

**CITY OF BELMONT
MEMORANDUM**



TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Carlos de Melo, Principal Planner

VIA: Craig A. Ewing, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: July 19, 2005 Planning Commission Meeting – Agenda Item 5D
Application No. PA2002-0017 – 1301 Ralston Avenue
Mitigated Negative Declaration, General Plan Amendment, Conceptual
Development Plan Amendment, and Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map to allow
a Senior Congregate Care development for the Ralston Village Facility

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant requests approval of 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. The proposed 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. This development would be located on the western 8.5-acre portion of the subject site. An existing 45,000 sq. ft. dementia care facility is located on the eastern 8.6-acre portion of the site.

Proposed parking 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 existing 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 facility), and a new two-way entrance driveway at the northwestern edge of the site on Ralston Avenue. A more complete project description was provided in the staff report of April 19, 2005. This memorandum supplements that report.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission open hearing, take testimony and continue the item for any additional research the Commission may deem necessary. Alternatively, the Commission may, following the hearing, direct staff to prepare a resolution of action (approval or denial).

BACKGROUND

The Commission previously reviewed the proposal on April 19, 2005 (see Attachment 1 for staff report), continuing the item and requesting responses to the following questions (See Attachment 2 for questions); the responses follow below.

COMMISSION QUESTIONS

Commissioner Frautschi

Project Initial Study

1. Page 1 Environmental Checklist Form – How long have the terms Phase I and Phase II been anticipated for this property? Was this Phase II development originally intended when the property was purchased?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

At the time the property was purchased, the Ralston Village group contemplated the development of the vacant land to the west of the existing buildings. Ralston Village envisioned a use that would be symbiotic with the assisted living complex. Subsequent to the property's purchase, the viability of creating a senior housing element was investigated and the plans and concept for this proposal was developed.

The terms Phase I and Phase II were adopted in order to differentiate between the existing complex and the proposed complex.

2. What was the applicant's understanding for future use and development when the property was taken over from the Belmont Hills Psychiatric Hospital?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

It was understood that the land was approved for expansion and development. Furthermore, if an alternate development solution were to be proposed, an amendment to the Planned Development would be necessary.

3. Bullet 7 page 5: Explain your thoughts on the future development of a new pedestrian pathway through the site?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

Meetings with several neighbors during the initial outreach underscored their concerns about the danger of the public sidewalk adjacent to Ralston Village on Ralston Avenue. The curve of the roadway combined with the fact that there is no vertical curb protecting the pedestrians from automobiles, they said created a dangerous situation for pedestrians. When the design team began to consider an internal pedestrian pathway leading from Phase II to Twin Pikes Park, the team proposed a link from the northwest corner of the site to the northeast corner near Twin Pines Park.

4. Page 17 of the Initial Study: How was the 9 and 15 trip figures arrived at?

Response prepared by **Staff:**

From the project Initial Study (Pgs. 47 & 48): A traffic impact study was prepared for the proposed project by Wilbur Smith Associates (WSA) in May 2002. A peer review of this study was completed for the City by Fehr & Peers in November 2002 and March 2004. The project's trip generation was estimated based on International Traffic

Engineer (ITE) Trip Generation rates for retirement communities (residential units similar to apartments or condominiums, occupied by senior citizens with special services, such as medical, dining and retail facilities). Trip generation rates account for trips generated by residents and visitors of the residential units, the internal trips between the residential units and the support services, plus the trips associated with employees of the support services. Based upon the above-described ITE rates for the proposed 55-unit congregate care facility (and existing dementia care facility), the project is estimated to generate the nine trips (four inbound and five outbound) during the AM peak hour and 15 trips (eight inbound and seven outbound) during the PM peak hour.

5. Does the Bay Area Air Quality Management District have a cumulative formula for air quality or do they base their standards only on a project by project basis with no accounting for what has preceded this development, e.g., other properties' development impact(s)?

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier)**:

On page 17 of the Initial Study, Air Quality Question III (a) requires a determination of the project's consistency with the applicable air quality plan. The applicable air quality plan for the project site is the Bay Area's Clean Air Plan (CAP). The CAP considers cumulative growth in the region and provides measures to help achieve compliance with Clean Air standards. Since the CAP is based on the City's General Plan land use designations and population projections of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) that were in effect at the time the CAP was approved, consistency with the General Plan would indicate consistency with the CAP. The project would be consistent with the Belmont General Plan and, therefore, the population added by the project is already anticipated by the General Plan. Therefore, the project would be consistent with the CAP.

6. Page 18 IVc. Why is Belmont Creek not considered in the Biological Resources analysis?

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier)**:

A discussion of the drainage characteristics for Belmont Creek is presented in the Hydrology section of the Initial Study (pages 28 through 31). Essentially, Belmont Creek on the project site consists of a subterranean 96-inch storm drain; the common topographical or biological characteristics usually associated with a stream channel do not occur on the project site. Consequently, there are no riparian biological resources on the project site that would be affected by the proposed project.

7. Page 19 of Initial Study. I am not completely clear if the Arbor Care study and the Levison report are reconciled? 123 trees identified – 44 retained, 17 retained if possible, 30 trees removed, 32 relocated.

Response prepared by the **Applicant**:

The 2002 Arborcare study was procured by the sponsor as a part of the 82 unit project application submittal to the City in 2002. Walter Levinson subsequently reviewed and commented on the Arborcare report. When the 55 unit submittal was made in 2004, the

Sponsor and Planning staff agreed to have Levinson perform a revised tree evaluation without Arborcare creating a new baseline.

The new 2004 Levison evaluation is in sync with the new plan. Please note, subsequent to Mr. Levison's initial review of this submittal, the design team met with him to develop design solutions that would save several important trees.

8. Page 24. What is an Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone?

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier):**

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act was passed in 1972 to mitigate the hazard of surface faulting to structures for human occupancy. The Act's main purpose is to prevent the construction of buildings used for human occupancy on the surface trace of active faults. The Act only addresses the hazard of surface fault rupture and is not directed toward other earthquake hazards. The law requires the State Geologist to establish regulatory zones (known as Earthquake Fault Zones) around the surface traces of active faults and to issue appropriate maps. ["Earthquake Fault Zones" were called "Special Studies Zones" prior to January 1, 1994.]

Earthquake Fault Zones are regulatory zones around active faults. Earthquake Fault Zones are plotted on topographic maps at a scale of 1 inch equals 2,000 feet. The zones vary in width, but average about one-quarter mile wide.

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

The following is a synopsis of the ALQUIST-PRIOLO SPECIAL STUDIES ZONES ACT OF 1972

SIGNED INTO LAW DECEMBER 22, 1972; AMENDED SEPTEMBER 26, 1974; MAY 4, 1975; SEPTEMBER 28, 1975; SEPTEMBER 22, 1976; SEPTEMBER 27, 1979, SEPTEMBER 21, 1990, AND JULY 29, 1991.

Excerpts from California Public Resources Code:

(a) In order to assist cities and counties in their planning, zoning, and building-regulation functions, the State Geologist shall delineate, by December 31, 1973, appropriately wide special studies zones to encompass all potentially and recently active traces of the San Andreas, Calaveras, Hayward, and San Jacinto Faults, and such other faults, or segments thereof, as he deems sufficiently active and well-defined as to constitute a potential hazard to structures from surface faulting or fault creep. Such special studies zones shall ordinarily be one-quarter mile or less in width, except in circumstances which may require the State Geologist to designate a wider zone.

(b) Pursuant to this section, the State Geologist shall compile maps delineating the special studies zones and shall submit such maps to all affected cities, counties, and state agencies, not later than December 31, 1973, for review and comment. Concerned jurisdictions and agencies shall submit all such comments to the State Mining and Geology Board for review and consideration within 90 days. Within 90 days of such review, the State Geologist shall provide copies of the official maps to concerned state

agencies and to each city or county having jurisdiction over lands lying within any such zone.

(c) The State Geologist shall continually review new geologic and seismic data and shall revise the special studies zones or delineate additional special studies zones when warranted by new information. The State Geologist shall submit all revised maps and additional maps to all affected cities, counties, and state agencies for their review and comment. Concerned jurisdictions and agencies shall submit all such comments to the State Mining and Geology Board for review and consideration within 90 days. Within 90 days of such review, the State Geologist shall provide copies of the revised and additional official maps to concerned state agencies and to each city or county having jurisdiction over lands lying within any such zone.

(d) In order to ensure that sellers of real property and their agents are adequately informed, any county that receives an official map pursuant to this section shall post a notice within five days of receipt of the map at the offices of the county recorder, county assessor, and county planning commission, identifying the location of the map and the effective date of the notice.

9. Page 24 – paragraph 3 – re: South Steep Slope. “Previous grading has left portion of the slope steep and susceptible to instability, especially during period of heavy rainfall. Scars left from past landslides will continue to erode unless the surface soil is stabilized with vegetation, grading or retaining structures.” Are there plans to do this mitigation?

Response prepared by the **Applicant**:

The Treadwell and Rollo report of 2002 evaluated the 82 unit structure which was to be built into the hillside. That being the case, the Treadwell Rollo report cautions of the risk of boulders which might be shook loose during a major quake. It indicates that a portion of the building located on the hillside would be at risk without the construction of catchments.

The 55 unit plan heeded the recommendations of the Geotechnical Consultant to move the structure from the hillside. The proposed building lies completely on the flat land near the base of the hill. Treadwell and Rollo will be evaluating the new location to see if catchments will be required. This evaluation will be forthcoming in the Detailed Development Plan submittal.

10. Response from geologist, architect, applicant and/or staff on this statement: “It seems ill-conceived to have a subterranean garage in a flood plane that is near the drainage plane for the Belmont Creek at the base of a very large steep hill with unpredictable water drainage conditions?”

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier)**:

Treadwell & Rollo, Inc., the geotechnical engineers for the proposed project, conducted detailed analyses of surface and subsurface conditions on the subject property. Their July 21, 2002 geotechnical report indicated that the proposed subterranean garage was feasible as long as certain project design elements are included as precautions to address existing and future drainage requirements on the site. A subsequent assessment

(August 18, 2004) of the revised site design by Treadwell & Rollo, Inc. re-affirmed the feasibility of a subterranean garage on the project site. A separate analysis (March 29, 2005) of project site conditions and previous reports by Cotton, Shires & Associates, Inc. confirms the conclusions of the Treadwell & Rollo reports. It should be noted that the geotechnical firm of Cotton, Shires & Associates, Inc. was retained under contract to the City of Belmont to provide an impartial, third-party peer review of previous geotechnical assessments prepared for the project by the applicant.

11. Page 25. “Results of the Supplemental & Geotechnical Evaluation shall be summarized in a written report with appropriate illustration, and submitted to the City for Review by the City Engineer and City Geotechnical Consultant prior to project geotechnical approval.” Has this supplemental geologic and geotechnical report been done? Date of report?

Response prepared by **Staff:**

Preliminary geotechnical evaluations have been completed at this stage of the development review process. Geotechnical approval (including Supplemental & Geotechnical Evaluations) for the project has not been completed, and is typically a requirement at the Detailed Development Plan (DDP) stage of the development review process.

12. Page 26. Item 16. Geotechnical Field Inspect. Project Geotechnical Consultant letter to City – Has this letter been done? Date of letter?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

The letter refers to a letter that the Geotechnical Consultant must prepare after all grading is completed and before occupancy is allowed. The letter verifies that the consultant has observed grading and site preparation activities as recommended by them and that the activities were performed in conformance with their design criteria (such criteria must be approved by the City’s Geotechnical consultant).

13. Page 29. Second paragraph. The project team engineers are currently petitioning FEMA to obtain the release from the 100-year flood zone designation. When will this happen? Please provide documentation.

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

FEMA has released the 100 year flood zone designation. The release letter is on file with the City of Belmont Public Works/Engineering Department (See Attachment 3).

14. Who is responsible for maintaining the 96” storm drain under Ralston Village?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

The project sponsor of Phase I and Phase II (property owner).

15. Page 29, paragraph 5. Neither the utility plan nor the grading plan indicates mechanisms for collecting potential runoff flows from the hillside. Please address this issue?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

The proposed plan incorporates a conceptual storm drainage plan (noted on Page 30 paragraph 1 of the Environmental Study), which takes into account the runoff from the hillside. The Detailed Development submittal will include a fully engineered design.

16. Page 30, paragraph 6. It should be noted that the surfaced drainage recommendations provided by the geotechnical study omit considerations for the control of water quality conditions in surface flows discharging to public waters? Please address this issue?

Response prepared by the **Applicant & Staff:**

“Best Management Practices” have been considered in the initial Civil and Landscape designs as it relates to the surface treatment of storm water. A full design using such “Best Management Practices” as mandated by NPEDS requirements imposed by the Regional Water Quality Control Board will be submitted as a part of the Detailed Development Plan.

17. Page 35 – third paragraph. What are the five other institutional-designated properties in Belmont that will be affected by a General Plan change?

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier):**

The following parcels designated as “Institution” by the General Plan would be affected by the General Plan amendment:

- 1. Notre Dame College, 1500 Ralston Avenue*
- 2. Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church, 900 Alameda de Las Pulgas*
- 3. Immaculate Heart of Mary, 1000 Alameda de Las Pulgas*
- 4. United Church of Christ, 751 Alameda de Las Pulgas*
- 5. Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 2600 Ralston Avenue*

Staff Report

18. Page 6. Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map. First paragraph – last sentence “These include a portion of the upper (southern sloped) conservation easement area, roadways, parking areas... etc.” Does this mean the proposed project extends into the current southern conservation easement?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

Please refer to Figure 2 of the Initial Study for the location of the conservation easement. The proposed project will be located no closer than 75-80 feet horizontally (to the north) from the easement.

19. Page 76. Review of subdivisions (five lots or more) are subject to City Council approval after review and recommendation from the Planning Commission of the findings. Clarify – how many lots are in this subdivision?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

Phase I will consist of 1 lot. Phase II will consist of 56 lots, 55 lots for each residential unit and 1 lot for the common area.

20. Regarding Page 10 Items c & e and Page 26 Transportation/Traffic #26. Any traffic improvement costs involved with this project?

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier):**

Both on-site and off-site transportation improvement costs will be the responsibility of the project applicant. Mitigation Measure 31, page 50 of the Initial Study, provides for public roadway repair and rehabilitation requirements upon completion of all construction activities.

21. Page 25. Please explain item 25. Recreation mitigation fees? Why is the city asking for this? A mitigation fee was obtained for the loss of the pool at the Jewish Community Center; however, what is the basis of the public loss here?

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier):**

The Initial Study should more accurately indicate that the City imposes park-in-lieu fees to address the potential impacts of new development on the recreational needs of the community. Park-in-lieu fees are authorized by the 1975 Quimby Act (California Government Code §66477)(as amended). The law provides for the contribution of land or in-lieu fees for the provision of park and/or recreational facilities. The imposition of a park-in-lieu fee is to offset the costs of providing additional park/recreational service to new residents; there is no public loss of facilities as in the case of the former Jewish Community Center site.

22. Page 28. Specifically, how is item 2052.3 furthered by this project? Residential institutional uses...etc.

Response prepared by **Staff:**

The project as proposed can be determined to be consistent with this policy. 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. As discussed in the 4/19/05 Staff Report, the project maintains a density of 6.5 units per acre (for the 8.5 acre Phase II portion of the property), consistent with low-density (1-7 units/per acre) residential designated areas to the west and south of the site. The estimated project population would be approximately 84 persons for the proposed 55 senior dwelling units (1.53 persons per household), also consistent (if not lower than) single-family residential development persons (2.35) per household projections. Thus the project furthers this General Plan policy by maintaining consistency (in density and household size) with surrounding low-density residential uses.

23. Page 29. Please respond to this statement – applicant. “The proposed project expands beyond the uses allowed by the 1982 General Plan policy.”

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

The project applicant/property owners recognize, on the surface, the proposed development expands beyond the 1982 General Plan since the ordinance contemplates providing "health services" designed to be "compatible with the residential character of the surrounding community." However, as the applicant's Health Care Consultant (Paul Gordon) noted at the 4/19/05 Commission hearing, over the past two decades, the methods of delivering care to seniors has evolved away from the "institutional medical model" and toward a "home and community based services model." This means that care is more commonly provided in an unlicensed residential environment rather than a licensed health facility. Licensed and unlicensed caregivers make services available to people in their own homes, allowing them to "age in place." This shift represents a change in the care industry in response to demands from the growing senior consumer population. The evolution of care giving for seniors has actually made such uses more compatible with residential surroundings than ever before.

The requested amendments would update the General Plan to reflect the new orientation of thinking in senior care. While licensed care facilities remain a part of the care continuum, there has been a shift of emphasis so that a significant percentage of people who, 20 years ago, would have been cared for in a skilled nursing facility, are now receiving care in a more residential setting. Rather than being placed in a 24-hour care center with steep monthly charges, seniors can receive care on an a la carte, as-needed basis, with caregivers from different disciplines being brought in to respond directly to an individual's needs. Wellness coordination, physical therapy, nutritional interventions, clinic hours, fitness programs and other more preventive measures can also prolong health and help avoid premature transfer to 24 hour care facilities. The proposed amendments would recognize these developments as being consistent with and in furtherance of the General Plan's original intent.

24. Page 35. Explain entry monolith mentioned 5 sections from bottom.

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

An entry monolith refers to an identifying entry sign of a sturdy permanent nature. Monoliths are often in the form of stone column which rise 3 to 5 feet above grade.

25. Page 41. What is the exact height of the pool structure? Exact distance from the property line?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

The roof peak is approximately 18' feet above grade. Grade is at 80 feet above MSL (Mean Sea Level). At its closest point, the pool structure is 15' from the property line. The structure moves progressively away from the property line as it heads southward.

26. Page 45. Response from applicant. The proposed development will provide greater opportunities to meet the different lifestyles and incomes of the people living within the development? Are below market value or subsidized units included in this development scheme?

Response prepared by the **Applicant**:

Below market rate homes are not included in the development. The Project Sponsor intends to create a development that meets the Belmont market. Belmont's senior population will be the primary beneficiaries of the new housing. Further, the dwelling units within the structure will vary in size and location and will thus vary in price. This will provide a range of prices that will meet the needs of people with various incomes.

27. A copy of the Olsen report and/or any other articles that speaks to the need for more senior housing. How many senior housing units are currently available in Belmont? Of these, how many are of the congregate care model proposed by the applicant?

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier)**:

The applicant will provide the Olsen report for the Commission. The following is a summary of Senior Housing/Assisted Living/Nursing Home developments in the City of Belmont:

Senior Housing:

Bonnie Brae Terrace - 164 units

Assisted Living:

Belmont Vista – 65 Units & Convalescent Facility

Sunrise of Belmont - 70 beds/units

Ralston Village - 100 beds

Nursing Homes:

Belmont Convalescent Hospital - 33 beds

Carlmont Gardens - 88 beds/units

Total: 520 units/beds

From www.calregistry.com (California Registry, a state licensed free referral agency) and <http://www.hlcsmc.org/sitesearch/> (Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County)

28. Document from FEMA removing the 100 flood designation.

Response prepared by **Staff:**

See Attachment 3 for the FEMA correspondence removing the 100-year flood designation for the site.

Commissioner Wozniak

1. Staff: What is the current parking standard for a 55-unit condo or apartment development with comparable dwelling square footage? If there is no official standard, please supply CUP findings for comparable non-senior projects.

Response prepared by **Staff:**

A multi-family development (apartment, condominium, or townhome) is required to provide one garage space and one space that need not be covered (two total per unit) as per Section 8.4.1(b) of the Belmont Zoning Code. Thus total parking for a 55-unit development would be 110 spaces (55 of which must be garage spaces).

2. There is a discrepancy between the applicant's analysis and the staff report regarding FAR and comparisons to the average Belmont residence; which one is correct?

Response prepared by **Staff:**

The analysis in the staff report is correct. It should be noted that the staff report did not include an FAR comparison of the project and single-family development, but did compare density and household size of these two types of uses. The project will maintain a density of 6.5 units per acre (for the 8.5 acre Phase II portion of the property). The proposal is consistent with the General Plan's guideline for low-density residential (1-7 units/per acre) for single family and clustered townhouse development. The estimated project population would be approximately 84 persons for the proposed 55 senior dwelling units (1.53 persons per household), which is less than the average population of 2.35 persons per household (estimated as per the 2001 Housing Element).

3. Is there a legal, AMA, or Dept. of Health standard for health-related maintenance programs in congregate care communities (the applicant answered this question, but I wanted to get staff confirmation).

Response prepared by **Staff:**

Staff is not aware of any local, State, or Federal mandates relating to Congregate Care facilities. As discussed at the 4/19/05 Commission meeting, the applicant's Health Care Consultant indicated that the proposed Congregate Care development would be an unlicensed facility and there is not a licensure standard for this type of use. However, physicians, nurses or health care workers providing services for the facility will have individual professional licenses. As further discussed at the 4/19/05 meeting, the applicant's Health Care Consultant indicated that the State of California has licensing requirements for residential care facilities for the elderly, which is how the current dementia care facility for the site is licensed and operates. Congregate Housing or

Congregate Care uses are generally considered to operate as unlicensed facilities but are distinguished from senior housing, senior apartments or age-restricted residential communities. However, the programs for such Congregate Care uses would have government oversight of the people who are involved in the delivery of service. Staff has no reason to disagree or question the statements made by the applicant's Health Care Consultant at the 4/19/05 Commission meeting in relation to Congregate Care facilities.

4. Applicant and Staff. Regarding VTSM: Is a **Vesting** tentative subdivision map essential to this project? If so, why? Why is the applicant applying for a VTSM instead of some other form of entitlements? Why has a VTSM been requested in this case?

Response prepared by **Staff:**

As discussed in the 4/19/05 Staff Report, the applicant submitted a more refined subdivision plan for the project which 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's Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map (VTSM) submittal is complete as per the City's subdivision ordinance. Their efforts to provide this level of information at the CDP Amendment stage (before the fundamental question of land use appropriateness has been determined) suggests that the VTSM route is essential for their project. As discussed in the 4/19/05 Staff Report, approval of the subject VTSM is sought to "lock in" the applicants' development rights associated with their Planned Development (PD). The City would relinquish control over implementation of any future development (zoning) restrictions due to ordinance or policy changes, provided the applicant remains in compliance with their PD.

5. When was the abandoned storm drain abandoned?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

This storm drain was abandoned in the mid-1970's.

6. 100 year Flood zone: When did it get released? Provide FEMA documentation.

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

The release was in 2002. Release is on file with the City (see Attachment 3 of this report).

7. What was the total number of residents when the Alexander Sanitarium occupied the property? What was the total area and FAR? How many parking spaces were there? What was the average ratio of cars/people at that time (1900 – 1960s)?

Response prepared by **Staff:**

The sanitarium had a maximum of 75 patients. No other information was available through a background/records search for the property relating to total area, FAR, parking, or comparative ratio of cars/people during the time the sanitarium was in operation for the site.

8. Applicant: The applicant reported “positive” feedback from the early 2003 neighborhood association meeting(s). Detail the feedback, both positive and negative.

Response prepared by the **Applicant**:

When the revised (55 unit) plan was developed in 2003, the project sponsor presented the new concept to individuals and groups of individuals who had provided critical comment on the previously submitted 82 unit plan.

The presentations included discussions of the following:

- *Reduction on the height of the structure from four to three stories and three to two stories at the extremities of the building.*
- *Reduction of the building mass.*
- *Relief of flood water should the culvert backup.*
- *Preservation of site lines from Ralston Avenue.*
- *Reduction of the unit count from 82 to 55.*
- *Change of the building aesthetic from stucco/Mediterranean to a wood/shingle style.*
- *Reduction of the removal or relocation of protected trees.*
- *Reduction of parking resulting from the reduction of unit count.*
- *Re-siting of the building to remove it from the hillside and site it on the flat area of the site.*
- *Increase of property building setbacks.*

Generally speaking, the changes in the plan were met with very positive review. This issues that met critical comment were:

- *Traffic on Ralston Avenue: With regard to the traffic concern, it is the contention of the traffic consultant (and supported by the City’s consultant) that the current traffic issues on Ralston Avenue will be minimally affected by the advent of the 55 unit senior project.*
- *Set backs and site lines on Ralston Avenue: The set back of the north wing of the building at Ralston Avenue was within 50 feet of the street. While the new design was a marked improvement on the 82 unit design because the structure was reduced to two stories at the northwest extremity, it still impinged on the site lines. Subsequent to the 2003 neighborhood meetings, the north wing was “flipped” thereby pushing the wing further away from the roadway and preserving the existing site lines.*
- *Removal of specimen trees: Several specimen trees were affected by the location of the north wing. As in no 2 above, the flipping of the building had a significant (positive) impact on the preservation of several of these specimen trees.*

9. What part of the 16-acre site did the Alexander Sanitarium use? In other words, what how much of the site was developed or contained buildings and other improvements?

Response prepared by the **Applicant**:

The entire flat, low lying area comprised of 9 acres was occupied by numerous buildings.

10. What was the outcome (what was changed as a result of) the \$1460 in traffic improvements at Ralston Ave. Sixth Avenue as mentioned in the report?

Response prepared by **Staff:**

In review of City building permit files, staff confirmed that the previous owners of the site (Community Psychiatric Centers) contributed \$4,860 to the City for traffic improvements at the Ralston Avenue/Sixth Avenue intersection in October 1988. This payment satisfied a Detailed Development Plan (DDP) condition of approval for expansion of the former Belmont Hills Hospital approved by the Planning Commission in January 1988. The fees were used for signal improvements for the above-described intersection.

11. How (detail) does one health services office on a site constitute “medical supervision” for a 55-unit senior complex?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

The health service office alone does not make up the entire medical supervision aspect of the community.

People age 60 and over generally have health needs that require assessment, monitoring and intermittent intervention, but not ongoing care of the kind more commonly delivered to older populations by licensed care facilities. The plan for our proposed community is to have staff or consultants and space devoted to wellness coordination, which would include initial assessment of resident health care needs, maintenance of health records, response to health changes and needs identified by residents, and referral, as needed, to independent licensed caregivers, such as home health nurses, who can deliver care in the residents' apartments. Routine health examinations, such as blood pressure checks and physician visits, educational programs focusing on prevention and wellness, accommodation of special diets, transportation to medical appointments, operation of fitness facilities, and emergency call system response would be among the health and wellness oriented services offered on site. This can be accomplished in a residential environment without extensive common facilities or numerous dedicated staff on site.

Our approach reflects a trend in senior care to allow residents to "age in place" and receive care in their private residences and related common areas for as long as possible, rather than being transferred prematurely to licensed care facilities.

12. Detail how the size of this development reflects the nature of the adjacent residential community.

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier):**

The discussion provided on page 33, paragraphs 2 through 5, of the Initial Study (April 2005) presents an explanation for the proposed project's conformance to the General Plan's intended uses for this site, and the project's consistency with the land use

guidelines defined by the City of Belmont General Plan. In brief, the Initial Study identifies the size of the proposed development, 55 units, to be consistent with the General Plan's residential development guidelines for low-density residential uses allowed on this site. The land use analysis is based on the premise that the General Plan's land use designation for the project site reflects a scale of planned low-density residential development that is acceptable to the community and the specific neighborhoods adjoining project site.

13. Detail how the project design preserves and enhances the character of the surrounding residential neighborhood?

Response prepared by the **Environmental Consultant (Geier & Geier)**:

As indicated on page 33, paragraph 3 of the Initial Study:

"The proposed structure is a two- to three-story residential building that is designed to be consistent with and complementary to the architectural styles of the surrounding neighborhood. The City's design review process would further ensure that the proposed project would adhere to community architectural and construction standards. The architectural style proposed for the project facilities would be consistent with the General Plan's second goal for institutional uses on the site."

The project applicant has designed a project that is intended to be architecturally complementary to the styles of the surrounding residential neighborhood. Since the architectural styles of existing residences in the neighborhood are varied, the degree of project consistency with one or more predominant architectural style is subjective. Consequently, further City design review will be required to ensure compliance with this General Plan goal.

In addition to this, the project would result in the preservation of existing landscaping, particularly mature native oak trees, the planting of new landscaping, and the provision of a public access path/walkway extending from Twin Pines Park through the entire site. The project also maintains the existing Conservation Easement, preserving the wooded hillsides on the southern portion of the parcel.

14. What detailed studies have been done to predict noise leakage into the surrounding uphill residential neighborhood (both residences adjacent to the site and within earshot)?

Response prepared by the **Applicant**:

A detailed study has not been performed at this time. An evaluation of the HVAC equipment noise output and noise mitigation will be performed in the Detailed Development plan.

15. If the pool structure is 15 feet from the adjacent residences, how is there a 30-foot setback?

Response prepared by the **Applicant**:

At its closest point the pool structure is set back 15 feet from the Horton property line. The pool structure moves progressively further from the property line as one move from north to south.

16. What are the criteria for residents who are purchasing units? The report mentions that they must be 60 years of age? Are there any health criteria?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

There will be no health restrictions.

17. Would there be limitations on the number of residents in each unit?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

Couples and care givers may reside in the dwelling units.

18. Would this forever and for always be a congregate care facility if all the requested entitlements were granted?

Response prepared by the **Applicant & Staff:**

Yes. Any use modifications to the proposed congregate care facility (not approved as part of the requested Conceptual Development Plan Amendment (CDP)) would be subject to subsequent review of a CDP Amendment by the City.

19. Would the residents of each unit have to be related?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

No.

20. Applicant: Why are you reducing the # of Phase 1 parking spaces from 88 to 52?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

By code, the Alzheimer's Community must have 52 spaces. To our knowledge, under normal operation, the Alzheimer community has not required 52 spaces. A mid day car count was recently performed at Ralston Village and the peak car count was 39.

21. What are some comparable congregate care facilities for those 60 and above and how many parking spaces do they have per unit?

Response prepared by the **Applicant:**

Two examples of comparable facilities are as follows:

Smith Ranch in San Rafael (for sale) – 450 spaces (1.84 spaces per unit)
Peninsula Regent in San Mateo (for sale) – 220 spaces (1.06 spaces per unit)

Commission Contacts with the Applicant

In June 2005, staff requested the Commission provide a summary of their individual contacts with the project applicant/owners within the last 12 months for the public record. Such responses provided by the Commission (to date) have been provided as attachment 4 of this report.

Police Department & South County Fire Authority Service Calls for Ralston Village

Subsequent to the 4/19/05 Planning Commission meeting, a request was made by Commissioner Dickenson to staff to provide a summary report of the Belmont Police Department and/or South County Fire Authority (SCFA) service calls to the current dementia care facility for the site. A summary of the service call activity (from Belmont PD) from January 2005 to present (last six months) has been provided as attachment 5 of this report. A summary of the SCFA service calls will be provided at the 7/19/05 meeting.

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. Planning Commission Staff Report and meeting minutes (April 19, 2005)
2. List of Questions from Commissioners
3. FEMA Flood Zone Modification for the Project Site – November 2002

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

RE: 1301 Ralston Avenue – Ralston Village

July 19, 2005

Page 18

4. Commission & Applicant/Property Owner Contact Information – Last 12 Months
5. 2005 Belmont PD Service Call Summary – Ralston Village Dementia Care Facility