

PANIL Notes

Volume 31 Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League-PO Box 20375-Oakland CA 94620 Nov/Dec 2006

ASKED ON THE AVENUE

Books for the Holidays?



Tim Hildebrand, owner
Spectator Books
4163 Piedmont Ave.
Fiction: *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, by Luis Alberto Urrea, is based on the life of the author's great-aunt. Nonfiction: *Animals in Translation* by Temple Grandin, an autistic animal scientist.



Bonnie Lucas, owner
Black Swan Books,
4236 Piedmont Ave.
Kay Thompson's *Eloise at Christmastime* is the 1958 first edition, with Hilary Knight's witty illustrations. And I'm very proud of our Franklin Library edition of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1974), in mint condition.



Inés Tisker, owner
Lucciola,
3980 Piedmont Ave.
For young adults, *The Tale of Desperaeaux*, by Kate DiCarlo, is a story about a mouse who falls in love with a princess. We also have Audrey Penn's *The Kissing Hand* and its Spanish translation, *Un Beso en Mi Mano*, about a raccoon who's afraid to start school.



Helen Bloch, children's librarian,
Piedmont Avenue Branch Library
For young children: *I'm Not Cute*, by Jonathan Allen, about an owl who goes exploring, and *Bark, George*, by Jules Feiffer, about a dog with a language problem. For older children: *The Lightning Thief*, by Rick Riordan, in which Percy discovers he's the son of a Greek god.



Jamie Turbak, branch manager,
Piedmont Avenue Branch Library
Still searching? Check out *Book Lust* or *More Book Lust*, in which super-librarian Nancy Pearl gives clever book recommendations on unusual themes like "The Complex Napoleon" and "Space Operas."

MacArthur BART Transit Village – Alive and Kicking

By William Manley

For almost 15 years, the vision of a MacArthur BART transit village hovered in the air over the parking lot. On October 5, the vision came much closer to reality as another group of developers presented a new proposal to an audience of about 100 in the Beebe Memorial Church on Telegraph

Walter Miles, longtime chair of the Citizens Planning Committee, mused about the parade of developers, the thousands of pages of proposals and drawings that have gone by the wayside since 1992, when the committee was first organized to provide public input into this development. But the latest proposal, from McGrath Partners (formerly Aegis), Shea Homes and Bridge Housing, shows promise of becoming reality.

While it's impossible to please all the people all the time, this proposal has won over some critics of an earlier proposal that was presented to the Planning Commission. A major point of dissatisfaction with the earlier proposal was two 20-story towers to be placed right against the freeway. Some expressed the opinion that they were out of scale with the neighborhood.



Dramatic increases in construction costs and the large supply of new housing coming on the market have diminished the viability of the towers, and now the towers are gone and no buildings will be more than 60 feet. The plan calls for about 600 housing units (down from 720 in the towers) including about 100 "affordable" units.

What really pleased many people was the plan to replace two motels on MacArthur, locales that many view as hubs of illicit activity. It now appears that Redevelopment funds may become available for their purchase.

The new plan includes a 300-space parking structure, a reduction from the number in the current parking lot. (Surveys showed that 10% of BART riders come to the station by car.) Other proposed specifics:

- Substantial improvements and increased space for busses and shuttles, for bicycles, and for pedestrians
- A 5,000-square-foot community center
- 38,000 square feet of retail space

The developers are expected to submit a draft Environmental Impact Report in February. There will be more public meetings, and PANIL will watch this important development closely.

PANIL Meeting

Wednesday, Dec 13, 7 p.m.

Piedmont Gardens, 110 41st Street, 11th Floor

**Piedmont Avenue
Neighborhood
Improvement League**
PO Box 20375
Oakland CA 94620
www.panil.org

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**Steering Committee
and Working Groups**

Library
Joan Dark
338.1316, jdark@pacunion.com

Media/Membership/e-mail list
Ronile Lahti/Margitta Gardner
655.1723, rklahti@aol.com

Public Safety/Parks
Bill Manley
658.2419,
bmanleynow@yahoo.com

Advertising/Senior liaison
Martin Huff
655.1748,
martin_huff@hotmail.com

Zoning/Building
Valerie Winemiller
653.4552,
vwinemiller@hotmail.com

PAMA
Ann Kraynak
428.2698. piedsys@support.net

City Government

District 1 Councilmember
Jane Brunner
238.7001
jbrunner@oaklandnet.com

District 1 School Board Director
Kerry Hamill
879.8653
kerry.hamill@ousd.k12.ca.us

Oakland Police Department
Lt. Jim Meeks
238.7147
jmeeks@oaklandnet.com

Paul Brekke-Miesner
Neighborhood Services Coordinator
pbrekke-miesner@oaklandnet.com
238.3102

MEETING YIELDS DESIGN IMPROVEMENTS

**Victory for Community Input
into Kaiser Expansion Plan**

By Valerie Winemiller

A committee of neighbors in KENIC (Kaiser Expansion Neighborhood Impact Coalition, which includes PANIL) met Kaiser's architects, NBBJ, and city planning staff on October 10 to discuss the remaining concerns about Phase I of Kaiser's project design. Phase I is the medical services building and parking structure on the west side of Broadway between MacArthur and 38th St.

The meeting was organized by Claudia Cappio (Director of Planning) after three meetings before the Planning Commission's Design Review Committee and one before the full Commission resulted in continued frustration and unresolved issues. This informal discussion format proved invaluable. KENIC has requested that a similar discussion take place earlier in the process for future phases of the project.

Kaiser had made revisions based on criticisms from an earlier Planning Commission Design Review Committee meetings, and, overall, the new drawings were a huge improvement over previous proposals. Neighbors have won some important changes which effect both the appearance and the impacts on neighbors' quality of life. These improvements have double importance because, as all sides agree, Phase I sets the standard and the "visual palette" for subsequent phases.

Features of the New Design

The reviled "upside down U" is gone from the Broadway facade and the building is sleeker with significantly more articulation.

At the Sept 27 Commission committee meeting, neighbors had finally won the support of commissioners for closing the back wall of the parking structure. This will protect the Manila residents from garage fumes, noise, light at night and from security problems. This important achievement was supplemented by an agreement on Oct 10 to also close more of the 38th Street facade to help further contain noise.

There is still concern about the use of field-applied stucco in such a large building, and whether it will crack and be unsightly as it ages.

"Green building strategies" received some discussion, but most of those details are generally handled in the building permit phase. Neighbors advocated strongly for various energy-saving measures including solar heat or hot water capacity, and installation of conduit and other infrastructure to allow future retrofitting. Kaiser representatives say they will be consolidating rooftop mechanical equipment in one area to leave room for such equipment in the future.

Next Steps

Unless someone appeals (not expected), Kaiser will prepare actual construction drawings for building permits and other regulatory approvals. Signage design proposals could be expected in a few months. For information and drawings, go to www.kenic.org

Count Me In

**I want to support PANIL's work
to keep the neighborhood informed
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Holiday Gift Shopping

by ShopGirl

Why trek to San Francisco when it's so easy to do all your holiday shopping right here on Piedmont Avenue? We browsed four local stores to discover the most delightful gifts of the season.

Nathan + Co.

3820 Piedmont Ave., 428-9638.

Open just seven months, this hip, witty shop features products from East Bay designers, such as wallets, bags, hassocks, and pillows made from recycled magazines and newspapers (\$30-\$100) and Funkie Baby cloth bibs (\$18). Owner **Nathan Waldon**, a former product designer himself, has an eye for the offbeat: restaurant-sign dinner plates (four for \$38), Storytime children's clocks designed by a Berkeley mom (\$69), and the PeePee Teepee for baby boys (\$13). "We combine contemporary design with good old-fashioned service," says Nathan. The store stays open till 9 p.m. Fridays, so you can shop after dinner at Tropix, next door.

Philippa Roberts

4176 Piedmont Ave., 655-0656.

South African-born Philippa, a jewelry designer, had an international wholesale business for ten years before deciding to bring her distinctive designs to Piedmont Avenue; her shop opened in September. All jewelry is made in a studio in the back of the store and is handsomely displayed in glass cases. Philippa's elegant geometric designs—earrings, bracelets, and necklaces (\$70-\$250)—combine matte silver and semiprecious stones. Other featured jewelry designers include **Andrea Wysocki** (Philippa's associate) and Mark Poulin. In addition, the store carries whimsical and practical baby gifts, including fleece caps by Oakland designer CC3 Design (\$24); home accessories such as tableware and candles; irresistibly scented hand and body lotions; and artistic stationery.

Make My Day

3850 Piedmont Ave., 601-0608.

This serene shop carries home accessories from around the world, with an emphasis on the organic, the sophisticated, and the unusual. A coconut-shell stool with a micro-suede seat, from the National Geographic home collection, is \$348; a tall urn made in the Philippines from banana leaves is \$200. For stocking stuffers and hostess gifts: unscented soy candles that burn for 80 hours (\$15.50 for a 3" x 4" pillar), silky jewel-tone placemats (\$5 each), and salad servers made from opalescent shells (\$39.50). Owner **Rita Lee** also does interior, color, and lighting design; ask her about Tech Lighting track lights—she's the only East Bay seller of these stylish, low-voltage systems.

Pimlico Place

4135 Piedmont Ave., 655-7081.

Owner **Annette Benjamin** is a British-trained interior designer who opened her eclectic shop four years ago with an emphasis on home furnishings. Recently she's expanded her selection of chic fashion accessories from European capitals. Linger over the exceptional jewelry collection, including new and antique cufflinks, Murano glass rings, and resin and Lucite jewelry from Florence. Handprinted bags from Liberty of London, in supple metallic leather, are about \$250; handrolled silk scarves from Emmanuelle Khanh start at \$60. Men's neckties in Italian silk (\$120 each) feature patterns of coffee beans, kiwis, or lemons; some have matching cufflinks. For the home there are beautiful Swiss Christmas-tree ornaments, Victorian and Edwardian glassware, and leather pillows.

ZONING UPDATE

Construction Boom Heading Our Way

By Valerie Winemiller

A 6-story, 19-unit condo is proposed for 4225 Broadway, currently a vacant auto dealership between Bay Appliances and the vacant Dave's Coffee Shop. The city's Zoning Division informs us that a second proposal that would fill the rest of that block is in pre-application stages. The construction boom of downtown and the Jack London warehouse district appears to be expanding north to our area.

PANIL urged that the design of both proposals respond to Oakland Tech, a city landmark in the next block. The quality of design and materials should be high. The proposed use of corrugated metal siding at 4225 Broadway is popular now, but is more appropriate to industrial areas and does not respond to the context of either the residential or the better commercial buildings of the area. It is becoming over-used, creating a sameness to much recent Oakland development.

The public comment period on 4225 Broadway was extended when PANIL's query revealed that the proposed open space did not meet zoning code: it is proposed to be all on the roof, but code allows only 20% there, with the remainder on the ground level.

PANIL is also concerned that this proposal does not have street level commercial activity to contribute to the business mix and to street life.

We expect to schedule a discussion of Broadway's zoning and future growth for an upcoming PANIL meeting.



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Next issue



Beat Officer Wendy Rae leaves Piedmont Avenue after 13 years

DECEMBER 9 AND 10

Buy a Christmas Tree —Support Oakland Tech Baseball

By Paul Brekke-Miesner

Funding for high school sports is in short supply these days. Every year, teams are expected to raise the money to get the minimal equipment needed to field a team. The Oakland Tech High baseball team, under coach Eric Clayton, has come up with a great way to raise the dollars during the holiday season—selling Christmas trees. The team launched the tree project last year and this year hopes to raise \$5,000 to fund the team.

Tech has produced several major league baseball players over the years, including Cookie Lavagetto, Len Gabrielson, Curt Flood and Rickey Henderson, and Coach Clayton has a good team this year -- one he thinks will compete for the Oakland Athletic League title. By purchasing a Christmas tree from the Tech High baseball team, you may help produce another potential star in the making. You also may be helping to keep a youngster involved in school through participation on the baseball team.

You can purchase either a Noble Fir or a Douglas Fir tree and pick it up Tech High on either December 9 or 10. Noble Fir trees cost \$75 for 5- to 6-footers to \$90 for 8- to 9-footers. Douglas Fir trees cost \$45 to \$60.

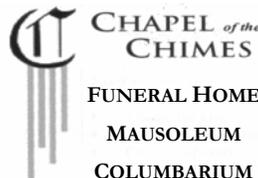
For information, contact Coach Clayton at (510) 338-0944. You can pick out your own tree. And, remember, trees are tax deductible.

Paul Brekke-Miesner is the Oakland Police Neighborhood Services Coordinator for the PANIL neighborhood.

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