

Proposal to the Planning Commission to recommend a second exit

320 Sheridan via Van Buren Road

Summary of Proposal:

A second entrance/exit east of the project would significantly benefit residents of the proposed housing, as well as residents of nearby neighborhoods in several ways:

- Increase firefighters' ability to fight a multistory blaze by entering via Sheridan using the prevailing wind at their backs. The Menlo Park Fire Chief, Mark Lorenzen agrees that a second exit which accomplishes this would be safer.
- Increase fire safety for teachers and residents in surrounding areas by facilitating their escape from a fire using Van Buren and thereby avoiding approaching tiller trucks.
- Provide a second, shorter option for residents of the Sheridan project to access areas closer to Willow Road.
- Shorten commutes by auto, as well as cycling and walking time.
- Ease the impact on morning traffic backed up on Bay Road at the 5 way intersection (currently a 10 minute wait at morning commute).

Current Sheridan Project Plan and limitations:

The proposed affordable housing at 320 Sheridan Drive is a well designed project that will provide many amenities for the teachers of Ravenswood School District. Teachers should have an option of using the most direct route to work east toward Willow Road. As currently drafted, Alliant's plans force teachers to use only one way to travel to and from work. We recognize that this project will unfortunately result in increased traffic, but intelligent planning will prevent making rush hour traffic worse. This small plan change will benefit everyone who uses Bay Rd. at rush hour.

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We believe teachers are entitled to live in a safe community easily reached by emergency vehicles. Alliant's plan does not address the unique requirements for building on a cul-de-sac property at the end of a cul-de-sac. Alliant has never built projects like this using only one exit. Their current plan relies on inside sprinklers and a locked gate to safeguard this community in the event of emergencies. We do not think that is safe enough, given the prevailing winds in that area.

Proposal for a safe and inexpensive additional access road:

After much research, we are confident that a safer access road could be built linking the 320 Sheridan project to Van Buren Road using an unused Caltrans right of way. The proposed second exit can be built on 180 feet of Caltrans right of way next to the sound wall. It would not require moving the sound wall. A map of the proposed safer access road is included below. (Figure 1.)

This would be an inexpensive and responsible addition to the Sheridan project. An estimate by a local union construction company put the cost at under \$120,000, a relatively small investment compared with the benefits gained. The process would remove the existing fire lane requirement.

In conclusion, there are many compelling reasons to create an easily accessed second exit from 320 Sheridan Drive to Van Buren Road . We encourage the commission to recommend that the city council engage with Alliant and Caltrans so that this project can realize a safe connection to our community.
