

Chairman Chris Leo
City of Santa Ana Planning Commission
Planning and Building Agency
20 Civic Center Plaza, Ross Annex M-20
P.O. Box 1988
Santa Ana, CA 92702

Dear Chairman Leo:

As a committee of neighborhood leaders within the nine neighborhoods surrounding the Village Green development, we are concerned. We have seen several presentations on this project and while we had reservations about this project as initially presented, we at least felt it "looked" like it was going to be a quality project. We are dismayed that the most recent plans submitted have taken a turn for the worse and no longer have the quality feel that would complement the surrounding single-family neighborhoods.

We realize there is still much to negotiate; we hope that the Planning Department and the Planning Commission will ensure that this project is not allowed to be anything but quality. Much of the Planning Commission study session dealt with the extremely important aspect of aesthetics. While we agree that aesthetics is of utmost importance, high density is of equal or higher concern. Everything we have seen thus far indicates that the developer is insistent on high density and we have concerns about the impact this will have on the surrounding neighborhoods as well as the development itself.

- **Owner Occupied.** With the housing slowdown in recent months, other Condo projects nearby have been turned into rental units. The City (and our neighborhoods) will be taking a step backwards if this project becomes rentals that are even denser than what is currently there. The latest artist renderings of the project look very much like apartment complexes. There is a fear that the developer will revert to renting if he is not able to sell the units. The City must make developer agreements necessary to ensure these units are only owner occupied in perpetuity.
- **Parking.** The development as currently planned, would require 1568 off-street parking spaces according to Santa Ana code. The plans, however, call for only 795 spaces. In other words, half the amount required. We were told originally the development would have underground parking but that has been eliminated in current plans. It is not acceptable to expect the adjoining neighborhoods to absorb the overflow vehicles nor is it acceptable or viable to force the neighborhoods to implement Parking Permit Districts, which are difficult to implement and enforce. Unless the parking shortage is resolved, any pedestrian walkway into the adjoining neighborhood is absolutely out of the question.
- **Parks and Open Space.** Especially on weekends, the adjacent Morrison Park and nearby Fisher Park are already over capacity. As recently reported in the Los Angeles Times, New York and Chicago have four times the amount of park acreage per resident than Santa Ana. Even Anaheim has nearly double the park acreage. The developer must at a minimum comply with the City's Subdivision ordinance (209.1 sq. ft/unit). The green space as proposed within the development, while it looks wonderful in artist renditions, will not be sufficient to offset the additional usage this development will place on neighborhood parks. Additional green space is required within the development as well as upgrades to the neighborhood parks.
- **School Bus Stop.** The students within this development and the apartments on the north and south end are within the Orange Unified School District. OUSD uses the Floral Park Promenade shopping center on Memory Lane as their bus stop for picking up and dropping off students. Because of the required traffic stop for the multiple school buses (Flashing Red), traffic diverts through the shopping center, adding to the safety issues of the students and their parents (often with strollers) as they dart through the shopping center. One only needs to observe the daily onslaught at the shopping center, creating a safety hazard, causing damage and havoc for the business owners and their customers to realize this bus stop must be relocated to a safer and more suitable location.
- **Vehicular Traffic.** It is no secret that Bristol Street is already congested. The northbound right lane (the entrance and exit to this development) is especially impacted by drivers jockeying to get on three freeways (22, 57 and 5). The development as proposed will create an additional 40%

more vehicle trips in and out of the complex than what currently exists. Compounding this with the proposed business use along the frontage of this development, can only result in far greater congestion and safety issues. Appropriate measures must be taken to accommodate additional traffic, including but not limited to turnouts for busses.

- **Pedestrian Traffic.** There is a safety issue with pedestrians coming to and from the shopping center and the existing apartments. There is no buffered parkway between the sidewalk and the street. The narrow walkway, crowded with pedestrians, strollers, trees, utility equipment, bus benches, etc. is dangerous next to the speeding motorists on their way to the freeway entrance. This situation is further complicated by the proposed businesses on the frontage of the development.
- **Shopping Center.** The developer is touting Village Green as a pedestrian friendly complex. In theory, residents will be walking more and driving less. The adjacent Floral Park Promenade Shopping Center and other retail businesses nearby do not presently have the amenities that can even begin to support this concept. The City and the developer need to work in concert with the shopping center owners and the businesses to simultaneously upgrade the services offered as well as making it more inviting and safe for all residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Infrastructure.** The neighborhoods agreed several years ago to a surcharge on our water bills to address an aging sewage system that was running near capacity. In fact several residents have noticed a strong sewage odor emitting from the complexes in the mornings and evenings. In addition, there is a long time drainage problem at the west end of Orange Road (east side of the development) that needs addressing. Along with this, both of the dilapidated gates at the end of Orange Road need to be replaced with a wall. Bristol Street in front of this development has been in disrepair for years. The additional traffic this development brings will only add to the woes. As part of the Development Agreement, the developer should agree to bring all infrastructure up to code, and implement traffic and roadway solutions that will last well into the future.
- **Issues before and during Construction.** It is apparent that the existing apartments are a haven for criminal activity. It has become even worse since the purchase by the developer. Graffiti, vandalism, break-ins, thefts and arson are affecting the quality of life in the nearby neighborhoods. As the apartments vacate in preparation for the demolition, we believe the problems will get even worse. The developer must agree to increased security during demolition, construction and sales of the new properties. We request a complete outline of actions to be taken by the City and the Developer to control noise, security, dust, pollution and other hazardous material during demolition and construction. Should the need arise, we need to know up front the process to address claims against the developer and how the City will enforce those claims.

So here we are in the current soft housing market condition. The developer, SunCal, has eighteen acres to work with. SunCal wants the largest return on investment that they can possibly attain in the current market. It appears that their latest proposal is the cheapest to build and squeezes out the most possible profit. From recent newspaper articles, it is apparent that this developer will go to extreme measures to push its projects through. I.e., Anaheim Resort District and San Clemente Marblehead. They do not care what is in the best interest of the existing neighborhoods. Make the quick buck, move on and let the neighborhoods deal with the problems created. We are not going to allow these same tactics and results to occur in our City. We want a partnership that works for all parties.

This development is not only located at one of the main gateways to the City, it is also at the entryway to some of the nicest neighborhoods in Santa Ana. As the City has worked hard to improve the gateways to our city, this project should be treated with the same importance if not greater importance. We all would prefer a development similar to the RiverGlen Homes, directly across the street, so anything less is going to be a disappointment. The developer and the City must assure the residents that the results will protect, as well as improve the integrity of this property and that of the surrounding neighborhoods. High-density monolith structures similar to those that sprouted in the eighties and touted as "professional residences" are now nothing more than blighted housing projects. Let us not revisit the past.

In Summary, we request that the City, developer, surrounding neighborhoods and shopping center create a Developer Agreement that at a minimum requires:

- Decreased density
- Increased Parking
- Quality Construction indicative of that which was presented initially
- Single family homes, townhouses and condos that have no more than 3 bedrooms.
- Owner Occupied (CC&R's that do not allow absentee owners / rentals)
- Increased Green Space within the development
- Funds directed to improve the neighborhood parks through the use of a Community Facilities District (CFD)
- Direct responsibility to upgrade and enhance the roadways, sewage, safety and other infrastructure adjacent to the development.
- Incentives and improvements to the adjacent shopping center to match the economic scale of the project.

Santa Ana City personnel and elected officials are employed to protect the best interest of Santa Ana's citizens. You are the gatekeepers. We hold you accountable for making the appropriate decisions. These decisions affect the quality of our daily lives, the value of our homes, the character of our neighborhoods and the City as a whole.

Let us not develop something that will sell in today's market and only benefit the developer. Let us develop something with long-term benefits to both the City and the neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

Casa de Santiago

Fisher Park

Floral Park

Morrison Park

RiverGlen

RiverView

Washington Square

West Floral Park

Westwood Condominiums

cc: Planning Commissioners

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