

## **Where is the “Village” in Curtis Park Village?**

Curtis Park Village, the city’s second largest infill development, is becoming the talk of the town. The land is just east of Sacramento City College, nestled between the Curtis Park and Land Park neighborhoods. It’s a Superfund site. Yet, the debate around the final plan for this development is much bigger than one toxic, infill site near our neighborhoods. It’s about whether the City Council will require development that creates space for walkers, bicyclists, small businesses and enough density to fill those light rail cars, without destroying the fabric of the surrounding community.

Over the last 15 years, neighbors have invested countless hours to ensure this toxic parcel is developed as a smart, forward looking, state-of-the-art infill development. We acknowledge and appreciate that developer Paul Petrovich has held many meetings in our neighborhood. We have provided comments on numerous versions of his draft plans over the last 5 years. The final application for Curtis Park Village was submitted in November of 2008. After reviewing the developer’s definitive plan, neighbors are asking, “Where is the ‘village’ in Curtis Park Village?”

There is no doubt that a majority of neighbors want this parcel developed. We see a unique opportunity to create a vibrant village that takes advantage of both light rail stations, a burgeoning student population at Sacramento City College, and neighbors who love to walk, bike and ride transit. Designed right, the village could meet the growing need for housing and retail space near the heart of the city and reduce dependency on cars. This village could positively transform the lives of neighbors and usher in an era of urban core development that is environmentally friendly.

Unfortunately, if the current plan is adopted without modification, this grand potential will not be realized. The proposed “village” has 259,000 square feet of commercial space that will create enormous traffic problems. It is vastly oversized relative to the blossoming neighborhood-serving businesses on Broadway, Freeport and Franklin boulevards. What traditional neighborhood has a 610-space parking lot?

The current application’s proposal for a staggering amount of commercial space and expansive parking lots does not encourage walking or bicycling. It’s contrary to a village design that would allow people to walk or bike to the planned grocery store and take transit to work downtown.

Neighbors recognize this project must be financially viable, and our association advocates replacing some of the commercial space near both light rail stations with more housing. This modification, combined with the reduced parking, would encourage the use of transit and mitigate the impact of increased traffic. We’d like people to think of Curtis Park Village as a place where you might not always find a parking spot for your car, but you will definitely find one for your bike or you can conveniently arrive by light rail.

Neighbors have also asked for senior affordable housing, multi-family housing

(currently in the plan) and a mix of housing types (apartments, duplexes, townhouses) to meet the needs of different income levels and lifestyle choices. We strongly advocate the village have housing or classrooms above its retail spaces, and store fronts on the sidewalk. We also believe the pedestrian bridge to City College should be a prominent focus of the commercial area, and it should be designed as an integral part of a central plaza or village green for neighbors to gather and build community.

Despite the tons of toxic dirt that will forever be stored in the backyard of our neighborhood, we appreciate that Petrovich has spent millions of dollars on cleaning up the site. We like that Petrovich is a responsible, local developer. He has listened to our concerns, we have listened to his concerns and the dialogue continues. We hope to forge a win-win compromise before this gets to the City Council. While there has been meaningful discussion between the parties, neighbors want a firm commitment to downsize the commercial, increase the density around light rail, break up the massive parking lots, orient the streets as a grid to be more pedestrian/bike friendly and include a village green to make the commercial area come alive.

While we talk with Petrovich, at the same time, we continue to reach out to the larger community that has a stake in this development. What price will we pay if these large retail spaces get built and then sit empty? How will the environment suffer if we allow commercial space to be designed for autos and the price of gas reaches \$6? How will the city reduce greenhouse gas levels required by law, if the City Council allows these infill developments to slip by without maximizing the opportunity they represent?

Neighbors in Curtis Park, Land Park and Oak Park want the City Council to get the toxic clean up right. We also urge them to raise the bar for urban, infill developments by requiring environmentally smart and sustainable design. We are hoping the City Council will work with us to put the “village” back into Curtis Park Village.

*--Rosanna Herber*