

# VILLAGE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

## Public Meeting

March 14, 2007

7:00 p.m.

Four Corners Room/Community Center

### PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Officer Brian Parsley addressed us:

- In last couple of weeks there have had some car thefts. Be sure to lock your car doors, and consider getting a club or other car theft prevention device. So far, officers have usually been able to recover the cars, but it is still a good idea to do whatever you can to secure your vehicles.
- As always, a reminder: **LOCK YOUR BIKES!** If you have an expensive bike, keep it inside. If you have an older Cryptonite lock, contact the company because some older locks can be easily opened. The company will replace your lock if you have one of the vulnerable kinds.
- Park in your parking spot and don't park your car in the guest spots. Residents who have multiple cars are negatively impacting others in the Village by parking their second car in the guest spots.
- Guest parking is limited to 72 hours. Any cars parked longer than that in a guest spot will be ticketed.
- Parking in front of the Community Center is for 2 hours only.
- Little League has started, and Little League parents tend to park in red zones along 10<sup>th</sup> Street to pick up their kids. This makes it difficult for traffic to get through. Little League is putting the parking rules in their upcoming newsletter, which will hopefully help. If this kind of thing becomes a bigger problem, the Village will make a request to have traffic officers come on Saturdays.
- If someone parks in your parking spot, you can call the UCPD non-emergency number at 642-6760. They will ticket and tow the car.
- As a reminder, it is not against the law for people to come dig through the garbage. Some people do it to collect recyclables. Be sure to shred all your personal documents and information because people could come take anything you throw away (including old bills, credit card statements, and other documents with personal and financial information).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Family Assistance Program Coordinator Dianne Rush Woods had the following announcements:

- April 28 will be the date of the Village Annual Health Fair. It is always a great event for families and provides a lot of good information for residents. Because of the Fair, parking and bus route changes will be made. If you know of any health, medical, or alternative medicine vendors that you would like to see at the Fair, please let Dianne know. You can contact her at: (510) 528-5391.
- Lea Stepman, an Albany Social Worker, is doing a workshop on respectful parenting. This class is geared toward parents of children age 1 to 8 years. The workshop teaches parents how to be firm but not too firm and how to provide effective discipline. The total cost is \$195 per person, but the Village will pay \$100 (you pay the rest) for up to 10 people. This is a fantastic course and it is a real opportunity to be able to take it with the subsidy. The class will start in April. For more information, contact Dianne.
- If you are a vocalist and like to sing, you will like this announcement. The Village has arranged to have an open mike night for Village vocalists. There will be a professional keyboardist who is comfortable playing blues, country, pop, and pretty much anything. All you have to do is bring the music and show up. The first open mike night is planned for Friday, March 30 in the Crossroads Room. More information about the location and details will be forthcoming. Check for additional information in the Villager.
- Do you want to learn how to quilt? Someone has volunteered to teach a course called “Not your grandmother’s quilt”. The details are still being worked out. It will probably be a series workshop, stretched over three Saturdays. There will be a fee.

	<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Where</b>
1.	FRC Kids’ Time: Storytelling & Singalong (ages 2 – 5)	Tuesdays 4:30 – 5:15 pm	Family Resource Center
2.	Health & Wellness Fair	April 28	Picnic area across from the Office
3.	Dissertation Writing support Workshop	Tuesdays, 5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Crossroads Room
4.	Single Parents Group	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, 7:00 – 9:00 pm	Crossroads Room
5.	Family Friday	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Fridays, 6:00 – 8:00 pm	Four Corners Room
6	Open Mike for Vocalists	Fridays, March 30 <sup>th</sup> and April 20 <sup>th</sup> 7-9 pm	Crossroads Room

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The Village Office is hiring students and spouses for temporary office work. If you are interested, call Pepper Black, Program Director, at (510) 526-8505 Ext. 12.

## THE FUTURE OF SECTION A HOUSING

Tavie Tipton, Village Manager, was assigned to speak to us on this matter by RSSP. The VRA Secretary invited several officials from campus who have more information on the matter, but they declined to attend. Tavie agreed to give us as much information as she could and also forward our concerns to campus administration.

- Section A apartments *are* being closed on June 30. Everyone will have to be out by that date, with the intention of that property becoming something else. Tavie didn't know exactly what it would become, but perhaps a grocery store, parking, or housing for the community.
- If a developer or grocery store buys or leases the land, they may not be ready to build immediately. Until demolition, the buildings will be fenced off and vacated.
- The reason for a delay may be that these buildings are very costly to demolish. They are filled with lead and asbestos, etc. It may cost up to \$5 million to tear down these buildings.

## Questions & Answers

Q: If it costs that much to tear them down, wouldn't it make financial sense to keep people living in the buildings until they were ready for demolition? That way they would still be pulling in money from rent.

A: Well, but the University is also putting money back into the buildings in the form of maintenance. We are still doing carpentry, fixing doors, etc. The sewer lines are in bad shape, there are electrical problems that need fixing, and so on.

Q: I live in Section A, and I am pretty satisfied. I think everyone else is too. What if we scaled down maintenance?

A: Thing is, you can't wave your rights. Some of the maintenance issues are more problematic than just a door not fitting correctly. To keep them inhabitable requires significant effort.

Q: Don't you think that rent is offsetting the cost of maintenance? Do you have any figures?

A: (Answered by Diane Rush-Woods.) I was on the affordable housing committee for Section B. We had people come in and do the numbers. We thought Section B was financially viable, but not Section A. And that was quite a few years in the past. We thought even back then that Section A should come down. We wanted to save Section B and let them take down Section A. There is a lot of money that goes into maintaining Section A.

Q: Is the University selling the land or just the rights to build on the land?

A: I don't know. This land is not under the purview of Housing & Dining any more. Once it is vacated, it will be controlled by Real Estate Services. There is very little undeveloped land in

the East Bay, and this land is very valuable. Everyone is interested in what happens to it. University Village doesn't pay taxes to the City of Albany, but we impact them a lot, particularly in terms of public school enrollment. Albany would be happy to have something taxable. If there was a grocery store, they would probably be pleased.

Q: There is all this talking about building, but where is the parking going? Already there is too much traffic near Ocean View. Traffic flow is a very important issue when we have so many children living here.

A: I have not heard any specific plans on traffic flow. It is something that will need to be addressed.

Q: I'm afraid that as soon as they make a construction plan, it will be too late. Who should we, as residents of the Village, try to talk to? Who is the decision maker?

A: (Answered by VRA Secretary.) I will find out who is making the decisions about this land. We will try to establish a dialogue with them. If necessary, we will send out their contact information to the VRA listserve and have people write/email/call them to explain our concerns about being included in the planning process.

A: (Diane) From my time with the VRA, fighting for affordable housing, I learned that if you want to be invited to planning, you have to make a lot of noise. You need to demand as consumers around environmental protection. When we did it, we organized around the community, created posters, contacted people, identified community leaders, worked with professors, and so on. Eventually, we forced them to justify their rationale for tearing down Section B. We also made them listen to our input regarding the design of West Village.

Q: How many people will be left without any housing after Section A is torn down?

A: Everyone will have an option to move within the Village.

Q: Before the last plan for construction was approved, the University had to perform an Environmental Impact Report. Does EIR need another hearing?

A: I don't know. The proposed building uses are not fundamentally different from before.

## **Discussion**

At this point, the VRA respectfully thanked and dismissed Tavie Tipton, Dianne Rush-Woods, and Pepper Black, and proceeded to discuss the matter. We came to a consensus about our stance, and organized to take further steps as necessary.

Comment: I am living in a one-bedroom Section A apartment. My concern is that I am going to have to move out of the Village because the West Village one bedroom apartments don't open until August 2008. I'd like to remain living in Section A until then, especially if the land is not going to be built upon.

Comment: It seems really unlikely that we can get people to be able to stay living in Section A. My concern is having them standing. Vacant buildings could attract gangs, vandals, squatters, drug dealers, and generally unsavory types that we don't want around our children. Abandoned buildings also present a safety hazard for children. No matter how many fences are erected,

some child might still find a way through and be injured or killed inside a building. If Section A is not going to be inhabited, then I'd like to see it torn down as soon as possible. (Everyone seemed to agree with this.)

After similar discussion, we agreed on the following position:

1. If the Section A buildings are going to be vacated, then they need to be demolished. We do not want vacant, abandoned, fenced-off buildings near our community.
2. If the University is not planning to demolish Section A immediately, then residents should be allowed to continue living there until there is a plan for demolition.
3. There needs to be much better communication between the University and Village residents concerning plans for construction and development. These plans will impact our lives, and we should have a voice in them.

A signup sheet was passed around, with residents who were willing to put more time and effort into this fight signing their names and contact information. We agreed that our next steps would be:

- Contacting the City Council for Albany and voicing concerns at their council meetings
- Speaking with the Mayor of Albany and inviting him to a VRA meeting
- Contacting the School Board for Albany Unified School District
- Contacting Julie Valdez, Principal of Ocean View Elementary School
- Publicizing a contact list of University officials who have purview over this land and asking residents to express their indignation and displeasure over the current state of affairs
- Contacting the Office of the President of the University
- Speaking out at meetings of the Regents

Prepared by:  
Maile Urbancic  
March 23, 2007