

# PANIL Notes

Volume 35

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

March 2010

## Our Trees on Piedmont Avenue Are Taking a Beating

By Mike Lydon

Piedmont Avenue Merchants Association  
Beautification Committee

It's been thirty years since the first Ornamental Pear Trees were planted on Piedmont Avenue. Over the years they have grown to provide shade for pedestrians and beautiful fall color for us all. Lately however they have been under siege by unscrupulous tree cutters who show up early on weekends to do the bidding of private individuals be they property owners or billboard companies. The result is poorly pruned trees that actually could, in time, become a danger to the public. Any arborist will tell you proper pruning will enhance the health of a tree. You can get a thinner leaner tree without topping it or reducing it to a skeleton.



Photo by Phil Laing

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## Piedmont Avenue Library Update

By Ronile Lahti and Peg Janosch

The sale of the library property has been completed by Citibank. The new owners are Neil B. Goodhue and Diane C. Goodhue as Trustees of the Sandringham Trust. Beginning November 1, 2010 a new one-year lease will increase the rent from the current \$1 per month to \$4,250 per month.

The Friends of the Piedmont Avenue Library have established a working group that has met with library administration and staff from Jane Brunner's office. There are several alternatives on the table including forming a special tax assessment district and locating other sites. The Friends are developing a survey so neighbors can weigh in with their preferences. The survey will be posted on the PANIL and Piedmont Avenue Merchants' web sites within the next few weeks.

Library staff has said "The Library is committed to finding the funds for the one-year lease and working with the community in developing a long-term solution for a Library in the Piedmont Avenue area."

**PANIL Monthly Meeting: Wed., Mar 10 — 7:30 p.m.**

**Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council — 7:30 pm**  
Sandra Sanders-West, our Neighborhood Services Coordinator

**General Meeting — 8:00 pm**

**Dealing with Waste:  
Painless Ways to Recycle**

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

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## A Talk with Piedmont Avenue Elementary School's Principal, Zarina Ahmad

*As trying as it may be to work in public education in Oakland, Zarina Ahmad expresses genuine enthusiasm for her work. As you might expect, she's bullish about public education and her school in particular.*

*Ms. Ahmad, who has been the principal of Piedmont Avenue Elementary School for the past two years, was born and raised in Oakland and spent nine years teaching kindergarten at Chabot Elementary before becoming assistant principal at Acorn Elementary. Her first job as a principal was at Piedmont Avenue. Her own children attend Oakland Tech and Montera.*

*Recently, she sat down with Bill Manley who conducted an interview with her for PANIL Notes. Manley started on a thorny issue for neighbors who travel on Echo Avenue near the school – traffic congestion.*



### What are the traffic problems you see with children arriving at and leaving school?

It's a problem at the beginning of the school year, when there are no after school programs in operation and all the parents come at one time. Several parents got tickets for double parking. We addressed that by having students trained as traffic monitors and setting up cones in the street to keep the drop-offs/pickups more orderly. There have not been recent problems.

### Are most children brought in cars by their parents? What about public transportation, bicycling, walking?

It seems that many working parents find it most convenient to drop off their kids on the way to work. Few, maybe a dozen families have their kids use the bus. We have a beautiful bicycle rack, a fish. Two of our teachers bike to work regularly, setting a good example, but not many students. Many of the neighborhood kids walk. We have a "walk to school" once a year, to demonstrate that it's possible!

### How many kids come from the neighborhood?

Only about 20-25%, but it's risen in the last year. We'd like to get more. Our enrollment decreased slightly as many families have moved out of Oakland in the current economic downturn.

### How do you reach out to the neighborhood students?

Every Wednesday morning we give a tour, but we're open to discussion any time. Once parents see what a nurturing environment we here, I know they will feel confident sending their children to this school.



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# Piedmont Avenue Elementary School's Principal

(continued)

## How does the school integrate itself into the neighborhood?

Our children have a circus troupe that performs at local retirement homes with unicycle riding, tumbling, juggling, clowns – a lot of fun, and well received. Many classes go to the public library down the road on a weekly basis. We have "Reading Partners." In our arrangement with Park Day Middle School on Ridgeway seventh-graders come to work with our children; and in exchange we allow them to use our play-field. We also have Experience Corps, an organization that bring older adults into the classroom to assist the teachers in focused areas. We do field trips to local businesses like the post office and Piedmont Grocery, so the kids can see what goes on behind the scenes.

## Do you have new infrastructure plans?

We just got a \$10,000 grant from the Rogers Family Foundation to refurbish our aged computer lab with new hardware and software. We also want to do a community garden. We're targeting this spring, but definitely within a year we expect to have one.

## What are your biggest gripes?

Attendance. And arriving to school on time. Its very important to arrive in class when the class begins. Students that miss the beginning of a class often can't get into the lesson. And it's disruptive to other students when some arrive late. I have one other gripe: the bathrooms. We try to teach the children good hygiene and cleanliness but the bathrooms are not as well kept as they should be. We have a good janitor now, but too often the good ones come and go.

## What gets you out of bed on a school day and makes you want to come to your job?

The potential I see. I have such a good group of outstanding, loving and dedicated teachers. And we've seen some real steady improvement in just the two years I've been here. We're at about 55% proficiency in a few grades, but very, very close to moving higher. I'm so proud of what we're doing. We try to instill in every student the belief that he/she can go to college; we've named all of our classrooms after colleges to support that idea. We believe that education has a serious purpose, and that it can be enjoyable.

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If you enjoy reading and live in the Piedmont Ave. area, please call 420-1356 for more information

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## 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 meets monthly

For the time, date and place of the meeting,  
email [contact@panil.org](mailto: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  
10 a.m., FREE

### Oakland Heritage Alliance Martin Meeker: The Oakland Army Base Oral History Project.

Historian Martin Meeker will share highlights of the in-depth interviews with individuals affiliated with the base during its period of operation (1941-1999)

Chapel of the Chimes  
4499 Piedmont Avenue,  
\$10 members/\$15 non members.  
You may join at the event.

### 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)

Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League

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WRONG CUTS CAN HARM A TREE

## Our Trees on Piedmont Avenue Are Taking a Beating (continued from page 1)

### Why is this happening?

One reason is that severe budget cuts in Oakland's Tree Division have left it able to address only the trees that are an immediate hazard.

As a result the Tree Division is allowing property owners to "prune" the trees in front of their property with some pretty radical results. The city has a set of standards to follow but there is no guarantee they will be followed. The standards, quoted below, are contained in the agreement the property owner must sign with the City of Oakland's Public Works Agency to get the permit required to prune the tree.

*The crown reductions cannot exceed 25% of the tree's main leaders and must adhere to the "Crown Reduction" and "Lateral or Directional Pruning" standards as described in the "Tree Pruning Guidelines" published by the International Society of Arboriculture.*

*Reducing these trees by more than 25% may be considered as illegal and the consequences of such action may lead to fines, replacement trees or both.*



*You must notify the Department of the start date at least 24 hours before beginning the work.*

*All tree work must be performed in a competent and professional manner by a state licensed tree contractor (C-61/D-49 or C-27), possessing \$500,000 of liability insurance. Proof of licensing and insurance must be provided to this department prior to the work beginning.*

For information, contact Gay Luster, Tree Division 615-5934

### What can you do?

If you see suspicious tree trimming going on – that would be trimming by unmarked trucks, early in the morning, on weekends – get a license number and report it to the city at 615-5934 during the normal work day or by calling Fire Department Dispatch during off hours – 238-3923. They will send out the on duty Public Works crew to investigate. Who knows—they may be able to catch unauthorized tree trimmers in the act.



## Sixth Annual Lakeshore Neighborhood Plant Exchange — FREE

**Saturday, March 27, 2010 12 noon to 4 p.m.**

**3811 Lakeshore Avenue (near Kenmore Avenue, 3 blocks east of Mandana and Lakeshore), Oakland 94610**

Have plants you must prune or divide? How about trading your excess with others in your neighborhood?

Bring plants and gardening supplies you don't want and exchange them for plants. All types of plants are welcome, from cuttings up to full size. Garden accessories and accents welcome; also umbrellas, clippers, books on gardening, pots, stepping stones, tools and supplies—even goldfish. Take home new plants for your yard and have an instant new garden!

For information [www.plantexchange.wordpress.com](http://www.plantexchange.wordpress.com). (510) 866-8482 [plantexchange510@gmail.com](mailto:plantexchange510@gmail.com)