

PANIL Notes

Volume 34 Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League - PO Box 20375, Oakland 94620 Aug/Sept 2009

Green Donation Boxes Reported as Dubious International Charity

By Valerie Winemiller

Green clothing donation boxes have appeared on the Avenue, at the Blockbuster parking lot and behind 4000-4008 Piedmont, accessible from the Piedmont Grocery parking lot. Signs on the boxes tout "Campus California TG" (CCTG). This is an affiliate of Tvind, a Denmark-based alleged charity, which also has donation boxes under the name "Gaia." Tvind, CCTG and Gaia have been the subject of a number of negative news reports over recent years.

A "CBS 30 Minutes" piece (aired in December 2006) said the proceeds from CCTG's clothing collection efforts in California are funneled to Tvind's sister organizations and used to enrich the organization's leaders—with little benefit to the poor. The Chicago Tribune estimated that less than 6% of the proceeds from the green bins there went to a non-profit, and even that was hard to trace.

Critics point out that donations to CCTG siphon needed income from other charities; in 2005, Oakland collections from boxes bearing the Gaia label equalled those of Salvation Army and were valued at about \$3 million. By Danish police estimates, Tvind now has over \$860 million dollars in assets which the

Continued on page 3

Director Bares BART's Challenges

By William Manley

At the August PANIL meeting, BART Director Bob Franklin, representing the area from Kensington to Castro Valley, spoke to an audience of 30 interested and involved neighbors. He appeared on the eve of a very critical BART Board meeting that was to decide whether to impose a contract, risking a strike, or to return to the bargaining table with the five unions involved. As the PANIL meeting commenced, two unions had ratified the new contract and a third had rejected it. (On the following afternoon a strike was announced, but tentative agreement was reached three days later).

The strike situation commanded the first 25 minutes of meeting. Mr. Franklin said that the length of the contract was the most contentious issue, from labor's point of view. Union representatives were pushing for two years; they felt that a four-year contract on the table did not give them the option to broker a better deal soon enough. Management felt that without the longer contract, BART could not plan adequately.

Health care benefits were also an issue – as they are in so many labor negotiations these days. Even though costs have skyrocketed, union members continue to pay \$85 a month, regardless of the actual cost of the health plan they choose. There is wide disparity in the cost of plans offered.

Asked how BART operators' compensation ranked with others in the country, Mr. Franklin commented they were among the highest. One woman in the audience who worked for a different transit agency said her BART counterparts earned 30% more. Asked about overtime pay, the Director noted that the average BART wage employee earns \$22,000 in overtime annually.

He could not assess the economic impact of a strike, but stated it would be crippling. Because 60% of BART's income is from fares, the effects would be felt long after any strike is concluded. Past experience has taught that BART riders who switch to bus service

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PANIL Monthly Meeting: Wed., Sept 9 — 7:30 p.m.

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council — 7:30 pm
Paul Brekke-Miesner our Neighborhood Services Coordinator

General Meeting — 8:00 pm

Piedmont Gardens, 110 41st Street — 11th Floor Sky Room

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BART (continued from page 1)

might not return to BART (good for AC – bad for BART).

The next topic was the status of the MacArthur Transit Village. As PANIL members are well aware, this has been “coming” for 20 years. Developers have been on the verge of breaking ground only to get cold feet for one reason or the other. Mr. Franklin said the project is still moving forward. It will contain 500+ units of housing, 40,000 square feet of retail, and a pedestrian plaza. Parking will be reduced as BART is making an effort (however faint) to encourage riders to get to BART stations by some means other than a single-occupancy vehicle. While the project may be alive, the Director could not provide any timeline for groundbreaking.

There was a lengthy discussion of the new Translink card, a single stored value credit-card pass to be used (some day) on all transit systems in the Bay Area. Still in a trial phase, it has been plagued by an unacceptably high error rate (37%) but Mr. Franklin was confident the problems would be fixed in short order. Some discounts (e.g. \$45 for a \$48 paper ticket) will be available when Translink is fully implemented.

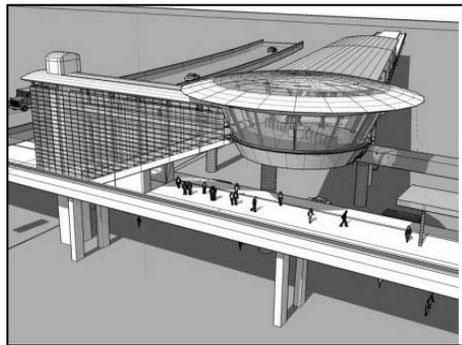
A good public transit link to the Oakland Airport has been on the wish lists of many East Bay residents. Unfortunately when BART was built in the 60’s (and for some Directors still) the focus was put on getting people from the suburbs to downtown San Francisco. Airport connections were an afterthought. By 2000, BART finally connected to SFO. But connecting to the Oakland Airport from BART still requires patrons to take their suitcases one flight down, using stairs or escalator, walk out of the station, get on a bus, pay the bus fee, and take the 12-30 minute ride to the airport. As patronage of the Oakland Airport has increased, so has the use of the Air-BART. (In fact, with the \$3.00 fare, it is one of the few transit services that actually pays for itself). There is a new proposal for an elevated light rail (like SFO, or JFK in NY) to take passengers to the airport for a projected price of \$6.00 each way. The big selling points are the projected travel time of only 12-15 min-

utes and the fact that passengers would not have to leave the BART station to board the trains. (However, with a recent bid change, the estimated time is likely to change to 15-18 minutes.) The big downside is the revised cost, now projected over \$500 million, more than 4 times the estimates in Measure B, passed by voters in 2000. An improved bus proposal is also under consideration, with lower cost estimates, but Mr. Franklin said he was skeptical of those numbers.

The Director fielded questions on the Oscar Grant shooting, and made it clear that BART took the matter very seriously and would soon announce major reforms including a civilian panel to oversee BART police operations.

Mr. Franklin touched on some of the pricing inequities, such as parking fees at urban stations and free parking in the suburbs. He stated that fees for parking would soon be imposed at many more stations in the near future to even out the burden. With parking structure costs now topping \$50,000 per space, it is virtually impossible politically to get parking to pay for itself.

When the meeting adjourned at 9:00, topics like bicycle accommodation, route extensions and BART overall finances had not even been touched. The meeting could easily have continued another hour.



Rendering of Coliseum BART station with airport connector line

Donation Boxes Reported as Dubious International Charity
(continued)

Danish government says include luxury homes, yachts and plantations.

As of April this year, the leader of the Tvind movement, Mogens Amdi Petersen and its spokesperson, Poul Jørgensen, are fugitives, both thought to be in countries—either Mexico or in Africa—where there are no existing extradition treaties with Denmark. The spokesperson is evading a 20-year sentence for tax fraud and embezzlement. Amdi Petersen is to be indicted on similar charges, but the government will not file them until he can be located. He was last seen in Mexico in 2006.

Legitimate groups benefitting local people would welcome your donations, including the Discovery Shop of the American Cancer Society, 127-41st Street; Claussen House Thrift Shop, 4834 Telegraph Avenue (benefitting programs and housing for developmentally disabled adults); as well as the local branches of Goodwill Industries, Salvation Army and St.Vincent DePaul.

To reach Blockbuster with comments, leave a message for District Manager Edward Campuzano at 800-940-2232, x1987. Campuzano has not returned several phone calls regarding this issue.

There are a number of websites about this group

- <http://www.tvindalert.com/>
(founded in 1999 as a journalistic endeavor and expanded since with the support of many informants and "victims of the Teachers Group;" they receive no funding of any kind.)
- <http://www.rickcross.com/groups/tvind.html>
- <http://www.clothingbincult.com/>
- <http://cbs5.com/30minutes/bhind.green.box.2.451581.htm>

**ADOPT-A-SPOT
Clean Up Day at Key Route**

At the first meeting of the Key Route Parking Lot Clean Up committee on Saturday, 8/22, volunteers trimmed bushes, dug out ivy, cut down dead plants, and picked up litter. There's still more to be done as we continue with the Piedmont Avenue Merchant Association's effort to maintain our two plazas (Piedmont Plaza and Key Route Plaza) and the area around our branch library in the Adopt-A-Spot Program. If you're interested in helping send your contact information to contact@piedmontavenuermerchants.org.



Ronile Lahti, Phil Liang, Ruby Long, Mike Lydon, Jan Gabelle pose with the mass of vegetation they removed in the clean up of Key Route Plaza. Photo by Phil Laing.

Car Burglaries Up, Crimes Against Persons Down

Piedmont Avenue neighborhood is one of several North Oakland areas hit hard by auto burglaries since June 1, reports Oakland Police Captain Anthony Toribio. Vehicles most frequently targeted are Toyota Corolla, Honda Accord, Toyota Camry, and Honda Civic. Neighbors are urged to report all suspicious activity and crimes to OPD by calling 777-3333. Police remind us to "harden the targets"—do not leave things in vehicles, lock doors and windows. Pay attention to what's going on around you and to strangers in your neighborhood.

At the same time that car burglaries are up, reported incidents against a person so far this year are down by 28% in our beat from 2008, an analysis of OPD statistics reveals.

Reminder from OPD: Use 777-3333 to report a crime after it has occurred. Use 911 when an IMMEDIATE police, fire, or medical response is necessary to protect lives or property. Use 777-3333 in all non-emergency situations.

Calendar

For more neighborhood events go to www.panil.org/calendar.

PANIL Meeting

2nd Wednesday of the month
7:30 to 9 p.m.
Piedmont Gardens
110 41st Street
11th Floor Sky Room

PANIL Steering Committee meets monthly

For thje time, date and place of the meeting, email contact@panil.org

Glen Echo Creek Work Day

2nd Saturday of the month
Monte Vista Avenue, 9:30 a.m.
654-1930

Mt. View Cemetery Tour

Docent led tour
2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month
10 a.m., FREE

Oakland Heritage Alliance

Tours of Oakland areas continue through the end of September. House tours take place in October.

For information contact:
www.oaklandheritage.org,
763-9218

Piedmont Avenue Branch Library

160 41st Street, 597-5011

Storytimes

Toddlers
Wednesday, 10:15 a.m.
Pre school
Wednesday, 11 a.m.

Saturday Knitting Club
Every Saturday 3 to 4 p.m.

To place an item on PANIL's calendars, send e-mail to: contact@panil.org



This page
Top left: Kempton Way
Top right: Monte Cresta Ave.
Center: Entrada Ave. Glen, and Arroyuelo
Bottom: Montell, Robley Terrace and 100 block of Monte Vista Ave.

Opposite page
Top: Rio Vista Ave.
Center right top photo: 4200 block of Montgomery
Center right lower photo: Ramona and Pleasant Valley Courts North and South
Center left: Brandon St.
Bottom: Glen, Glen Eden, Echo

Photographs are by Margitta Gardner, Marcia Lam of L'Amx Tea Bar, Ronile Lahti, and Phil Laing. These great photos are in color when you view PANIL Notes on the PANIL website, www.PANIL.org.



**2009 National Night Out
For PANIL Neighbors**



Safeway's Rockridge Shopping Center Plans Are Panned at the Planning Commission's Scoping Hearing

By Stu Flashman

Reprinted with permission of the Rockridge News

Safeway has said it wants to hear from the public about its proposed plans for a "redo" of the aging Rockridge Shopping Center. It certainly got an earful on July 16th, at the Oakland Planning Commission scoping session. The public hearing was intended to receive comments on the scope of potential impacts that should be studied for the project's environmental impact report.

Safeway's plans call for increasing the size of the shopping center, currently about 185,000 sq. ft., by 110,000 sq. ft. Most of the center's buildings would be replaced by two story structures, with the Safeway itself expanding from 50,000 sq. ft. to 65,000 sq. ft. and moving to the space now occupied by the Longs Drugs/CVS store. That store would be replaced by a much smaller 15,000 sq. ft. conventional drug store—about 25% its current size. Most of the parking (1000 spaces in all) would continue to be surface parking spread over the lot.

The Commissioners heard from several neighborhood groups, including Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC), as well as other interested citizens. In addition to its testimony at the hearing, RCPC also submitted a six-page comment letter to the City. The overwhelming sense was that Safeway's plans had major problems and would need a lot of revision. In addition to RCPC, other groups weighing in included Friends and Neighbors of College Ave. ("FANS"), the Temescal area's Standing Together for Accountable Neighborhood Development ("STAND"), and Urbanists for a Livable Temescal Rockridge Area ("ULTRA"). PANIL was unable to have a representative attend the hearing, but has submitted written comments. While the groups have sometimes been at odds with one another on past North Oakland development projects, there was a notable unity in rejecting the Safeway proposal. Indeed, several Commissioners commented on how unusual it was to have the entire community speak with one united voice.

Speaker after speaker pointed out the project's potentially damaging transportation, air quality,

public safety, and other impacts. The speakers also emphasized the need to look beyond Safeway's proposal at more urban, transit-oriented, and community-integrated alternatives. Several specifically referenced a study that the City itself had commissioned two years earlier for a commercial "node" at the Broadway/51st Street intersection.

After the speakers had finished, the Commissioners had their say as well. They complemented the speakers for exceptionally cogent and well-thought-out comments, and then the Commissioners one after another chastised Safeway for its unimaginative suburban-styled proposal. The Commissioners echoed the speakers in asking for a more urban alternative proposal, and made it clear that major changes would be needed if Safeway expected to get Commission approval. It remains to be seen how well Safeway heard the message.

Commissioners chastised Safeway for its unimaginative design and echoed the speakers in asking for a more urban proposal

My neighborhood gym!

"After working out here for years, I bought the place! Come check out our innovative new equipment & classes. Say 'Lisa sent me' and get a *FREE WORKOUT*"

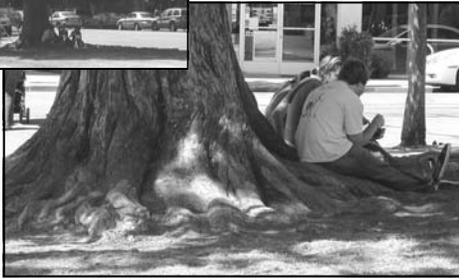
-Lisa Gartland, gym owner

Inside Outside Fitness

* New members only * (510) 655-8308
www.InsideOutsideFitness.com
4444 Piedmont Ave, Oakland, CA 94611

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PIEDMONT AVE PHOTO GALLERY

A View of the Avenue

Our neighborhood is filled with interesting sights.

The tallest tree provides the best seating in the shade on the lawn at Piedmont Avenue Elementary School.

We invite photographers to send photos taken on the Avenue or in the neighborhood to contact@panil.org.

School Board Director **Jody London**

Invites you to a District 1

TOWN HALL MEETING

With

Oakland's New Superintendent:

Anthony Smith, Ph.D

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

7 – 8:30 p.m.

Oakland International High School,

4521 Webster Street, Oakland

For more information and to RSVP:

Jody London

Jody.London@ousd.k12.ca.us

510-459-0667

A veteran of the Bay Area education reform movement and a champion for equity in schools, Smith's tenure in OUSD began on July 1, 2009. Formerly, Smith served as Deputy Superintendent for the 56,000-student San Francisco Unified School District from November 2007 through June 2009, earning lavish praise from the community for his work in the areas of innovation, instruction and social justice.



He has also served as Superintendent of the Emery Unified School District (2004-2007) and before that as Director of the Emeryville Citywide Initiative, with particular responsibility for the Math, Science, Technology Initiative (MSTI), a joint project of the school district, the City of Emeryville, the Emery Ed Fund and the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES). In this role, Smith fostered the development of a local, state and federal agenda promoting greater attention to parent, community and teacher voices as well as the creation and support of high-quality, equitable, small autonomous schools.

Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League

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www.panil.org



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GREATER MOSSWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Cooperation Among Agencies and Neighbors Brings a Tot Lot to Mosswood Park

By Carla Paliaga

The Mosswood Park Tot Lot within Mosswood Park at Broadway and Macarthur grew out of a community initiated grant proposal in June of 2007 when the Greater Mosswood Neighborhood Association first applied for an initial grant of \$50,000 from the NPI (Neighborhood Program Initiative), then raised more funds and formed partnerships among the City of Oakland (CEDA,) Oakland Parks and Recreation, the neighboring community and local businesses such as PGA design—the group which gave its time, pro bono, to complete the initial conceptual design.

Soon, Kaiser Permanente, at the request of a community member, volunteered time to working with Oakland Parks and Recreation. The City of Oakland eventually formalized this partnership through Kaiser's Conditions of Approval related to the construction of their new hospital.

From June 2007 through June 2009 funds raised included \$100,000 in NPI grants, \$20,000 in City of Oakland ADA funds, and \$80,000 from Kaiser Permanente.

Throughout this process there has also been a significant amount of time donated by Kaiser Permanente and Kaiser's construction partners, nbbj and McCarthy Building Company. Up to this point all design documents have been donated by nbbj.

The original design used the space next to the historic Moss House, but due to concerns over trees and concerns about historic preservation expressed by the City of Oakland's Cultural Heritage survey, the



If you are interested in joining the Mosswood Tot Lot Community yahoo group, please visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MosswoodTotLotCommunity/join> or send an email to MosswoodTotLotCommunity-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Tot Lot has been moved adjacent to the existing playground for 5-12 year olds..

At a community meeting at the end of June , community members gave feedback to the architects at nbbj regarding which playground features were preferred. The entrance gate will likely be moved based on feedback. Swings were prioritized over a covered sandbox in the event of budget constraints with the rationale that a sandbox will be easier to add later. There is the potential to add more features, particularly art, to the playground through additional fundraising and community efforts.

OVER 20 FAMILIES -

Huge Neighborhood Yard Sale, Saturday September 12 9:00 to 3:00

Plymouth Church, corner of Oakland and Monte Vista Avenues

For other information, call Karen at 510 658 9588