



# City of Santa Barbara California

## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

**REPORT DATE:** September 24, 2009  
**AGENDA DATE:** October 1, 2009  
**PROJECT ADDRESS:** 1235 Veronica Springs Road (MST2003-00793)  
 Hillside House  
**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Division, (805) 564-5470  
 Danny Kato, Senior Planner  
 Peter Lawson, Associate Planner

### **I. SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL SCOPING HEARING**

Public scoping hearing to accept comments from the public, agencies and Planning Commissioners on the proposed scope of analysis for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to be prepared for the Hillside House, located at 1235 Veronica Springs Road.

### **II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project consists of annexation of the approximately 24 acre project site to the City of Santa Barbara, the removal of all existing structures on the site, except the structure known as Harmony House (a single family residence), and the phased development of 120 residential units in 33 buildings. With the conversion of Harmony House to a triplex, there would be a total of 121 residential units. The new buildings would be two to three stories tall and include single and two car garages. Two non-residential buildings are included: a three-car garage and a 6,700 square foot administration building for Hillside House clients. The proposed residential units include 70 market-rate condominiums, 12 very-low income rental units (Hillside House units), 11 inclusionary ownership units and 28 low-income rental units.

The 24 acre project site is comprised of one legal lot. As part of the annexation to the City of Santa Barbara the entire lot would receive a General Plan designation of Residential (5 units/acre) and a Zoning Map Amendment to SP-9 (Specific Plan). Two conservation easements are proposed on the project site, which would be recorded as part of the final tract map. The first conservation easement would encompass the entire segment of Arroyo Burro Creek, located with the project site boundaries, and include an area of approximately 100 feet on either side of the creek for its entire length on the project site. The second conservation easement would encompass the hillside on the north-east side of the project site.

### Public Improvements

On site, the project would include a 36-foot wide public road that would be located along the southwestern side of the lot. The road would be located a minimum of 90 feet and a maximum of 110 feet from the top-of-bank of Arroyo Burro Creek for an average of 100 feet. A proposed pedestrian path would connect to the emergency access road described in the next paragraph and provide both pedestrian and bicycle access through to Palermo Road. As proposed, 30-on street, parallel parking spaces would be provided on the road.

Offsite, a 20 foot wide emergency access road would be improved, within the City 60 foot wide public right-of-way easement, which crosses four privately owned parcels. As described above, this improved emergency access road would serve as a pedestrian and bike path through to Palermo Road. The easement is currently not developed and is used as a farm road. Other offsite improvements would include a new 42-inch storm water pipe line that would be trenched within the Veronica Springs Road right-of-way. The storm drain would terminate at an existing headwall, located approximately 420 feet south of the project site on the west side of Veronica Springs Road. Finally, a regional natural gas line would be re-located on the project site to the proposed public road right-of-way.

### Parking

A total of 222 covered and uncovered parking spaces would be provided on site. Attached garages would provide at least one covered space for each of the units, for a total of 178 spaces. The remaining 44 on site parking spaces would be uncovered. The project may include a Modification request or be allowed under a proposed Specific Plan to eliminate the 28 required visitor parking spaces and 2 required parking spaces for the Hillside House administration building. Three parking areas for the staff of the Hillside House would be located on the south side of the road, near the project entrance.

### Habitat Restoration

The project includes restoration of the portion of Arroyo Burro Creek within the boundaries of the project site, located along the south-west property line. The area along the top-of-bank currently includes structural development surrounded by non-native plants and paving. As proposed, these structures would be removed along with non-native plants and paving. An average setback of 100 feet (90 feet minimum) from the top-of-bank to the proposed public road would be established. Within the setback, an approximate 70 foot to 50 foot from the top-of-bank restored buffer area would be established with no hardscape improvements. The remainder of the setback area would include improvements, such as a public pedestrian path, passive rest areas, and native plant material.

### Demolition/Construction:

Approximately 42,000 square feet of structures would be demolished along with approximately 68,000 square feet of paving. The paving that is being removed includes parking areas and internal driveways. All of the buildings on the site except for one would be demolished. The building known as Harmony House, which is currently a single family residence, would be retained, relocated, and rehabilitated on site. Grading for the project is estimated to be 72,000 cubic yards of cut and 81,000 cubic yards of fill. The grading estimate is based upon an assumption of excavating up to three feet.

### **III. REQUIRED PERMITS/ACTIONS**

1. Adoption of the Specific Plan. (SBMC §28.08);
2. Annexation of the subject parcels to the City of Santa Barbara (requires LAFCO approval);
3. General Plan Amendment, upon annexation, to add the subject parcels to the City's General Plan Map, with designations as described above (SBMC §28.07);
4. Zoning Map Amendment, upon annexation, to designate the parcels as described above;
5. A Modification to reduce the number of required parking spaces (may be part of a Specific Plan instead)
6. A Tentative Subdivision Map for a one-lot subdivision to create 70 residential condominium units (SBMC 27.07 and 27.13);
7. Architectural Board of Review (ABR)/Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) review.

### **IV. PROJECT HISTORY**

The project was initially submitted to staff as a pre-application on November 5, 2003, then followed up by a DART application on February 25, 2004. Since the submittal of the application, the following decision bodies have reviewed and commented on the project:

- March 2, 2004 – City Council initiated annexation of the project site. The project, as proposed, involved removing all structures and constructing 178 residential units and ancillary space. Council recommended that the County receive 100% of the RHNA credit, due to the unique situation with the County Housing Authority.
- March 4, 2004 – A concept review of the project was held by the Planning Commission. The proposed project reviewed by the Commission involved the removal or demolition of all existing structures on the site and construction of 178 residential units and ancillary space.
- May 20, 2004 – A work session was held with the Planning Commission to provide the applicant feedback. The project proposal included demolishing all structures and constructing 178 residential units. Suggestions included providing open space on site, connecting the development to the neighborhood, providing bicycle and pedestrian access and considering the density of the development.
- September 16, 2004 – A second work session was held with the Planning Commission. The project considered by the Commission included the removal of all existing structures on the site and the phased construction of 38 residential buildings, with up to 127 units. Also included is an administrative building for Hillside House. The Commission felt the project was moving the right direction, that finger roads were more appropriate than a loop road, providing a bicycle path was desirable and concerns were raised about the effect of traffic on the Los Positas Valley.

- November 11, 2004 - A third work session was held by the Commission. The project remained the same as proposed in September. The Commission stated that the 100 foot creek setback should be retained to protect the integrity of the creek corridor, that this project is unique, so it is definitely not precedent-setting, that the entire hillside to the north be dedicated open space, and that traffic impacts are a concern.
- February 25, 2008 – Architectural Board of Review (ABR) provided conceptual review of the project, which now involves retaining one residential building on site that would be converted into a triplex, the development of 120 new residential units in 33 buildings and a 6,500 square foot administration building. The ABR provided suggestions on integrating the project into the neighborhood, reducing the bulk of some of the buildings.
- May 19, 2008 – ABR provided a second conceptual review of the project. They reserved the right to study each individual building in detail, including for mass, bulk, and scale as only cursory building review was done. The Board felt that project shows good neighborhood compatibility, especially at Veronica Springs Road in its one and two story presence there and variety of building styles having similar style and character as the surrounding neighborhood. The Board appreciates creek restoration.

#### **V. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS**

An Initial Study was prepared for the project and a Notice of Preparation for an EIR was issued on September 16, 2009, for a 30-day public review and comment period that extends through October 15, 2009. Written comments should be sent to the attention of Peter Lawson, Associate Planner, at the City Planning Division, P.O. Box 1990, Santa Barbara, CA 93102-1990, or via e-mail at [PLawson@SantaBarbaraCA.gov](mailto:PLawson@SantaBarbaraCA.gov). Following the end of the public comment period, Staff will refine the EIR scope of analysis as necessary, and proceed with preparation of the Draft EIR. A subsequent public review period will be held to receive comments on the Draft EIR, followed by preparation of a proposed Final EIR and public hearings before the Planning Commission to certify the proposed Final EIR and take action to approve the project. A public hearing will also be held by the City Council to consider the Annexation of the project site and the Specific Plan Amendment.

#### **VI. PROPOSED EIR SCOPE OF ANALYSIS**

The Initial Study evaluates the potential environmental effects resulting from the proposed project. Potentially significant environmental effects are associated with traffic/circulation, and impacts will be further evaluated in the EIR. Additional analysis of these issue areas is required to determine if there is a significant impact associated with this environmental concern. Mitigation measures that can feasibly avoid or reduce significant impacts and alternatives to the project proposal that might reduce significant impacts will also be considered as part of the EIR.

The Initial Study determined that for all other issue areas, the project would result in potentially significant but mitigable impacts, less than significant impacts or no impacts. Required and recommended mitigation measures for these issue areas are identified in the Initial Study.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission hold an environmental hearing to receive comments from the public, agencies and Commissioners on the proposed EIR scope of analysis.

No action will be taken at this hearing on the environmental document or the project. Subsequent Planning Commission hearings will be scheduled to consider actions to adopt the final environmental document and make decisions and recommendations to City Council regarding approval of the proposed Specific Plan Amendment and Annexation on the project.

### Exhibits:

- A. Draft Initial Study (previously provided under separate cover; available upon request or on the City's website: [http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/Resident/Environmental\\_Documents/](http://www.santabarbaraca.gov/Resident/Environmental_Documents/))

