian Science facility to the 15th Avenue and Wawona Gate, which provides a more direct and safer path to West Portal and reduces opportunity for the development's residents to park off site in the neighborhood.

In response to NOA's concerns, Robert Mendelsohn, president of Republic Urban Properties' San Francisco Branch, states that additional workshops will be conducted to allow further community input.

NOA proposes to host another town hall meeting to present the current plan to allow neighborhood input, prior to the project's submission for environmental review. Once a date is determined, a notice will go out to neighbors. For the latest information on the developer's plans and NOA's efforts, visit [www.ardenwoodsf.com](http://www.ardenwoodsf.com) and [www.NeighborsOfArdenwood.org](http://www.NeighborsOfArdenwood.org).