

PANIL Notes

Volume 34

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

Mar 2009

Kaiser Demolition: Estimated Schedule for Phase 2

A letter from Kaiser distributed to neighbors near the construction sites gave this demolition schedule for the MB Center block (Mac Arthur to the 580 overpass, and Broadway to Piedmont Avenue).

Demolition will proceed in sections of the block, starting on Broadway at the 580 overpass, and progressing as follows:

- 12/08 to 2/09 Now underway, small buildings south of MB Center along I-580
- 3/09 to 5/09 Southwest section of MB Center along Broadway
- 5/09 to 6/09 Corner section of MB Center along MacArthur
- 6/09 to 7/09 Mid-section of MB Center along MacArthur
- 9/09 to 12/09 Section of MB Center along Piedmont Ave, including the office tower on the corner of MacArthur and Piedmont

All trucks are to enter and exit the site on Broadway. Demolition must be confined between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. by city conditions for the permit. Kaiser states that noise levels and air quality will be monitored during demolition.

Neighbors with questions or concerns are urged to contact Judy DeVries, Assistant Director for Kaiser's Public Affairs, at 752-2004 or Judy.DeVries@kp.org.

HERE WE GO AGAIN

Alta Bates Summit Medical Center Begins Hospital Replacement Project

by Valerie Winemiller

Alta Bates Summit Medical Center, part of the health care giant Sutter Health, has begun the permitting process through Oakland's Planning and Zoning Division for a seismic upgrade and replacement of hospital buildings and a master plan for its Summit Campus.

The facility, between the 580 overpass and 29th Street, from Webster St. to Telegraph Ave., currently includes a hospital, doctors' offices and diagnostic clinics, a school for health care professionals (nurses, physician assistants, occupational therapists, etc.) and several parking structures.

Summit is subject to the same state legislative deadline of 2013 for seismic upgrades that triggered Kaiser's hospital replacement. Summit proposes an 11-story tower, similar in height to Kaiser's, and like Kaiser, in-patient beds will be in private rooms. So, while the hospital will be considerably bigger than the facilities it is replacing, the number of beds will be the same. The project will result in a net increase in building floor area on the Summit Campus of approximately 384,100 square feet and an increase in approximately 806 parking spaces. A relocated emergency department and new parking structure would be included in this first phase of the master plan.

The medical center proposes that additional construction from 2014 to 2016 would add a new medical office building, new space for Samuel Merritt University, an employee fitness center atop a parking structure, and the closing of Summit Street, with construction of street level retail and landscaping on the resulting mall.

Continued on page 2

PANIL Monthly Meeting: Wed., March 11 — 7:30 p.m.

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council — 7:30 pm

Paul Brekke-Miesner our Neighborhood Services Coordinator

Anthony Ramos, our Problem Solving Officer

General Meeting — 8:00 pm

A conversation with Mayor Ron Dellum's Deputy Chief of Staff

Leslie Littleton

This is an opportunity to learn more about major initiatives in the Mayor's office and the city's approach to the current fiscal crisis. Come share your concerns and your ideas.

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

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Alta Bates Summit Medical Center (continued from page 1)

Future phases are expected to be completed prior to year 2030.

The medical center sponsored an open meeting on Jan. 28 to introduce the project to interested community members and to solicit input on how best to communicate with neighbors. In addition to the formal city process of public hearings, the medical center administrators expect to conduct a community process for discussion of planning and design issues in preparation for the public hearings. While the Summit Campus buildings are not as close to small scale residences as Kaiser is, the traffic and transit impacts should be of interest to neighbors.

Summit CEO Warren Kirk spoke at length of the corporation's desire to build a "green project under the highest standards of hospital construction," but then disclosed that the increased green space is proposed to be achieved by convincing the city of Oakland to abandon Summit St. to the hospital for a pedestrian mall. That will cause concern because Summit St. is part of the route for the 59 bus, which carries employees, visitors and patients to the medical center. Getting drivers out of their cars and maximizing use of public transit is a keystone of minimizing traffic congestion and related air quality problems, but

there was no discussion at the January 28 meeting of how public transit could effectively and conveniently serve the complex without access along Summit Street.

The city of Oakland released a Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on Jan. 23. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on February 18 soliciting comments on the scope of issues that should be studied in the EIR; written comments were due by February 23. The public will be able to comment on the Draft EIR when it is released, probably in mid-summer.

Scott Gregory, of Lamphier-Gregory, has been hired to serve as the zoning case planner. Gregory acted in this same role for the Kaiser project. These projects are too large for the city's zoning department staff to handle. His familiarity with the Kaiser project could be an advantage. Coordination between the two projects' construction-related traffic and parking, as well as long-term impact mitigations, will be important.

PANIL neighbors interested in following this issue should contact Valerie Winemiller at 653-4552 or vwinemiller@hotmail.com to receive notification of future community meetings.

Raising Funds for the Oakland Public Library

The Bookmark Bookstore, run by Friends of the Oakland Public Library, will hold a 30% off sale from April 9-12, 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. every day at 721 Washington Street.

When you buy books there, you support these Library activities:

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1925 FASHIONABLE APARTMENTS

Corum Apartments Make Way for Hospital

by Valerie Winemiller

The MB Center block is losing its last vestiges of residential character this month, as demolition is completed of the Red Hanger Cleaner and its associated houses on Broadway, and of the apartments at 3459 Piedmont Avenue.

Owner A. Corum began construction on the 30 units of apartments at 3459 Piedmont in 1925.

Kaiser's central utility plant will occupy the site.

Construction in Oakland was booming at the time, and 206 building permits totaling \$449,443 in value were granted in one week alone. The building permit for the Corum Apartments was the largest of those, listing construction costs at \$75,000. By June of 1926, classified ads were running in the Oakland Tribune announcing the two- and three-room "apartments to let" with steam heat, furnished or unfurnished, starting at \$40 per month.

Painted cream-of-tomato red in recent years, the 3-story building had an arched entry with columned portico centered in the symmetrical facade. A decorative frieze ran under the bracketed eave. The facade was topped by a Spanish tile roof, which was a false front.

Many newspaper announcements of completion of the company's buildings tout hardwood floors, built-in furniture such as dressers in the closet, clothes drying provisions on the roof and basement lockers. Admired brand names of the era are often trumpeted, including Rip Van Winkle wall beds and Spark gas ranges.

The Corum building lost some of its cachet with the construction of the freeway, but remained solid housing.

The building permit was in the name of the California Builders Company, a prominent design-build operation of the era, headquartered on Franklin at 16th. The company specialized in construction of residential income property, handling all stages of the process. It advised property owners on the wisest "class of improvement" for the site, designed it, arranged the financing, conducted the construction and then found the tenants. In 1924, the company claimed to have built 20% of all the apartments built in Oakland that year, including twin four-plex buildings at 4278 and 4286 Terrace Street, built for Mr. and Mrs E. L. Ormsby.

While built for investment, the company's projects were of practical but attractive design, were built soundly of good materials, and featured amenities valued by apartment hunters then and now.

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To become a member of PANIL, send a check for \$15 to PANIL, P.O.Box 20375, Oakland, CA 94620 with your name, address and e-mail address.

Help keep the neighborhood informed and make our voices heard.!

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

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 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

Jane Brunner speaks to PANIL

By William Manley

Councilmember Jane Brunner took the mike at the February PANIL meeting and launched into a quick-fire briefing on her new role as City Council President, the city budget crisis, and help for business in Oakland



Ms. Brunner described her move to the council presidency as transitioning “from advocator to mediator.” As a former labor negotiator, she is well equipped to engineer the compromises necessary in the often-contentious body. She sees a definite need to improve communications among the city council, the Mayor and city staff. She spoke of her recent leadership in the removal of former Police Chief Tucker and told how she approached the mayor well in advance of the Council’s expected “no-confidence” vote on the top cop, urging the mayor to take action before the precipitous council move.

On the city’s current budget deficit, she stated flatly that city services will be cut. Parks, permits, libraries might all be affected. Of the billion-dollar budget, the city has discretion over only about \$400 million, and the bulk of that goes to police and fire. She stated that Mayor Dellums is very well-connected to Washington, which could work in Oakland’s favor. *(Note: Next month’s PANIL meeting: a rep from the Mayor’s office!)*

Valerie Winemiller asked about reversing the crippling fiscal impact of Measure OO, “Kids First 2.” While well-intentioned and nice-sounding, the proposition passed last fall earmarks more millions of dollars into private after-school programs without assessing them in relation to other city activities that must be cut. Councilpersons Quan and Kernighan

have already proposed partial reversals of OO, but Brunner thinks they do not go far enough. We are likely to see something on the ballot this fall. Council will receive mayor’s budget in May; City must finalize the budget by end of June.

Regarding the problem of foreclosures and their impact to homeowners as well as renters, Brunner noted that 238 properties were in foreclosure in North Oakland alone. She and Paul Brekke-Miesner went personally from house to house to inform residents of their options and to make sure renters understood that as long as they pay their rent, they can remain at the foreclosed properties.

For stimulating business in Oakland, which presumably would bring jobs to residents and tax revenues for the City, Ms. Brunner is pushing for a Business Assistance Center, a one-stop-shopping center for new businesses where permitting and new business assistance will be expedited, similar to what was done for homeowners after the Hills fire. Attracting new business was a challenge in Oakland even before the recession because Oakland must compete with the new growth in Emeryville and the cachet of San Francisco. Some in the audience noted that It seems like yesterday that Oakland put millions into an “auto row” that is now largely a mile-long eyesore of vacant storefronts and used-car lots. The MacArthur transit village, slated to supply North Oakland with 60,000 new square feet of retail, remains an asphalt hole in the ground.

Bill Manley asked about increases in fees instead of property taxes, specifically: residential permit parking (RPP), which has had the same fees for 20 years. Brunner said that RPP fees will be raised substantially (in stages) from the \$15 annual fee, but because it was so poorly administered in 2008, that increase was deferred. Expect it soon. *(Note: Many but not all RPPs in the PANIL neighborhood are paid by Kaiser as mitigation for parking impacts.)*

George Horton asked about in-law units and the potential for Oakland to generate tax revenue by allowing them on properties designed originally as single family residences. Brunner said that resistance to in-law units has come from North Oakland neighborhoods that saw property owners building out lots to maximum coverage. Requiring a parking space for each unit makes excessive build-out less practical. Some noted that this has the perverse effect of making automobile ownership almost a prerequisite for residence, since it forces one to acquire a parking space when one simply wants a place to live. The councilwoman invited more input on the subject.

Current total Oakland budget	\$1 B
Earmarked funds	\$600 M
Discretionary general fund	\$400 M
Police and Fire portion of discretionary fund	65%
Balance of discretionary	\$110M
Cuts made in 2008-2009	\$42.5M
Budget for 2009-2010	
Balance of discretionary general fund	\$90M (if cuts not made to Fire and Police)
Cuts needed to balance	\$50-70M

Sidewalk Liability

Many of the questions to Councilwoman Brunner focused on the sidewalk liability issue. This topic has been hot on neighborhood blogs since the city recognized it could save money by formally shifting liability for trip and fall accidents from the city to the homeowner. Most sidewalks are city right of way over private property; the law requires homeowners and businesses to maintain them in good condition. While putting the liability on property owners is consistent with state law and a practice already followed in other municipalities, many homeowners have envisioned a flood of lawsuits and dramatic increases in insurance premiums.

The City will fix the sidewalk if it was damaged by a City-planted tree, but, as many at the meeting confirmed, it's hard to know whether the City planted the tree, and then to get the public works to fix the sidewalk if the city did plant it. Brunner acknowledged a lot of confusion. She felt anyone should be able to get his sidewalk repaired quickly and without a costly permit. An information sheet passed out at the meeting showed that since 2001, there were an average of 59 trip and fall claims annually, at an average award of \$5600. She said any change in city policy is still under debate.

Brunner has been a long-time advocate of street trees and rejects the idea that street trees and safe sidewalks cannot coexist.

Letter to the Editor:

The proposed ordinance for establishing property owner responsibility for sidewalk maintenance and safety has serious flaws that need to be understood and corrected before this ordinance is seriously considered for passage.

1. An informal pamphlet states that the city will retain liability and responsibility for repairing sidewalks damaged by "official street trees" (those planted by the city). Yet that responsibility and liability appear nowhere in the proposed ordinance.

The ordinance makes property owners responsible for maintaining sidewalks, curbs, gutters, retaining walls and even "signs allowed" in the parking strip. Presumably, this would include street sweeping and speed bump announcement signs installed by the city.

Language stating city responsibility and liability for city-planted "official street trees" must be included in the ordinance, because a "trust me" assurance in a pamphlet is a policy that could change tomorrow at a city administrator's whim; the ordinance as written clearly states that it is the property owner's responsibility, and it remains so whether the city steps in to repair those damages on an ad hoc basis or not. If the city intends to be responsible and liable for damages its trees caused, let that be clearly stated in the ordinance itself.

2. There is no analysis of what sort of shift of financial costs will transfer from the city to the property owner. The payouts by the city for injury claims is very modest, ranging from a low of \$ 145 K in 2005-6 FY, to a high of \$ 569 K in 2003-4 FY. The average payout between 2001-2 and 2005-6 was \$ 328 K paid for an average of 59 claims per year, or \$ 5600 per claim.

But there is another, more significant cost that will be shifted to the property owner by the ordinance: the

actual cost of repairing the sidewalks, curbs, and gutters currently repaired by the city. Citizens and members of the City Council have a right and a duty to know what sort of costs property owners are being asked to assume, so that they can weigh in on the matter knowledgeably.

What are the annual costs of repairs for these items during the period from 2001—2008 in a simple tabulation similar to the one provided by the City Attorney's Office? That tabulation should also list the repairs required by official street trees separately from those required by other causes. That will give property owners and City Council Members a clearer sense of the burden being transferred to property owners and actual monies to be saved by the city.

If the amounts are as modest as the liability claim payouts, citizens and the City Council may well feel that the shift in liability is not worth the effort given the hassle the property owners are going to face hiring contractors and dealing with their insurance companies.

On the other hand, if the amounts currently being spent by the city to make these repairs are substantial, property owners have a right to know before this ordinance is approved. **The dollar figure may be the unseen elephant in the center of the room. Not revealing it up front is tantamount to tricking the electorate by hiding vitally essential information.**

3. Finally, there is reason to be skeptical about the accuracy of the city's survey of the city's sidewalks and estimates official street tree related damage. I surveyed my block, which has 27 properties and 17 locations with sidewalk damage: 4 are clearly owner caused; 13 are caused by official street trees alone or in combination with deteriorated concrete dating back to the early 20th century.

Don Link, North Oakland
February 3, 2009

A Senior Village for the PANIL Neighborhood

By Joanne Coates

A group of Piedmont Avenue area residents has formed a founding committee to develop Pleasant Valley Village, a Senior Village for people over 50 in the PANIL area.

Pioneered by the Beacon Hill Village in Boston, a senior village is a membership organization whose purpose is to provide the kinds of practical support and opportunities for social activities found at a good retirement community—but for people who want to stay in their own homes as they age. Members pay an annual fee for a range of services which may include free transportation to medical appointments and grocery shopping, information, referral and coordination of services from the many public and private agencies serving seniors, caregiver support and shared care giving, daily or weekly phone check-in, healthcare assessment and management, educational and social activities, exercise classes, volunteer opportunities and access to a network of screened vendors who provide services such as home repair and in-home care at a discount.

Senior villages are an idea whose time has come as our population ages, and are being developed all across the country. San Francisco Northside Village (www.sfvillage.org) opened last month and Ashby Village (www.ashbyvillage.org) is being formed in the South Berkeley/North Oakland area. Most villages are nonprofit corporations with membership fees that range from around \$500 to \$800 per year for a single person and from \$900 to \$1200 for a couple or family, depending upon the area. In comparison, a residential retirement community can cost several thousand dollars a month. A senior village typically has one to two paid staff and is supported by a combination of membership fees, grants from government agencies and foundations, and donations. Most offer discounted fees for low-income members.

Because there is so much interest in the Bay Area, Beacon Hill Village is sponsoring a one-day workshop in Oakland on Monday, March 30, a great opportunity to learn specifics on building a village from the pioneers and to network with other local village groups. For workshop and registration information see the Beacon Hill Village web site www.beaconhillvillage.org

The Pleasant Valley Village committee is eager to move ahead. We welcome the participation of anyone interested in working to create this resource for themselves, their loved ones and neighbors. We will give a special welcome to persons with expertise and experience in starting and managing nonprofits, providing services to the elderly, managing volunteers, publicizing community groups, fundraising, web site development. We meet monthly, on the fourth Tuesday of the month, at committee members' homes. The next meeting will be March 24. For information contact Judith Coates, 510-653-1183, jdcoates13@yahoo.com or Ruby Long, 595-9514, roobeedew@sbcglobal.net.

Student Artists Highlight Fundraiser for Oakland Technical High School

Music by the Live Jazz Ensemble and show pieces from other performance arts students will draw supporters to Oakland Technical High School's annual auction on Saturday, March 21

at Leona Lodge, 4444 Mountain Blvd. in Oakland. Doors open at 6:00 p. m., and performances begin at 6:30. The evening includes both a silent and a live auction.

**All
that
Jazz**

Tickets are \$10 per person before March 5 and \$15 per person after that date. The organizers have arranged for interested persons to purchase a ticket for a teacher. And, as additions to the ticket price, donations to the school are encouraged.



PIEDMONT AVE PHOTO GALLERY
A View of the Avenue
in 1962

Tree branches and debris blocked the entrance to the culvert under Monte Vista Avenue during a heavy rainstorm in 1962. The resultant dam caused Glen Echo Creek to overflow dramatically. Basements flooded and foundations were jeopardized. In the midst of the panic, the Wurm family (who lived at 122 Monte Vista) characteristically found time to laugh at adversity. The four kids skimmed up and down the block in a rowboat. And the parents, the late Ted and Betty Wurm, posed in antique bathing suits in front of 121 and 115 Monte Vista.

The culvert entrance was later redesigned to prevent a repeat flood.

The late Ted and Betty Wurm clown in antique bathing costumes in a 1962 flood on Monte Vista Avenue. [Photo by Wurm family]



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Piedmont Avenue Elementary School — Monthly Pizza with the Police



Fourteen good students earned the lunchtime visit with Problem Solving Officer, Acting Sgt. Anthony Ramos: Jelani, Sal, Susan, Anand, Joseph, Jason, Biniam, IK, Jahmir, Aracely, Chantell, Dani, Jacobi, and Kierra.

Principal Zarina Ahmad and Joan Dark of the PANIL Steering Committee joined the students this month.

Financial support for this month's lunch came from PANIL and two individual donors.

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