

PLEASANTVILLE

Today

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Riverside Development Company Triples Down on Proposed Willow Corner Urban Village,

Will Pleasantville Win or Lose?

By Kris Lannin Liang on November 23, 2018 2:00 pm

Over the past two years, Pleasantville's Senior Planner, Jay Macintosh has been collaborating with Riverside Development Company (RDC) to redevelop "The Willow Corner", a 40-acre parcel containing the former Global Toy manufacturing plant and a riparian corridor identified as a steelhead trout run in need of restoration. Global Toy, the manufacturing hub of Pleasantville from the early 19th Century until the end of WWII contains a collection of warehouses designed by Walter Gropius, one of founders of the International Style of architecture related to modernism.

During the last two decades the area has increasingly attracted homeless encampments and criminal activity. Children are often seen using the site to build makeshift ball fields



Willow Creek Homeless Encampment

and skateboard ramps. The parcel, approximately the size of 12 city blocks (including 40% set aside for parking and parkland), abuts two historic neighborhoods, including the Gropius Complex Historic District, an area designated a Certified California Local District by California Office of Historic Preservation. The district features the country's most celebrated collection of

International Style residences and small-scale retail buildings in the nation, including the Bank of Pleasantville (now the Global Toy Car Museum), Global Sweets & Treats and Marketville, the city's first grocery store, owned and operated by Mayor Delgado's family for over 90 years. Historic preservationists have, for years, attempted to restore several of the Gropius-designed buildings on the property without success.



Cherise Cline-Orange, President, Real Estate Development Operations, Riverside Development Company



Jay Macintosh, Pleasantville Senior Planner



Willow Creek Homeless Resident, Mary Larenas' tearful plea for more and improved public services was supported by other participants at the community forum

Deepti Nanawati, an historical preservation advocate, asked city officials to convene a committee or task force to address her concerns about preserving and celebrating the history of Global Toy and Pleasantville, as well as concerns expressed by neighbors and advocates for open space, affordable housing and the community's homeless population. Connie Ludewig, an opponent of density and increased traffic, has requested that city council, "Consider bringing life to 'old' Pleasantville to include new growth plans" and blending communities rather than separating old and new.

What is described in Pleasantville's 2010-2040 General Plan (zoning was changed from light industrial to Mixed Use Commercial/Residential "to build housing and generate much-needed tax revenue for the city") as the Willow Corner Urban Village would be a complete community integrating a mix of 75,000 square feet of neighborhood commercial/employment uses and 750 housing units near transit. During a community forum on November 3rd, RCD President, Real Estate Operations, Cherise Orange described an ultra-modern project that had increased the size and scale of the General Plan description by at least 266% without providing the actual number of residential and commercial square feet, parking spaces or a schematic of the overall design. The monetary rewards associated with development over and above what's described in the General Plan are considerable. Whether or not Pleasantville's city council approves plans for a greatly expanded project is literally (over a 10-year period) a \$64 million dollar question.



Commercial Space: Office



The New Willow Corner will provide 200,000sf of Class-A Commercial Space

Commercial spaces will be designed to attract technology startups and entrepreneurs seeking flexibility to grow through shared or private offices space. Long-term options will be available.

Development Component	2010-2040 General Plan Description	City Staff Presentation	RDC's Presentation (Community Forum Proposal)
Commercial Development	75,000 sf	105,100 sf (six 4-story buildings)	200,000+ sf (undefined)
Housing Development	750 units 75 low-income (included)	(total sf undefined) 1,414 units 141 low-income (included) 19 buildings (10 3-story, 5 2-story, 4 1-story)	(undefined number of units and sf) 19 buildings (undefined number of 5- and 7-story)
Transit	Near transit		Transit-oriented
Parking		Commercial: 2 acre (4-story) 1935 spaces Housing: (# undefined) Community Park: 200 spaces	
Plaza		(size undefined)	(size undefined)
Community Park		12 acres along Willow Creek (including 200 space parking)	
Gross Annual Residential Revenue (based on \$3.00/sf rent index @ 90% of units)	\$2,673,000	\$3,405,240	\$6,480,000+
Gross Annual Low Income Housing Units	\$45,000	\$1,015,200	Unable to calculate
Creek Restoration	30' minimum riparian buffer	(undefined)	(undefined)

Rent index based on nearby San Carlos, California.

Low income housing rates based on San Carlos average of \$600/month

Based on San Carlos commercial (not retail)01 rates of \$33/sf/year

The devil's in the details. During the public comment period, Councilman Warren asked planning staff to clarify allowable building heights. Creek restoration wasn't mentioned during the presentation. Ms. Orange did not appear to be aware of or appreciate the significance of the warehouses on the site and their connection to the city's history even though she is related to Melanie Liu, who in addition to serving as President of the city's business association, also serves as the Community Liaison for RCD. Whether or not the development would rely on downtown transit within walking distance, or create another hub within the development, was unclear.

Affordable Housing. Robin Brune, an affordable housing advocate suggests increasing the percentage of affordable housing to 25% (15% to moderate-income and 10% to low-income households) to avoid a disproportionate housing shortage impacts on minorities, large families and the disabled. In her letter to Mayor Delgado and City Councilmembers, Mr. Brune suggests that multi-family units can be built at a range of heights and could be complimentary to neighborhood scale and character. At present, the tallest building in Pleasantville is three stories high.

Pleasantville's City Council will decide whether to grant RCD permission to move forward with their plans on December 1st. The meeting will be facilitated by Mayor Delgado.