



Brandon Wise [brandonw@smdp.com](mailto:brandonw@smdp.com)

**WRITING ON THE WALL:** A number of residents are concerned that a commercial development at 2919 Wilshire Blvd. may lead to more traffic and a number of other issues. Jerry's Liquor and Pet Depot would both be removed if the project receives approval from city officials.

# Development draws criticism

**BY MELODY HANATANI**  
Daily Press Staff Writer

**WILSHIRE BOULEVARD** A busy corner known for the iconic Jerry's Liquor could one day become a dry spot as a local development firm has aspirations to build a mixed-use complex on the site.

The Blackstone Capital Group, whose office is located on Nebraska Avenue, is proposing to develop a three-story development that includes a mixture of rental housing units and retail space at 2919 Wilshire Blvd, which is currently the home of the popular liquor store, Elaine's Pet Depot and a large parking lot.

The project would include 26 market-rate rental units and retail located on the ground floor. The Blackstone Capital Group purchased the roughly 22,000 square foot lot last year from the Buteyn family, which had owned the property for 75 years, according to company CEO Halston Michael.

While the project is still in its infancy, yet to even undergo an environmental review, it has already created some buzz among neigh-

bors, some of whom have expressed disappointment that a development of this size could take place in their corner of the city.

Michael presented the project during a community input meeting at the Santa Monica Public Library on Monday, a gathering during which several residents raised concerns regarding a possible increase in traffic, some asking why the development doesn't occur elsewhere, such as Montana Avenue.

Their concerns touched on several possible future projects in the vicinity, including a proposed Lionsgate development just a few blocks away on Colorado Avenue and a rumored redevelopment of the Albertsons site on 3105 Wilshire Blvd, which Macerich Co. just purchased earlier this year. Macerich also owns Santa Monica Place, which is currently undergoing renovation.

Neither Lionsgate or the Macerich property are even close to realization — city officials are about to enter negotiations for a development agreement with Lionsgate while Macerich is expected to wait until the completion of Santa Monica Place before

they begin plotting the future of the Wilshire site.

Bob Aptaker, the vice president of development for Macerich, said the first step in planning a redevelopment of the Albertsons site is to go through a community process, which is what the company did in designing Santa Monica Place. The site on Wilshire, which includes Big 5 Sporting Goods and Albertsons, is roughly two acres.

"A big part of the process is really understanding what the community wants so that will be a big part of it," Aptaker said on Thursday.

Catherine Eldridge, who lives a few blocks away from Wilshire, said she feared gentrification of her neighborhood and that rental property owners would redevelop their own buildings after seeing the development of the proposed mixed-use complex, the Macerich site and Lionsgate. This could lead to higher rent, Eldridge said.

"Do you think that the apartment owners are going to leave the apartment buildings

SEE DEVELOPMENT PAGE 11

# Building blocks for a greener life

**BY KEVIN HERRERA**  
Editor in Chief

**DOWNTOWN** Sometimes sustainability starts on the rugby field.

That's where Daniel Beattie met Darrin Coquer and Simon Jones, partners in Enviro Plumbing, a Santa Monica-based plumbing company that helps homeowners drastically reduce their water and energy usage by installing dual-flush toilets and solar water heaters.

The three were playing together with the Santa Monica Rugby Club when they decided it would be best to join the green building movement, and they've never been happier.

"We're lucky enough to get to work with cool green architects who are a lot mellower and nicer, plus we feel good about doing something that is important for the environment," Beattie said. "And it's fun coming to work in the morning with my buddies."

While Enviro Plumbing has been making a name for itself, Beattie is hoping that word will spread even faster about their business following the fifth annual Alternative Building Materials & Design Expo ([altbuild-expo.com](http://altbuild-expo.com)), a City Hall-sponsored showcase featuring the latest in alternative building practices and standards.

AltBuild, which attracted over 8,000 people last year, begins today at 10 a.m. and runs through Saturday at the Civic Auditorium. The expo is free and open to the public.

"This is going to give us a lot more exposure with all the green architects who have an interest in zero-emissions housing," Beattie said. "Not many solar guys can do that."

The expo will be offering a number of firsts and unprecedented presentations, including the first official presentation by the Green Cities California collaborative, a coalition of cities throughout the state, including Santa Monica, who are committed to policies that reduce their carbon footprint and impact on the environment. There will also be top speakers and noted exhibitors within the green community.

"The great thing with the AltBuild with all its exhibitors is that we try and focus on what's new and different ... what's relevant

SEE EXPO PAGE 9



**Since 1967**  
**Quality & Value Always!**  
Open 6am - 2:30pm Mon. - Fri.  
6am - 4pm Sat. - Sun.

**"The dog wants to take a walk! Come on down!"**

310-399-7892

2732 Main St.  
Santa Monica



**Golda Savage**

Stand **[on]** your **[own]** ground.  
Helping sellers & buyers accomplish just that.

310.770.4490  
[golda@bulldogrealtors.com](mailto:golda@bulldogrealtors.com)



**BULLDOG REALTORS**

1209 Abbot Kinney Boulevard, Venice

# Developer proposes mixed-use project

FROM DEVELOPMENT PAGE 3

that way?" Eldridge said following the community workshop on Monday.

Dan Kay, who lives a few blocks north of the Blackstone project on Yale Street, said he has concerns about increased traffic from commercial developments in Santa Monica. Kay has lived in the neighborhood for 15 years.

"I'm not opposed to development of condos or apartments, it's the retail that will impact traffic," Kay said.

Concerns like Kay's is what sparked the Resident's Initiative to Fight Traffic, which seeks to limit the amount of commercial development in the city by placing caps every year. Launched by the Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City (SMCLC), a petition containing more than 10,000 signatures, or roughly 30 percent of registered voters expected to participate in the November election, was submitted to the City Clerk on Wednesday.

"Our city is on the verge of another explosion of commercial growth that will add a whole lot more traffic," Diana Gordon, the co-founder of SMCLC said on Thursday. "RIFT came because of that."

Critics of the RIFT say that it does nothing but place artificial caps on commercial development and hijacks the community process that has taken place in the formulation of the Land Use and Circulation Element, the update of the general plan.

City officials have been conducting numerous community workshops for the LUCE in the past few years and a draft plan is expected to go before the Planning



Rendering courtesy Blackstone Capital Group

**NEW LOOK:** The project planned for 2919 Wilshire Blvd. would include residences and shops.

Commission in the next few months.

What the LUCE actually does is better manage development by ensuring that it fits in with the surrounding neighborhood, communicates well with other projects, and has clearly stated public benefits, according to Eileen Fogarty, the director of planning and community development for City Hall.

"There would be more discretion, more public input and a higher threshold of what any project would have to meet," Fogarty said.

Fogarty added that the Planning Department has added a new process where projects, when first submitted, are presented to the community early on for input. The purpose is to allow the community to weigh

in before the projects go to the Planning Commission.

Each project would also require a traffic management program where trips would have to be reduced significantly.

"What we're doing with the Land Use and Circulation Element is going to the heart of the issue with traffic," Fogarty said.

The RIFT would place an annual limit of 75,000 square feet on new commercial development for the next 15 years, excluding schools, hospitals and other community-serving development.

Michael contends that his project would minimally increase traffic, adding that there is already retail on the property and that res-

idential doesn't generate much traffic.

The corner of Yale Street and Wilshire is considered to be prime real estate in the city, Michael said, calling it the "gateway to the city," serving as one of the first few corners that drivers see, coming from the city of Los Angeles.

The boutique development would create an active street life with a proposed cafe on the ground floor and possibly a grocery store, Michael said, adding that several grocers have contacted him.

The project would also include some public benefits in the form of a courtyard with benches, accessible from Wilshire Boulevard.

Grace Cho, the associate planner for City Hall, said she had several concerns with the project when it was first submitted late last year, including its office-like appearance and lack of activity on the ground floor. The applicant came back with favorable changes, which were presented to the public this week, she said.

Some of the changes include adding bike parking off Wilshire and incorporating an outdoor cafe seating area. The applicant was able to create a more residential like appearance by adding balconies and roof terracing, Cho said.

Cho anticipated the project going before the Planning Commission later this year.

Michael said his project will beautify the site, adding a high-quality building and serving a demand for rental in the city.

"We're dedicated to a high standard for design," Michael said. "It will be a high value project added to the city of Santa Monica."

[melodyh@smdp.com](mailto:melodyh@smdp.com)



TAKE A FREE WHEEL RIDE INTO SANTA MONICA HISTORY.



spcaLA

Friends for life.

spcaLA is dedicated to the prevention of cruelty to animals through education, law enforcement and intervention.

**SAY GOODBYE** to the world famous Pacific Wheel, but don't worry... Santa Monica residents ride the wheel free one last time from April 28th through May 4th. Provide proof of Santa Monica residency (driver's license, local bill, etc.) and receive one free ride on the Pacific Wheel. (A maximum of 4 riders per Santa Monica resident.)

**AND** ... enter to win a chance to be the final rider before the wheel comes down. Between April 28th and May 1st you may enter to win at any Pacific Park ticket booth. Winner will be drawn on May 2nd and need not be present to win.

**PLUS** ... ride free and help support spcaLA. Pacific Park will donate \$1.00 to spcaLA for every person that rides the wheel on May 4th.



(310) 260-8744

WWW.PACPARK.COM

Pacific Park THE FAMILY AMUSEMENT PARK ON THE SANTA MONICA PIER 380 Santa Monica Pier • Santa Monica, CA 90401