

PANIL Notes

Volume 34

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

July 2009

LARGER REDESIGN PROPOSED

Safeway Revises Rockridge Shopping Center Plans

by Valerie Winemiller

Safeway Corporation held open house meetings on June 23 and 25 to show neighbors their latest plans for the Rockridge Shopping Center. The Longs/ CVS lease runs out in 2011, and in 2007, Safeway announced plans to take over the site for an expanded Safeway store of 75,000 square feet (see the September 2007 issue of PANIL Notes at www.panil.org/newsletter). At that time, many in the community criticized the proposal for leaving intact the rest of the overly auto-oriented and transit- and pedestrian-unfriendly mall.

Safeway's new proposal responds partially to this criticism, with new stores added to the Pleasant Valley frontage, and second stories on some parts of the complex. Rooftop parking on the new Safeway insures that there is more parking, even with the new stores. Safeway is already marketing the new commercial space, touting its location in "a

Continued on page 6

EBMUD

Whisky is for Drinkin'

By William Manley

... and water is for fightin', as Mark Twain is quoted. No one quite came to fisticuffs in the June 10 PANIL meeting, but the subject of water use and pricing did precipitate a lively discussion. Jon Bauer of EBMUD presented a fascinating and fact-filled hour, peppered with sharp questions from the audience of about 30. It was timely, as a day earlier the EBMUD board had declared an end to the drought emergency and mandatory rationing effective July 1, 2009, BUT also decided to hike rates 15 percent over the next two years, after falling numbers of new-home hookups and reduced water use took a \$30 million bite out of revenues. Ironically, while we are being urged to cut back on water use, EBMUD is bemoaning the reduction in new water consumers.

Mr. Bauer began his presentation with a map of California, showing the path from the Mokelumne River watershed and Pardee Dam, through three aqueducts to the dozens of reservoirs in the East Bay hills. The EBMUD water is among the purest in the country, as many of us can attest if we visit places like San Jose or San Diego. A more detailed map showed that EBMUD service boundaries are not governed by county boundaries, so areas like Richmond, San Ramon and Walnut Creek can enjoy EBMUD water while neighboring Concord gets its water from the Delta. Mr. Bauer stated that the District just celebrated the completion of the earthquake retrofit of the Claremont Tunnel, which houses a major pipeline for getting water to this side of the Berkeley/Oakland hills.

Continued on page 2

PANIL Monthly Meeting: Wed., July 8 — 7:30 p.m.

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

General Meeting — 8:00 pm

City and County Budgets

Rebecca Kaplan, Oakland Councilmember at Large

Keith Carson, Alameda County Supervisor

Zack Wald, Chief of Staff to Council President Jane Brunner

Propositions C, D, F, and H on the July 21st mail-in ballot.

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

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East Bay Municipal Utilities District (continued from page 1)

Mr. Bauer noted – to the surprise of many – that the west side consumes much more water. But when one looks at per capita consumption, it's a whole different story. Like per capita gasoline consumption, water usage on the West side is only a fraction of that on the East.

under East Bay, desalinization, and the controversial expansion of the Pardee Reservoir, that would build a new 400-foot high dam, inundating miles of wildlife habitat and historic sites, and reduce fresh water flow into the Delta. The costs of these projects was not revealed, but EBMUD has

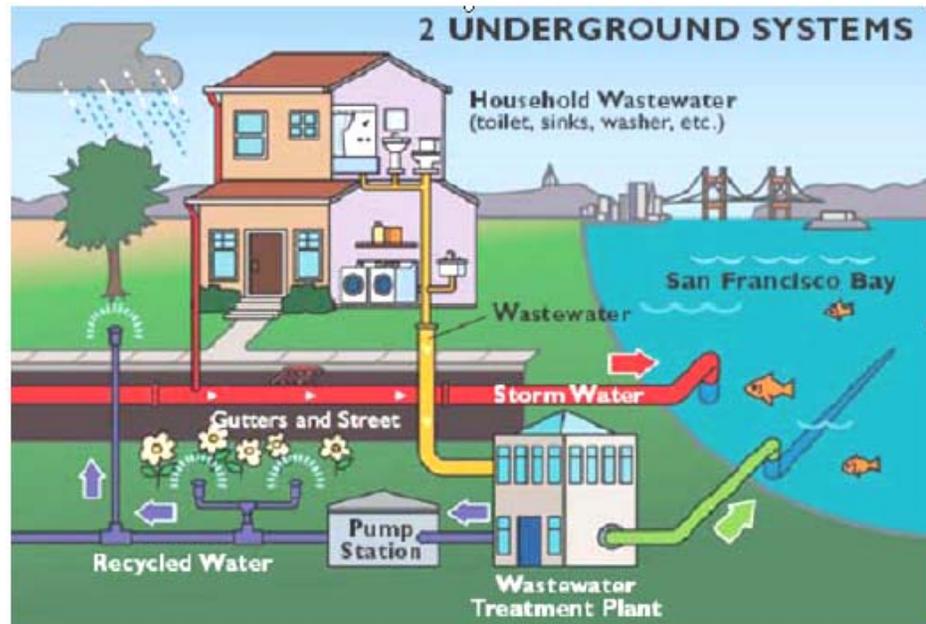


Figure 1 -- Two drainage systems (courtesy EBMUD)

This is a touchy subject, fraught with economic justice and developer patronage questions. Several in the audience brought up EBMUD's lack of transparency on the issue, citing a recent article in the East Bay Express ("Protecting the Water Wasters" 6/10/09) that accuses EBMUD of flimsy and questionable policies of concealing information about its largest consumers. Several times during his presentation Mr. Bauer, could only say "I don't set the policy" and advised us to talk to our Board Member (Andy Katz) or attend the public meetings.

Because the District is independent of City or County governance, its politics often go under the radar of most people, though its decisions have substantial fiscal, land use, and environmental consequences. Mr. Bauer stated the District does not get any water from Federal or State water projects, but that it is looking at new sources such as an aquifer

identified them as key components of 2040 Water Supply Management Plan (WSMP).

Mr. Bauer pointed out that to encourage wise water use, EBMUD can have a representative come to your home to analyze your water use habits and suggest improvements. While baths and showers take large amounts of water in the house, leaky toilets are a source that often go unnoticed and are very inexpensive to fix. Free dye tablets were provided at the meeting for attendees take home to test for leaks.

Many residents, particularly in environmentally-conscious California have attempted to make use of rainwater and 'gray water.' Gray water is the water that comes from showers, baths and clothes washers (but not kitchen sinks) that can be used relatively safely for irrigation purposes in yards.

Unfortunately current standards for plumbing make it cost-prohibitive if one complies with code. As a result, most gray water usage is done without permits. New legislation is on the way to ease those standards and make safe home water recycling affordable. In response to a question about using rainwater, Mr. Bauer noted that in the Mediterranean climate in which rain comes in one relatively short season each year, storage of rainwater is a much more difficult than in parts of the country where it rains more frequently.

Since the '70s, industry has made great strides in reducing heavy metals in wastewaters (see chart), but new pollutants have emerged to further challenge effective sewage treatment. The most notable pollutants are drugs (particularly antibiotics) and "anti-bacterial" soaps and cleaners. The process of sewage treatment requires healthy microorganisms to digest and breakdown harmful pathogens in sewage. The chemical triclosan, found in many bacterial soaps and even toothpastes, is a registered pesticide and can form dioxins and chloroform in combination with chlorine (in pool and tap water) and can damage fragile marine environments. The audience was encouraged minimize the use of products containing triclosan and reminded to dispose of old drugs in the garbage – not in drains.

As the clock struck 9:00, Mr. Bauer was asked about pricing models, environmental justice, and how EBMUD charged for consumption. Pricing was currently in three tiers of consumption, so that as one uses more, one pays more for each gallon. The incentives for thrift naturally depend on the price differential between tiers. Some cities have adopted a four-tier model that very effectively reduces consumption at the high-end. EBMUD has not taken that approach. Among many urban dwellers who have smaller homes and yards in a cooler microclimate, there is a feeling that EBMUD pricing favors suburbs, and that rising rates and the big dam projects are pushed to slack voracious suburban thirst.

There was clearly not enough time to explore the handling of this essential element. As many futurists have pointed out, the next big war will be over water rather than oil. Given the interest and liveliness of the discussion, PANIL will definitely look to bring in an EBMUD board member to a future meeting, who can supplement the material we heard, but also clearly address the policy issues.

Reducing Pollutants

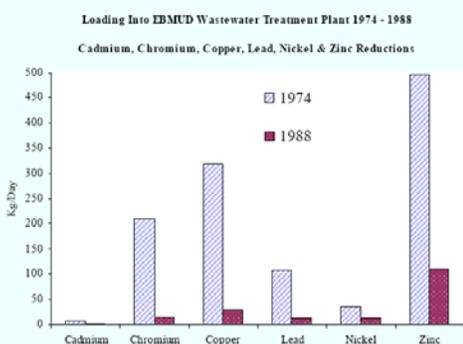


Figure 2 Heavy Metals Reduction (courtesy EBMUD)

From recycling in the home, the discussion moved to handling rainwater and gray water in general - storm drains and sewers. In the East Bay they are two different piping systems. Storm drains flow into Lake Merritt and the Bay, whereas sewage is piped into treatment plants, such as the one adjacent to the I-80 I-580 interchange. EBMUD has responsibility for water delivery and sewers; cities have responsibility for the storm drains. An older model, used in San Francisco, has street drainage and sewage all flowing into a the sewage treatment facilities. The big problem with single drainage model is that when it rains heavily, sewage treatment facilities can be overwhelmed. In SF, there is no option but to discharge the excess into the sea. Of course in SF that discharge goes into the Pacific Ocean, but for EBMUD there is only the bay. In Oakland and other established East Bay cities, cracks and seepage in old pipes buried underground go undetected and often comingle storm runoff and sewage.

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

email 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 and 4th Saturdays 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

Oakland Heritage Alliance Lecture Series

2nd Thursday of each month
\$8 OHA members/\$10 non-members
For more 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

FOOD USES MORE THAN DOUBLE WHILE RETAIL DROPS

Business Mix Shifts Over 34 Years on Piedmont Avenue

by Valerie Winemiller

There is currently a great deal of interest in the economic health of Piedmont Avenue. In our last issue, we reported on the joint meeting between PANIL and the merchants. This issue, we'll look at the changes over time in the balance of goods and services offered in our commercial district.

In 1975, city planning students helped PANIL create a neighborhood plan; as part of that class project, a survey of avenue businesses by categories was made. We will compare that data with a March 2009 list of Avenue businesses compiled by the Piedmont Avenue Merchants Association (PAMA). Businesses are divided into use categories defined in the zoning code for Piedmont Avenue.

The total number of businesses increased from 186 to 228, so it is important to compare the categories as percentages of the mix rather than just by simple numbers. This increase has been due partly to new buildings (such as Longs on 41st Street and 4171 Piedmont, Piedmont Yarn and Apparel and Site for Sore Eyes), and partly due to conversion of residential to commercial use, such as the garden apartments at 4335 Piedmont.

Changes over time

Retail, as a percent of the business mix, dropped by nearly 26%, from 35% of the total to 26%. If data were available on retail square footage, we suspect the drop would be greater, as larger stores were replaced by several smaller spaces, some now restaurants. One example is Eastern Stores, a variety store that occupied 4 bays in the Julia Morgan building at 40th and Piedmont in 1975. That space was divided into 4 shops, two now given to food use—A.G. Ferrari Deli and Gregoire.

Food use more than doubled, from 11% to 23% of the mix, and in sheer numbers, this is the category with the greatest growth. The Planning Department is considering sub-dividing this category, separating restaurants and cafes from grocery stores and delis that predominately sell food to be consumed off site.

Food uses tend to draw more customers per square foot, putting pressure on traffic and parking as well as garbage storage. Restaurants can also pay more for rent, so their competition for space tends to drive

up rents, making it harder for retail to compete. Montclair businesses are under these same pressures.

In recognition of its greater impacts, conversion of retail space to food use requires a special permit, which can have conditions imposed in an attempt to mitigate impacts, but rent costs are not addressed.

Use	1975	2009
Restaurant	10	47
Coffee Shops		
Groceries	6	4
Food Stores		
Delis		
Bars	4	2
TOTALS	20 (11%)	53 (23%)

The service category that includes everything from personal services like nail salons to professional services such as psychologists and accountants grew from 100 to 115 businesses. But as a percent of the mix, it shrank from 54% to 50%.

Vacancies: appearance and reality

At PANIL's April 8 meeting, former Planning and Zoning Director Leslie Gould urged those concerned about vacancies to collect data on the reasons businesses left. At this point, we lack systematic data. While a few owners had been considering retirement for a while, PANIL has been told by a number of others that they felt greatly pressured by rents, which are generally much higher on the Avenue than, for example, on Lakeshore. Changing buying patterns also impact shops: Office Max and use of e-mail make it hard for a stationary store to survive.

Two spaces currently vacant hold approved permits for new cafes: Cafe Trieste, and Sparky's. A third permit, for La Farine Bakery, is expected to be approved. The Piedmont Stationer space is now occupied by Piedmont Yarn and Apparel, and next to Piedmont Cinema, Spoiled Rotten (boutique) has been replaced by Mercy Vintage Now, a vintage clothing shop.

Remaining vacancies may put some downward pressure on rents, allowing more businesses to move in. But no matter what happens, all the Avenue businesses need our support.

LAKESIDE PARK TREASURE

Oakland Municipal Band Plays July 4th and Every Sunday July 12 through August 2

A treasure in the heart of the city, the Oakland Municipal Band plays on the shore of scenic Lake Merritt in the stunning 1912 Edoff Memorial Bandstand – what could be more inviting on a warm Sunday afternoon. It's two hours of variety that includes jazz, pop, big bands, classical, show tunes and marches. Stretch out on a blanket under shady oaks, pack a lunch and enjoy the ambiance. It doesn't get any better than this and it's Free. Concerts begin at 1pm and end at 3pm in Lakeside Park, 666 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland.



You Have to Vote by Mail

On Tuesday, July 21, the City of Oakland will hold a Special Municipal Vote by mail in response to the budget crisis. It will be mail only; no polling places will be used.

The only issues on the ballot will be four revenue measures: C, C, F, and H.

- Measure C— Hotel Tax Increase
- Measure D— Children and Youth Grants
- Measure F — New Tax Rate for Business Tax
- Measure H — Real Property Transfer Tax

For Information see the League of Women Voters www.lwvoakland.org.

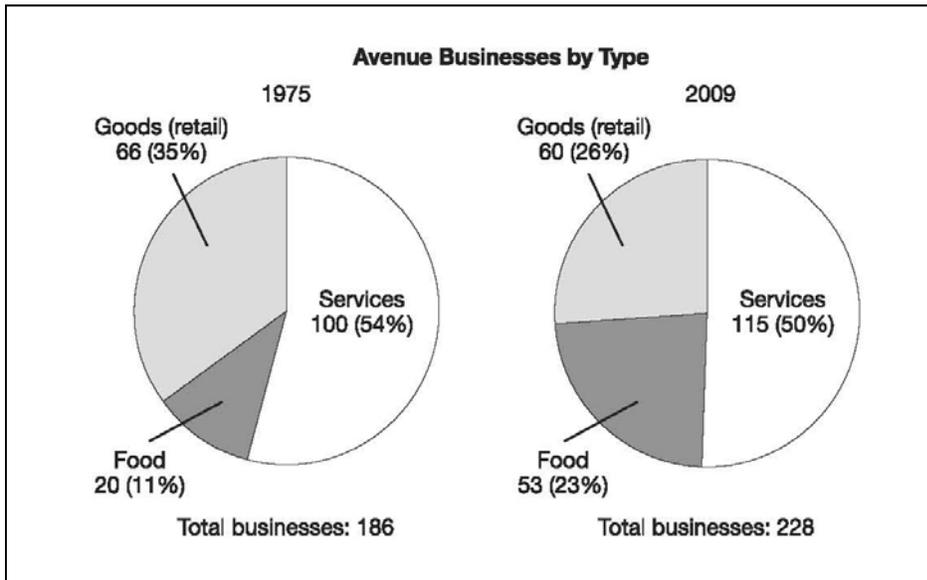
THE 14TH ANNUAL

John Street Jumble — July 11

Join us for a neighborhood tradition! This year marks the 14th year of the John Street Jumble Sale. Based on and around the 100-block of John Street, the sale is a chance to meet neighbors, clean attics and perhaps promote some personal economic stimulus. The sale will be held July 11th from 9-1 p.m.

For further information, call Lesley Mandros at 654-1386 or Christine at 420-1831. (No late calls, please.)

Food uses more than double while retail drops in the mix of businesses on Piedmont Avenue in the last 34 years.



Safeway Revises Rockridge Shopping Center Plans (continued)

growing high-income area with excellent demographics.”

But the proposal appears to still fall short of creative possibilities. For good urban design, the shopping center should

- integrate better with Broadway, as part of a continuous street shopping experience, and to make it more transit, bike, and pedestrian friendly. The current proposal continues the dominance of driveways at Broadway.
- address Pleasant Valley better. We have seen only site plans and not street elevations, but it appears that the new buildings proposed for Pleasant Valley frontage turn their backs to the street.

- be more truly pedestrian friendly. The center should also have a pedestrian-oriented plaza, possibly more like Bay Street in Emeryville, rather than just a sea of parking separating the new buildings on Pleasant Valley from the rest of the shopping center.

Some earlier critics advocated a mixed-use development with housing on the site. The Chase Bank and (former) Emil Villa Restaurant sites are under different ownership and not included in the plans.

Safeway has proposed an ambitious construction timeline, but zoning staff has determined that the project warrants an environmental impact study first. Watch for announcements of further opportunities for public input.

Safeway has hired political campaign consultant, Larry Tramutola to manage PR for the project.



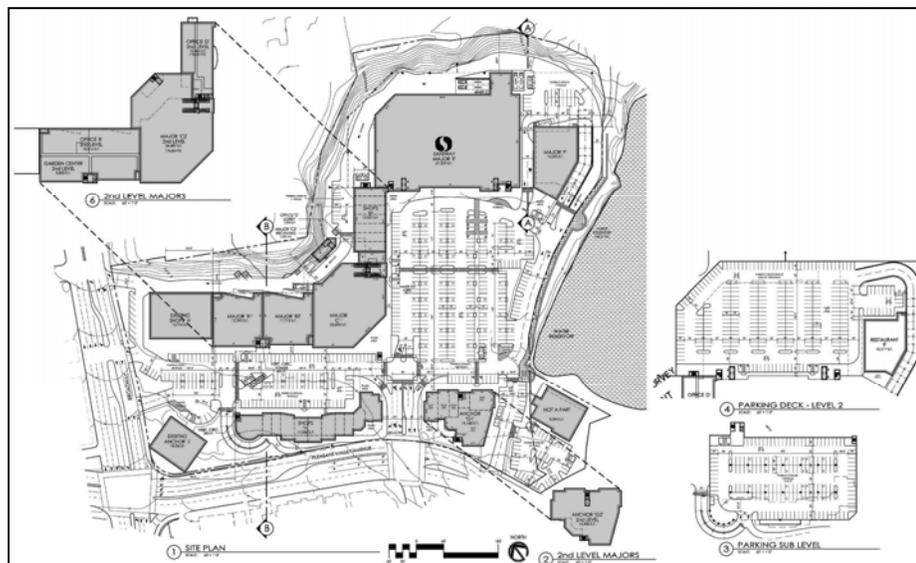
An expanded Rockridge Shopping Center, with Broadway on the left and the old quarry pond on the right.

Safeway would occupy an expanded store at top, with additional new stores along Pleasant Valley.

Proposed site plan which includes second stories on some buildings, and rooftop parking over an expanded Safeway store at the current Longs/CVS site.

New stores are along Pleasant Valley, at bottom.

Broadway frontage, at left, is still dominated by driveways.





PIEDMONT AVE PHOTO GALLERY

A View of the Avenue

Our neighborhood is filled with interesting sights.

This striking photo of a stairway in a new building on Piedmont Avenue is by Richard Friedman and appears on his photo blog at www.rchrd.com/photo.

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

THREE TOURS IN PANIL AREA

Historic Tour Series Starts July 11 in Cemetery

by Valerie Winemiller

This year's first walking tour in Oakland Heritage Alliance's popular annual summer series will take place Saturday, July 11 in Mountain View Cemetery from 10 am to 12:30 pm.

Participants will walk into the past in California's most historic cemetery to meet some of our state's early movers and shakers along with the monuments that preserve their memory. Charles Crocker, Domingo Ghirardelli and Samuel Merritt are among those you will encounter. Meet in front of the Chapel of the Chimes, 4499 Piedmont, for this hilly walk led by Barbara Smith and noted historian Michael Crowe.

Other neighborhood tours include one of Piedmont Avenue history, led Saturday, August 8 from 2 to 4:00 pm by Monte Cresta resident Ruby Long, and a tour of the Civil War at Mountain View Cemetery on Sunday, September 20, from 10 am to 1:30 pm, led by historian and author Dennis Evanosky.

The 21 fascinating tours look at rail and aviation history, Rockridge bungalows, a burgeoning arts district in formerly industrial Jingtletown, Uptown Art Deco and many other hidden parts of town.

For the complete listing, call 510-763-9218 or visit www.oaklandheritage.org or for a brochure.

A modest fee for the tours supports Oakland Heritage Alliance's preservation advocacy and activities.

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

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www.INSIDEOUTSIDEfitness.com
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Piedmont Avenue
Merchants Association

**Piedmont Avenue Merchant Association
has adopted the Piedmont & Key Route Plazas and the area around
our branch library as part of the city's**

Adopt-A-Spot Program

**PAMA has agreed to take care of these areas because they will no
longer receive regular maintenance from the city
due to our current financial crisis.**

**If we get more help, we will adopt
the 41st and Piedmont Avenue parking lot also.**

We need all the help we can get!

Visit

www.piedmontavenuemerchants.org

**for more information,
then join in the effort.**

Thanks!