

MEETING OF APRIL 19, 2005

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5C



Application I.D.: PA2002-0017

Application Type: Mitigated Negative Declaration, General Plan Amendment, Conceptual Development Plan Amendment, Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map

Location: 1301 Ralston Avenue

Applicant: Bradford Liebman, Ralston Village

Owner: Pami PCCI Inc.

APN: 045-190-030 & 040, 045-170-010

Zoning: PD [Planned Development]

General Plan Designation: IN [Institutions]

Environmental Determination: Mitigated Negative Declaration

PROJECT SUMMARY

Application to consider a General Plan Amendment, amendment to the Ralston Village Conceptual Development Plan, and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map to allow development of a Senior Congregate Care community within the 17.1-acre project site. For purposes of distinguishing (and discussion of) the two key components of the project site, *Phase I* is defined as an existing 45,000 sq. ft. dementia care facility located on the eastern 8.6-acre portion of the site. The proposed *Phase II* development consists of: 1) a 141,357 sq. ft. building containing 55 independent living residential units for seniors, and 2) common areas including recreational, dining, library, health services, and other congregate areas within the building. The Phase II development would be located on the western 8.5-acre portion of the subject site.

Proposed parking for Phase II consists of 90 spaces: 63 within a below-grade level garage in the new building, and 27 uncovered spaces. Fifty-two uncovered spaces will remain for the Phase I dementia care facility; total parking provided within the entire site is 142 parking spaces. Vehicular access to the site will be from an existing two-way entrance driveway on Ralston Avenue (currently serving the existing Phase I facility), and a new two-way entrance driveway at the northwestern edge of the site on Ralston Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission open the public hearing, take testimony, and continue the item for any additional research the Commission may deem necessary.

500-foot Radius Map

STAFF REPORT ORGANIZATION

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 - Economic Feasibility Analysis of Proposed Commercial Uses
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 - Relation to Future Land Use in Surrounding Area as Proposed in the General Plan
 - Proposed Off-Street Parking
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- Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map Discussion
- Conclusion and Recommendation
- Action Alternatives
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PROCEDURE FOR PROJECT REVIEW

Amending the General Plan

The proposed project entails the amendment of the Belmont General Plan to accommodate the specific development actions under the project proposal. The proposed amendments to the General Plan (GPA) are intended to refine Plan policy and discussion as these relate to the Ralston Village site. Amendments to the General Plan are subject to the review provisions of Section 20 of the Belmont Zoning Ordinance.

Because a General Plan Amendment is a legislative action, it must be approved by the City Council after a review and recommendation from the Planning Commission. In addition to required public hearings, Section 20 also states the following with regard to how this type of amendment is to be judged:

“20.7 ...The Council shall make a specific finding as to whether the proposed Amendment is required to achieve the goals and objectives of the City. (excerpt)”

This is the only finding applicable in evaluating an amendment to a General Plan. The staff report considers this finding after discussion of the requested Plan policy to be amended in light of proposed project. A full description of the applicant’s proposed General Plan text modifications is discussed further in the report. (A copy of Section 20 is provided as Attachment 1).

Planned Development Amendment

The project is also a request to amend an existing Planned Development approval and is subject to the review provisions of Section 12 (Planned Unit Development or “PD” District) of the Belmont Zoning Ordinance. Unlike properties in other zoning districts, properties seeking a PD designation are governed by a two-step review process: First, general issues of land use, site plans and circulation plans are reviewed by way of an application for a Conceptual Development Plan (CDP). After approval, more detailed issues – such as building architecture, landscaping, parking layout, and lighting – are evaluated by way of an application for a Detailed Development Plan (DDP). (A copy of Section 12 is attached as Attachment 2).

Conceptual and Detailed Development Plans

The Conceptual Development Plan is the core of the PD zone designation. PD designations are assigned only in response to a specific project application, and each PD-zoned site includes a Conceptual Development Plan. The CDP includes a schematic layout of, “proposed land uses, location of building, structures and building groups...proposed circulation systems...proposed parks, playgrounds, school sites and other open spaces...proposed landscaping...any existing trees to be removed...proposed off-street parking”.¹

A CDP also includes tabulations of densities, floor area ratios and maximum building heights; an economic feasibility analysis (commercial projects, only); delineation of any phasing; and discussion of relations to future land use in surrounding areas. Because CDP’s and PD’s result in zone changes, CDP’s must be approved by the City Council after a review and recommendation from the Planning Commission.

The second stage of PD review is the Detailed Development Plan, which does not occur until after a CDP is approved. The DDP review focuses on “...elevations and perspective drawings of all proposed structures...location and type of plant materials...finished grades...off-street parking”.² Other features of the DDP include a description of how recreation and open space areas are used (including ownership and maintenance), traffic regulation devices and plans for public utilities.

¹ Belmont Zoning Ordinance, Section 12.3A, excerpts

² Ibid., Section 12.5.A.6, excerpts

DDP's are reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission. The City Council only reviews DDP applications if an appeal is filed after Planning Commission action.

In summary, project approval under a PD zone designation requires two applications, and these are well described by their titles. The first level of review is conceptual in nature: Overall land uses, building sizes and locations and general circulation layouts are the focus of attention on a CDP application. The second level DDP review centers on the details: Architecture, landscaping, lighting, signage, etc.³ This approach is also used for amendments, as discussed below.

Amending a PD-designated Site

Amendments to a site zoned PD are treated in the same two-stage manner as an original PD designation. First, the property owner applies for an amendment to the Conceptual Development Plan. Section 12.3.2 of the Belmont Zoning Ordinance addresses how CDP amendments are evaluated, as follows:

“12.3.2 Changes in Conceptual Development Plan shall be considered as changes in the Zoning Ordinance and shall be made in accordance with Section 16 of this Ordinance.”

Section 16 of the Belmont Zoning Ordinance contains the regulations for zoning amendments. In addition to requiring public hearings and Planning Commission recommendation, it states the following with regard to how this type of amendment is to be judged:

“16.7 ...The Council shall make a specific finding as to whether the proposed Amendment is required to achieve the objectives of the Zoning Plan and the General Plan for the City. (excerpt)”

This is the only finding applicable in evaluating an amendment to a Conceptual Development Plan. The staff report considers this finding after discussion of the existing conditions and proposed project.

Should the CDP zoning amendment for Ralston Village be approved by the City Council, their application to amend its Detailed Development Plan is then reviewed. Section 12.9 of the Belmont Zoning Ordinance directs DDP amendments to be processed, as follows:

“12.9 AMENDMENT OF DETAILED DEVELOPMENT PLAN – Changes in any Detailed Development Plan shall be treated as amendments to the CUP and Design Review and considered per Section 12.4.”

³ A following section of this staff report – “Prior Actions” – describes how a CDP and DDP were approved for the Ralston Village property.

Section 12.4 of the Belmont Zoning Ordinance identifies how DDP's are approved.⁴ Therefore, in amending a DDP, a project follows the same process and requires the same findings for approval as an original DDP application. (This is in contrast to the CDP, where an amendment follows rules, that are different from the original CDP approval process).

Staff has reviewed the Ralston Village application under these provisions, recognizing that a proposed General Plan Amendment (as described earlier), and PD/CDP amendments are under consideration at this stage. Therefore, only the proposed development features related to the Conceptual Development Plan are evaluated in this staff report. If the City Council approves this amendment to the CDP, the remaining issues of the Detailed Development Plan will be reviewed as an amendment to the DDP. Staff notes that some issues fall into both CDP and DDP review. In such cases, staff has tended to review those issues earlier – at the CDP stage – to provide a more comprehensive and integrated treatment of the project.

Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map

The proposed subdivision entails creation of two lots – an 8.6-acre parcel for Phase I (existing dementia care facility) and an 8.5-acre parcel for Phase II (proposed senior independent living unit facility) for the 17.1-acre subject site. The Phase II parcel would be subdivided into the 55 (Senior Living) condominium units including common areas associated with the project. These include a portion of the upper (southern sloped) conservation easement area, roadways, parking areas, and office and ancillary space within the building.

The applicants propose a Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map (VTSM) for the proposed development. It is important to note that approval of a VTSM confers a vested right to proceed with the development in substantial compliance with the ordinances, standards, and policies in effect at the time the vesting tentative map is approved. In other words, approval of the subject VTSM is sought to “lock in” the development rights associated with the Planned Development. Thus the City relinquishes control over implementation of any future development (zoning) restrictions due to ordinance or policy changes, provided the applicant remains in compliance with the PD.

Consequently, the submittal for a Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map is more detailed in scope and includes exact delineation of building size/placement, sewer/storm drain and road details, grading/geotechnical and flood control information, and architectural design details. The applicant

⁴ “12.4 APPROVAL OF USES AND DEVELOPMENT – A Conditional Use Permit shall be required for any and all uses in a PD District, and Design Review shall be required for any and all improvements, as determined below:

- A For all commercial, institutional, multiple family residential, institutional and similar developments, the principles of Section 13.5.3 shall be followed.
- ...
- C In addition, the Planning Commission shall not grant a Use Permit for any use or uses in a PD District, unless it finds:
 - 1 Such use or uses substantially conform to the adopted General Plan of the City of Belmont.
 - 2 Such use or uses are as shown on the approved conceptual Development Plan for the particular PD District.

A Detailed Development Plan, as described in Section 12.5 shall be submitted as part of any application for a Use Permit / Design Review”

has provided a complete submittal for the Vesting Tentative Map as per the City's subdivision ordinance. Review of subdivisions (five lots or more) are subject to City Council approval after a review and recommendation from the Planning Commission of the following findings (all of which must be made in the affirmative) as per Sections 9.8 (a-g) and 5.1.1 of the Subdivision Ordinance (Ordinance 530):

9.8 – Planning Commission Action on Tentative Maps – Findings

- a. *The proposed map is consistent with the applicable general and specific plans.*
- b. *The design or improvement of the proposed subdivision is consistent with applicable general and specific plans.*
- c. *The site is physically suitable for the type of development.*
- d. *The site is physically suitable for the proposed density of development.*
- e. *The design of the subdivision or the proposed improvements is not likely to cause substantial environmental damage or substantially and avoidably injure fish and wildlife or their habitat.*
- f. *The design of the subdivision or the type of improvements is not likely to cause serious public health problems.*
- g. *The design of the subdivision or the type of improvements will not conflict with easements, acquired by the public at large, for access through or use of, property within the proposed subdivision. In this connection, the City Council may approve a map if it finds that alternate easements, for access or for use, will be provided, and that these will be substantially equivalent to one previously acquired by the public.*

5.1 – Planned Unit Development Subdivisions – Finding

1. *The Tentative Map conforms to the approved Detail Development Plan and shall constitute approval of any and all deviations from standards contained in this Ordinance.*

Analysis of these VTSM findings for the project is discussed further in the report (see page 59).

Environmental Review

The decision to amend the General Plan and either the CDP or the DDP is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which guides the City in evaluating a project's impacts on the physical environment. Under CEQA, each of these amendments (as well as the requested Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map) are considered "projects" and are subject to a determination of environmental impact prior to final action. Staff has prepared a draft environmental clearance for consideration by the Planning Commission (for recommendation to the Council) on those issues raised by the General Plan and CDP amendments, and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map. Environmental issues related to the Detailed Development Plan amendment will be evaluated as part of the review process for the DDP amendment, should it occur.

In summary, the review procedures for the Ralston Village Phase II project would track as follows:

General Plan & CDP Amendments, and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map

1. Planning Commission recommendation on environmental clearance and General Plan Amendment, CDP amendment, and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map requests.
2. City Council decision on environmental clearance.
3. City Council decision on General Plan Amendment, CDP amendment, and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map

DDP Amendment (*Conditional Use Permit and Design Review*)

4. Planning Commission decision on environmental clearance
5. Planning Commission decision on DDP amendment

This staff report is prepared for Step 1: Planning Commission recommendation on environmental clearance and General Plan Amendment, CDP amendment, and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map requests.

GENERAL PLAN & ZONING CODE DESIGNATIONS

The Belmont General Plan designation for the subject site is Institutions (In); the existing Dementia Care Facility (Ralston Village – Phase I) is a compatible use under this designation. A determination on compatibility of the proposed Senior Residential Development with the Institutions designation will be made as part of the General Plan Amendment decision for the project. The site is zoned Planned Development (PD). The procedure section above details the process to amend the General Plan and adopted CDP.

PRIOR ACTIONS

The project site was originally developed in the early 1900's with a residence. A significant expansion occurred in 1924, when the Alexander Sanitarium for the treatment of mental disorders was established for the site. By 1948, the sanitarium could house seventy-five patients, and contained a swimming pool, bowling green, as well as tennis, croquet, and badminton courts. The Sanitarium was demolished in 1973. Soon after the building's demolition, five single-level structures were constructed on the eastern half of the site for use by the Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center.

November 27, 1984: The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 724 to rezone the property from A (Agriculture) to PD/A (Planned Development/Agriculture).

April 28, 1987: The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 765 to eliminate the Agricultural Development Standards from the PD/A zoning designation, thereby rezoning the site to PD and establishing a Conceptual Development Plan for expansion of the Belmont Hills Hospital. The approval was subject to the following conditions and development standards:

1. *Approval of a Conceptual Development Plan is granted as shown on plans dated received February 17, 1987 and as modified by the conditions contained herein.*
2. *Development standards for building size and location and the general location of parking, site circulation and access, and landscape improvements shall be as established*

- on the approved Conceptual Development Plan, subject to refinement at the Detailed Development Plan stage.*
3. *The Conceptual Development Plan is approved for a 14,000 sq. ft. hospital wing expansion and a 6,000 sq. ft. medical office building.*
 4. *The revised Detailed Development Plan submitted for review by the Planning Commission shall incorporate the following design features and information:*
 - a. *The parking, and circulation changes shall be redesigned to include changes shown on the staff study dated February 24, 1987 and to incorporate more landscaping in the parking lot. Additionally, the Central access drive on the west side of the dining building shall incorporate cul-de-sac acceptable to the Planning Commission in place of the hammer-head turnaround.*
 - b. *Mitigations in the Final EIR and addendum shall be incorporated into the project. These mitigations include but are not limited to removing the front parking area, renovating and supplementing landscaping along the site frontage, relocating the front fence down slope from Ralston Avenue, establishing a scenic easement across the hillside to the south of the hospital compound, rebuilding the existing driveway entrance to improve site distance and to improve the safety of entering and exiting autos, and contributing to the rephrasing of the signal at Sixth Avenue and Ralston.*
 - c. *The Detailed Development Plan shall be accompanied by a statement addressing each of the mitigation measures in the Final EIR and addendum and detailing how each mitigation measure has been incorporated into the revised project or will be met as a condition of Detailed Development Plan approval.*
 - d. *Access for emergency vehicles consistent with protecting the scenic quality of the site.*
 - e. *How the additional beds provided in the expanded hospital shall be restricted to use for the treatment of children and/or adolescents.*
 5. *A flex-time and carpooling program shall be implemented to reduce trip generation by the hospital during the PM peak hour. The specific details of the flex-time and carpooling program shall be presented to the Planning Commission for its review and action with the detailed development plan.*

January 5, 1988: The Planning Commission adopted Resolution No. 1988-2 approving a Detailed Development Plan, Conditional Use Permit, Design Review Permit, Master Grading Plan, and Excavation Permit for Community Psychiatric Centers (applicant) for the (CDP-approved) 20,000 sq. ft. expansion of the 25,000 square foot Belmont Hills Hospital. These approvals were subject to the following conditions:

1. *A detailed development plan, conditional use permit and design review is approved for Hospital expansion as shown on plans received and dated September 23, 1987, subject to and as modified by the conditions of this permit.*
2. *The following traffic mitigation measures shall be incorporated into final project plans submitted for building permit:*
 - a. *Reconstruction of the entry drive in accordance with approved plans.*
 - b. *Landscaping design chosen to maintain a low profile so as not to block the line of site between on-coming traffic and exiting autos at the project entrance.*

- a. *All tree work shall be performed by a qualified tree service firm. Secure tree removal permits prior to any tree removals.*
 - b. *Coordinate all tree work (pruning or removal) with Parks Department.*
 - c. *Removal all undesirable growth along Ralston Avenue prior to planting.*
 - d. *Remove plant material back from volleyball court to avoid interference with the play.*
 - e. *Remove all unnecessary paved surfaces adjacent to sidewalk along Ralston Avenue and replace with landscaping.*
 - f. *Add xylosma congestum to shrub screen along Ralston Avenue.*
 - g. *Trees to be planted along Ralston Avenue shall be 24-inch box size minimum.*
 - h. *Provide detailed irrigation plan for City review and approval.*
 - i. *Review shrub planting along Ralston Avenue to insure the provision of a solid visual screen and add shrubs as necessary.*
 - j. *Modify parking lot and landscaping by incorporating landscape islands as shown on the staff study dated 12/18/87. Increase site landscaping by decreasing automobile stall depth to the allowed minimum of 18 feet. All parking stalls shall have a minimum back-up space of 26 feet.*
 - k. *Landscape islands shall incorporate shrubbery in addition to the proposed ground cover and tree planting program.*
 - l. *Fencing along Ralston Avenue between the entrance drive and Twin Pines Park shall be set back at least eight feet from the back edge of the sidewalk and appropriate landscaping incorporated between the fencing and the sidewalk.*
8. *Submit a cash bond equivalent to 10 percent of the cost of materials and labor for landscape and irrigation improvements to insure the completion of approved landscape and irrigation improvements pursuant to approved plans.*
 9. *Fencing and lighting shall be as shown on submitted plans and specifications. Submit documentation indicating that the lighting wattage proposed is the minimum necessary for safe illumination of the parking area consistent with current generally accepted lighting design standards. The City Public Services Department will review in conjunction with the City Planning Department lighting intensity to insure excessive lighting is not installed. Light standards shall be limited to 20 feet in height. Light fixtures in the parking area nearest the adjoining residential properties shall be equipped with opaque shields to prevent light spillage onto to adjoining property and to eliminate point source glare.*
 10. *Establish a scenic easement across the rear hillside down to the toe of slope at the southern edge of the parking lot and building improvements, running continuously from the eastern to the western department boundaries. The final configuration of the scenic easement shall be subject to review and approval by the Planning Department. The scenic easement shall be executed using documents approved by the City Attorney's Office prior to issuance of a building permit.*
 11. *Eliminate the front parking area at the northeast corner of the lot and replace with landscaping as shown on approved plans.*
 12. *Emergency access consisting of an 18 foot wide emergency access road shall be constructed of decomposed granite as shown on the approved landscape plan. The entrance ramp between the entry gate at Ralston and the level portion of the site shall be paved with an all-weather surface to prevent carrying gravel and loose rock on to Ralston Avenue and to provide a safe sloped driveway for emergency vehicle access.*

- Emergency vehicular access shall be gated and locked for emergency use only. Provide an Knox Box pursuant to Fire Department requirements. This gate should be keyed for a key 2006 and accessible to all Belmont police patrol cars. Contact the Belmont Police Department at 595-7404 or the South County Fire District at 593-8016, ext. 225 for further information.*
13. *Prior to occupancy of new buildings CPC-Belmont Hills Hospital shall provide a security guard to patrol the ground 24 hours per day.*
 14. *Comply with the requirements of the soils report prepared by Daniel Herzog dated September 21, 1987.*
 15. *A master grading plan and excavation permit is approved subject to the following conditions:*
 - a. *Approval is granted to excavate approximately 3600 cu. yds. As shown on submitted plans received and dated September 23, 1987.*
 - b. *Pay an excavation permit fee to the Planning Department based upon the volume of material to be moved as specified in the adopted excavation fee schedule.*
 - c. *Submit grading plans for permit issuance to the Building Inspection Department.*
 - d. *Incorporate earth retention devices to protect oak trees from fill emplacement as required under the landscape plan approval.*
 - e. *Provide an on-site water wagon/truck to spray during grading operations and minimize the blowing of dust.*
 - f. *Grading operations shall comply with the noise and traffic mitigations of condition #3 of this approval.*
 - g. *Make progress reports to the City Engineer as requested.*
 - h. *Specify the number of working days within which excavation and grading operations will occur.*
 - i. *Stockpile undisturbed topsoil in an area designated on grading plans submitted for permit issuance, and respread topsoil to a depth of 8 inches in areas proposed for landscaping at the prior to the commencement of the planting program.*
 - j. *Post a corporate surety bond, cash deposit, and liability insurance in an amount determined by the City Engineer.*
 - k. *All material spilled from trucks in connection with the excavation shall be cleaned up within 24 hours, otherwise the City may clean same up and charge it against the cash deposit required herein.*
 16. *Building sites, setbacks, site coverage, yard requirements building and structure heights and the maximum heights of fences shall be as shown on the approved detailed development plan. Architectural style as building materials and colors shall be as shown on the submitted sample board approved by the Planning Commission and shall match the existing Hospital buildings.*
 17. *Submit plans for the establishment of a new Belmont Hills Hospital sign for review and approval by the Planning Director. The new sign shall meet all size, height and location standards of the existing sign ordinance and shall utilize materials and lighting used on the existing sign or shall match the materials, colors, and lighting type used at the College of Notre Dame. Freestanding signs shall be a maximum of five feet in height. Parking modifications specified in the staff report dated January 5, 1988 shall be incorporated into plans submitted for a building permit.*

18. Comply with the requirements of the South County Fire District as follows:

- a. A supervised fire sprinkler system shall be installed throughout all new buildings.*
- b. An approved smoke detection system shall be installed.*
- c. Three approved fire hydrants shall be installed at locations approved by the Fire Marshall.*
- d. Water main for fire hydrants shall be a minimum of six inches looped line fire flow for this area. Fire flow for this area is 2,500 gpm. Fire hydrants shall be wet barrel, rich corona or james jones type with 2.5 inch outlets and one 4.5 inch outlet.*

19. Comply with the requirements of the Public Services Department as follows:

- a. A drainage plan for the entire site shall be submitted. Calculations justifying pipe sizes and slope and depth of flow in gutters shall be submitted for review and approval by the Public Services Department.*
- b. Replace the existing 48 inch RCP storm pipe with a 66 RCP from Ralston to the existing junction structure on site. Modify the junction structure accordingly. Plans and specifications shall be approved by the City Engineer prior to construction.*
- c. Dedicate right-of-way necessary to locate the existing roadway and required sidewalk within the ultimate right-of-way for Ralston Avenue.*
- d. Execute a bond for on-site storm drainage and Bite frontage work and necessary improvement agreements.*
- e. Install a five foot PCC sidewalk along Ralston Avenue frontage. Provide detailed construction plans for review and approval by the City Engineer. Any required protective hand rail shall be subject to review and approval by the Planning Director and City Engineer.*
- f. Eliminate the bus turn-out opposite Notre Dame College. Repair the eroding rip-rap at the inlet of Belmont Creek to the on-site culvert. Submit plans for approval by the City Engineer. Enclose with a six foot chain link fence both the inlet and the outflow to Belmont Creek. The inlet fencing shall have provisions for removal by the City to enable cleaning of debris from the inlet. Fence plans shall be coordinated with the City Engineer. Call 595-7426 for further information.*
- g. Repair the failing retaining wall on the south side of the site.*
- h. All utility services to the new construction shall be underground. Existing easements shall be modified to correspond to the location of existing utilities.*
- i. Plans submitted for construction of the parking lot shall specify parking lot paving thickness as recommended in the Soils report. Further soils report information may be necessary for foundation designs.*
- j. Submit detailed construction drawings for reconfiguration of the entrance driveway and striping of a left-turn in and acceleration lane within the center striped median of Ralston Avenue for review and approval by the City Engineer.*

20. Merge all three lots into one parcel prior to issuance of a building permit.

The existing Dementia Care facility (and use of the entire 17.1 acre project site) is operating under these controlling conditions of Planning Commission Resolution 1988-2.

March 14, 1989: The City Council adopted Resolution No. 6666 to accept an offer of a Conservation Easement (See Attachment 4) over the southern portion of the Belmont Hills Hospital property consistent with Condition of Approval #10 of Planning Commission Resolution 1988-2. This easement is recorded with the County of San Mateo on April 4, 1989. Discussion of the boundaries and use limitations of this easement follow further in the report.

Mid-1998: Campus Health Care Group took over the property, renames it Ralston Village, and makes minor design changes to the buildings (new paint & signage), and landscaping improvements to the site.

May 22, 2001: The City Council held a Study Session to review a 205,000 square foot four-story Senior Congregate Care facility adjacent to the existing Ralston Village Dementia Care Facility. The 80 residential-unit building included a subterranean parking garage with spaces for 99 vehicles; 38 additional uncovered spaces were located within the project site. Council concerns raised included traffic, density, and height, bulk, and massing of the proposed facility as it would be viewed from Ralston Avenue. The Council further believed steps should be taken to increase neighborhood outreach for the project and the proposed design/layout of the building should not adversely impact the scenic easement within the property.

October 2, 2001: The Planning Commission reviewed a Preliminary Design Review (PDR) for construction of the Senior Congregate Care facility. The project design/site layout and size of the building had not changed since reviewed by the Council in May 2001. The Preliminary Design Review provided an opportunity for early identification of issues and alternatives that should be considered by the applicant before submitting a formal development review plan for a project. The Commission provided the following general direction (see 10/2/01 meeting minutes - Attachment 4):

- Consider erecting story poles to illustrate the location of the building and associated height as seen from neighboring properties and Ralston Avenue.
- The building appeared to be too tall for the site; consider reducing the building height and bulk.
- Consider the removal of fewer oak trees, and an increased setback for neighboring properties
- Requested submittal of a Master Plan for the entire that describes any future plans (i.e. new construction) for the existing Dementia Care facility.

May 2002: Formal project application submitted to the City for the Senior Congregate Care facility. The unit count (82) and building size (196,000 sq. ft.) remains essentially the same from the Planning Commission PDR submittal in October 2001.

August 2002: The Planning Commission held a Study Session at the project site to view story poles for the proposed building. This meeting was well attended by the public, with numerous concerns raised relative to bulk and massing, excessive density, tree removal, and neighborhood compatibility (see 8/20/02 meeting minutes - Attachment 5). Expanded discussion of specific neighbor concerns

from the August 2002 story pole study session is noted in the *Neighborhood Outreach* section of the report.

December 2003 through April 2004 – Project scope was refined to current proposal before the Commission. Modifications include reduction in the number of residential units to 55, building size to 141,357 sq. ft, and building height to two & three stories.

SITE CONDITIONS

The Ralston Village site is comprised of three parcels of land totaling 17.1 acres with over 800 linear feet of frontage on Ralston Avenue. The land is comprised of two distinct geographic elements; a densely wooded, eight-acre steep southern hillside area known as the *Conservation Easement* – see below, and a second, nearly flat nine-acre portion of land defined by the northern toe of the hillside. The entire flat portion of the property is surrounded by a thick canopy of existing trees and shrubs.

The eastern half of the flat land area is currently occupied by the Ralston Village, Phase I, 100 bed assisted living facility that specializes in the treatment of individuals afflicted with Alzheimer's disease; this facility is located on the lower, northern 40 percent of the proposed 8.6-acre Phase I parcel.

As discussed earlier, the southern 60 percent of the 17.1-acre site consists of a steeply sloping hillside (35-45+% slope). The northern portion of this hillside has slopes of approximately 1.25:1 (horizontal:vertical), decreasing to about 3:1 slopes at the lowest elevation.

Conservation Easement

As discussed earlier, a Conservation Easement was established (April 1989) for the southern eight-acre hillside portion of the property as a DDP condition of approval for the Community Psychiatric Centers expansion of the former Belmont Hills Hospital. The northern boundary of the Conservation Easement, which runs east to west, lies approximately 90-150 feet horizontally from the toe of the hillside. The lowest elevation point of the easement is approximately 70' to 75' above the grade at Ralston Avenue. The southern boundary of the conservation easement area borders the rear of several properties on Talbryn Place and Talbryn Drive which are at the top of the hill.

Permitted uses within the conservation easement area are limited to the following: natural open space, landscaping and irrigation systems, footpaths, underground utilities and utility easement areas, drainage facilities and systems, and perimeter walls and/or fencing. The applicant proposes no construction or other improvements within 60 feet of the northern boundary of the conservation easement line.

Storm Drain/Culvert Easements

Prior to past development of the property, the Belmont Creek traversed through site. The stream was originally directed into a 60-inch diameter storm drain that ran diagonally across the Ralston Village facility, in the north-south direction. Because the pipe was determined to be too small to convey surface flows, it was abandoned and replaced with a 96-inch diameter storm drain/culvert. The abandoned storm drain easement is located under both the existing Phase I and proposed Phase II facilities. The large 8' diameter active concrete storm culvert diagonally bisects the Phase II site

(and proposed building), and runs beneath the roadway in Phase I.

Entry Points/Parking

The subject site would be accessed via two points: 1) the existing entrance which currently services Phase I at the northeast corner of the property, and 2) through a proposed entry point located at the northwest corner of the property at the current location of the fire access road. The northwest entry will be restricted to a right turn in and right turn out. This restriction would preclude any cross traffic movement of vehicles across Ralston Avenue. This entry has been designed to meander through the existing tree cover which lies between Ralston Avenue and the proposed structure.

The applicant's traffic consultant has recommended improvements to the existing entry near Twin Pines Park to allow for safer ingress and egress. The Conceptual Development Plan implements these recommendations.

The existing Dementia Care facility includes 88 uncovered spaces in a looped parking configuration (90 degree angle spaces); the parking areas are located to the north and west of the existing building.

Surrounding Properties

Adjacent land uses include residential, institutional, and park uses. Ralston Avenue bounds the project site on the north, with the College of Notre Dame de Namur and single-family residential uses along the north side of Ralston Avenue. Twin Pines Park adjoins the existing Phase 1 portion of the project site on the east.

Ten residential properties accessed by Desvio Way, Buckland Avenue, and Talbryn Drive adjoin the wooded, hillside portions the project site that would remain protected by the scenic easement covering the southern half of the subject property. The back yards of four residential properties along Chula Vista Drive and the side yard of one Ralston Avenue residence adjoin the western perimeter of the project site.

In addition to the immediately adjoining land uses, Carlmont Village Shopping Center is located one mile to the west on Ralston Avenue. The Belmont Civic Center is located one-half mile to the east, which includes retail establishments, supermarkets, restaurants, and the Caltrain station. On the north side of Ralston Avenue, directly across from the northwest corner of the project site, is the vehicular entrance to the Notre Dame de Namur University.

NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH

The applicant reported sending project information letters to neighbors (within 500 feet of project site) and holding meetings at the Ralston Village complex in October 2000, and March & September 2001 to inform them of preliminary plans for the site. In August 2002, a Planning Commission study session was held at the proposed site of the Ralston Village expansion. The session included a walk-through of the study poles of the proposed structure. Following the study session, Planning Commissioners received 26 written comments about the proposed project.

The majority of the comments received expressed concerns about the project including the:

- need to protect the Ralston view corridor
- possibility of flooding from culvert back-up
- question of General Plan compliance
- heavy traffic on Ralston
- number of senior facilities in Belmont
- scale of the building compared to the neighborhood
- fire danger of a wood-frame, multi-level building
- need for greater building set backs
- architecture being out of character for Belmont
- precedent that a four-story building would set
- lack of tax revenue from senior housing
- removal of mature trees

In addition to the above concerns, some residents offered supporting comments for the project, and cited a need for congregate senior living in Belmont. A compilation of these comments has been included in the report attachments (see Attachment 6).

Following the study session, project representatives reported that they met with adjacent property owners (1050 Chula Vista Avenue) during 2003 and 2004 to discuss the specific concerns of the neighbors adjacent to the northwest Ralston Village property line. These concerns included:

- Culvert maintenance and design
- Sound attenuation
- Ingress and egress issues
- Set back concerns
- General Plan modification

Input from the study session and neighbor meeting were used to revise the project plan.

Project Revision

The applicant reported that in early in 2003, project representatives discussed options for revising the project with the adjacent neighbors and the McDougal Neighborhood Association. In addition, the applicant reported contacting all residents who had written comments to the Planning Commission, and invited them to a meeting to review the project revisions. Following reportedly positive feedback from those meetings, the revised project plans were submitted to the City of Belmont in March 2004.

Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration Comments

Analysis of previous neighbor concerns were included in the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), prepared by the environmental consultant, Geier & Geier. In November 2004, the City received one set of comments on the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration from an adjacent property owner at 1401 Ralston Avenue; these comments are included in the project IS/MND. In December 2004, project representatives reportedly met with this neighbor; as a

result of that discussion, a “green screen” landscaping solution at the neighbor/Ralston Village property line was increased and a triangular traffic island that required right-turn-in/right-turn-out was added at the northwest project entrance. The addition of these project modifications reportedly addressed all concerns raised by the adjacent neighbor. A formal *Response to Comments* section has been included as part of the IS/MND.

Neighborhood Update - 2005

Early in 2005, the applicant reported sending a letter to 134 neighbors residing in homes closest to Ralston Village. The letter summarized the revised project and invited neighbors to a meeting to discuss the current plans for Phase II.

It was reported that seven neighbors attended a meeting including the residents of all of the homes on the northwest property line. The changes to the project’s architectural style, downsizing, increased set backs and landscaping were reportedly well received by the attending neighbors as described by the applicant. The concerns neighbors expressed were:

- speed and volume of the traffic on Ralston Avenue creates a dangerous area east of Chula Vista
- visibility and backup on Ralston could be a problem at the new project entrance
- the Chula Vista/Ralston intersection shouldn’t get worse
- the stability and maintenance of the culvert
- maintaining a substantial “green screen” between Ralston Village and neighboring homes
- assurance that the project is a viable business that is well-maintained and enhances neighborhood property values, and that there is a need for congregate senior living in Belmont
- the need to keep the shrubs along Ralston trimmed so they are not a hazard for pedestrians

Ralston Village representatives have indicated to staff that they will continue to interact with residents as the proposed Phase II development proceeds through the public review process. It appears the applicant has achieved the neighborhood outreach strategy tasks.

CEQA STATUS

The project is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An Initial Study was prepared for the project and determined that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, adherence to mitigation measures will reduce the impacts to less than significant levels. Based on the Initial Study, a Mitigated Negative Declaration was prepared and made available for public review between October 25, 2004 and November 15, 2004. Comments received during the required 20-day public comment period have been included as part of this staff report to the Commission.

Discussion of Mitigations

When adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration, the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15074.d) require that the Lead Agencies adopt a program for reporting on or monitoring the changes that it has required in the project or made a condition of approval to mitigate or avoid significant environmental effects.

The following sections identify the project mitigations (and agency responsibility for monitoring) associated with modifying the General Plan and Conceptual Development Plan, and review of the Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map in order to avoid significant environmental effects. Staff also recommends an additional mitigation measure, not described in the current IS/MND, in relation to *Public Services* (see page 24). The Initial Study and Appendix can be found in Attachment 7.

Aesthetics

1. *As part of the project's landscaping plan, screening trees will be planted along Ralston Avenue and the western property boundary to screen the project from the traveling public and residents along these two sides of the project site. The trees will be maintained by the project's owners/management to ensure the expeditious enhancement of screening between the proposed structure and adjoining residential properties. The trees' screening effects will increase as the trees and other landscape plantings mature.*

This measure will be deemed successful if the conditions of the City's Tree Ordinance for survival of replacement trees are met, and the project design has been implemented as approved by the City. The report findings and mitigations have been included as part of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration study for the project.

Air Quality

2. *Water all active construction sites at least twice daily.*
3. *Cover all trucks hauling soil, sand, and other loose materials or require all trucks to maintain at least two feet of freeboard.*
4. *Pave, apply water three times daily, or apply (non-toxic) soil stabilizers on all unpaved access roads, parking areas, and staging areas at construction sites.*
5. *Sweep daily (with water sweepers) all paved access roads, parking areas and staging areas at construction sites.*
6. *Sweep streets daily (with water sweepers) if visible soil material is carried onto adjacent public streets.*
7. *Hydroseed or apply (non-toxic) soil stabilizers to inactive construction areas (previously graded areas inactive for ten days or more).*
8. *Enclose, cover, water twice daily, or apply non-toxic soil binders to exposed stockpiled materials.*
9. *Limit traffic speeds on unpaved roads to 15 miles per hour.*
10. *Install sandbags or other erosion-control measures to prevent silt runoff to public roadways.*
11. *Replant vegetation in disturbed areas as quickly as possible.*

These mitigation measures will be deemed successful through confirmation of compliance by the City's Building & Planning Divisions and Public Works Department.

Biological Resources

12. *All of the following recommendations made by the City's arborist will be implemented to eliminate or minimize the project's potential effects on the site's protected trees: provision of protective fencing along the proposed grading limit line as well as around driplines of oak trees to be retained; locating all utility trenching outside the existing tree canopies; pruning protected trees under the direct supervision of a certified arborist; locating all landscape structures, stones, and cobbles a minimum of four feet away from the trunk tissue of all trees to be retained; retaining all protected tree areas as permanent open space zones with no improvements, alterations, or landscaping allowed; and the posting of a bond to allow for mitigation in the event of damages to protected trees.*

The consulting arborist's reports recommended site plan redesign that would reduce the level of pruning protected trees to maintain the canopies of key specimens. Through the relocation of the project building to the north and west, the proposed structure avoids interference with the canopies of these protected trees. The proposed project has been refined to incorporate reduced building height and structure re-orientation to reduce the extent of required pruning for construction and retain more of the existing trees for community and on-site amenities. The preservation of site trees through project redesign in conjunction with implementation of the arborist's recommendations would mitigate potential biological impacts to a less-than-significant level.

This mitigation measure will be deemed successful through confirmation of compliance by the City's Building & Planning Divisions and Parks & Recreation Department.

Cultural Resources

13. *A qualified archaeologist shall be retained to monitor all earthmoving activities, initial trenching, and excavation of the proposed swimming pool and subterranean parking garage to ensure that there are no buried archaeological deposits. In the event that any apparent intact archaeological deposits are located during monitoring, it is recommended that grading and/or excavation work be halted in the immediate area of the discovery until a plan for its evaluation and/or mitigation has been developed and submitted to the Belmont Planning Department for approval. All archaeological testing, evaluation and/or data retrieval should be completed before any further excavation or grading work is allowed to continue in areas defined by the archaeologist as intact archaeological deposit.*

This mitigation measure will be deemed successful through confirmation of compliance by the City's Building & Planning Divisions.

Geology and Soils

14. *Supplemental Geologic and Geotechnical Evaluation. The Project Geotechnical Engineer shall complete supplemental engineering geologic and geotechnical engineering evaluations including, but not necessarily limited to:*
 - a. *Preparation of an original, detailed engineering geologic cross-section to characterize site*

conditions and to ensure that off-site conditions have been considered with respect to the proposed development. The cross-section shall show the proposed grading and also extend through the landslide and scarp area, through Boring B-5, and depict the extent and probable thickness of surficial earth materials (including existing artificial fill, colluvium, alluvium, and landslide debris, if applicable) and bedrock (showing structure, if applicable).

- b. The Project Geotechnical Consultant shall inform the City Geotechnical Consultant a minimum of 24 hours prior to excavation of the recommended test pits to allow the City Geotechnical Consultant the opportunity to inspect them.*
- c. Re-evaluation of the liquefaction potential with respect to Boring B-1 at the depths of approximately 20 to 23 feet and analyze the potential hazard to the proposed and existing improvements.*
- d. Evaluation of the potential hazards associated with ground shaking on a building with differing foundation types (deep/shallow) across the structure.*
- e. Evaluation of the potential expansive nature of the on-site soils, considering that the R-value classified the soil as a CH (inorganic clays of high plasticity, fat clays).*

Results of the Supplemental Geologic and Geotechnical Evaluation shall be summarized in a written report with appropriate illustrations, and submitted to the City for review by the City Engineer and City Geotechnical Consultant prior to project geotechnical approval.

- 15. Geotechnical Plan Review. The Project Geotechnical Consultant shall review and approve all geotechnical aspects of the project building and grading plans (i.e., site preparation and grading, site drainage improvements and design parameters for foundations, retaining walls and driveway) to ensure that their recommendations have been properly incorporated.*

The results of the plan reviews shall be summarized by the Project Geotechnical Consultant in a letter and submitted to the City for review and approval by the City Engineer prior to acceptance of documents for building permit plan-check.

- 16. Geotechnical Field Inspection. The Project Geotechnical Consultant shall inspect, test (as needed), and approve all geotechnical aspects of the project construction. The inspection shall include, but not necessarily be limited to: site preparation and grading, site surface and subsurface drainage improvements, and excavations for foundations and retaining walls prior to the placement of steel concrete. The consultant shall verify that fill materials placed on sloping ground are properly keyed and benched into supportive materials, as necessary.*

The results of these inspections and the as-built conditions of the project shall be described by the Project Geotechnical Consultant in a letter and submitted to the City for review and approval prior to final (granting of occupancy) project approval.

- 17. The City will require implementation of all design recommendations outlined by Treadwell & Rollo, Inc. in their February 12, 2002 study and August 18, 2004 assessment, as well as the March 29, 2005 recommendations of Cotton, Shires & Associates, Inc., and any*

subsequent studies which will reduce identified potentially significant geotechnical constraints to less-than-significant levels.

These measures (14, 15, 17) will be deemed successful upon review and approval of the required supplemental geotechnical data by the City's Geotechnical Consultant, Public Works Department, and Building Division. Subsequently, measure 16 will be deemed successful upon approval by the City after final inspection of project improvements.

Hydrology and Water Quality

18. *For new development and construction projects, the City requires the implementation of Best Management Practices for Construction (BMP's) to ensure the protection of water quality in storm runoff from the project site. In brief, the measures presented in the BMP handbook address pollution control and management mechanisms for contractor activities, e.g. structure construction, material delivery and storage, solid waste management, employee and subcontractor training, etc. The handbook also provides direction for the control of erosion and sedimentation as well as the establishment of monitoring programs to ensure the effectiveness of the BMP's. The Best Management Practices guidelines are available at the Belmont City Hall. The City shall also require an agreement with the applicant that ensures the permanent and on-going maintenance of water quality control improvements by the applicant and/or project site owner(s).*

The developer has incorporated the following Best Management Practices (BMPs) for stormwater quality protection into site design to the extent that conditions allow. (Refer to the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association (BASMAA) Start at the Source Design Guidance Manual for Stormwater Quality Protection (available from BASMAA @ 510-622-2465):

- a) *For walking and light traffic areas, permeable pavements shall be used where feasible. Typical pervious pavements include pervious concrete, porous asphalt, turf block, brick pavers, natural stone pavers, concrete unit pavers, crushed aggregate (gravel), cobbles and wood mulch.*
- b) *Parking lots shall include hybrid surfaces (pervious material for stalls only), concave medians with biofilters (grassy swales), and landscaped infiltration/detention basins as feasible.*
- c) *The landscape design shall incorporate biofilters, infiltration and retention/detention basins into the site plan as feasible.*
- d) *For outdoor work areas including garbage, recycling, maintenance, storage, and loading, applicable stormwater controls include siting or set back from drainage pats and water ways, provision of roofing and curbs or berms to prevent run on and run off. If the area has the potential to generate contaminated run off, structural treatment controls for contaminant removal (such as debris screens or filters) shall be incorporated into the design.*

City review of the project design will determine whether other appropriate BMP's shall be

required and incorporated into the project plans.

This measure will be deemed successful through compliance with the BMP conditions at the completion of the project construction by the City's Public Works Department and Building Division.

Land Use and Planning

19. *In order to conform to the objectives and intent of the General Plan for institutional uses on the subject property, the proposed project plans shall implement programs and/or facilities that directly relate to the medical uses indicated by the General Plan. The project's programs will include on-site medical supervision and care under the auspices of Mills Peninsula Clinic of San Carlos. The project shall include private office space for use by Clinic physicians in the care of Phase II residents. Medical services not provided by the Clinic on-site would be available from physicians affiliated with the Clinic at off-site medical offices.*
20. *In order to ensure consistency with the General Plan, the project's General Plan amendment should consider proposing modification of Institutional Land Use Policy 3. Proposed text change for the policy could define "other care facilities" to include senior congregate care facilities as follows:

"Residential institutional uses (e.g. nursing homes and other care facilities such as senior congregate care uses) should be limited to a density of population compatible with adjoining residential areas."*
21. *With regard to project size and form, the proposed project design has been revised to be consistent with the character of the surrounding residential uses. To achieve the objective of the General Plan's Goal 2 for institutional uses, the project design shall ensure that the proposed facilities are integrated into the community, and in a manner that preserves and enhances the character of the surrounding residential neighborhood.*

The applicant proposes office space within the building to accommodate on-site medical supervision, and programs for off-site physician care for additional medical services to address Mitigation Measure #19. This measure will be deemed successful upon completion of development plans as approved by the City and operation of the residential units in conjunction with a medical care overlay (use) for the project.

The Initial Study concludes that the project applicant has attempted to reduce the potential impacts of the project design on neighboring residential properties (Mitigation Measure 20). Mitigation Measure #21 provides direction and guidance for General Plan Amendment text modifications that should be considered to reduce potential compatibility impacts to a less than significant level.

22. *Trucks shall not be allowed to queue or travel within 50 feet of the adjacent residences to the west or the Phase I facility to the east in order to maintain interior noise levels of 60 dBA (assumes a 15-dBA reduction with open windows). Larger setbacks shall be provided wherever possible. Flagpersons shall direct traffic to ensure that trucks travel through the*

western driveway as quickly as possible rather than allowing them to idle at length in this driveway while waiting to turn into or out of the Ralston Avenue driveway.

23. *A detailed analysis of acoustical requirements will be made to ensure that interior noise levels of 45 dBA (CNEL) or less are achieved in all residential units in accordance with California Noise Insulation Standards (Title 24, Part 2, Chapter 2.35 of the California Code of Regulations) and City Noise Guidelines.*

These measures will be deemed successful through compliance with these conditions at the completion of the project construction and subsequently after operation of the Senior Congregate Care facility has begun. These measures will be further reviewed at the DDP stage.

Public Services

24. *The project will comply with the following Belmont Police Department conditions of approval to ensure public safety:*
- a) *Flag persons shall be positioned at both ends of blocked traffic lanes.*
 - b) *A 24-hour written notice to the Police Department is required before any lane closure.*
 - c) *No debris boxes or building materials shall be stored on the street.*
 - d) *All activities shall be subject to the requirements of the Belmont Noise Ordinance.*

This measure will be deemed successful upon inspection/approval by the City's Building Division and Police Department.

The draft Initial Study indicated no other significant impacts on public services; however, based upon past operating experience of convalescent homes, dementia care facilities, and other facilities which provide assisted living services in the city, a high number of calls are generated for these types of facilities that require the services of the South County Fire Authority (SCFA) and City's Police Department. The existing dementia care facility and proposed 55-unit senior independent living/congregate care facility may generate a significant number of requests for medical service and security assistance from these two departments. Staff amends the Initial Study with this information and further recommends an additional Initial Study mitigation measure be incorporated for the proposed development, prior to granting environmental clearance for the project. The mitigation measure is as follows:

- 24-1. *The applicant shall provide a medical service and security plan for both the existing dementia care facility and proposed senior independent living unit facility subject to the review and approval of the Police Department and South County Fire Authority. In the event the approved medical and security plan protocols are not adhered to and excessive use of Police Department and SCFA resources is necessary to service either Phase I or II facilities for the site, a one-time or on-going mitigation fee may be imposed for the Ralston Village Planned Development.*

Recreation

25. *The project applicant will provide the City with a one-time recreation mitigation fee to be negotiated with the City to provide for the maintenance and enhancement of park land in the community. The City has indicated that the recreational fees generated by the project would be used to fund capital improvements in the City's recreational facilities.*

This measure will be deemed successful upon collection of the associated Park in Lieu fee (approximately \$700,000 to \$800,000) as part of project building permits by the City's Building Division.

Transportation/Traffic

26. *Left turns into and out of the proposed access driveway should be permitted.*
27. *The two proposed parking stalls located at the east end of the drop-off area (adjacent to the building entrance) should be relocated or eliminated.*
28. *The landscape area separating the drop-off area from the private drive should be elongated to more clearly define the drop-off area from the main access drive. A minimum of 24 feet should be provided to accommodate a shuttle bus.*
29. *Where parking stalls require vehicles to make more than a 90-degree turn to enter the spaces from the main access drive, the curb should be rounded so as to provide room for the car to enter the space without rolling over the curb. The extension of the curb lines could be painted instead.*
30. *The reconstructed existing entry driveway adjacent to the existing Phase I facility should be constructed with a consistent width.*
31. *Prior to issuance of the building permit, the project applicant and City will complete a pavement condition survey documenting the extent of existing pavement defects using photographic equipment. In addition, a pavement deflection analysis will be performed to determine pavement strength. This analysis may indicate which streets can better withstand the traffic with minimal damage. After project construction, the project applicant and City will conduct another pavement condition survey and pavement deflection analysis to determine whether any road damage occurred as a result of project construction and whether there were any changes in pavement strength. Using State of California analysis procedures for deflection analysis, the rehabilitation requirements of the pavement before and after heavy usage can be determined. The project applicant will be responsible for completing any required road repairs prior to acceptance of the subdivision improvements.*
32. *The project sponsor will be required to work with the City Public Works Department to develop a traffic control plan for incorporation into the construction bid documents (specifications), and this plan will include, but not be limited to, the following measures:*
 - a. *Construction truck traffic should only be allowed between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, to avoid peak traffic periods on Ralston Avenue. When the nearby high school is in session, the City could choose to prohibit truck operations on Ralston Avenue for the 30 minutes following the end of school to allow school-related traffic to dissipate from Ralston Avenue and the immediate vicinity.*

Flag persons shall be placed on-site and at the project's western driveway to control truck turning movements to and from Ralston Avenue as well as truck queuing on-site (see Mitigation Measure #23 regarding truck noise).

These measures will be deemed successful upon approval by the City after completion of a traffic control plan, final inspection of project access improvements and parking stall redesigns, and completion of a pavement improvement program (if necessary as a result of the before/after conditions of the survey).

In summary, the potential environmental impact of the project has been assessed in the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, and its Appendix. The applicant has incorporated some of the recommended mitigation measures as presented in the Initial Study into the project plans and proposed use characteristics for the development:

Measure 1 – Landscape Screening (on project plans)

Measure 18 – BMP's (on project plans)

Measure 19 – On-site provision of medical offices and programs (project use characteristics)

Measure 21 – Project size and form more consistent with the surrounding residential neighborhood (on project plans)

The project applicant has not addressed (at this time) the recommendations provided by Mitigation Measure 20 in regard to the proposed General Plan Amendment text modifications. Prior to a recommendation being made by the Commission on the appropriateness of the requested General Plan and CDP amendments, staff will require the applicant to provide written confirmation on their agreement or disagreement with any/all of the recommended mitigation measures described in the IS/MND.

Additional public comments could be received during public hearing(s) used to review the potential environmental effects of the project and the appropriate mitigation measures that would reduce such impacts to less than significant levels.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

General Plan Amendment

As discussed earlier, the General Plan designation for the project site is "In," Institutions. Surrounding land use designations include "RI," Low Density Residential, Institutions, and "Pk," Park. The Plan indicates that institutional land uses accommodate facilities that provide educational, cultural, religious, health and related services to the community and, in some cases, to a larger service area.

The General Plan identifies several institutional facilities in Belmont and specifically addresses the importance of the College of Notre Dame and the Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center⁵. The General

⁵ The Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center was the name of Ralston Village (subject site) when the Belmont General Plan

Plan indicates that both institutions occupy large, centrally located, and visually prominent sites. The open spaces on these sites were designated as important community resources, and potential expansion or modification of existing site uses could have a significant impact on the character of the Ralston Avenue corridor.

The General Plan specifically designates the Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center parcels (Ralston Village Phases I and II) as Institutional. The intent of this designation is to permit limited expansion of the existing medical use of the site, with the possibility of including medical offices. The Plan indicates that the City desires to maintain as much of the site as possible in open space, especially the visually prominent hillsides to the south and areas within the scenic corridor of Ralston Avenue.

The Plan concludes that any further development of the property should preserve the views from Ralston Avenue and conserve the open character of the site.

The General Plan presents two goals for the establishment of institutional uses:

2051.1 - "To accommodate private institutions which provide educational, religious, cultural, health and charitable services to members of the community."

2051.2 - "To ensure that institutional uses are designed and operated in a manner that preserves and enhances the character of Belmont's residential neighborhoods."

The proposed project consists of a senior congregate care community that would be developed on the Ralston Village site. The project description submitted to the City as part of the development review application indicates that the project will consist of:

"an independent congregate community specifically designed to promote, maintain, and enhance the health and well being of its residents. It will provide residences designed specifically for older adults with certain health-related services designed to help them maintain an independent lifestyle... On-site medical monitoring and care would be provided by the Mills Peninsula Clinic in San Carlos for those residents who require and desire such services. Currently, the Clinic is contracted to provide care for the residents of Ralston Village Phase I. Phase II includes private office space for the Clinic physicians who would provide care for Phase II residents or would consult with their families. For medical services not provided by the Clinic, Ralston Village staff would schedule the appropriate physician appointments, maintain medical files, and provide transportation to physicians' offices."

(See attachment 8 describing the full extent of the Applicant's General Plan & CDP Amendment request and Project Description). While the proposed facility would seek to provide health maintenance services to its residents, the intent of the General Plan is to ensure that medical-related uses would be developed on the project site. To this extent, the proposed project attains the goal of supplying health services to members of the community and a limited amount of medical office space as part of the project. However, the principal use for the project is the provision of senior housing.

With regard to the General Plan's second goal for institutional uses, the proposed project would need to be designed and operated in manner that preserves and enhances the character of its neighborhood. The project design would also need to conserve the subject property as an asset for

the whole Belmont community. To accomplish this goal, a Conservation Easement protects the property's upper elevations. The easement ensures that the steep, wooded hillsides on the southern portion of the project site would be undisturbed and would continue as a visual and biological resource benefiting the entire community as well as the neighborhood.

The proposed structure is a two- to three-story residential building that is designed to be generally consistent with the architectural styles of the surrounding neighborhood (wood and/or stucco design). The City's Design Review process would further ensure that the proposed project would adhere to community architectural and construction standards. Ultimately, the Planning Commission and City Council must determine whether the project would be consistent with the General Plan's second goal for institutional uses on the site.

In addition to the two institutional goals of the General Plan, the plan provides four policies to guide the development of institutional uses in the community that directly apply to the development proposal for the project site. These policies are:

2052.1 - "All institutional uses should be served directly by major collector or arterial roads."

2052.2 - "All institutional uses should be located and designed to be compatible with the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood. In particular, compatibility of uses in terms of traffic generation, parking, and noise shall be ensured prior to the establishment of any new institutional use or expansion of an existing use."

2052.3 - "Residential institutional uses (e.g. nursing homes and other care facilities) should be limited to a density of population compatible with adjoining residential areas."

2052.6 - "Land west of Twin Pines Park, partially occupied by the Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center should be used for a combination of open space and medical uses consistent with the natural site characteristics and visual importance of the site to the community."

In addition, the above policies in the General Plan are augmented with an explanation of the City's approach to the management of institutional land uses within the community.

The proposed project complies with the Policy 2052.1 through the use of two access points on Ralston Avenue: 1) the existing entrance which currently services Phase I at the northeast corner of the property, and 2) through an entry point located at the northwest corner of the property at the current location of the fire access road along the western edge of property. The northwest entry is proposed to be restricted to right turns in and out. Ralston Avenue is a principal arterial serving the Belmont community.

The development proposal's general compatibility with the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood (Policy 2051.2) is discussed above. The compatibility of the proposed project with nearby uses in terms of traffic generation, parking, and noise is evaluated as part of the project Initial Study. As discussed above, the Planning Commission and City Council must determine whether this policy is met with the proposal.

Policy 2052.3 of the General Plan's land use discussion for institutional uses recommends the

limitation of population densities for residential institutional uses (e.g. nursing homes and other care facilities). The proposed project's neighborhood includes low-density, single-family residential uses. The project proposal would result in a density of 6.5 units/per acre for the 8.5-acre Phase II parcel. The Planning Commission and City Council must determine whether this policy is met with the proposal.

General Plan policy 2052.6 directly addresses future land uses envisioned for the project site. The proposed project conforms to the General Plan recommendation for the maintenance of open space use on the site by ensuring that the densely wooded upland slopes of the property remain protected. These visually important site characteristics are preserved through a Conservation Easement covering the southern portion of the project site.

In addition to the conservation of the site's natural characteristics, Policy 2052.6 also stipulates that medical uses would be acceptable on a portion of the subject property. The development of Ralston Village Phase I complied with this recommendation by providing a dementia care facility. The total scope of Ralston Village develops a congregate senior community (Phase II) while also continuing to provide assisted living services in Phase I.

Under a strict interpretation of the General Plan's policy, the project proposal includes limited medical-related uses. The project provides senior residential uses that include a health maintenance orientation, a health services office, and on-site medical supervision and care. However, the proposed project expands beyond the uses allowed by this 1982 General Plan policy.

Proposed General Plan Text Modifications

The project includes a proposed amendment to Institutional Land Use Policy 2052.6 of the General Plan as follows (deleted text in ~~strikeout~~, and new text in ***bold italics***):

“6. *Land west of Twin Pines Park, partially occupied by ~~the Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center~~ Ralston Village should be used for a combination of open space ~~and~~, medical **and health care uses, and related independent and assisted congregate living residences** consistent with the natural site characteristics and visual importance of the site to the community.”*

The proposed amendment of Policy 2052.6 would update the General Plan reference to the subject property and provide for consistency between an amended General Plan policy and the proposed project.

The project applicant also proposes a modification of the General Plan “Description” of Institutional land use pertaining to the Ralston Village (Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center) site as follows (deleted text in ~~strikeout~~, and new text in ***bold italics***):

Description

*2053 - Institutional land use accommodates facilities which provide educational, cultural, religious, health, **(including independent and assisted congregate living residences)** and related services to the community and, in some cases, to a larger service area. Institutions may be nonprofit or profit making and sometimes receive public financial support.*

However, their main sources of funding are private and their policies are not formed by publicly elected officials.

*2054 - Institutional facilities in Belmont include several private schools, major places of worship, two convalescent hospitals, a Jewish Community Center, and several charitable and cultural organizations. The College of Notre Dame and ~~Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center~~ **Ralston Village** are institutions which occupy large, centrally located, and visually prominent sites. The open spaces on these sites are important community resources, and potential expansion or modification of existing uses could have significant impact on the character of the Ralston Avenue corridor.*

*2055 - The General Plan proposes that the City and the College of Notre Dame maintain a cooperative, working relationship to deal with potential land use issues as they arise. The plan also designates all three parcels partially occupied by ~~the Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center~~ **Ralston Village** as institutional. The intent of this designation is to permit limited expansion of the existing medical use of the site, ~~perhaps~~ including the addition of medical offices **and/or independent and assisted congregate living**. However, the City desires to maintain as much of the site as possible in open space, especially the visually prominent hillsides to the south and areas within the scenic corridor of Ralston Avenue. Any further development of the property should preserve the views from Ralston Avenue and conserve the open character of the site.”*

The proposed amendment of the General Plan’s discussion of institutional uses would have two distinct effects on the land use planning guidance presented by the Plan. First, the immediate effect of these changes would involve the refinement and extension of acceptable uses for the subject property and the application of an updated reference to the site. The proposed amendment of the General Plan’s discussion would specifically expand the potential uses of the project site to include the proposed independent senior congregate living facilities in Phase II and maintenance of the existing assisted living facilities in Phase I. The range of effects resulting from these changes to the General Plan are limited to the subject property with no further ramifications for the overall community.

The proposed text change in the first paragraph of the “Description” specifically identifies independent and assisted congregate living residences as health-related facilities that would be permitted on lands designated as Institutional uses by the General Plan. While Institutional Land Use Policy 2052.3 establishes a guideline for residential institutional development, this proposed amendment of the General Plan would further define the potential residential uses of the institutional designation to include congregate living residences. The Planning Commission and City Council will need to determine whether the definition of “independent congregate living units” would also apply to dormitories or convents or be limited to facilities housing only seniors – the merits of this policy change may make sense beyond the Ralston Village property. .

Amendment of the General Plan would not specifically be expected to induce changes in land uses for institutional-designated lands in Belmont. However, the application of this amendment to the overall community would affect five other institutionally designated properties in Belmont; these involve three school and two church sites, including Notre Dame de Namur University. While the development and/or expansion of the college is guided by its (2002 approved) 15-20 year Master Plan, the establishment of health-related residential uses on other institutional properties would be

subject to Institutional Land Use Policy 2052.3, limiting population densities to levels compatible with adjoining residential areas. Under this guideline, the establishment of residential institutional uses on other institutional designated properties in the City could potentially be limited.

In summary, the Planning Commission and City Council will need to determine whether the commercial nature of professional office use is appropriate for the project site relative to the proposed health-related senior congregate community that would be allowed under the General Plan amendment.

Conceptual Development Plans

The BZO requires that a Conceptual Development Plan show the following information:

1. *Proposed land uses.*
2. *Location of buildings, structures and building groups.*
3. *A tabulation of proposed dwelling unit density in residential areas.*
4. *A tabulation of floor area ratios and the maximum heights of proposed buildings.*
5. *Proposed circulation systems, including preliminary street cross sections.*
6. *Proposed parks, playgrounds, school sites and other open spaces.*
7. *Location and type of existing and proposed landscaping (Identification of any existing trees to be removed, in accordance with Ordinance No. 424).*
8. *An economic feasibility analysis of proposed commercial uses.*
9. *Delineation of the major units within the development to be constructed in progression.*
10. *Relation to future land use in surrounding area as proposed in the General Plan.*
11. *Proposed off-street parking.*

The following sections establish the applicant's proposal for the conceptual development.

Proposed Land Use

The project sponsor is proposing to extend the use of Ralston Village. Currently, there are 100 assisted living beds that are designed to provide support services for seniors who are living with Alzheimer's or need assistance with the activities of daily living. Ralston Village Phase II would provide an additional 55 for-sale residences that are designed to provide support services for seniors who are able to live independently but may benefit from health maintenance support. Phase II residents would be age-restricted to 60 +.

The 55 senior dwelling units would be an average size of 1,470 square feet (s.f.). The unit mix would include one bedroom, two bedroom, and two bedroom with study units. The structure would be a combination of two- and three-story elements above one level of below-grade parking. The habitable portion of the building would contain approximately 110,900 s.f. of net residential area, 18,000 s.f. of common useable area, and 22,000 square feet of common circulation area. Representative building elevations are described on Sheets A4 & A5, and floor plans are presented on Sheets A2 & A3 of the project plans (Attachment 11).

The basement floor (28,631 gross s.f.) would be developed with 63 parking spaces. The first floor (40,175 gross s.f.) would include a lobby, reception, kitchen, dining room, health services, exercise

room, pool, lounge and card rooms, storage rooms, offices, and 15 residential units. The second floor would be developed with 21 residential units, while the third floor would contain 19 units. There would be five different floor plans. Eleven units would have variations of Floor Plan A (1,211 and 1,362 s.f.), 17 units would have variants of Floor Plan B (1,392 to 1,503 s.f.), 16 units would have Floor Plan C (1,521 to 1,648 s.f.), seven units would have Floor Plan D (1,725 and 1,918 s.f.), and four units would have Floor Plan E (1,212 and 1,329 s.f.).

If completed, Ralston Village II would provide a continuum of care for its residents including medically supervised health maintenance and wellness services for Phase II residents and assistance with the activities of daily living for Phase I residents. (The State of California requires that five types of assistance be provided: eating, taking medications, bathing, dressing, and toileting). As is currently the case, if a resident's medical needs medical intervention and supervision, Ralston Village will assist in finding a skilled nursing facility located close to the resident's family members. Specifically, the health maintenance program at Ralston Village will include:

- Nutrition and diet
- Exercise and fitness training
- Relaxation and meditation
- Stress reduction
- Weight management
- Detoxification

On-site medical supervision and care would be provided by the Mills Peninsula Clinic in San Carlos. Currently, the Clinic is contracted to provide care for the residents of Ralston Village Phase I. Phase II includes private office space for the Clinic physicians who would provide care for Phase II residents or would consult with their families. For medical services not provided by the Clinic, Ralston Village staff would schedule the appropriate physician appointments, maintain medical files, and provide transportation to physicians' offices.

The project sponsor has initiated a dialogue with the University of Notre Dame de Namur. The sponsor and administrators at the University have met on several occasions to discuss the mutual opportunity of having an independent congregate community located adjacent to the University. The University has expressed a desire to promote a cross generational experience for their gerontology classes. In addition, it may be possible for their students to provide some services to the congregate community and for the congregate community to take advantage of the University's educational facilities.

Location of buildings, structures and building groups

The Conceptual Development Plan for Phase II includes a single structure containing the independent living units and the common areas supporting the residents. The proposed congregate community is to be a self contained structure with living units that are designed for older adults (60+) and common areas that would be shared by all residents.

Within the structure are public areas including a community dining room, kitchen, lobby, lounge, library, indoor swimming pool and other recreational facilities, administrative offices and offices for health maintenance staff, physician appointments, and health monitoring.

Common useable areas such as administrative offices, library, dining, and kitchen would be located on the ground floor level as would several independent living units. The majority of the living units will be located on the second and third floors.

The applicants Geotechnical Consultant recommends a foundation for the building utilizing a combination of drilled piers and spread footings within the abandoned and active 20-foot wide storm drain easement areas to minimize the potential for hazards (See the *Geology & Soils* Section of the project Initial Study – Attachment 7 for further discussion of geotechnical considerations for the project).

The project plans for the proposed senior facility include three design elements to attempt to reduce the potential visual impacts of the project which include: 1) a minimum 45-foot setback of the building from the common western residential neighbor property line; 2) a lower building height on the portions of the project structure closest to adjoining residences (specifically a one-story pool pavilion structure at a 15-foot setback from the western property line); and 3) landscape plantings to augment existing screening already on the project site perimeter. The proposed building also maintains a minimum 100-foot setback from the Ralston Avenue property line, and a 25-foot setback from the existing Dementia Care facility. As discussed earlier, no improvements are proposed within 60 feet of the northern boundary of the conservation easement line.

A tabulation of proposed dwelling unit density in residential areas

	Units	Acres	Units Per Acre
Dwelling units per acre (Phase II only)	55	8.5	6.5

A tabulation of floor area ratios and the maximum heights of proposed buildings

	Acres	Lot Area
Lot Area Phase I	8.6	374,616sf
Lot Area Phase II	8.5	370,260sf
Total Lot Area	17.1	744,876sf
Lot Coverage Phase I (Bldg footprint)		45,000 sf
Lot Coverage Phase II (Bldg footprint)		40,175 sf
Total Lot Coverage		85,175 sf

	Total Area	Lot Area	FAR
FAR Phase I and Phase II Combined	186,357 sf	744,876 sf	0.25
FAR Phase II	141,357 sf	370,260 sf	0.38
Maximum height of proposed building	42 ft.		

Proposed circulation systems, including preliminary street cross sections

From Ralston Avenue, the proposed structure would be accessed from two points: 1) the existing entrance which currently services Phase I at the northeast corner of the property, and 2) through an entry point located at the northwest corner of the property at the current location of a fire access road to be extended (20-feet in width) along the western edge of property. A turnaround loop (30-foot inner radius) is proposed at the south end of this fire access road; the South County Fire Authority has indicated the design of this fire access road is adequate.

The new northwest entry will be restricted to right turns in and out. This restriction would preclude any cross traffic movement of vehicles across Ralston Avenue. Additionally, the entry court accessed from the northwest is shrouded by the existing tree canopy. The drive aisle has been designed to maintain nearly all of the specimen trees in the area between the proposed structure and Ralston Avenue.

The existing entrance and exit at the northeast corner of Ralston Village Phase I would remain intact. The applicant's traffic consultant has recommended improvements to the entry to make it safer for ingress and egress. The submitted Conceptual Development Plan implements these recommendations. A total of 27 surface spaces are proposed to be located north and east of the proposed building, while 63 spaces would be located in the subterranean parking garage.

The applicant has also proposed a pathway link from the Ralston Village property into Twin Pines Park. The entry would be located at the northeast corner of Phase I. The pathway entrance could potentially become part of a path system that would begin at the northwest corner (entry to Phase II) and would link with the existing trail at this new Twin Pines entry.

Proposed parks, playgrounds, school sites and other open spaces

This CDP item generally pertains to large subdivisions with varied land uses. This proposal would not add any parks, playgrounds, or school sites. Existing mature landscaping and trees on the perimeter of the Phase II development area would be maintained and augmented with new plantings. As discussed earlier, the Conservation Easement area (approximately eight acres of hillside open space) would be maintained as part of the project.

Location and type of existing and proposed landscaping

The CDP landscape design preserves virtually all of the existing vegetation bordering Ralston Avenue (the northern property line) and the western property line. The Conservation Easement to the south remains untouched. In addition to the hillside Conservation Easement a 60'-120' buffer between the new structure and the Conservation Easement is to be preserved.

The land and building plans have been primarily developed around the existing protected oak trees. The Conceptual Landscape plan amends the existing trees with a palette of new trees including: *Arbutus 'Marina'*, *Carpinus betulus* - (Musclewood; Ironwood), *Melaleuca* - (Myrtle), *Quercus agrifolia* - (Coast Live Oak), *Tibouchina urvilleana* - (Princess Flower), *Myrica Californica* (Wax Myrtle) and *Sequoia sempervirens* - (Coastal redwood).

A description of the proposed landscape plan is as follows:

- **Existing entry and Phase I drive:** The existing entry which will be improved for driving safety will be flanked by the existing trees. Several London Plane trees are currently located directly to the south of the entry. The re-grading of the entry will require the removal and relocation of these trees. The landscape bordering the driveway leading past Phase I to Phase II will remain intact and will be amended with oaks, myrtle, and muscledwood trees.
- **New entry at the northwest corner of the property:** The entry will be flanked by existing oaks and will be supplement with new myrtle trees. An entry monolith is to be installed which matches the building design and color.
- **Building entry and drive court:** Two Marina trees will become a focal point in a center island within the drive court. Existing oaks, new oaks, myrtle and muscledwood trees will surround the drive court. The drive court is to be constructed of colored concrete.
- **Inner court and fire truck turnaround:** The inner court and the surrounding structure have been designed to maintain and highlight several large oaks. A specimen 26” oak will become the focal point of the building entry. A granite slab water feature is to be in alignment of two of the building’s axis and the 26” oak. The fire truck turnaround is to be constructed of a pervious planted drive surface and has been designed to preserve one 24” and one 30” oak trees.
- **Western property line:** The area between the fire access road and the western property line is to be heavily screened with myrtle and oaks.
- **Drive aisle parking separating Phase I and Phase II.** London Plane trees which currently align the parking adjacent to Phase I will remain. Several of the London Plane trees which populate the existing parking lot are to be replanted between the eastern façade of the new structure and the drive aisle.

The project landscape plan also includes plantings of shrubs, groundcovers, and vines to compliment the proposed tree plantings for the site; the landscape plan is found on Sheet L1 (Landscape Concept) of the project plan (Attachment 11).

An economic feasibility analysis of proposed commercial uses

No specific commercial uses are proposed as part of the project. As discussed earlier, the applicant proposes a Congregate Care facility that provides residential units for seniors, and health maintenance programs, and limited medical services within the facility. From that end, the health proposed care programs for the facility could be considered commercial in nature thereby necessitating a cursory assessment of economic feasibility for the project.

The applicant indicates in their project description that there is a high need for senior (independent living) housing in the Bay area. The applicant further indicates that housing choices for seniors include: 1) remaining in their family homes, 2) down-sizing to smaller homes (usually a condominium with maintenance services), or 3) moving to a community that provides a continuum of care.

Typically, seniors move to a congregate community when they are still able to live independently and benefit from health maintenance and wellness services that prolong their independence. If they develop a need for assistance with the activities of daily living, they are able to move to an assisted residence within the community (as established by the Phase I development).

The expectation and objective of the project sponsor is to market and sell to senior residents of Belmont and nearby communities. The applicants indicate that maintaining the proposed 55-unit density is critical to being able to build the congregate community at a cost that is commensurate with the market value of the residential units. If completed, the congregate community would operate by means of a homeowner's association. The 55-unit density would provide the economy of scale required to keep homeowner's dues at a reasonable level while supporting a sufficient Homeowner's Association.

Delineation of the major units within the development to be constructed in progression

Phase II will be constructed in one phase. The following are the major components of that development and the projected sequence of that development:

- Upgrade of the existing entry way at Ralston Avenue at the east end upgrade of the fire entry at the northwest corner as the primary entry to the complex to accommodate a right turn in and right turn out.
- Installation of new utility services including sanitary, water and fire services.
- Construction of the new residential building with one level of subterranean parking beneath a portion of the structure and a combination of the two- and three-story wood frame structure above the subterranean parking level.
- Reconfiguration of existing surface parking.
- Installation of mature trees and vegetation at the western (residential) property line.
- Development of a new pedestrian pathway which could extend from the new vehicle entrance at the northwest corner to a new entry point at Twin Pines Park at the northeast corner of the site.

Relation to future land use in surrounding area as proposed in the General Plan

Adjacent land uses include single family residential, institutional, and park uses. Ralston Avenue bounds the project site on the north, with Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) and single-family residential uses along the north side of Ralston Avenue. Twin Pines Park adjoins the existing Phase I portion of the project site on the east; the Belmont Civic Center Complex is located further east of the subject site.

NDNU has recently completed (2004) construction of a 200-bed dormitory for their campus; construction of a student union building is expected to commence within the next two years. Additional campus buildings (approved in 2002 as part of a University Master Plan Expansion) will also be constructed over a future 15-20 year period. The City of Belmont will soon complete (late Spring/Early Summer 2005) an expansion of its City Hall building. A proposed expansion of the Charles Armstrong School at 1405 Solana Way has been reviewed by the City's Planning Commission (February 2005) and is expected to be reviewed by the City Council in June 2005.

There are no other proposed or expected changes to the surrounding land uses proposed in the Belmont General Plan.

Proposed off-street parking

The Dementia Care facility currently contains 88 surface parking spaces. However, some of these spaces would be removed in order to accommodate the Phase II facility. With the proposed Phase II project, 52 surface parking spaces would be assigned to the Phase I facility, while Phase II would have 90 spaces (27 surface parking spaces and 63 spaces in the underground garage). Both phases propose a total of 142 spaces.

As mentioned earlier, an Initial Study mitigation measure recommends removal or relocation of two of the Phase II parking spaces adjacent to the new building drop-off area. Thus, net parking for the Phase II facility would result in 88 spaces if these two spaces are unable to be accommodated in other site areas of the proposed development.

When the City's requirement for Convalescent Homes or Institutions for the Aged⁶ is applied to the existing Phase I facility, a maximum of 52 spaces would be required. The proposed parking assignment for the existing Phase I building meets the Zoning Ordinance requirements.

When the strict application of BZO parking requirements for multi-family residential uses⁷ are applied to the proposed building for Phase II, the provided parking falls short of this standard. For a 55-unit residential building, 110 parking spaces would be required. As discussed earlier, 90 spaces are proposed for the Phase II building (with the potential of two spaces being lost resulting in net of 88 spaces).

With respect to the Phase II parking demand, while the City does not have a specific parking standard for the proposed type of residential use (Senior Congregate Care), the ITE *Parking Generation* manual estimates peak parking demand on weekdays to be 0.27 spaces per unit for retirement communities. Since the project would be more similar to the retirement community characteristics described by ITE (residential units similar to apartments or condominiums, occupied by senior citizens with special services, such as medical, dining and retail facilities) than the City's standards for residential uses, the project's parking demand could more closely resemble the ITE parking rate.

Based on this rate, the project's parking demand would be 15 spaces. The 88 resulting spaces for Phase II would sufficiently meet this parking rate. The proposed parking supply would be adequate for the residents of each unit to own one vehicle (55 spaces), while providing 35 spaces for staff and

⁶ BZO Section 8.4.8 – Miscellaneous Uses

b) Rest Homes, Nursing Homes, Sanitariums, Convalescent Homes or Institutions for the Aged or for Children – One space for each four beds, plus one for each two employees (other than staff doctors), plus one for each doctor assigned to the staff.

⁷ BZO Section 8.4.1 – Residential Uses

b) Two-family and Multi-Family Dwellings (including Apartment Hotels) – One garage space for each dwelling unit in any two family or multiple family structure, plus one paved open parking space or garage space for each such dwelling unit.

visitors as well as for residents who may own a second car. The project Initial Study traffic consultant, Fehr & Peers, has concurred that the project would provide adequate parking.

Because the site is zoned Planned Development, the opportunity exists to set flexible development standards (like setbacks, height, parking, etc.) that may vary from the BZO requirements for the proposed uses of the site. However, the decision on the appropriateness of setting a lower parking standard (than the BZO multi-family residential parking requirement) for Phase II shall be determined as a part of the Commission recommendation, and Council adoption of the CDP Amendment, if approved.

GENERAL PLAN & CDP AMENDMENT ANALYSIS & GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The only required finding for an amendment to the General Plan is the determination that it “...*is required to achieve the goals and objectives of the City*” (Excerpt - BZO Section 20.7). City objectives are largely formulated through goals and policies of the General Plan; there is no other single policy document that better illustrates what the vision and long term plan of the City will be.

The only required finding for a CDP amendment is the determination that “...the change in the district boundaries or of the district regulations is required to achieve the objectives of the Zoning Plan and the General Plan for the City” (BZO Section 16.7). Staff notes that there is no Zoning Plan; however, the Zoning Code contains a purpose statement (Section 1.1) that represents the objectives of the City’s zoning regulations:

1.1 PURPOSE – The following regulations for the zoning of land within the City are hereby adopted to promote and protect the public health, safety, peace, comfort, convenience and general welfare, and to provide a precise guide for the physical development of the City.

Essentially the above two findings speak of the same issues – in determining appropriateness of either type of amendment (and whether it is *required*), there must be General Plan consistency. Thus in determining that consistency, several of the goals and policies of the Belmont General Plan must be considered in light of this proposal. The Commission must determine that such goals and objectives are achieved by the proposed amendments.

GENERAL COMMUNITY GOALS AND POLICIES

Goals

Goal 1015.1 - To assure that Belmont will be a balanced community with residences, schools, business, industry, and space and facilities for social, recreational and cultural activities in keeping with the present character of the City.

A residential use (and the associated congregate care aspect of that use) is on equal footing with other types of uses that are desired in a community. The goal does not give more or less weight to any one type of residential use (single or multi family, or units specifically designed for Seniors); all residential uses are equal to other uses described in this goal in establishing a “balanced” community. The proposed project represents a reasonable expansion of the uses currently permitted on the site (dementia care facility) through the addition of a specific residential use designed to serve the community housing needs of independent seniors.

Goal 1015.2 - To preserve and enhance the attractive, family-oriented and tranquil quality of Belmont's residential neighborhoods.

In long-term use, the senior congregate care facility is not expected to adversely affect the generally quiet nature of the residential neighborhood to the west and south. However, the construction of the new facility will result in some noise impacts to these residences. These impacts may jeopardize the neighbors' perception and expectation of a serene residential setting. The project has been designed to shift the proposed new building as far from western residences as possible without interfering with the circulation pattern for the existing dementia care facility and proposed western secondary access area (including the emergency vehicle turnaround lane).

It is anticipated that traffic-related noise increases (along Ralston Avenue) associated with the project will be less than significant due to the high ambient noise levels that already occur along this main arterial and relatively minor changes in traffic volumes due to the project. Nevertheless, a project mitigation measure will require trucks to not queue or travel within 50 feet of the adjacent residences to the west or the Phase I facility to the east in order to maintain acceptable interior noise levels.

Thus, the proposed development can generally coexist without significantly disturbing neighboring uses, since the project will be conditioned through performance standards and adherence to mitigation measures required in the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Goal 1015.3 - To preserve significant open spaces, trees, views, waterways, wildlife habitats, and other features of the natural environment.

The natural environment of the project site includes the upper southern (conservation easement area) slopes of the property; these densely wooded, steep hillsides of the site provide intervening screening between the lower site area and residences to the south. The proposed development would result in the intensification of the site's urban character through development of the two- to three-story senior community complex in the center of the project site that would replace the open space that currently defines this portion of the site with a single, multi-leveled structure.

The project has been designed to include landscape screening along the western property line to screen the building from adjacent residential uses. The building setback from the northern property line also include preservation of existing peripheral landscaping that would generally screen views of the proposed development from passing motorists and pedestrians on Ralston Avenue. As determined in the project initial study, no views, waterways, wildlife habitats, or natural environmental features of the site (i.e. southern open space areas) would be significantly impacted by the proposal.

Goal 1015.4 - To maintain and enhance the appearance of the City through controlling the location, timing, design and landscaping of new development and encouraging renovation of older areas.

The proposed General Plan and CDP amendments would allow site development of the senior congregate care facility, while the evaluation of design and landscaping associated with a project will be formally addressed at the Detailed Development Plan stage.

Goal 1015.10 - To provide for safe and efficient movement of people and goods within the community and between the community and other areas of the region with a minimum of disruption and adverse environmental effects.

The project Initial Study indicates that most of the unsignalized intersections along Ralston Avenue to and from minor streets experience relatively long delays per vehicle causing disruption in the movement of goods and people within the community. The study further indicates that project-related traffic increases would not likely cause significant impacts at study intersections. No off-site traffic circulation mitigation measures are required for the project. Within the project site, ingress/egress and internal traffic circulation is generally sufficient for residents, staff, visitors and emergency services. Nevertheless, the project Initial Study (and corresponding traffic/circulation analysis) recommends implementation of site plan modifications for the development which include:

1. Permitting left turns into and out of the proposed northwestern access driveway (currently proposed as a right turn in and out only).
2. Relocating or eliminating two proposed parking stalls located at the east end of the drop-off area (adjacent to the building entrance).
3. Elongating the landscape area separating the new building drop-off area from the private drive to more clearly define the drop-off area from the main access drive. A minimum of 24 feet driveway width is also recommended to accommodate shuttle bus ingress/egress.

Incorporating these mitigation measures as part of the project would further improve traffic circulation within the internal areas of the development.

Policies

Policy 1016.1 New development should be of a scale and character compatible with surrounding land uses and Belmont's small city environment.

The project poses the problem of determining the appropriate size for a senior residential unit project given the various types of uses that surround the site (including single family residential). What is meant by a "small city environment" in light of the need for provision of housing needs for the senior segment of the community population? What is acceptable "scale" and "character"? A project on the order of 55 residential units (and senior care facilities) will be larger in scale than adjacent single family uses but not be busier in character than other uses such as NDNU (directly to the north) or civic (City Hall & Twin Pines park) and commercial uses located to the east. Still, the question of compatibility remains.

From a site planning perspective, the project generally provides sufficient area to accommodate the proposed senior residential unit project while maintaining appropriate site area for the existing dementia care facility, parking, setbacks and landscaping and open space.

The project would maintain a minimum 45-foot setback of the main building component from the common western residential neighbor property line and a 15-foot setback from the western property line for a one-story pool pavilion structure. The proposed building also maintains a minimum 100-foot setback from the Ralston Avenue property line, and a 25-foot setback from the existing Dementia Care facility. As discussed earlier, no improvements are proposed within 60 feet of the northern boundary of the conservation easement line. Landscape plantings are also proposed to

augment existing screening already on the project site perimeter. Overall, the project does not appear to overwhelm site.

Policy 1016.2 - Intensity of use of land as measured by such factors as parcel size, population density, building coverage, extent of impervious surfaces, public service requirement parking requirements, and traffic movements should be based on the following general principles:

- a. Intensity of land use should decrease as steepness of terrain and distance from major thoroughfares increase.*
- b. The lowest intensities of use should occur on the steep hillsides to limit storm runoff, prevent increased erosion, avoid unstable slopes, protect vegetation and watersheds and maintain scenic qualities.*
- c. Intensity of use of individual parcels and buildings should be governed by considerations of existing development patterns, water and air quality, accessibility, traffic generation, parking, noise, fire safety, drainage, natural hazards, resource conservation and aesthetics.*
- d. Intensity of land use should be regulated according to the availability of community facilities and services.*

The project does not entail construction on steep slopes, as the proposed development would be located on a relatively flat portion of the subject site. The project site is located on a main arterial; adequate ingress/egress and traffic circulation for residents, staff, visitors and emergency services is provided within the project site. The appropriateness of project parking for both the existing dementia care building and proposed senior residential unit development will be evaluated as part of the General Plan and CDP amendment decision.

The project would be required to meet regional water and air quality requirements. The project will be required to meet current UBC and Fire codes which regulate new construction to address protection from natural hazards. The project will generally improve the aesthetics of existing buildings and will not diminish resource conservation. The project will not impact community facilities and all utility providers can adequately serve the site. Although the project will generate (temporary) construction noise impacts to adjacent south and western residences, the project Initial Study indicates that this factor can be reduced to a less than significant level through mitigation measures for the project.

Policy 1016.3 - All land uses should conform with the environmental quality and safety policies in Part 3 of this plan.

Discussed under Noise, Seismic Safety, and Open Space Goals and Policies Sections of the General Plan (see further in report).

Policy 1016.4 – The following standards shall apply to all new development:

- a. Sewage disposal shall be by sanitary sewers.*
- b. Storm drainage facilities shall be provided.*
- c. Erosion shall be minimized through such measures as runoff retention and revegetation.*
- d. Grading and new impervious surfaces shall be kept to the minimum necessary to permit development of land in a manner compatible with its characteristics and designated use.*

- e. Land, water and energy shall be used efficiently.*
- f. Structures shall be clustered, where possible, to maximize open space and minimize costs of providing public services.*
- g. Safe access to the public road system of the community shall be provided.*
- h. Fire and police protection shall be adequately provided.*
- i. Slopes exceeding 30 percent shall be avoided whenever possible.*

The project has been designed to meet the above the development standards. All utility services can serve the site and adequate emergency services (police and fire protection) can be provided for the project. The project does not entail significant grading (relative to the proposed building size and scope), as it would be sited on a relatively flat portion (less than 10% slope) of the property. Adherence to erosion control and air quality measures will be required and incorporated for the project.

Policy 1016.5 - In the more intensely developed and accessible portions of the City, land use should be varied with creative mixing of businesses, professional offices, institutions, and residences.

The project consists of construction of a senior congregate care facility for the site. While the surrounding area is not considered “intensely developed”, the residential uses to the south and west, commercial uses to the east, institutional uses to the north, and the proposed Phase II development creates a varied mix of uses that are generally compatible.

Policy 1016.6 - Natural features, such as ridgelines, canyons, steep hillsides, meadows, streamsides and significant stands of trees, should be preserved and protected through planning, conservation practices and, where appropriate, the dedication of open space or scenic easements.

The project does not entail construction within the southern slopes of the subject property currently protected by a conservation easement. Several redwoods, London plane trees, and clusters of oaks occur along the northern site perimeter; most of these trees are to be preserved to screen the building from Ralston Avenue. The project includes also additional landscape plantings along the western edge of the property to screen the proposed building from adjacent residential land uses.

Policy 1016.8 - In any development within the Planning Area, geologic conditions should be thoroughly evaluated to avoid or mitigate problems of unstable land.

A geotechnical report (including the assessment of the geological site conditions) has been prepared for the project. The findings of this report have been evaluated and included as part of the Initial Study for the project. The environmental study concluded that should the design and recommendations of the applicant’s geotechnical study and City’s third party consultant (Cotton & Shires) be included for the project, issues related to site stability would be mitigated to less than significant levels.

Policy 1016.9 - In all new development, significant historical and archaeological features should be identified and, as determined appropriate, protected or conserved.

There are no archaeological sites recorded on the project site; no evidence of prehistoric archaeological materials was found by project environmental study consultants anywhere on the

northwestern portion (proposed development area) of the project site. A large prehistoric site has been recorded to the east of the project area in the vicinity of the former location of the Twin Pines Sanatorium (near the Civic Center complex and Sixth Avenue).

The project Initial Study describes that future earthmoving associated with project construction could uncover archaeological materials associated with the prehistoric habitation areas. However, the study concluded that the potential was not high enough to justify undertaking a mechanical subsurface testing program of the project site to search for buried midden associated with the documented prehistoric site to the east. To reduce cultural resource environmental impacts to a less-than-significant level, a mitigation measure has been recommended to retain a project archaeologist to monitor all earthmoving activities, initial trenching, and excavation of the proposed swimming pool and subterranean parking garage to ensure that there are no buried archaeological deposits.

In the event that any viable archaeological deposits are located during project construction, grading and/or excavation would be halted in the immediate area of the discovery until a plan for its evaluation and/or mitigation is developed and approved by the City.

Policy 1016.10 - Through traffic should be channeled onto major streets and collectors and diverted, to the extent possible, from residential neighborhoods.

No significant public capital improvements are anticipated to modify the street pattern for surrounding areas of the site. As such, all traffic enters and exits the site on Ralston Avenue, a major arterial. In addition, the incorporation of on-site traffic/circulation mitigation measures for the project will avoid any increase in adverse traffic conditions on adjacent or surrounding streets.

Policy 1016.11 - On-street parking should be controlled by requiring provision of off-street parking in new development, construction of additional off-street parking spaces, especially in the Central Business District and near Old County Road, preventing the conversion of space or uses to higher intensities unless adequate off-street parking is provided.

The proposed site plan for the development would assign 52 surface parking spaces to the existing dementia care facility, while the senior residential unit project is proposed to have 90 spaces (27 surface parking spaces and 63 spaces in the underground garage for the building); a total of 142 spaces is proposed for both buildings. A mitigation measure recommends removal or relocation of two of the assigned Phase II parking spaces resulting in a potential net of 88 spaces for the new building. The dementia care building parking assignment meets Belmont Zoning Ordinance (BZO) requirements. The proposed parking for the senior residential unit building falls short of the BZO standard for multi-family buildings (two spaces per unit). Using this ratio for a 55-unit residential building would yield 110 required parking spaces. As discussed earlier, 88 spaces would result for this new building if two (Initial Study recommended) spaces are removed and not relocated elsewhere on the site.

Based upon the conclusion that a senior independent living/congregate care facility would require less parking than a typical multi-family development, the proposed parking for the project would be adequate. Furthermore, the City's average household size is assumed at 2.35 persons per household as per the 2001 Housing Element. The estimated project population would be approximately 84 persons for the proposed 55 senior dwelling units resulting in a 1.53 persons per household ratio,

further justifying a lower required parking count for the facility. If approved, staff would recommend that the project be conditioned to remain as a Senior Congregate Care facility.

Subsequently, the Planned Development zoning for the property provides an opportunity to set flexible development standards (like setbacks, height, parking, etc.) that may vary from the BZO. However, the appropriateness of setting a lower parking standard for the new building (than the BZO multi-family residential parking requirement) shall be determined as a part of the Commission recommendation, and Council adoption of the CDP Amendment, if approved.

Policy 1016.12 - Incompatible land uses should be separated by landscaped open spaces, streets or other forms of buffers.

The existing dementia care facility and proposed senior residential unit project have not been identified as incompatible land uses in relation to the surrounding mix of uses (commercial to the east, residential to the south and west, and institutional to the north). Nevertheless, the project maintains an existing tree screen along the northern site frontage and southern upper slopes of the property. The project also includes landscape buffers (additional tree plantings) along the western perimeter of the project site to screen the proposed senior residential unit facility from adjacent residential land uses.

ELEMENTS OF THE LAND USE PATTERN

Residential Areas

Goal 2006.1 - To encourage location of new multiple family housing in relatively flat areas which have good access, service availability and compatible adjacent uses.

The proposed senior congregate care/residential development is sited on land that is a mix of relatively flat and moderate (approximately 10% slope) terrain to blend with natural elements and grade of the site. The site is served by all utility providers and affords adequate ingress/egress and traffic circulation for both residents of the units and emergency services. The site is surrounded by a mix residential, institutional, and commercial uses, which are compatible with the proposed residential units.

Goal 2006.2 - To address the housing needs of traditional families, senior citizens and young adults by encouraging a mix in housing type, design, and cost.

Policy 2007.2 - A variety of types and densities of residential uses should be provided to meet the needs of the different lifestyles and incomes of the people who live in the community.

The proposed Senior Congregate Care development would generally be compatible with the character of adjacent residential neighborhoods (west and south). The proposed development will provide multi-family senior housing opportunities to meet this community need. Residential housing stock within the city includes detached single family residential, duplex, condominium, townhouse, and apartment units, with the largest supply in the single family detached category. Residential densities range from 1-7 units/per acre for single family areas to 8-20 units/per acre within medium density areas to 20-50 units/per acre within the higher density areas. The project proposes a density of 6.5 dwelling units/per acre for the 8.5-acre Phase II parcel. Thus, the proposed

development is consistent with the mix of residential uses in the community. The site location is close to established single-family neighborhoods and in reasonable proximity to both public transportation and commercial services.

The project will provide additional living units for seniors which increases the housing stock for the City and can free existing units in the area. The proposed development will provide greater opportunities to meet the different lifestyles and incomes of people living within the development and community.

Public Facilities and Services

Policy 2042.18 - Community use of existing public facilities should be optimized through cooperation with other public agencies, careful scheduling of activities, and structural modifications, if needed, to permit multiple uses.

A conservation easement area for the subject property, consisting of approximately eight acres of the 17.1-acre project site creates vistas of a steeply sloping and densely wooded hillside that are enjoyed by surrounding properties. While no specific public facilities (i.e. parks) are proposed within the subject site, the project does include creation of a public trail connection (to be accessed from Ralston Avenue) within the property to link with an existing Twin Pines Park pedestrian pathway to the east. The exact alignment of this connection will be determined at the DDP stage, should the General Plan and CDP Amendments be approved.

Institutional Facilities

Goal 2051.1 - To accommodate private institutions which provide educational, religious, cultural, health and charitable services to members of the community.

The subject property consists of a private (dementia care facility) institution. The proposed site development would enable Ralston Village to create a congregate care community (with residential living units for Seniors) and improve its offerings and services.

Goal 2051.2 - To ensure that institutional uses are designed and operated in a manner that preserves and enhances the character of Belmont's residential neighborhoods.

The construction of the proposed senior congregate care facility will create some (temporary) noise and traffic impacts to surrounding residential uses. These impacts have been deemed by the project Initial Study to be able to be reduced to less than significant levels. The project has been designed to shift the proposed new building as far from western and southern residences as possible. In addition, it is expected that the operation of the senior congregate care facility can be sufficiently maintained without significantly disturbing neighboring residential uses, since the project will be conditioned through performance standards and adherence to mitigation measures required in the Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Policy 2052.1 - All institutional uses should be served directly by major collector or arterial roads.

Ralston Avenue, a main arterial, directly serves the Ralston Village project site.

Policy 2052.2 - All institutional uses should be located and designed to be compatible with the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood. In particular, compatibility of uses in terms of traffic generation, parking, and noise shall be ensured prior to the establishment of any new institutional use or expansion of an existing use.

The city must determine that the proposed senior residential unit development including the existing dementia care facility is compatible to adjacent residential uses. The proposed project for the site generally provides sufficient area to accommodate the new Phase II building, parking, setbacks and landscaping and open space. Implementation of project mitigation measures (internal site plan changes which include allowing left turn movements from the northwestern driveway, and parking stall/building drop off area modifications) will reduce adverse traffic generation/circulation impacts to less than significant levels.

Noise associated with the construction of the Phase II building will have temporary detrimental impacts to the adjacent residential area. No significant adverse noise impacts have been identified in the project Initial Study for the operation of the proposed senior congregate care facility.

Policy 2052.3 - Residential institutional uses (e.g. nursing homes and other care facilities) should be limited to a density of population compatible with adjoining residential areas.

As discussed earlier, this policy recommends the limitation of population densities for residential institutional uses (e.g. nursing homes and other care facilities) to a compatible level with adjoining residential areas. The proposed project's neighborhood includes low-density, single-family residential uses. Under the General Plan's guideline for low-density residential (1-7 units/per acre) for single family and clustered townhouse development, the project maintains a density of 6.5 units per acre (for the 8.5 acre Phase II portion of the property), consistent with the upper limit of this low-density designation.

Assuming an average household population of 2.35 persons per household (as per the 2001 Housing Element), the anticipated population for the project site would be approximately 130 persons. Due to age restrictions and health considerations, the estimated project population would be approximately 84 persons for the proposed 55 senior dwelling units (1.53 persons per household). Consequently, the project as proposed could be determined to be consistent with this policy. However, the Planning Commission and City Council must ultimately determine that this policy is appropriately met given the residential density proposed and expected population increase for the proposal.

Policy 2052.6 - Land west of Twin Pines Park, partially occupied by the Belmont Hills Psychiatric Center should be used for a combination of open space and medical uses consistent with the natural site characteristics and visual importance of the site to the community.

As discussed earlier, this policy directly addresses future land uses envisioned for the project site. The proposed project ensures that the densely wooded upland slopes of the property (defined by the Conservation Easement) will remain protected, which conforms to the General Plan recommendation for the maintenance of open space use on the site.

This policy also describes that medical uses would be acceptable on a portion of the subject property. Maintenance of the Phase I building complies with this recommendation by providing a

dementia care facility. The proposed project would develop a congregate senior community (Phase II) while also continuing to provide assisted living services in Phase I. Under a strict interpretation of this policy, the proposal includes limited medical-related uses. The project provides a senior residential living unit facility use that includes a health maintenance orientation, a health services office, and on-site medical supervision and care. However, the proposed project falls short of the intended uses envisioned with this 1982 General Plan policy. An amendment to this policy is proposed and discussed earlier in this report.

CIRCULATION ELEMENT

Goal 2080.1 - To provide a transportation system consistent with the residential, small city character and physical setting of Belmont.

No changes are proposed to the existing transportation system or surrounding streets of the project site. No off-site mitigation measures are required as part of the traffic analysis/circulation assessment for the project Initial Study.

Goal 2080.4 - To route through vehicular traffic around, rather than through, residential neighborhoods.

All traffic to and from the site will be routed onto Ralston Avenue, a main arterial within the city.

Trafficways

Policy 2081.2 - Through traffic should be routed to streets on the periphery of residential areas to the maximum extent possible.

The subject site is located on a main arterial; all vehicular ingress/egress within the project site will be routed back to Ralston Avenue.

Policy 2081.3 - When it is determined that through traffic is adversely affecting a residential area, reasonable actions should be taken to re-route the traffic or otherwise reduce the traffic or mitigate its effects.

The project Initial Study indicates that project-related traffic increases would not likely cause significant impacts at study intersections. Thus, no off-site traffic circulation mitigation measures are required for the project. Certain unsignalized street intersections along the east and west traveling Ralston Avenue corridor contribute to excessive levels of traffic delay. As of this time, no significant capital improvements are anticipated along Ralston Avenue to improve the existing conditions.

Policy 2081.5 - Streets and roads should be designed for safe travel at moderate speeds and for low maintenance costs.

No adverse safety conditions (on adjacent streets) have been identified as part of the Initial Study for the new senior congregate care building.

Policy 2081.10 - New stop signs, traffic signals or other means of traffic control should be installed only where necessary to ensure safe use of a roadway or intersection by automobiles and pedestrians.

No off-site mitigation measures are required as part of the Initial Study for the project. This study recommends mitigation measures for the site plan layout which include: Permitting left turns out of the proposed northwestern secondary access driveway, minor parking stall changes, and modifications to the new building drop-off area to improve internal traffic circulation within the facility. Taken together, these mitigation measures will reduce project associated traffic impacts to less than significant levels.

Public and Private Group Transportation

Policy 2082.3 - Commuter buses, van pools and other forms of private transit should be encouraged or required, where appropriate, especially in conjunction with major new industrial or commercial developments.

Ralston Village will incorporate a Vanpool program for the proposed Senior Congregate Care facility to reduce the number of vehicle trips to the project site.

Policy 2082.5 - The City shall encourage improvement of bus routes and schedules to provide transportation to commuter trains, local schools and recreational facilities without infringing on quiet neighborhoods.

No improvements to public bus routes or schedules are anticipated in conjunction with the review of the proposed project for the Ralston Village site. A Samtrans bus stop is located within 1/4 mile of the Ralston Village facility; no changes to Samtrans service is proposed. As discussed above, Ralston Village will institute a Vanpool program as part of facility operations to reduce the number of drop-offs/pick-ups for commute peak hour traffic periods.

Parking

Policy 2084.2 - No new non-residential use shall be permitted unless adequate off-street parking and loading spaces can be provided, Standards for off-street parking and loading shall be reviewed and revised as needed for all non-residential uses.

As discussed earlier, fifty-two surface parking spaces would be assigned to the existing Phase I facility, while the new Phase II building is proposed to have 90 spaces (27 surface parking spaces and 63 spaces in the underground garage for the building); a total of 142 spaces is proposed for both buildings. In addition, if two (Initial Study recommended) parking spaces are removed and not relocated elsewhere on the site, 88 spaces would result for the new Phase II building. The proposed parking for the dementia care building meets Belmont Zoning Ordinance (BZO) requirements. The proposed parking for the senior residential unit building falls short of the BZO standard for multi-family buildings (two spaces per unit).

On the premise that a senior independent living/congregate care facility requires less parking than a typical multi-family residential development, the proposed 88 spaces for the new Phase II building

would be sufficient. As discussed earlier, the 2001 Housing Element assumes the City's average household size at 2.35 persons per household. The senior independent living unit project population is expected at approximately 84 persons for the proposed 55 dwelling units resulting in a ratio of 1.53 persons per household, potentially justifying lower parking needs for the facility.

The property's Planned Development zoning provides an opportunity to set flexible development standards (like parking) that may vary from the BZO. However, the appropriateness of setting a lower parking standard for the new building shall be determined as a part of the Commission recommendation, and Council adoption of the General Plan and CDP Amendments, if approved.

SEISMIC SAFETY – SAFETY ELEMENT

Goal 3040.2 - To continue to obtain and incorporate into City decision-making information delineating geologic, hydrologic and seismic hazards.

The project Initial Study includes an assessment of geologic, hydrologic, and seismic hazards for the proposed development. Appropriate mitigation measures have been recommended for the project to reduce these associated environmental factors to less than significant levels.

Goal 3040.3 - To encourage public and private development that is located, designed and constructed in such a way as to minimize the risk of loss of life and injury in the event of a major earthquake, flood, wildfire or other disaster.

The proposed development will be required to meet current Uniform Building and Fire codes. These codes are designed in the review of new construction to protect persons and property from fire, erosion, earthquake, and other natural hazards.

Policy 3041.1 - The City shall require investigations by both registered soils engineers and engineering geologists prior to issuing building permits for any new construction unless waived due to current existing information and location. All such reports shall be independently evaluated, on behalf of the City, for completeness and accuracy.

A geotechnical report has been prepared for the project. The findings of this report have been independently evaluated and included as part of the Initial Study for the project. The environmental study concluded that the design and recommendations of the applicant's geotechnical study and City's third party consultant (Cotton & Shires), if included in the project, would mitigate soils issues to less than significant levels.

Policy 3041.4 - All environmental reports submitted to the City in support of development proposals shall include sections evaluating seismic, geologic, fire and flood hazards.

The project environmental study includes an evaluation of seismic, geologic, fire, and flood hazards. Adherence to appropriate mitigation measures for the project would assure support of the development proposal as currently designed.

Policy 3041.13 - No new construction shall be permitted in areas where emergency access cannot be

adequately ensured.

Both the Police Department and South County Fire Authority have confirmed that adequate emergency services can be provided for the site. All service levels can be maintained to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

Policy 3041.14 - Sprinkler systems and/or smoke detectors should be required according to ordinance provisions administered by the South County Fire District.

Should the project be approved, a fire sprinkler system would be required (as per SCFA) for any new buildings for the subject site.

Policy 3041.15 - Fire retardant roofing and exterior siding materials should be required for any major remodeling of structures in presently developed areas which are adjacent to wooded open space areas or without adequate emergency access or water flow, assuming that 80 percent of the siding or roofing is being remodeled.

Should the project be approved, appropriate fire retardant materials for new on-site building would be required as per the Uniform Fire Code as administered by SCFA.

Policy 3041.16 - All geologic reports required by the City in support of a development application shall include an evaluation of seismic conditions on and near the site and how they could affect the proposed development.

The findings of a prepared geotechnical report for the proposed development have been evaluated and included as part of the environmental assessment for the project. The environmental study concluded that incorporating the design and recommendations of the applicant's geotechnical study, and City's third party consultant (Cotton & Shires) would reduce seismic safety factors to less than significant levels for the project.

Policy 3041.19 - The City supports strict control of the use, storage and transport of toxic, explosive or other hazardous materials.

No storage, or transport of toxic, explosive or other hazardous materials is proposed for the project. The project Initial Study included a records search of federal, state, and local databases pertaining to the transport, storage or disposal of hazardous materials or wastes. Regulatory records indicate no potential on or off-site sources of hazardous substances that could affect soil and groundwater quality at the site.

HOUSING ELEMENT

Housing and Neighborhood Conservation

Goal 1.0 - Assure the quality, safety, and livability of existing housing and the continued high quality of residential neighborhoods.

Inherent in the construction of the senior congregate care facility will be some noise impacts to surrounding residential uses. If unmitigated, this noise would negatively impact the livability of the surrounding residential setting. These impacts have been deemed, as part of the project Initial Study, to be moderated to a less than significant level (with incorporation of mitigation measures). No noise measures were required in the design of the proposed senior congregate care building to mitigate impacts to off-site western and southern residences. An operational project mitigation measure will, however, require trucks visiting the facility to not queue or travel within 50 feet of the adjacent residences to the west or the Phase I facility to the east in order to maintain acceptable interior noise levels.

The project has been designed to shift the proposed new building as far from western residences as possible without interfering with the circulation pattern for the existing dementia care facility and proposed northwestern secondary access area (including the emergency vehicle turnaround lane). No adverse safety conditions have been identified in the project initial study that would result from construction of the proposed development.

Policy 1.5 - Preserve the unique environmental aspects of the community, including hillsides and other environmental amenities.

The proposed project would be constructed within an existing parking and flat landscaped area of the site. The project has been designed to preserve eight acres of southern hillside open space and mature trees along the (northern) Ralston Avenue property frontage.

Housing Production

Goal 2.0 - Provide residential sites through land use, zoning, and specific plan designations to encourage a broad range of housing opportunities.

The site is surrounded by a mix of uses (single family residential, institutional, and commercial), which are generally considered compatible with the proposed senior congregate care facility. The proposed senior congregate care development will provide multi-unit housing opportunities to meet community needs for residents aged 60 and over. Project benefits also include locating higher density housing in reasonable proximity (one-quarter to one mile) to both public transportation (SamTrans and Caltrain) and commercial services. The project creates senior housing with support services for residents to foster an independent living environment.

The project will provide greater opportunities to meet the different lifestyles and incomes of people living within the development and community. The project will provide additional multi-family units, which is necessary to provide alternative residential uses for the area and increase the housing stock for the City.

Policy 2.1 - Identify adequate sites, which will be made available and zoned at appropriate densities, to facilitate goals set forth in the 1999-2006 RHND.

This site has been identified in Belmont's adopted (August 2002) Housing Element as a location for potential construction of residential units as set forth in the 1999-2006 Regional Housing Needs Determination (RHND). Approval of the project would create 55 units of permanent senior housing and assists the City in meeting these regional housing needs.

Policy 2.2 - Ensure that residential sites have appropriate public services, facilities, circulation, and other needed infrastructure to support development.

The proposed senior residential units & congregate care facility is sited on land that is relatively flat and is designed to blend with the grade of the site. The site is served by all utility providers and affords adequate ingress/egress and traffic circulation for both residents of the units and emergency services.

Policy 2.5 - Encourage colleges, assisted living facilities, and other institutional settings to set-aside 10% of the units for independent affordable units.

The project is not located in the City's Redevelopment Area which specifically requires 15% of residential units (for projects of 10 units or more) proposed in this region of the City be set aside as affordable. Thus no specific mandate exists to create affordable units for the project, outside of this Housing Element policy which *encourages* an affordable unit set-aside.

However, should the Planning Commission and City Council see merit in the proposed General Plan and CDP amendments, they could direct staff to negotiate with the applicant to reserve 10% of the units for low or moderate income households.

CONSERVATION ELEMENT

Goal 3051.3 - To minimize the erosion of soil.

Should the project be approved, compliance with stormwater runoff/erosion control measures as required by the Belmont Public Works Department as mandated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board will be required.

Goal 3051.5 - As appropriate, to comply and encourage compliance with regulations designed to achieve state and federal air quality standards.

As described in the environmental study, the project will be required to meet Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) requirements in its design and operation. These standards are enacted to preserve clean air for the Bay Area region.

Goal 3051.6 - To provide for the efficient use of energy resources in activities carried out or regulated by the City.

Should the project be approved, the project will be required to meet the Uniform Building Code which includes provisions for compliance with *Title 24 – Energy Conservation* for new construction.

Goal 3051.8 - To protect scenic views to and from the hillsides.

The project is proposed within the relatively flat portions of an existing landscaped area and parking lot located in the northwestern portion of the site. The project will maintain an eight-acre (steeply sloping) wooded area in the southern portion of the site that protected by a conservation easement. Scenic views of this hillside area (from Ralston Avenue) are not expected to be diminished as a result of the project.

Policy 3052.1 - New development shall be located and designed to preserve specimen trees and significant stands of trees to the extent possible.

The project will not be constructed within the densely wooded southern slopes of the subject property currently protected by a conservation easement. Existing mature trees along the north property line perimeter are to be preserved to screen the building from Ralston Avenue. This open space area and the western edge of the property would be augmented with additional landscape plantings to screen the proposed senior congregate care facility from adjacent single family residences.

Policy 3052.2 - The use of native and drought resistant vegetation should be encouraged in new landscaping.

A Preliminary Landscape plan for the project includes both native and drought resistant vegetation for the site. Landscape Plan review will be more formally addressed at the Detailed Development Plan stage of the Planned Development review for the project.

Policy 3052.4 - The City shall control both the amount and timing of grading to prevent accelerated erosion of the soil. Erosion and runoff control facilities shall be regularly maintained and preventative measures taken whenever possible.

Compliance with stormwater runoff/erosion control measures as required by the Belmont Public Works Department and mandated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board will be required for the project. These measures will include adherence to Best Management Practices (BMP's) in the design/construction of new buildings to address grading, erosion control, and storm water quality control for the proposed development.

Policy 3052.6 - In carrying out its functions, the City will comply and encourage compliance with all applicable federal and state air quality regulations.

The construction and operation of the Senior Congregate Care facility project will be required to meet Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) requirements; these standards are enacted to preserve clean air for Belmont and the surrounding Bay Area region.

Policy 3052.12 - Structures should be located and designed and landscaping designed and maintained to protect, to the extent possible, views to and from the hillsides.

The proposed senior congregate care facility is sited within a relatively flat area of the site (existing landscaped area/parking lot) and as such, will not affect views to and from hillsides. The proposed project is not expected to adversely affect community views of the southern (densely wooded) conservation easement area from Ralston Avenue. New landscaping is also proposed along the western edge of the property to screen the proposed senior congregate care building from adjacent

residential uses.

Policy 3052.13 - A right to plant trees on a property should be balanced with the right of a view from adjacent property.

As discussed above, new landscaping screening plantings are proposed along the western edge of the property to mask the proposed senior congregate care facility from adjacent residential uses. These plantings are not expected to diminish existing views of the conservation easement area as seen from Ralston Avenue. However, while these landscape plantings may eventually effectively screen the building from four directly adjacent residences (one on Ralston Avenue, and three on Chula Vista Drive), the plantings may affect the views of the upper southeastern wooded slopes of the Ralston Village property. In any event, a view of trees would result for these four properties.

NOISE ELEMENT

Goal – Promote a Balanced Community

Promote a noise environment that reflects a balance of the various City objectives while providing an environment that maintains a healthy living environment; fosters relaxation and recreation; is conducive to the work environment; and provides pleasant living conditions.

Policy 2.1 - Ensure that noise levels appropriate to protect the public health and well being are maintained.

Residential care facilities, and multi-family residential uses are typically considered equal to other types of uses that are preferred within a balanced community. The Belmont Noise Element identifies residential units, schools, hospitals, extended care facilities, and open spaces as sensitive noise receptors. There are three single-family residences located adjacent to the western project boundary (approximately 55, 180, and 160 feet) from the proposed building. Single-family homes to the south are separated from the proposed building by approximately 900 feet in distance and 315-foot change in elevation.

Traffic-related noise increases (along Ralston Avenue) associated with the project are anticipated to be less than significant due to the high ambient noise levels that already occur along this main arterial and relatively minor changes in traffic volumes expected from the project. Construction of the senior congregate care facility will create some temporary noise impacts to adjacent residential uses. The project Initial Study has deemed these impacts to be at a less than significant level for the project.

No noise measures were required in the design of the proposed senior congregate care building to mitigate impacts to off-site western and southern residences. Trucks visiting the facility will not be allowed to queue or travel within 50 feet of the adjacent residences to the west or the Phase I facility to the east in order to maintain acceptable interior noise levels. This mitigation measure has been identified as part of the project Initial Study to ensure that the senior congregate care facility would operate within acceptable noise levels.

The project has also been designed to shift the proposed new building as far from western residences as possible without interfering with the proposed northwestern secondary access area (including the emergency vehicle turnaround lane) and circulation pattern for the existing dementia care facility.

Given the existing site location along Ralston Avenue, temporary construction noise impacts (which would be regulated by the City's current Noise Ordinance), and operational mitigation measure related to on-site truck queuing, it is expected that the proposed senior congregate care facility would be constructed and operate within acceptable noise standards established for the community.

PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENTS

Goal 2062.1 – To provide recreation areas for community and neighborhood use, conveniently located and properly designed to serve the needs of the residents of the community.

The proposed project (and operation of the existing dementia care facility) includes continued enforcement of a recorded conservation easement to protect views of a southern densely wooded area of the subject property. Although the project does not propose to establish specific areas within the Ralston Village property for neighborhood or community recreation, it does include a proposed trail connection within the site to link with existing pedestrian walking trails in Twin Pines Park.

Goal 2062.3 – To preserve and enhance existing parks, recreational areas and facilities to serve neighborhood and community needs to the maximum extent possible.

No public facilities (i.e. parks) are proposed within the subject site. However, the project does include creation of a public trail connection within the property, accessed from Ralston Avenue, to link to an existing Twin Pines Park pathway to the east. As discussed earlier, should the General Plan and CDP Amendments be approved, the exact alignment of this connection will be determined at the DDP stage of the development review process.

Goal 2062.4 – To expand opportunities for active recreation in existing community parks.

This project does not propose to expand the recreational opportunities for Twin Pines Park, with the exception of the above described proposed trail connection.

Policy 2063.11 – To the extent possible, volunteer activity and private financial resources should be used in combination with public funds for acquisition, maintenance and operation of recreation facilities. In addition, the provision of private recreational facilities to serve the community should be encouraged.

A private senior congregate care facility is proposed; the project does not include community (i.e. public) access to recreational areas of this facility. The applicant does propose creating a public trail connection at the northeast corner of the property to link to an existing Twin Pines Park pathway to the east.

OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Goal 2070.1 – To designate and protect open space lands for the preservation of scenic areas, views, trees, natural drainage channels and plant and wildlife habitats; for the managed production

of natural resources; for outdoor recreation; for protection of historical and cultural resources; for public health and safety and for structuring urban development.

A conservation easement area defines the upper eight-acre southern slopes of the subject property. Community vistas of this densely wooded natural resource area are provided from Ralston Avenue and surrounding areas. Permitted uses within this easement area are limited to natural open space, landscaping and irrigation systems, footpaths, underground utilities and drainage systems, and perimeter walls and/or fencing. The applicant proposes no construction or other improvements within 60 feet of the northern boundary of the conservation easement line.

Goal 2070.2 – To provide opportunities for the enjoyment of natural beauty, solitude and relief from the pressures of urban life.

A steeply sloping eight-acre conservation and open space area will continue to be maintained as part of the proposed project to provide opportunities for natural resource enjoyment.

Goal 2070.4 – To actively explore various methods including, but not limited to, regulation, full acquisition, transfer of development rights, and less than fee purchase for protecting open space resources.

A condition of approval for expansion of the existing dementia care facility in 1988 required establishment of a conservation easement for the upper southern slopes of the subject property. This easement was recorded in 1989 thereby protecting a neighborhood open space resource.

Goal 2070.6 – To provide open space areas as separations between incompatible uses.

On the basis that residential care facilities and multifamily (or senior) housing should be located in reasonable proximity to other mixed (single family, institutional, or commercial) development, the existing and proposed uses of the site would generally be regarded as compatible to the above described mix of uses. Nevertheless, the project has been designed to preserve trees and open space within the southern conservation easement area and along the north property line. Additional landscape plantings to screen the proposed senior congregate care facility from adjacent residential land uses to the west would also be added as part of the project.

Policy 2071.1 – In any land development project, the basic visual character of the Planning Area should be conserved through project design.

The basic visual character of the Planning Area consists of a surrounding mix of residential, institutional, and commercial uses and the existing one story Ralston Village dementia care facility. Single-family dwellings are one and two stories, and Institutional (i.e. NDNU) and commercial uses range from one to three stories in height surrounded by significant stands of trees. The two to three story senior congregate care building for the site would incorporate a similar (and generally compatible) development and landscape pattern.

Policy 2071.2 – All major visual features, such as ridgelines and steep valley sides, should be preserved through regulation or public acquisition of fee title or lesser interest.

The subject property includes eight acres of steeply sloping densely wooded hillside that is protected under a conservation easement. As discussed earlier, no construction or other improvements are proposed within this open space area.

Policy 2071.3 – Areas hazardous to the public safety and welfare should be retained as open space. Areas that fall into this category include:

a. *Hillsides generally over 30% slope.*

The project does not entail construction in any hillside areas of over 10% slope. The subject private institutional (dementia care facility) site is not hazardous to the public safety and welfare. The proposed site location for development of the Phase II building is on relatively flat ground (existing parking lot and landscaped areas).

Policy 2071.5 – A variety of vistas should be provided and preserved ranging from the small enclosed private views to the more distant views shared by many people.

The subject site provides the community a variety of views of the distant hills defined by a southern conservation area of the property. The proposed project would preserve the public views of this open space area from Ralston Avenue.

Policy 2071.7 – Landscaped open spaces should be included in new developments, especially in commercial areas and along streets and pathways.

The project includes maintenance of an existing mature tree screen along the Ralston property frontage and new landscaped areas along the western edge of the site and around the senior congregate care building. Final landscape plan design would be formally reviewed at the DDP stage of the project.

Policy 2071.8 – Measures should be taken to improve the visual quality and safety of pedestrian ways along roads.

The project plan includes Vanpool loading, and a pedestrian drop-off area within the senior congregate care facility rather than along adjacent public roads. Internal traffic/circulation mitigation measures, identified as part of the Initial Study, are required for the senior residential unit development to enhance the visual quality and safety of pedestrian ways for the project.

Policy 2071.12 – The City shall explore opportunities to obtain easements to establish a trail system linking residential areas to open space lands, schools, parks and commercial areas.

The project includes creating a trail connection from Ralston Avenue through the subject property to an existing pedestrian walking trail within Twin Pines Park to the east. The DDP stage will provide the opportunity to determine the exact alignment of this connection, should the project General Plan and CDP Amendments be approved.

Policy 2071.16 – Open spaces should be provided as possible to separate incompatible uses, especially single family residential use from commercial and industrial uses.

At this time, the existing dementia care facility and proposed senior congregate care facility has not been determined to be an incompatible use in relation to the surrounding uses. Nevertheless, open space areas and proposed landscape buffers are provided to separate the existing Phase I building and proposed Phase II development from the adjacent western and southern residences.

2072.4 Open Space in Commercial, Industrial, Institutional and Mixed-Use Areas. Open spaces in these areas provide space for off-street parking, places for employees, customers, and clients to relax and converse, and visual separation of uses. These open spaces are not necessarily beautiful, but with care in location and design, provide visual variety in the City's more intensively developed areas. Actions:

- a. Define open space requirements for commercial, industrial and institutional uses.*
- b. Establish standards for landscaping of parking lots and rights-of-way in commercial, industrial and institutional areas.*

The above actions are directed at the City. As for the project, the site layout for the Ralston Village Complex accommodates site parking, landscaping, and open space areas. Within the existing western open space area of the site, additional landscaping would be planted to screen the proposed senior congregate care facility from adjacent residential land uses. The specific open space requirement for this institutional use will be determined at the time the Detailed Development Plan would be adopted for the project.

SUBDIVISION ANALYSIS

In order to recommend approval of the proposed Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map to the City Council, the Planning Commission must make the following findings as per Section 9.8(a-g) and 5.1.1 of the Belmont Subdivision Ordinance (No. 530):

Section 9.8

- a. The proposed subdivision map is consistent with applicable general and specific plans.*

Satisfaction of this finding in the affirmative will be determined upon the Planning Commission recommendation and City Council adoption of the requested General Plan and CDP Amendment, as discussed herein. Should both of these amendments be approved, General Plan consistency would be achieved for the project, and it is reasonable that this finding could be made in the affirmative.

- b. The design or improvement of the proposed subdivision is consistent with applicable general and specific plans:*

The same logic of this finding follows as discussed above. The determination that the design of the proposed Vesting Tentative Map is consistent with the General Plan intent would be dependant upon approval/denial of the requested General Plan & CDP amendments. The development provides additional congregate care (senior living) units which is necessary to provide alternative residential uses for the area and meet community needs. Should the proposed development be found to be consistent with the mix of other residential, institutional and commercial uses in the community, this finding could be made in the affirmative.

- c. The site is physically suitable for the proposed type of development.*

The size and topography of the site is generally adequate to allow for construction of the 55 new residential units, and roadways, parking areas, and amenities for the project. The proposed development is sited on land that is a mix of relatively flat and gentle upslope terrain with an aggregate slope of less than 10% (excluding the deed-restricted conservation area). The proposed residential units are located to follow the natural contours of the site.

d. The site is physically suitable for the proposed density of the development.

This finding will be able to be made in the affirmative if the proposed residential development would meet density standards established as part of the General Plan and Conceptual Development Plan amendments approved for the project.

e. The design of the subdivision or the proposed improvement is not likely to cause substantial environmental damage or substantially and avoidably injure fish or wildlife or their habitat.

The subdivision will be required to comply with all mitigations outlined in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, the applicant's geotechnical report, and the City Arborist report. No substantial adverse impacts were identified as part of the environmental study for the project.

f. The design of the subdivision or the type of improvements is not likely to cause serious public health problems.

All public utilities can serve the proposed project, and the project will be required to comply with all mitigations in the Mitigated Negative Declaration, conditions of project approval, and Uniform Building and Fire Codes.

g. The design of the subdivision or type of improvements will not conflict with easements, acquired by the public at large, for access through or use of, property within the proposed subdivision. In this connection, the City Council may approve a map if it finds that alternate easements, for access or for use, will be provided, and that these will be substantially equivalent to one previously acquired by the public.

No construction or other improvements are proposed within 60 feet of the northern boundary of an established conservation easement that protects approximately eight acres of steeply sloping, densely wooded hillside for the site. The proposed project is contained and comprised of a private street system to be maintained by the property owners through the enforcement of Codes, Covenants, and Restrictions (CC&R's) for the Ralston Village (Phase II) Homeowners Association. The South County Fire Authority and Public Works Department have reviewed and approved the circulation plan for the proposed project.

Section 5.1 – Planned Unit Development Subdivisions – Finding

1. The Tentative Map conforms to the approved Detail Development Plan and shall constitute approval of any and all deviations from standards contained in this Ordinance.

This finding is unable to be made in the affirmative until a Detailed Development Plan submittal has been provided for the project. However, should the General Plan and CDP Amendments be

approved, and the requested DDP essentially carries forward all approved development standards of the CDP, it is reasonable to expect that this finding would eventually be able to made in the affirmative.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the foregoing analysis, staff recommends the Planning Commission take the following actions:

1. Continue the review to a date certain in order to appropriately assess the material.

ACTION ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt a resolution recommending City Council action regarding the Mitigated Negative Declaration.
2. Adopt a resolution with findings recommending City Council action regarding the requested:
 - General Plan Amendment
 - Zoning Ordinance Amendments for the site
 - Conceptual Development Plan & Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map for the Ralston Village Phase II residential development

ATTACHMENTS

1. Zoning Ordinance Section 20 – Amendment of General Plan
2. Zoning Ordinance Section 12 – Planned Unit Development
3. Recorded Conservation Easement – April 4, 1989
4. Planning Commission Preliminary Design Review Meeting Minutes - October 2, 2001
5. Planning Commission Staff Report and Meeting Minutes (Story Pole Study Session) – August 20, 2002
6. Public Comments – Story Pole Study Session – August 2002
7. Initial Study – Mitigated Negative Declaration, Addendum, Appendix, prepared by Geier & Geier Consulting, Inc. – April 2005
8. Applicant Statements – General Plan & CDP Amendment Request & Project Description – March 2004
9. Arborist Reports - August 2002, March 2004, January 2005 - prepared by City Arborist Walter Levison (3-20-04 Arborist map to the Commission only)
10. Geologic and Geotechnical Review – Treadwell & Rollo – June 2002, Cotton & Shires – August 2002, Treadwell & Rollo – August 2004, Cotton & Shires – March 2005
11. Project Plans (for Commission Only)

Respectfully submitted,

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CC: Applicant