

# PANIL Notes

Volume 33 Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League - PO Box 20375, Oakland 94620

January 2008

## ASKED ON THE AVENUE

### What Do You Think of the New Parking Meters?



**Peter DaSilva**  
Moraga Ave.

I like them. It's convenient to be able to use a credit card, and I can use the receipt for my business records.



**Allison Skidgel**  
42<sup>nd</sup> St.

They take some getting used to! I do like that they seem to be an honest system, unlike the old meters, which could easily be jammed or broken.



**Carolyn Raymond**  
Monte Vista Ave.

They're OK. I wish we could use bills, though—I'd rather use cash than a credit card, and sometimes I don't have coins.



**McGregor Bullard**  
Ramona Ave.

Inconvenient! I don't like having to make two trips—to the meter, then back to the car to put the ticket on the dashboard.



**Lynda Dann**  
Montgomery St.

The new meters don't tell you how much time you've paid for—only when your time is up. If you don't know what time it is when you parked, you're screwed.

Photos by  
Joyce Benna

### Oakland Shops for Stores

*From Staff Reports*

"For years, wherever I've gone in Oakland, people have asked me why we don't have more stores, and why we have to travel to Emeryville or Walnut Creek to shop."

With those words, Oakland City Councilmember Jane Brunner established the theme for her Dec. 1 community meeting, the most recent of her Saturday-morning town halls. More than 60 people attended the event, which was held at Peralta Elementary School.

Retail is high on many Oaklanders' list of concerns. The city had expected 250 people to respond to its recent survey on the subject. Instead, it received 2,300 responses.

The principal speaker at Peralta was Denise Conley, a real estate economist and retail consultant—and Oakland resident—who recently completed a study of Oakland's retail landscape. The study was commissioned about a year ago by the City Council at the urging of Brunner and fellow councilmember Pat Kernighan. Its recommendations include sweeping changes for the section of Broadway currently known as Auto Row.

Conley laid the groundwork for her presentation by explaining the difference between "convenience" and "comparison" retail. Convenience stores include dry cleaners, grocery stores, and drugstores. Comparison stores sell items such as apparel, gifts, jewelry, and home furnishings. Despite a few successful retail areas such as Piedmont Avenue, Conley said, Oakland is lacking in comparison retail. The city's only major department store is Sears.

As a result, Oakland suffers from "leakage," the draining away of local dollars to other communities. "Per capita retail sales in Emeryville are more than 10 times greater than in Oakland," Conley said. (See chart on page 2.) Conley estimated that Oaklanders should be spending \$1.5 billion in Oakland—three times as much as they now spend. The disparity translates to a loss of as much as \$10 million in sales-tax revenue and about 10,400 jobs in the city each year.

A loss of as much as \$10 million in sales tax revenue

Reversing that trend requires a "critical mass" of land and retail space, Conley said—about 10 acres and 450,000 square feet. The most promising location for that critical mass is Upper Broadway, roughly between

Continued on page 2

### January PANIL Meeting Wednesday, Jan 9, 7:30 p.m.

7:30-8 p.m.— Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council

8-9 p.m. — 2008 Issues on the Feb. 5 Ballot  
Reviewed by League of Women Voters

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

**Piedmont Avenue  
Neighborhood  
Improvement League**  
PO Box 20375  
Oakland CA 94620  
[www.panil.org](http://www.panil.org)

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**Oakland Shops for Stores**

(Continued from page 1)

27<sup>th</sup> Street and Interstate 580. Car dealers are leaving this neighborhood in favor of the area around the Coliseum and airport.

To make an investment worthwhile, it would have to be developed as mixed retail and residential, because residential development can bring in as much as \$200 per square foot, while retail brings in less than half as much.

“Retail is the weak sister in land value,” Conley said. “That’s why it doesn’t happen accidentally.” She said successful developments such as Walnut Creek’s Broadway Plaza

Successful developments require a clear plan and the political will to turn down proposals that don’t follow the plan.

resulted from a clear plan and the political will to turn down proposals that didn’t follow the plan.

The Upper Broadway plan represents Phase 1 of Conley’s recommendations. Its success would encourage more retailers to do business in the city, Conley said.

Conley acknowledged that serious challenges lie ahead: improving public safety, reducing property crimes, and balancing access to stores without adding excessive traffic. Looming in the background is the mortgage and credit crisis.

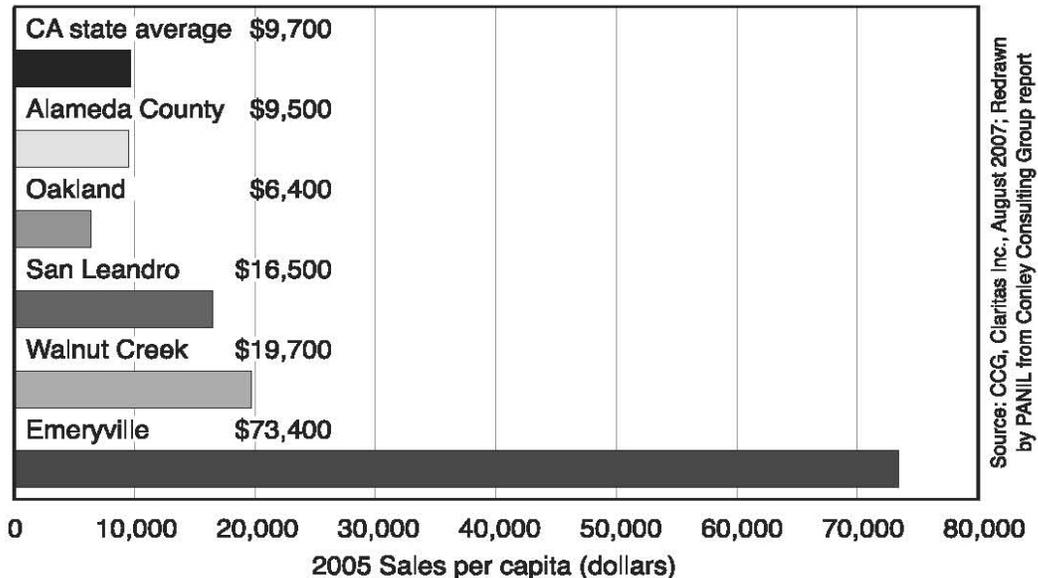
Following Conley on the agenda was Scott Silvera, owner of Scout, the six-year-old home-accessory store and staging business that recently relocated from Rockridge to Temescal. Silvera spoke

candidly about the challenges of owning a retail business in Oakland, including vandalism and armed robbery. He has also refused to compromise on his commitment to paying employees a living wage. At one point, while his store was still on College Avenue, he was losing \$10,000 a month.

Silvera turned his fortunes around by augmenting his retail business with a service offering—home staging—that gave him added exposure in the community. Today he’s upbeat about the outlook for retail. “If anyone wants to start a new business in Oakland, send them to me,” he said. “I’d be glad to help!”

During the audience-comment portion of the meeting, several speakers applauded the Conley report and brought up general and specific concerns, including the need to design with sensitivity to adjacent residences and to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. Some speakers mentioned the need for unique stores that sell quality merchandise. Others spoke against “big-box” retail. A few others supported offering tax incentives to attract and retain merchants.

Several audience members expressed their concern about crime control. Shoplifting is not prosecuted in Oakland, Brunner acknowledged. She will convene another meeting devoted to crime.



COULD AFFECT PIEDMONT AVE. PERMIT

### Cabaret Permit Rule Changes

The City Council is expected to pass changes to rules for granting (and revoking) cabaret permits on Jan. 15. A cabaret permit allows live music and dancing; it is granted by the Office of the City Administrator. Rules in place since at least 1949 have forbidden permits within 300 feet of public schools, libraries or places of worship.

The proposed changes would allow case-by-case discretion. In response to concerns from PANIL and the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC)—both groups have had problem venues in their neighborhoods in the past—several changes have been made to the current process. Public notification procedures have been significantly broadened and comment time lengthened (changes PANIL first requested in 1993). There will be a hearing with appeal rights. Background checks of management and performance standards have been enhanced, and a stronger enforcement and revocation process has been created.

The code revisions are being requested by the Fox Theater renovation project, which shares a building with the charter school of performing arts, and by Cafe Trieste, which has leased a space within 300 feet of the Piedmont Avenue Branch Library. Councilmember Jane Brunner's office has provided copies of proposed revisions and made revisions in response to comments from PANIL and RCPC.

### A Senior Village for Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood?

Judith Coates of Echo Avenue has issued a call to neighbors saying she would like to meet with others interested in developing a senior village in the Piedmont Avenue area. "I'm hoping to gather a group and schedule a meeting early in the new year," said Coates.

As described in the SF Chronicle article "It Takes a Village" (12/12/07 in the Home section), a senior village is a membership program designed to enable people to stay in their own homes by providing support and services needed as they age.

For more information, contact Judith Coates by phone 653-1183 or by e-mail [jdcoates13@yahoo.com](mailto:jdcoates13@yahoo.com).

### Calendar

(for more neighborhood events go to [www.panil.org/calendar](http://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

email [contact@panil.org](mailto:contact@panil.org) for time, date and place of monthly meeting

#### 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 Saturday of the month  
10 a.m., FREE

#### Events at the Chapel of the Chimes

4499 Piedmont Avenue  
654-0123

#### Historical and Botanical Tour

3rd Saturday of the month  
10 a.m. to noon, FREE

#### Jazz at the Chimes

3rd Sunday of the month  
\$20/children under 12 FREE  
2 to 4 p.m.

#### Oakland Heritage Alliance Lecture Series

2nd Thursday of the month  
7:30 p.m.

\$5 OHA members/\$10 non-members/\$5 low income  
For more information contact:  
[www.oaklandheritage.org](http://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](mailto:contact@panil.org)



**The Jazz & Justice Church**

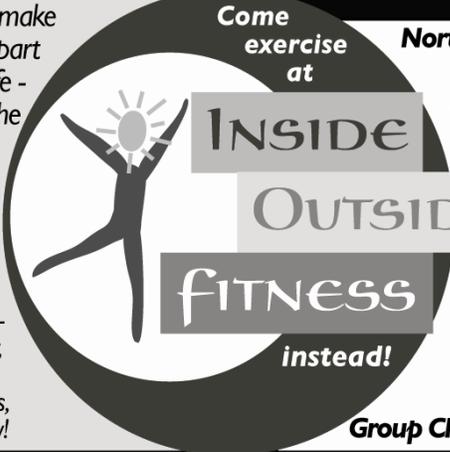
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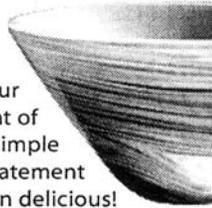
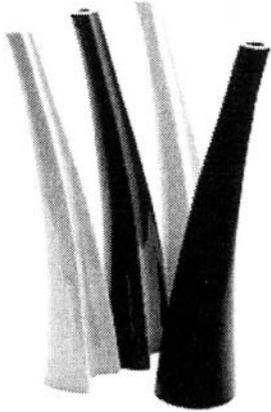
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### January Hearing Expected for 412 Monte Vista Development

A public hearing on the 40-unit condo development proposed for 412 Monte Vista Ave. is expected to be held before the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board on Monday, Jan. 14, at 6 p.m. at City Hall, One Frank Ogawa Plaza. To confirm the date, go to the web page for the Planning Commission Meetings — [www.oaklandnet.com](http://www.oaklandnet.com) — and scroll down to Landmarks Preservation Agenda. Download the city's staff report from the same page.



View of proposed development from Monte Vista at Harrison. The historic mansion is lifted and moved to the lot's front corner. Rendering courtesy of Kirk Peterson and Associates, architects



This hearing will focus on impacts to the historic mansion, designed by Walter Mathews. The board will hear suggestions for further study in the focused Environmental Impact Report.

Later hearings before the Planning Commission will consider the entire project. For project description and house history, download the March 2007 PANIL Notes and the architect's renderings from [www.panil.org](http://www.panil.org).

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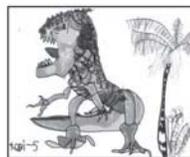
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## Best of the Avenue

BY SHOPGIRL

Welcome to PANIL Notes' first annual tribute to the best shops and services in the Piedmont Avenue neighborhood! Many thanks to everyone who sent in nominations—there were about 40 of you, too many to list individually. When comments were attached to the nominations, I've included them here. Please note that if I couldn't confirm the name, or if it isn't actually in our neighborhood, it doesn't appear here.

We hope you'll continue to patronize the merchants and service providers listed here. And if you discover someone else we should know about, please let us know: [shopgirl@panil.org](mailto:shopgirl@panil.org).

### FOOD AND DRINK

Best place to take out-of-town visitors: **Cesar, Ninna, Bay Wolf.**

Best place for a celebration: **JoJo** ("I had my 60th birthday celebration there for 25 friends and family and everyone left feeling well fed, well taken care of and with smiles on their faces"). Also recommended: **Bay Wolf.**

Best place for a date: **Dopo.**

Best breakfast: **Piedmont Café and Bakery** ("good fresh food; pleasant, efficient help").

Best sandwich: "The roast beef sandwich at **Dopo**," "Gyros at **Simply Greek**," "The Bali Wrap at **Baja Taqueria**," "Anything at **Gregoire's**," and "The tuna sandwich at **Rooz**—to die for!"

Best sushi: **Geta Sushi** (41<sup>st</sup> Street)

Best alternative to Fenton's: **Tango Gelato.**

Best take-out food: **Little Shin Shin.**

Best men of meat: **Piedmont Grocery.** "The butchers will cut anything you want exactly to order. Want a quarter-pound of chicken breast? Salmon filet in 2-inch pieces? No problem! *And* they will invariably be able to tell you how to cook it. Several different ways."

Best coffee: **Peet's.**

Best Mexican mocha: **Gaylord's.**

Best plantains: **Tropix.**

Best late-night hangout: **Kerry House:** "An authentic neighborhood dive-bar with a great juke box! You can order Indian food from Raj (next door) and eat it at the Kerry while playing a game of pool and drinking beer." Runners-up: **Cesar, Tiki Bar, Park Ave. Grill.**

Best anytime hangout: **L'Amyx.**

Most venerable restaurant: **J's.** "Some 40 years ago my babysitter would bring my friends and me on the bus from San Francisco to go to Lake Temescal. We had to transfer at the intersection of 41st and Piedmont so we sometimes got a snack at J's. I think it was called J's even back then."

### CLOTHING AND ACCESSORIES

Best menswear: **Anatoly's.** "Okay, it's the *only* menswear store on the avenue. But it would be worth a prize even if the field were crowded. Owner Tony Kisilyov, originally from Kiev, sells European suits in amazing colors and patterns, shirts with interesting details like square buttons, and the most extraordinary shoes you'll ever see. (Giraffe slip-ons, anyone?) Fast, expert alterations, too."

Best women's clothing: **McMullen** ("I'm drooling ... and saving up for a splurge!"). Also recommended: **Abigail.**

Best jewelry: **Philippa Roberts, A Step Forward, Given Gold.**

### CHILDREN

Most family-friendly restaurant: They *love* kids at **Holly's Mandarin** ("fast, friendly, and very helpful for kids"). Also recommended: **Mekong, Lo Coco's, Barney's** and **Park Avenue Grill.**

Best kids' clothing: **Crackerjacks, Baby Alula.**

Best place to take the kids: **Cato's.** Yes, it calls itself an ale house, but "on Sunday afternoons there's free live music and room for kids and adults to dance!" Also: **Kids In Motion Gymnastics** (gymnastics classes) and "story time" at the **library.**

### SERVICES

Best dry cleaner: **Sunny Piedmont** ("friendly staff, state-of-the-art equipment, excellent attention to detail"), **Dry Clean Time, Mee Rae.**

Best alterations: **Irena Studio.** "After you drop off your pants to be hemmed, you can do a little shopping—Irena carries her own clothing designs as well as well-priced accessories."

Best copy store: **Piedmont Copy, Piedmont Systems.**

Best small bike store: **Pioneer Bike Shop** on Rio Vista, just off the avenue. "Very reasonable bike tuneups and repairs."

Best tax preparer: **Mike Harrar of The Tax Pros.** "Not only is he really really cute, but he used to work for the IRS, is great to work with, is very smart, and has saved us lots of money." Adjacent to 7-11 at 4187 Piedmont.

## Best of the Avenue

Continued from page 5

### SHOPPING

Best bookstore: **Black Swan** (used), **Spectator Books** (used and new).

Best bargains: Readers are saving while they spend at **Dress Best for Less**, **American Cancer Society Discovery Shop**, and **Surprise!**

Best stationery store: **Piedmont Stationers**. "They have just about all office supplies covered, plus the oddest and funniest other 'gifty' stuff, like Dalai Lama paper dolls and George Bush chewing gum." Another reader offered this: "Best service from the store with the employees who have the most piercings."

Best gift store: There's something for everyone at **Pimlico Place**, **Bee's Knees**, **Waterlilies**, **Folks' Art**, and **Greetings**.

Best place to buy gifts for kids (and grown-up guys): **Dr. Comics and Mr. Games**.

### HOME

Best lighting store: **Piedmont Lighting**. "Owner Slavash Haddad's current lamp repair service (with new switch and cord) is only \$12! Great supply of quality lamps."

Best florist: **J. Miller** ("their flower arrangements are extraordinary and their gifts unusual") and **Mille Fiori** ("fresh and appealing—like being on a street in Paris.")

### HEALTH

Best family doctor: **Stephen Sommer, M.D.**

Best chiropractor: **Alive Chiropractic**.

Best dentist: **Dr. Noushin Pirnazar**.

Best massage: **Laura Russell** (434-1189). "Yes, she lives in the neighborhood!"

Best spa: **Piedmont Springs**. "Can't beat the indoor/outdoor tubs—especially in the rain."

Best place to work out: **Inside Outside Fitness**. "A comfortable, privately owned gym right here on Piedmont Avenue; gorgeous wood-floored exercise room with natural light; no sales pressure." And let's not forget "walking in **Mountain View Cemetery**."

### BEAUTY

Best nail salon: **Sassy Nails**. "They are so happy every time I walk in: 'Hi! How lovely to see you! We missed you! Pick your polish!' They have lovely new spa chairs (I only get pedicures); the place is clean as a whistle and they

give lovely foot massages. All for \$20 plus tip." Also recommended: **Nails Today**, **Polish on Piedmont**.

Best hair salon: **Skye Salon**, **Connie's**, and **Charles Hunt** all received enthusiastic recommendations.

Best aesthetician: **Li Hoo** at **Piedmont Hairport**.

### ET CETERA

Most welcome addition in 2007: The most votes went to the eclectic magazine shop **Issues** ("Great selection and friendly staff. Also offers a collection of cool: unusual tee shirts and other odd and interesting knickknacks"; "Fills a void on the avenue; friendly proprietors; browsing and hanging out encouraged; a shop with a personality.") Runners-up included **Il Piemonte** (the new condo development), **Xyclo**, **Piedmont Yarn and Apparel**, **Piedmont Fabric**, and **Paws on Piedmont**.

Best video rental store: **Video Room**. "The best and most entertaining and interesting staff on the avenue!"

Most nostalgic: Readers experience "the way it was" at **Piedmont Branch library**, **Fenton's**, **Piedmont Theater**.

Best reason not to stay home on Saturday night: "The opportunity to win a prize at the **Piedmont Theater**."

Shop whose employees seem to be having the best time: **Philippa Roberts**. "All those dogs, and people chatting away in the back while busily making jewelry."

Best wireless connection: **Rooz**.

Best deal: "The **Piedmont Avenue Elementary School** merchants' card that I bought at a school fundraiser. It cost \$10 and offers discounts at many avenue shops for a year."

Best secret destination: **Mountain View Cemetery** and **Chapel of the Chimes**.



Photo by Richard Friedman

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Photo by Richard Friedman

### PIEDMONT AVE PHOTO GALLERY

#### A View of the Avenue

Our neighborhood is filled with characteristic sights. PANIL area resident Richard Friedman has been taking pictures of Piedmont Avenue and Mountain View Cemetery for his photo blog at [www.rchrd.com/photo](http://www.rchrd.com/photo). They are collected under the category "Oakland," with new images added almost daily.

We invite other photographers to send pictures taken on the Avenue or in the neighborhood to [www.panil.org](http://www.panil.org).



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## Kaiser Revises M/B Center Site Plan

by Valerie Winemiller

Kaiser and its architects showed further design revisions to neighbors at a Dec. 3 community meeting, the fourth in a series at Mosswood Recreation Center. The NBBJ Architects team has been creative, and repeatedly found solutions to neighbors' concerns Kaiser management had earlier said couldn't be changed. (This is a different team than the one which designed Phase 1, currently under construction.) In response to neighbors' comments at the Oct. 22 community meeting, the architects had found a way to bury the ambulance parking "in the belly of the building." This allows more landscaping on Piedmont Avenue.

At nearly 1 million square feet and 40 feet taller than the existing hospital (with mechanicals), the hospital base and tower will be a dominating presence on the neighborhood. In spite of its size, there is room only for Kaiser functions, Kaiser now says, not outside retailers. But the architects stated an intent to have the street level "activated" and "as transparent as possible." Storefront-style glass walls would be used for the cafeteria, pharmacy waiting rooms, gift/flower shop, conference and education rooms, and other public functions.

The MacArthur Boulevard facade of the base now zig-zags along the shallow curve of the street, creating triangular landscaped areas. While there is no vehicle through-connection, a landscaped plaza aligns with the end of Westall Street and creates a visual and pedestrian corridor from Piedmont Avenue to Mosswood Park. Roof gardens are being considered for the top of the podium (base). These green areas would be visible from houses along the hillside above Piedmont Avenue.

The garage, entered from Broadway by the freeway, will be screened by a "green wall" of vines. The hospital base is proposed to be stucco panels with random-sized window accents of enameled metal panels. The hospital tower itself would be two tones of the same metal panels.

For the hospital interior, a number of strategies are to be employed to improve the inside environment as well as reduce its impact. These include water and energy use,

waste and recycling strategies, high ventilation and avoidance of toxic materials.

### Building Design Tied to Signage

Neighbors had objected strongly to Kaiser's sign master plan as containing too many over sized signs (see Sept. '07 PANIL Notes). The architects are now working with the sign design firm on revisions. "Signs are band-aids," NBBJ architect Jeffrey Bailey said in his presentation. "The architecture should be so clear that you don't need band-aids." Bailey went on to describe how window size and placement and other design elements will act as "intuitive signage" for building function and entry locations. The revisions to the master plan for signs will be publicly available by the time you read this in January.

### Commissioners Echo Neighbor Concerns

The members of the Planning Commission Design Review Committee echoed a number of neighbors' earlier concerns. Commissioners Doug Boxer and Madeleine Zayas Mart both urged that the tower be revised to reduce its visual bulk and monolithic quality, including use of greater articulation and rhythm and patterns (such as more interesting window placement). Zayas Mart wanted to protect Broadway's character from a parking garage facade and urged a shallow retail space on the street level, as well as more active uses on the street level of the rest of the block. She also asked for a better visual relationship between the hospital tower and the end of Howe Street.

Commissioner Suzie Lee, who was very supportive of Kaiser's proposals without revisions during the EIR and zoning approval process, again praised the project and had no suggestions for improvement.

The hospital tower must also go through a lengthy state permitting process at the agency which licenses hospitals. The rest of the base/podium is subject only to city design and building code regulations and can be approved more quickly. At least one more community meeting will be held before the project returns to Design Review in February. PANIL will send e-mail announcements of the meeting.