

# VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

## Public Meeting

February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006  
7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

### INTRODUCTION

We began by going around the room and introducing ourselves.

### COMMUNITY MATTERS

Ron Bialkowski, VRA Board Member, had a couple of announcements:

1. **Resident Assistants.** Ron described the job of a Resident Assistant (RA): RAs plan events in the Village, answer questions, and assist with neighborhood dispute resolution. If you have any questions you may call any of the RAs. You can find their phone number on copies of The Villager or through the Village Office.
2. **Upcoming Events.**
  - Family Friday will be held at 6:30 p.m. on February 10<sup>th</sup>. The movie "Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit" will be shown.
  - There will be a children's art exhibit in March. More details to come.
  - In April there will be a Health and Wellness Fair, but a firm date has not yet been set.

Grace Park, University Village Health Worker, addressed us.

1. **Health and Wellness Fair.** At the fair there will be information about personal health and interacting with the environment in a healthy way.
2. **First-Aid Kits.** Free first-aid kits are available to those who request them. For more information, contact any University Village Health Worker. You can get the contact information for the Health Workers in the latest Villager or by emailing [cmo@uhs.berkeley.edu](mailto:cmo@uhs.berkeley.edu).

Rob Schechtman, Vice President of Academic Affairs for the Graduate Assembly (GA) had several important announcements:

1. **Class Pass.** The Class Pass is student legislation that has the University purchase an unlimited-use bus pass for each student with money from a student fee. Graduate students are more likely than undergraduates to use the bus, especially graduates who live in the Village. The Class Pass is coming up to vote again and it is imperative that we have as many voters on this issue as possible. If it isn't the case that at least 20% of graduate students vote for the Class Pass, it will be defeated and everyone will lose their bus passes. Voting will take place on February 21, 22 and 23 online on Telebears. The VRA will send out an announcement that week with a link to the voting site. Be sure to participate!

2. **Career Center Move.** On the same ballot with Class Pass there is a measure to move the Career Center closer to campus. The GA recommends opposing the measure because the move would require the University to spend money on leasing costs.
3. **YMCA Memberships.** The GA has negotiated a deal with the Berkeley YMCA. Memberships for UC Berkeley students will be half-price until February 15<sup>th</sup>.
4. **Affordable Housing.** The GA is very interested in affordable housing for University Village families and would like to work more closely with the VRA on the matter.

Tavie Tipton, the Village Office Manager, had the following to say:

1. **West Village.** The Office will start showing model apartments for West Village in April. Until then the floor plans for the new apartments will be available online. Tavie will work on making copies of the floor plans available in the office.

## CONSTRUCTION & GARDEN

Jeff Bond, Senior Planner for Capital Projects and Emily Marthisen, Interim Assistant Vice Chancellor for Campus Planning, addressed us. Jeff disclosed that he will be leaving the University at the end of the month. Despite his upcoming job change, he still agreed to come speak with us because he has had more dealings with the Community Garden than his peers. Jeff came prepared to answer a letter sent from the Community Garden to Capital Projects regarding the upcoming construction of West Village and the accompanying encroachment into the Garden. He proposed going through the letter to address each request. His comments are as follows with the Garden's original requests in parentheses.

1. (Continued access to the Garden throughout the construction process.) This shouldn't be a problem. The University will continue to provide access to the Garden throughout the construction process.
2. (Water supplied to the Garden throughout the construction process.) The University will accommodate this request, though there may be a few inconveniences or short water outages as the construction progresses.
3. (Wild blackberry bushes removed in the southern half of the Garden.) At the completion of the construction project these will be removed.
4. (Water made available to the western side of the Garden.) The University will provide permanent water to the west side of the Garden.
5. (Two 30-minute loading zone parking spots near the entrance to the Garden made available for use by gardeners.) Because parking is severely limited as it is, the University proposes one 20-minute loading zone parking spot.
6. (Maintenance of a secure six-foot fence around the Garden throughout the construction process.) The University feels that they have a mutual interest in preserving the safety of the area and will maintain the fence throughout construction.
7. (Installation of a sturdy six-foot wooden fence with a lockable gate after the construction is complete.) This is more problematic for the University because it creates some legal problems when a lock is installed. The University would like to continue with current plans for a lower, aesthetic fence facing the Village and six-foot fences around the other sides of the Garden.

8. (No decorative trees planted on the eastern side of the Garden after the construction is complete.) This is not a problem. No trees will be planted there.
9. (Fruit trees planted on the western side of the Garden after the construction is complete.) The University would like to investigate further this option and look into the soil type and amount of sun on the west side of the Garden so that it can plant trees that would thrive in that area.
10. (Impartial environmental engineer to (a) survey the Garden and estimate the potential environmental damage of a construction staging area on the land and its long-term use for agriculture, as well as the possible health hazards of air-borne pollutants to gardeners and their children during the construction process; (b) propose steps for J.R. Roberts to take to prevent any potential environmental damage; and (c) review possible non-Garden staging sites in terms of environmental impact and construction costs.) The University has instructed the staging area contractor to not explore the Garden as a possible location. The University does not know where the staging area would go, but it will NOT go in the Garden. The University understands Village residents' concerns about the environmental hazards of having a staging area in the Garden.

After Jeff finished giving the University's reply to the Garden's letter he asked for discussion and comments, particularly about the two requests that the University rejected (parking and lockable gate).

1. **Parking Spot.** Residents were satisfied and agreed that one spot was better than none. Residents agreed to have the spot as a general 20-minute loading zone instead of trying to make it Garden-specific.
2. **No Lockable Gate, Shorter Fence.** Residents were more concerned about this point. People mentioned having problems with tools and food being stolen from the Garden. A suggestion was made to work on further securing the sheds to prevent having tools stolen. Someone suggested making the sides of the fence not facing the Village taller and more secure, perhaps by planting some sort of spiky vine near the fence.
3. **Eastern Landscaping.** Someone asked why space was required on the east side of the Garden for landscaping between the parking lot and the Garden. Couldn't that space be returned to the Garden if we forewent the landscaping? Jeff's answer was that the landscaping was actually a legally required bioswell, a space that takes runoff from parking lot and filters it into the ground to prevent contaminants from ending up in the creek. The landscaping is not larger than required for the bioswell and is mostly grass.
4. **How Much Land Lost?** A resident wanted to know exactly how much land would be lost from the Garden. He said he had seen stakes in the Garden showing which plots would be taken, but he didn't know what they meant. Jeff sent around pictures of the stakes but said he did not know exactly the footage that would be lost. Because of the layout of the ground, the bioswell will have to curve inward a little on the northern side of the Garden, but not significantly.

There were no more questions specific to the Garden, so Jeff answered questions related to construction and future housing plans.

1. **Section A.** Everyone wanted to know the future plans for Section A. Apparently the University's plans are not firm, but Section A is guaranteed to stay up until the summer

of 2007. There is a lot of room to reconceptualize the construction plans that will take Section A's place. One resident stated that he wanted the administration to know that some people would be willing to stay in Section A as long as possible, despite any problems with the buildings.

2. **Beautifying Section A.** One resident reported seeing a windowsill being painted and asked if the University would be painting all the windows and beautifying Section A. Tavie Tipton replied that Village Maintenance had been testing a sealing agent on the windowsill and, no, unfortunately the University will not be investing any more money to improve Section A.
3. **Section B vs. Section A.** A resident wanted to know why is Section B being torn down while Section A is staying up. For a variety of reasons, Jeff and Tavie answered: there were major mold problems in Section B; the finances of renovating would have been too costly; initial plans involved moving family housing away from San Pablo and using the land from Section A for single graduate housing. Additionally, Section A and Section B were both slated to be destroyed at the same time, but the plans for building on the Section A land simply fell through.
4. **Housing Affordability.** Rob Schechtman from the Graduate Assembly asked how much discussion in Capital Projects there had been about the increased cost of rent for graduate students, and how much flexibility in rent prices existed. Jeff replied that there was a lot of awareness. He said that housing is a university auxiliary so it cannot receive state funds. Rob replied that Intercollegiate Sports is also an auxiliary, but it received funding. He suggested that there was a whole list of funding sources that could legally be used. He also asked why the University did not build less beautiful, less expensive buildings and thus make rent cheaper. Tavie replied that the University is now done creating plans for family housing.
5. **Recreation.** A resident wondered whether another gym was planned, since the recreation programs in the Village are such a big part of Village life. Tavie answered that yes, a new gym and office building would replace the old gym and office if it were torn down.
6. **Price of New Apartments.** A resident wanted to know the average cost per unit for West Village. Jeff did not know, but said he could look up the numbers on his computer for us. (A web search after the meeting showed that the rent for a 2 bed, 1 bath apartment will be \$1295; the rent for a 3 bed, 1 bath will be \$1475.)
7. **Gill Tract.** Michael Beer from Urban Roots, a group advocating the construction of a working educational farm on the Gill Tract asked Jeff if it was still a possibility that the Gill Tract could be set aside for use as an educational farm. Jeff answered that he had never been given an indication from the Board of Regents that a working farm on the Gill Tract would be a realistic goal. The ultimate idea, he said, was to move the Village Community Center and Office to a portion of the Gill Tract.
8. **Last Day for Section B.** A resident was concerned about the time frame for moving out of Section B into the new apartments. Tavie said that residents will be able to stay in Section B through June and will have a few days at the beginning of July to move into West Village. West Village will open July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Prepared by VRA Secretary  
Maile Urbancic  
February 15, 2006