

### III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This chapter describes the University Village at San Pablo Avenue Project (proposed project) that is evaluated in this Environmental Impact Report (EIR). A description of the proposed project's background, the project site, objectives, and project details are provided, in addition to a discussion of required approvals and entitlements.

#### A. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The project site is located within University Village, a 77-acre area owned by University of California and situated in the City of Albany. Approximately 62 acres of University Village are used for student family housing and associated facilities, and 10 acres are associated with agricultural research fields known as the Gill Tract. Figure III-1 shows the location of the project site and Figure III-2 shows the location of the project site within University Village.

Family student housing has been located at University Village since 1956. Today the village includes approximately 974 apartments and townhouses. University Village also contains other uses, including recreational facilities, a community center, a café, laundry rooms, and child care center. While seismic retrofit of Albany Civic Center is underway, the Albany Police Department and Albany Fire Department are temporarily located on Monroe Street in University Village.

In January 1998, the Regents of the University of California approved the *University Village & Albany/Northwest Berkeley Properties Draft Master Plan* and certified the Focused Environmental Impact Report (EIR)<sup>1</sup> that evaluated potential environmental effects caused by the Plan's implementation. This Plan identified the property along San Pablo Avenue frontage (including the project site) as an economic development opportunity.

In 2004, the University amended the Master Plan. These amendments focused on the second and third phases (referred to as "Steps") of construction of University Village; Step 1 was completed in 2000. Figure III-2 shows the proposed Steps of the 2004 Master Plan Amendments. The proposed amendments included demolition of older housing units, construction of new units, construction of community facilities, and construction of retail space. The 2004 Master Plan also expanded the area considered for commercial and mixed use to include more of the San Pablo Avenue frontage. In June 2004, the University of California Regents certified the EIR prepared for the 2004 Master Plan,<sup>2</sup> and approved construction of Step 2.

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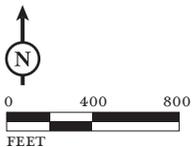
<sup>1</sup> EIP Associates, 1997. *Focused Draft Environmental Impact Report, University of California, Berkeley Draft Master Plan – University Village & Albany/Northwest Berkeley Properties, State Clearinghouse No. 97072039*. August 29

<sup>2</sup> LSA Associates, Inc., 2004. *Subsequent Focused EIR for the University Village & Albany/Northwest Berkeley Properties Master Plan Amendments, State Clearinghouse No. 1997072039*. January 30.



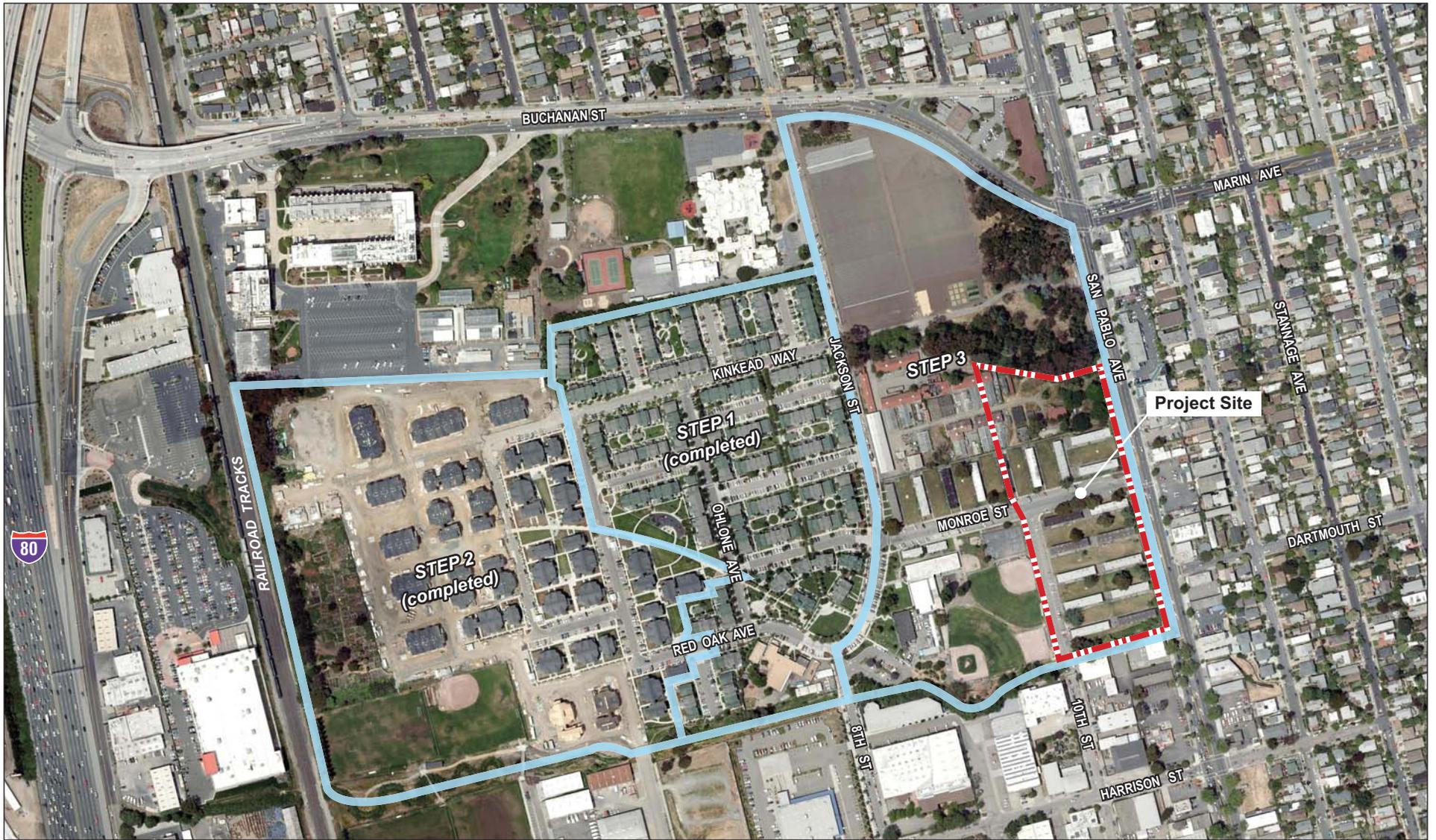
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FIGURE III-1



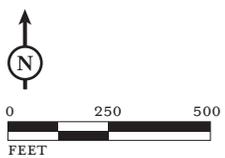
 PROJECT SITE

University Village at San Pablo Avenue Project EIR  
 Project Vicinity and  
 Regional Location



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FIGURE III-2



-  PROJECT SITE
-  PHASED STEPS OF CONSTRUCTION

*University Village at San Pablo Avenue Project EIR  
Phased Steps of 2004 Master Plan Construction*

SOURCE: GOOGLE EARTH, 2008.

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Back of III-2

The proposed project would fall within Step 3 of the 2004 Master Plan. In 2007, the University demolished the 1940's barrack-style student housing which was located on the entire parcel south of Monroe Street and a portion of the parcel north of Monroe Street. The portion of the northern parcel within the Gill Tract includes a former residence (Gill House) that has been used for office space, research buildings and greenhouses, and several trailers associated with the agricultural research facilities. All these structures are currently vacant and, with the exception of the Gill House, will be demolished during the summer of 2009.<sup>3</sup> The Gill House will be either relocated or demolished at a later date.

As an autonomous state institution, land use decisions of the University that support the University's educational mission are exempt from land use regulations of local jurisdictions. However, the proposed project would be developed by a third party and includes development of the grocery store, retail space, and senior housing (all of which are outside the scope of the University's educational mission). This project is therefore subject to the land use regulations of the City of Albany. The City of Albany is the lead agency for this Environmental Impact Report and the University of California is a responsible agency.

Some of the environmental conditions, as well as the proposed project, have changed since the 2004 EIR was certified, requiring new environmental review. Some portions of the 2004 EIR contains information that is useful for the current analysis of environmental impacts. If data from the previous EIR is used, it will be updated and expanded upon as needed and discussed in further detail in regards to its relation to the current proposal.

## **B. PROJECT SITE**

The following section describes the project site's location, surrounding land uses, site characteristics, and existing General Plan and zoning designations.

A Notice of Preparation (NOP) for this project was published on March 28, 2008. Since the release of the NOP, the site plans for the proposed project have been modified with the relocation of the grocery component north of Monroe Street. This change aims to improve the interface between the project and Codornices Creek.

### **1. Project Location**

The project site is located in the City of Albany in northern Alameda County, California. The site is within the University Village development and includes the area generally bounded by San Pablo Avenue, Codornices Creek, 10<sup>th</sup> Street, and Village Creek.

The approximately 5.3-acre project site consists of properties to the northwest (Block A) and southwest (Block B) of the Monroe Street/San Pablo Avenue intersection. The project would include improvements to the roadway segments of Monroe Street, between San Pablo Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, improvements to 10<sup>th</sup> Street between Codornices Creek and Village Creek, and a pedestrian/bicycle crossing of San Pablo Avenue at Dartmouth Street. Figure III-1 shows the project location.

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<sup>3</sup> McDougall, Jennifer Lawrence, 2009. Manager, Capital Projects, University of California, Berkeley. Personal communication with LSA Associates, Inc., June 15.

## 2. Site Characteristics

The discussion of the existing conditions of the project site is divided into three sections: Block A (parcel north of Monroe Street), Block B (parcel south of Monroe Street), and roadways.

**a. Block A.** Block A is approximately 2.8 acres and is located to the northwest of the San Pablo Avenue/Monroe Street intersection. This block is bounded by Village Creek to the north, San Pablo Avenue to the east, and Monroe Street to the south, and the Gill Tract.

A chainlink fence prevents access to the Gill Tract from San Pablo Avenue in the northern portion of Block A. Village Creek forms the northern boundary of the project site. There are several vacant structures within this portion of the site including the Gill House (shown in Photo 1), research buildings and greenhouses, and vacant trailers. Concrete foundations of demolished buildings associated with the Gill House and agricultural research buildings are also located within the project site. With the exception of the Gill House, all other structures within the project site will be demolished during the summer of 2009.<sup>4</sup> The Gill House will be relocated or demolished prior to initiation of the proposed project. There is a paved driveway within the project site with an entrance onto San Pablo Avenue and internal roadways/driveways within this portion of the Gill Tract. This San Pablo Avenue entrance is currently gated. Trees are located throughout this portion of the site.

The southern portion of Block A is a vacant lot. An approximately 8-foot fence bisects Block A, creating a separation of the vacant lot from the Gill Tract portion of Block A. A chainlink fence is located along the eastern boundary of the block. A chainlink fence enclosure on the southeast corner of the site contains water piping equipment. While there are mature trees located on the project site along Monroe Street and San Pablo Avenue, the southern portion of Block A contains only grass and weeds. Photo 2 is a representative photo of the conditions on the southern portion of Block A.

**b. Block B.** Block B is approximately 2.5 acres and is located southwest of the San Pablo Avenue/Monroe Street intersection. This block is bounded by San Pablo Avenue to the east, Codornices Creek to the south, 10<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, and Monroe Street to the north.



*Photo 1: View looking west of the Gill House and a driveway.*



*Photo 2: View looking northwest of southern portion of Block A*



*Photo 3: View looking north of Block B*

<sup>4</sup> Impacts related to the demolition of the structures on the Gill Tract (including the Gill House and structures associated with the UC Agricultural Research Experiment Station) were evaluated in Subsequent Focused Draft EIR for the University Village and Albany/Northwest Berkeley properties Master Plan Amendment prepared in 2004. Demolition of these structures is not considered part of this project and is not evaluated in this EIR.

This block is vacant and contains limited grassy vegetation and scattered mature trees within and on the boundary of the block. An ivy covered chain link fence prevents access to Codornices Creek from the block. This fence also extends across 10<sup>th</sup> Street blocking vehicle access. A chain link fence is also located along the San Pablo Avenue frontage. Overhead telephone and electric wires and poles are located on the property along Monroe Street. Photo 3 is a representative photo of the conditions of Block B.

**c. Roadways.** The proposed project would include changes and improvements to three roadways: San Pablo Avenue; Monroe Street and 10<sup>th</sup> Street. A description of the existing conditions of these roadways is presented below.

**(1) San Pablo Avenue (State Highway 123).** Adjacent to the project site, San Pablo Avenue has four travel lanes and a center lane for left turns. The San Pablo Avenue/Monroe Street intersection is a signalized intersection with a northbound left turning lane into University Village and one pedestrian crosswalk across San Pablo Avenue at the southern portion of the intersection. Sidewalks are located on both sides of San Pablo Avenue, and an AC Transit bus stop is located to the southwest of the intersection.

**(2) Monroe Street.** Adjacent to the project site (between San Pablo Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street) Monroe Street is a two lane roadway with angled parking spaces and sidewalks location along both sides of the street. Monroe Street can be seen in Photo 4. Monroe Street is owned and maintained by the University.



*Photo 4: View looking east on Monroe Street*

**(3) 10<sup>th</sup> Street.** Adjacent to the project site (between Codornices Creek and Monroe Street), 10<sup>th</sup> Street is a two lane street with parking spaces provided on the east side of the street. Currently, 10<sup>th</sup> Street is gated and does not allow pedestrian or vehicle access on the street between the City of Berkeley (to the south) and University Village. Tenth Street is owned and maintained by the University.

**d. Land Use Designations.** The City of Albany General Plan identifies the two land use designation for the project site: Residential/Commercial (RC) and Creek Conservation Zone. The RC designation is a specific land use designation for land at University Village. This designation allows for a medium residential density of 34 units per acre and commercial development with a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.95.

The City of Albany Zoning Ordinance identifies three zoning designations on the project site: San Pablo Commercial (SPC); Residential Medium Density (R-2); and Watercourse Overlay District (WC). The SPC designation accommodates commercial and retail businesses serving a citywide or larger regional market in a boulevard environment and also provides opportunities for office development and high-density residential development, which may be in mixed-use settings. The R-2 designation provides for residential living at moderate densities. The Watercourse Overlay District is intended to promote preservation and restoration of areas adjacent to creeks and to regulate development in flood prone areas.

The *University Village & Albany/Northwest Berkeley Properties Master Plan*, a University of California planning document, provides guidance for the redevelopment of University Village. This Master Plan identifies the project site as Commercial or Mixed-Use. The Master Plan identifies this designation as land that will be made available for lease to generate income to subsidize new housing.

### 3. Surrounding Land Use

The land uses surrounding the project site are described below.

- a. North.** Village Creek forms the northern boundary of the project site. The agricultural research station on the Gill Tract is located adjacent to Village Creek. Ocean View Elementary School is located northwest of the project site. Uses further north of the site include the City of Albany municipal offices, commercial and office uses along San Pablo Avenue, and residential areas.
- b. East.** San Pablo Avenue forms the eastern boundary of the project site. The opposite side of San Pablo Avenue across from the project site includes a rental car parking lot and a variety of commercial and retail structures. Residential uses are located to the east of San Pablo Avenue.
- c. South.** Codornices Creek forms the southern boundary of the project site. In this area of Albany, Codornices Creek forms the boundary between the Cities of Albany and Berkeley. Mixed-use and light industrial uses are located to the south of the project site and south of Codornices Creek.
- d. West.** University Village is located to the west of the project site. University Village includes residential and recreational uses. The Union Pacific Railroad, I-580/I-80, and Golden Gate Fields are located further west of the project site.

## C. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following are objectives of the proposed project:

- Locate a mixed-use project on the San Pablo Avenue corridor within Block B of the project site.
- Build a grocery store within the San Pablo Avenue frontage of University Village located within Block A of the project site.
- Offer retail space and outdoor seating as a local amenity designed to connect with the surroundings and serve local residents and new residents of the project.
- Facilitate pedestrian/bicycle movement across San Pablo Avenue.
- Improve the visual quality of the site.
- Provide senior housing.
- Within the project site, provide a pedestrian/bicycle path along Codornices Creek.

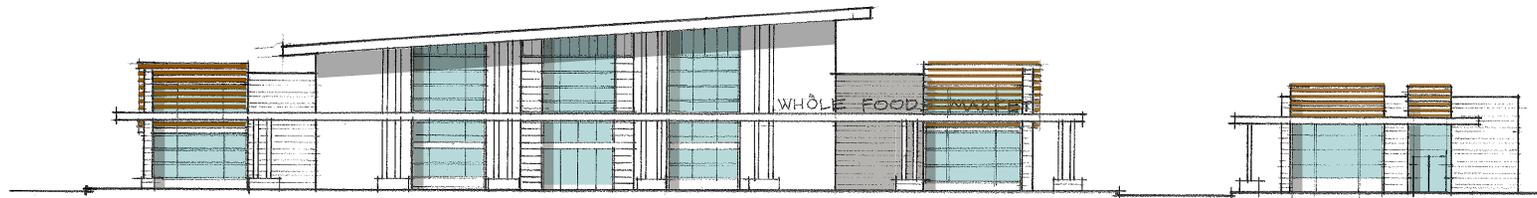
The University of California's objectives are detailed in the University Village Master Plan.

## D. PROPOSED PROJECT

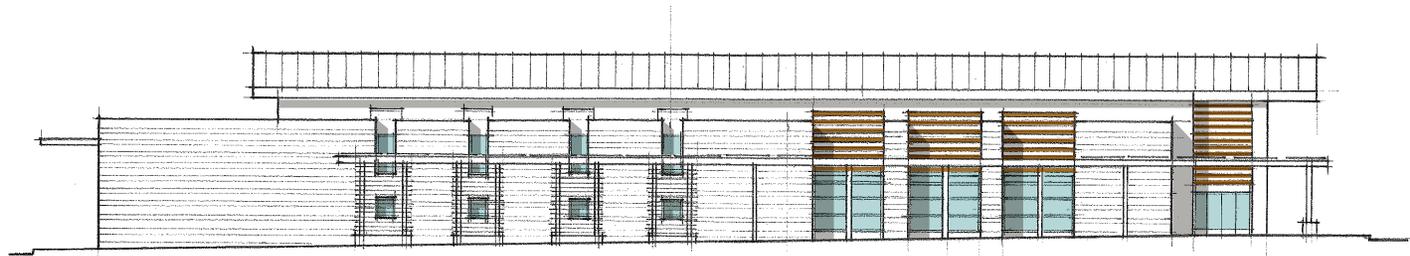
The proposed project would include: construction of a Whole Foods Market, the Creekside Retail building, and parking area located on Block A of the project site; retail space and senior housing located on Block B of the project site; roadway improvements surrounding the project site, pedestrian/bike improvements; and site drainage facilities. Figure III-3 shows a conceptual site plan of the project, and Figures III-4 and III-5 shows conceptual elevations and conceptual modeling of the



Back of III-3



EAST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION

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FIGURE III-4

NOT TO SCALE

*University Village at San Pablo Avenue Project EIR*  
Conceptual Elevations of  
Whole Foods Market and Creekside Retail

SOURCE: PYATOK ARCHITECTS, INC., 2008.

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*View of Southeast Corner of Block B Building*



*View of Northwest Corner of Block B Building*

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FIGURE III-5

*University Village at San Pablo Avenue Project EIR  
Conceptual Modeling of Block B Building*

project. The components of the proposed project are described below. The proposed project does not include any changes to the University Village Community Center, Little League field, or Gill Tract agricultural field.

## 1. Block A

Development on Block A would consist of five components: a grocery store (Whole Foods Market is the proposed operator), the Creekside Retail building, a parking lot, a pedestrian path along Village Creek, and storm drainage facilities. These components are described below.

**a. Whole Foods Market.** The Whole Foods Market would be located on southern portion of Block A, and would front on San Pablo Avenue. The Whole Foods Market would have a 44,000 square foot ground floor and a 11,000 square foot mezzanine area, for a total of 55,000 square feet. Approximately 114 underground parking spaces would be provided via a ramp at the rear of the building. This ramp and the loading dock area could be accessed off 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

The building would be approximately 30 feet in height. Two entrances to the building would be provided along the San Pablo frontage, and one would be provided along the north side of the building. The exterior of Whole Foods Market would be a textured block wall with alternating color banding. The exterior would also include metal and wood trellis, and wood screen details. A conceptual elevation view of the Whole Foods Market is shown in Figure III-4.

**b. Creekside Retail.** A Creekside Retail building would be constructed at the northeast corner on Block A and would front on San Pablo Avenue. This retail space would be approximately 2,000 square feet and include an outdoor sitting area west of the building. This structure would be approximately 20 feet tall, and would be constructed of similar building materials and in a similar style as the Whole Foods Market. A conceptual elevation view of the Creekside Retail building can be seen in Figure III-4.

**c. Parking Lot.** An at-grade parking lot is proposed north of the Whole Foods Market and south of Village Creek. Circulation within the parking lot would be two-way. This parking lot would include porous pavers and parking spaces would be oriented at 90-degree angles. The parking lot would be accessed by a driveway on San Pablo Avenue and from Monroe Street. Entry onto San Pablo Avenue would be right turn only. The parking spaces in this lot would total approximately 112 spaces. Landscaping, tree plantings, pedestrian walkways and safety lighting would be included in the parking lot design.

**d. Village Creek Pedestrian Path.** An approximately six foot wide decomposed granite path would be located along Village Creek. This path would follow Village Creek from San Pablo Avenue to the extension of 10<sup>th</sup> Street. An outdoor seating area, situated between the path and the parking lot, would be located on Block A.

**e. Site Drainage Facilities.** A storm water detention swale would be installed along the western boundary of Block A, which would drain into a retention area in the northwest corner of the block. At least two outfalls into Village Creek would be installed to drain the new swale and for drainage under the permeable paving and the building foundation drainage.

## 2. Block B

Block B would be developed with a mixed-use structure that includes retail space and senior housing. Approximately 28,000 square feet of retail space would be provided on the San Pablo Avenue and Monroe Street frontages. The retail component of the building would have a maximum height of 28 feet on San Pablo Avenue.

The retail components of the Block B building would be one story, and would be designed to allow for multiple smaller retail stores along the San Pablo Avenue frontage. The southern portion of the building frontage would have an additional setback to allow for possible outdoor seating.

The senior housing would be a multi-care facility including approximately 100 senior residential units and 75 assisted living units. The senior housing would be located behind the retail component and would be oriented towards 10<sup>th</sup> Street. This component would be five stories and 52 feet tall on Monroe Street. The five-story component would be set back approximately 75 feet from San Pablo Avenue.

A two-way drop-off driveway with turn-around area for the senior housing would be located on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Below grade parking, which would be accessed off of 10<sup>th</sup> Street, would be included under the senior housing and would provide approximately 86 parking spaces. There would be approximately 14 surface parking spaces provided on 10<sup>th</sup> Street within Block B. Landscaping would be installed around the perimeter of the building.

A drainage swale would be located along the western boundary of Block B. At least two new outfalls would be installed into Codornices Creek to drain the swale and the permeable paving and building foundation drainage.

## 3. Proposed Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Roadway Improvements

As part of the project, roadway improvements and alterations would be made to San Pablo Avenue, Monroe Street, and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, and a bike/pedestrian path would be installed along Codornices Creek, Village Creek and a portion of 10<sup>th</sup> Street. These improvements are described below.

**a. San Pablo Avenue.** A driveway is proposed to be installed on San Pablo Avenue (north of the Monroe Street/San Pablo Avenue intersection) to allow for access to the Whole Foods Market parking lot. This driveway would be a right-in/right-out driveway. The pedestrian crosswalks of San Pablo Avenue/Monroe Street intersection would remain on the west and south sides of the intersection. Additional street trees would be installed on San Pablo Avenue.

A pedestrian crossing of the San Pablo Avenue at Dartmouth Street is also proposed as part of the project. While the specific design for the crossing is under evaluation, four potential means of crossing were evaluated in this document.<sup>5</sup> These include:

- A high-intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) traffic signal on San Pablo Avenue at Dartmouth Street.

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<sup>5</sup> As San Pablo Avenue is a State of California facility, CalTrans would need to provide approval for the pedestrian/bicycle crossing of San Pablo Avenue.

- A signal at the San Pablo/Dartmouth Street intersection, pedestrian countdown signal and high-visibility crosswalk on both north and south approaches of San Pablo Avenue.
- A two-stage signalized crossing with a six-foot wide median refuge on San Pablo Avenue between Codornices Creek and Dartmouth Street.
- A two-stage unsignalized crossing with a median refuge on San Pablo Avenue.

More details regarding these potential crossing configurations are described in Section IV.A, Transportation, Circulation and Parking.

**b. Monroe Street.** Monroe Street, at the San Pablo Avenue intersection, would be configured to allow for one west bound lane and two east bound lanes. Approximately 30 back-in diagonal parking spaces would be provided on Monroe Street between San Pablo Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street. New landscaping and sidewalks would be installed between San Pablo Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Back-in diagonal parking is proposed to address bike safety along Monroe Street.

**c. 10<sup>th</sup> Street.** Tenth Street, between Codornices Creek and Monroe Street, would be reconfigured. While 14 street parking spaces would remain, the existing 45 spaces of street parking along 10th Street would be removed.

**d. Pedestrian/Bicycle Path.** A pedestrian/bicycle path would be installed on the project site along Codornices Creek and along the western boundary of the project site. This approximately 10-foot path would connect from San Pablo Avenue and facilitate pedestrian/bicycle access from San Pablo Avenue to the interior of University Village. The City would work with the applicant to ensure that final design of the path along Codornices Creek would be consistent with the Lower Codornices Creek Improvement Plan. Restoration work to Codornices Creek is not proposed as part of this project.

#### **4. Infrastructure and Utilities**

The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) supplies water to University Village and the City of Albany. The water system within University Village generally follows the street plan, and a water main runs along San Pablo Avenue and delivers water to University Village at the Marin Avenue/San Pablo Avenue intersection and at the Monroe Street/San Pablo Avenue intersection. The proposed project would connect to the existing water system within University Village.

EBMUD, the City of Albany, and University of California are responsible for portions of wastewater conveyance at University Village. Wastewater is transported from University Village through two mainlines: one is located on the west side of the University Village parallel the railroad tracks, and the other is located on the east side of the property along San Pablo Avenue. The proposed project would connect to the existing wastewater system within University Village.

Ten foot wide drainage swales along the western side of 10th Street and outfalls into the Village and Codornices Creeks would be installed. Additionally, a large drainage detention swale would be located north of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street extension.

## 5. Landscaping

Many of the existing trees on site would need to be removed to accommodate building, circulation and utility facilities of the proposed project. Additionally, removal of some trees is recommended due to their poor health or risk of collapse. While the landscape plan has not been finalized, currently the applicant is proposing to preserve approximately 20 trees on site; transplant approximately 3 trees; and remove approximately 64 trees. Approximately 5 trees within the Village Creek creekbank would be removed. An arborist's report, provided by the applicant, has been included in Appendix F.

## 6. Demolition, Phasing and Construction Schedule

Demolition of the existing structures located on the Gill Tract, and the relocation or demolition of the Gill House, would occur independently of the project. It is estimated that the construction of the proposed project would take approximately 1.5 to 2 years. The project applicant has not proposed specific phasing for construction of the project.

## E. USES OF THIS EIR

A number of permits and approvals would be required before the development of the project could proceed. As lead agency for the proposed project, the City of Albany would be responsible for the majority of approvals required for development. The University of California, as owner of the property, would be considered a responsible agency. Other agencies may have some authority related to the project and its approvals. A list of required permits and approvals that may be required by the City and other agencies is provided in Table III-1.

**Table III-1: Required Permits and Approvals**

Lead Agency	Permit/Approval
City of Albany Planning Commission City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rezone</li> <li>• Planned Unit Development</li> <li>• Design Review</li> <li>• Parking Exception</li> <li>• Affordable Housing Agreement</li> <li>• Use Permit</li> </ul>
<b>Responsible/Trustee Agencies</b>	
University of California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of project</li> <li>• Action on land lease</li> </ul>
East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of water lines, water hookups and review of water needs</li> </ul>
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of plans and encroachment permit for improvements located within the State right-of-way along San Pablo Avenue (State Highway 123); improvements within public right-of-way</li> </ul>
California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for stormwater discharge; Section 401 Water Quality Certification; Section 404 Permit</li> </ul>
California Department of Fish and Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement</li> </ul>
Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationwide Permit 7; Nationwide Permit 33</li> </ul>
NOAA Fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biological Opinion</li> </ul>
<b>Other Agencies</b>	
AT&T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of communication line improvements and connection permits</li> </ul>
Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval of natural gas and connection permits</li> </ul>

Source: LSA Associates, Inc., 2009.