

PANIL Notes

Volume 32

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

March 2007

ASKED ON THE AVENUE

How did you choose your child's school?



Leelind Gee, Howe St.

When our older son was 3, we switched to **Duck's Nest Pre-school** after a bad experience elsewhere. He cried every day at first, but the staff was very nurturing and flexible, allowing him to attend daily for an hour and a half.

Soon he was ready for full days, and now he loves it! We're sending our younger son there in the fall.



Emily Ross-Brown, Entrada Ave.

We chose **Archway School** for our kindergartner because of the small class size—our son's class has just eleven students—the enthusiastic teachers, and the way they set kids up for success.

There are loads of field trips, and the after-school program is fantastic. I wish Archway went through high school!



Julie Graffagna, View St.

Both our children attend **Piedmont Ave. Elementary**—the older one's in second grade, the younger one in kindergarten. We support public schools and wanted a neighborhood school—it's just two minutes away, so we

can be more involved. We have a very active PTA and great teachers. Our kindergarten teacher, Ms. Banks, is stellar! Both kids *always* want to go to school.



Renate Woodbury, John St.

Both girls did very well at Piedmont Ave. Elementary, but when they didn't get into the public middle schools they wanted, we decided on private schools. Our older daughter is now a freshman at **College Preparatory School**

[CPS] and the younger girl is at **Redwood Day School**. We chose Redwood Day because we liked the head of school and heard good word of mouth. CPS is tough academically, but they have an amazing system to help kids succeed.

Continued on page 3

NEW UNITS MAY BE PROPOSED

Neighborhood Mansion Sold

By Valerie Winemiller

The mansion at 412 Monte Vista Avenue (just off Oakland Ave) is obscured by overgrown landscaping and a badly placed crude board fence, but for those with imagination to see it as it was and could be, it is a stunning remnant of grandeur and one of the most gracious buildings in the neighborhood. Long owned by Plymouth Church, the property has been bought by a developer who is expected to propose relocating the building on the lot, making major alterations, and filling in the remaining land with up to two dozen new units. PANIL has requested a public presentation and discussion in the near future.



The History of the House

The top of the hill on either side of Oakland Avenue was mostly developed between 1890 and 1920. Formally known as the Linda Vista Tract; it was called "Millionaire's Hill" by downhill neighbors in smaller houses. Many of the grand homes were demolished in the 1950s and '60s for apartment blocks.

The 1908, 17-room Colonial Revival house at 412 Monte Vista was designed by prominent Oakland architect Walter J. Mathews and is considered to be of major architectural importance by the Cultural Heritage Survey, a part of Oakland's Planning and Zoning Division. Construction cost a

Details from 412 Monte Vista Ave, a building rated worthy of landmark status. *Photos by Joyce Benna*

Continued on page 4

March PANIL Meeting

Wednesday, March 14, 7:30 pm

Piedmont Gardens 11th Floor Sky Room

110 41st Street

Agenda: Development Plans
For Our Part of Broadway

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

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**New Walking Officer
on Piedmont Avenue**



Piedmont Avenue has welcomed the new Beat Officer, Marcus Moreno, who began his assignment here in January. He is a nine-year veteran in the Oakland Police Department with previous assignments on the CRT (Crime Reduction Team) for Police Service Area 1 – the downtown/West Oakland area.

Contact info for Officer Marcus Moreno: 510.238.3455 (phone); 428.6472 (cell).

PAMA, PANIL Thank Wendy Rae

Piedmont Avenue Merchants' Association helped to express everyone's thanks to Wendy Rae as she left the Piedmont Avenue beat by providing gifts and written notes of appreciation from many of the folks in the stores and businesses on the Avenue. Special thanks go to L'Amxy Tea for a gift basket, to Bella Ceramica for a gift and to J. Miller Florists for a bouquet.

**How Do Our Crime Stats
Stack Up Against Other Areas?**

By Valerie Winemiller

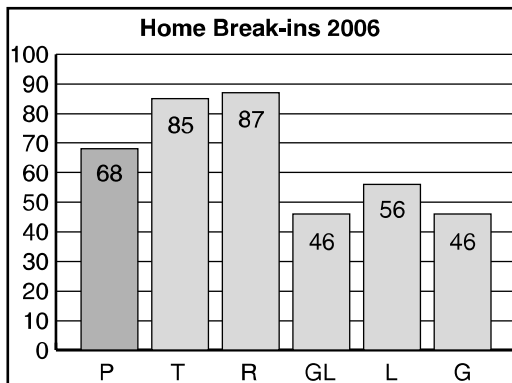
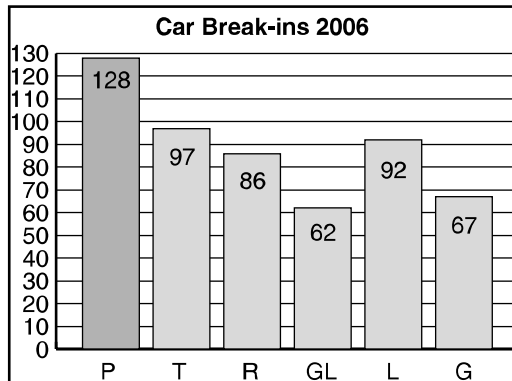
The graphs below are a selected look at crime statistics for 2006, according to Oakland Police Department data shown in a table published in *The Montclairion*, January 26. The Piedmont Avenue area is compared to five other "mid-lands" neighborhoods (not hills or flat-lands) with commercial streets.

Some important definitions: Aggravated assault means that someone was seriously injured; a simple assault can be "just a touch," according to Lt. James Meeks. In a strong arm robbery, a weapon is used to take something by fear or force; the weapon could be a stick or a brick or a gun, Lt. Meeks says.

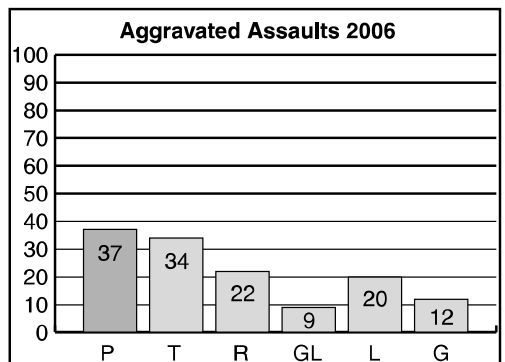
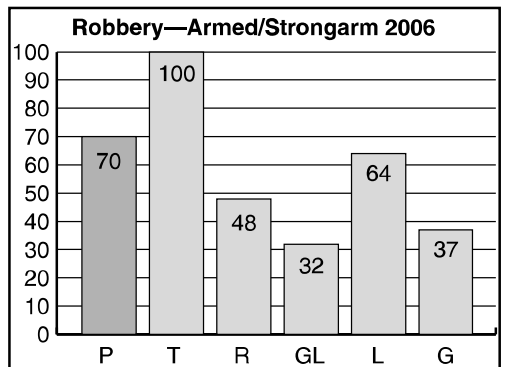
Of the five neighborhoods, only Grand Lake had homicides (2). Larceny (181), auto thefts (146) and car break-ins were the most common crimes in our area.

Overall crime stayed steady in the PANIL area (-0.3%) compared to 2005, while Temescal crime dropped 14.4% and Rockridge crime was up 29%.

The Public Safety section of the PANIL website (www.PANIL.org/ncpc) shows comparisons between Police Service Areas and the beats within PSA 2 (PANIL's area).



P	Piedmont	GL	Grand Lake
T	Temescal	L	Lakeshore
R	Rockridge	G	Glenview



How did you choose your child's school?— continued from page 1



Kerry Hamill
Fairmount Ave.

My kids had a first-rate education at Piedmont Ave. Elementary. When it came time for middle school, we looked at all the

public options, including charter schools. We chose **Claremont** because it's close to our house and many of our daughter's friends were going there. She's happy and feels challenged. The school is a work in progress, but we're active in the PTA and are encouraging more parents to participate.

Kerry Hamill is the District 1 Director for the Oakland Board of Education.



Tiffany Fletcher
Howe St.

I went to Catholic schools myself, and my daughter is now in 6th grade at **St. Leo's School**. The school has a strong focus on academics plus an emphasis on developing morals and values so that kids can go out into the world and be leaders. My daughter plays basketball, and the athletic program is great. I also like that the school reflects the diversity of Oakland—it isn't just a neighborhood school.



Claudia Vieira
Monte Vista Ave.

We ruled out private school because of cost, so both our sons go to **Oakland Tech**. One is in the Paideia program for academically inclined students and in the engineering academy, which does incredible things like a bridge-building contest. There's also an amazing program called TryUMF that teaches social justice issues. Both boys have been happy with their teachers. Our older son was just accepted at Reed College.

All photos by Joyce Benna

Calendar
(for more neighborhood events go to www.panil.org/calendar)

PANIL Meeting

2nd Wednesday of the month
7:30 to 9 pm
11th Floor Sky Room
Piedmont Gardens
110 41st Street

PANIL Steering Committee
email info@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 am
654.1930

Mt. View Cemetery Tour

Docent led tour
2nd Saturday of the month
10 am, FREE

Events at the Chapel of the Chimes

4499 Piedmont Avenue
654.0123

Historical and Botanical Tour

3rd Saturday of the month
10 am to noon, FREE

Jazz at the Chimes

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

Oakland Heritage Alliance Lecture Series

2nd Thursday of the monthly
7:30 pm
\$8 OHA members/\$10 non-members/\$5 low income
Further information:
www.oaklandheritage.org or
763.9218

Piedmont Avenue Branch Library
160 41st Street, 597.5011

Storytimes

Toddlers
Wednesday, 10:15 am
Pre school
Wednesday, 11 am

Saturday Knitting Club
Every Saturday 3 to 4 pm

To place an item on PANIL's calendars, send e-mail to: info@panil.org




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Historic Mansion Sold—*continued from page 1*

staggering \$20,000, nearly ten times that of contemporary 2-bedroom cottages in the neighborhood. The house is two stories, with basement and attic. Its imposing impression is heightened by the fact that it sits above two tiers of carefully proportioned terracing and, on top of that, there are three marble steps to reach the columned front porch and its welcoming glazed double doors.



Freize with modillion block with Greek key decoration below it under the eaves.

The house is designed on a square plan, with a symmetrical front, but monotony is avoided. A hierarchy of ceiling heights, window sizes and trim details announce the respective importance of the main floor, with its grand entrance hall and palatially proportioned parlors for entertaining, the second floor with bedrooms, and the attic with servants' quarters. The attic story is further reduced in visual importance by camouflaging the windows into a frieze; a band of Greek key decoration runs under the attic windows, with bands of egg and dart decoration under the eaves.

Unusual flush (not shiplap) board siding covers the exterior. A porte cochere was added to the west side of the house not long after original construction. The addition was designed by Brown and Bladewell, architects of San Francisco's City Hall. To maintain symmetry, it is balanced by a sun room on the east side.

Despite sometimes intense use as a day care center and church extension, the interiors of the house and addition are remarkably intact.

The Architect

Walter J. Mathews (1850-1947) was one of Oakland's foremost architects. His brother Arthur Mathews and his wife Lucia are currently the subjects of a major retrospective at the Oakland Museum (see www.museumca.org/exhibit/exhi_mathews.html).

As was common in the years before licensing requirements, Mathews began his career with practical experience, first working as a carpenter for his architect father for seven years. He next worked in his father's office, then practiced as an architect in a partnership in Los Angeles; he returned to Oakland to become a partner in his father's firm in 1877.

Then in 1886 he opened a practice in Oakland. During the 1890s, he was City Architect of Oakland and in this capacity designed several buildings for the city. In private practice, Mathews designed the Immigration Station at Angel Island and the First Unitarian Church at 14th and Castro Streets in Oakland, both now national landmarks. Commercial commissions included the Athenian-Nile Club (now Geoffrey's Inner Circle) at 14th and Franklin, Union Savings/Easton Building at 13th and Broadway (Oakland's first skyscraper), the Central Building (14th and Broadway, with a Rite Aid now on the ground floor) and the Chapel of the Memories columbarium at Montgomery and Pleasant Valley in the PANIL neighborhood.

Mathews is also credited with over forty palatial mansions in San Francisco.

One of his largest residential commissions was Arbor Villa, the 42-room home (now demolished) of F. M. "Borax" Smith of Twenty Mule Team Borax fame. Intriguingly, famed architect Julia Morgan's childhood home at 14th and Brush Streets was a Mathews design.

The 1890 Oakland Tribune Illustrated Annual Edition noted, "...[Mathews] has inaugurated a new era in building, especially in Oakland, a departure from the old forms and ideas. ... Stability, firmness of design, and utility are as apparent in the work of Mr. Mathews, as beauty and artistic finish. Throughout every design there is originality." We are fortunate to have such a fine example of his work in the neighborhood.

Bella Ceramica

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ZONING UPDATE

**Piedmont Gardens expansion:
Some progress, some questions**

On January 31, PANIL representatives met with representatives of Piedmont Gardens for further preliminary discussions regarding the facility's expansion plans. Attending were Valerie Winemiller, PANIL Steering Committee; George Horton, architect and neighbor; Martin Huff, PANIL member and Piedmont Gardens resident; Reginald Lyles, Director of Piedmont Gardens; the CFO of their parent organization, American Baptist Homes of the West (ABHOW); Texas-based consultants Greystone Communities (www.greystonecommunities.com), and local architect Kirk Peterson with an architect from his offices.

Progress has been made on two issues. 1)Kirk Peterson, brought in after the first meeting, has visually tied the proposed addition to the materials and style of the 1920s-era apartments across Glen Avenue, rather than to continue the drab modern style of the existing towers, improving its appearance. And 2)Pamela Claassen, CFO of ABHOW, stated that ABHOW is willing to consider improving the exterior appearance of the tower at 110 41st Street, especially the corrugated metal balcony railings.

A number of zoning issues remain unclear; PANIL and the project proponents have different views of zoning history and the height and footprint allowed.

Since the meeting, a formal pre-application proposal has been submitted to the city's Zoning Division, to elicit the city's ruling on those issues. A public neighborhood meeting will be scheduled after zoning rules are clarified.

If you want to support PANIL's efforts to keep the neighborhood informed and make our voices heard, become a member. Send \$15, with your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number, to PANIL, Box 20375, Oakland 94620.

If you want to become an advertiser in PANIL NOTES, contact Joan Dark at 338-1316 or send e-mail by using the Contact Us button at www.PANIL.org.

Do You Use City Car Share?

PANIL NOTES will profile this innovative and eco-friendly service in a future issue.

If you are a member of Car Share, will you share your experiences with us?

Use the "contact us" button at the PANIL website, www.panil.org

Correction

A caption in the January issue mistakenly said that Betty Wurm was standing before the mural at Gaylord's. She was pictured in front of the mural at Key Route Plaza.



Betty Wurm standing before the mural at Key Route Plaza, Piedmont Avenue at 41st Street

Below is the mural at Gaylord's. Both murals were created by Rocky Baird.



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2007 Tulip and Art Festival

By Ronile Lahti

The tulips have been planted at Mountain View Cemetery, all 30,000 of them, and more up and down the Avenue as plans progress for the second Piedmont Avenue Tulip and Art Festival to be held March 30 to April 28.

The cemetery's floral exhibit in Tower Chapel will feature tulip arrangements from approximately 30 Bay Area florists and garden club members. "Last year's was great and we think this year's will be even better," said Doreen Herbruger, customer service manager at Mountain View Cemetery.



This year's events will include demonstrations of how to make floral arrangements; on Friday, March 30, the facilitator for that program will be Connie Hubbel from Merritt College.

A number of merchants will showcase local artists and artisans in their stores. Watch for the posters in store windows to learn which artists are being sponsored.

Several events are planned for each weekend including a Cherry Blossom Tea at the Chapel of the Chimes, music at Key Route Plaza (41st and Piedmont Avenue), a performance by the Oakland Lyric Opera and an antique car show. Go to PANIL's web site for an updated list – www.panil.org. There will be something for everyone.

The festival will wrap up on Saturday, April 28, at Key Route Plaza with a special program celebrating this neighborhood and those who make it the great place it is.

How Does This Newsletter Get to Your Doorstep?

Have you met the good neighbor who delivers the newsletter to you?

Margitta Gardner delivers PANIL NOTES to her neighbors on **Ramona Avenue**.



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Comings and Goings on Piedmont Avenue

Ciao, Lucciola

Children's bookstore Lucciola, which offered books in several languages and story hours in English and Spanish, closed its doors permanently at the end of February. We're sad to see this unique store leave our neighborhood, but happy to hear that the owners will continue to sell books at school book fairs and at the Grand Lake Farmers Market.

Opening

Paws on Piedmont — Pet Supply (3974 Piedmont Avenue between Monte Vista and Montell)

Closed

Marshall's Luggage at Linda Plaza (Linda and Piedmont Avenue)

Bellevue Cleaners (4155 Piedmont Avenue, between Ridgeway and 41st Street)

Cremalita Dessert Cafe at 4301 Piedmont Avenue (between Pleasant Valley Avenue and John Street)

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Kid Stuff

By ShopGirl

Need to keep the kids busy—or buy them something special? Just take a stroll down Piedmont Avenue.

Baby Alula is both old-fashioned (“the toys you grew up with,” says co-owner **Tiffany Smith**) and up to date. Tiffany and her husband, **Timothy**, stock the shelves with chic diaper bags from Fleurville, Skip Hop, and Petit Planet (\$70 to \$140); Kidorable rain sets (\$15 to \$35); Happy Handle stampers (sized for little hands); classic Radio Flyer red wagons; and Kiwi Industries organic cotton clothing. But kids will want the four-foot-tall giraffe, now reduced 25% from its original \$120 price.

Capoeira is a centuries-old Brazilian martial art: part self-defense, part dance, part gymnastics. Kids as young as 3 can learn the basics at **Capoeira Mandinga Academy**, where owner **Marcelo Pereira** teaches many classes himself. “It’s a very fun art form because we avoid contact and emphasize community,” says Marcelo, who adds that many capoeira moves found their way into break-dancing choreography. Classes start at \$13 each, with discounts for siblings, teens, and one-month class cards.

You won’t find video games at **Dr. Comics & Mr. Games**, an avenue destination for almost 20 years. Instead, discover wooden memory and strategy games from local game designer Blue Orange and family-friendly games like Scrambled States of America from Gamewright, as well as classics like Cranium and Risk. “We’ve played every game we carry,” says owner **Michael Pandolfo**. “If we don’t like it, we send it back to the manufacturer.”

Learn to play the ukulele—or almost any other instrument—at **Harmony Road Music School** inside the Piedmont Piano Company. A Playsongs class introduces very young children (infants to 3 years old) to world music; older kids can take group or individual classes “just for fun” or “for serious recital preparation,” says school director **Krista Johnson**. Private classes are about \$35/half-hour; group classes are about \$35/hour.

For eleven years, **Kids in Motion** has been teaching toddlers through teens the elements of gymnastics in a “positive, challenging, yet noncompetitive atmosphere,” says director **Charli Prete**. Equipment includes uneven bars, balance beam, trampoline, climbing apparatus, rings, and trapeze. Eight-week sessions (one class a week) range between \$102 and \$128. Ask about summer and winter day camps and birthday-party hosting.

Just over the PANIL border in Temescal, longtime Montgomery Street residents **Jana Branisa and Mark Hall** have opened **MONART School of the Arts**, offering fine-art classes to children from 4 through teenage (and adults, too). The after-school program uses a proven 25-year-old method, developed by Mona Brookes, to teach drawing and painting in a noncompetitive atmosphere. Ask about birthday parties, vacation camps, and classes for home-schooled kids.

Former Archway School teacher **Becky Thomas** started **The Roleplay Workshop** in 1989 to augment her middle-school classes. Today it’s a year-round program that uses an interactive storytelling game to develop kids’ social and problem-solving skills. Students age 10 through 18 create their own characters, then respond to scenarios assigned by a story director. “Kids learn everything from math to negotiation techniques,” says Becky. Classes meet upstairs from Dr. Comics & Mr. Games (which donates the space); ask about birthday parties, summer day camps, and weekend and school-vacation sessions.

BabyAlula

3929 Piedmont Ave.
597-9945
babyalula.com

Capoeira Mandinga Academy

4125 Piedmont Ave.
655-8207
mandinga.org

Dr. Comics and Mr. Games

4014 Piedmont Ave.
601-7800

Harmony Road Music School

4382 Piedmont Ave.
652-1222
piedmontpiano.com

Kids in Motion

4137 Piedmont Ave.
601-8424
kimgymnastics.com

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521-3729
oakalnd.monart.com

The Roleplay Workshop

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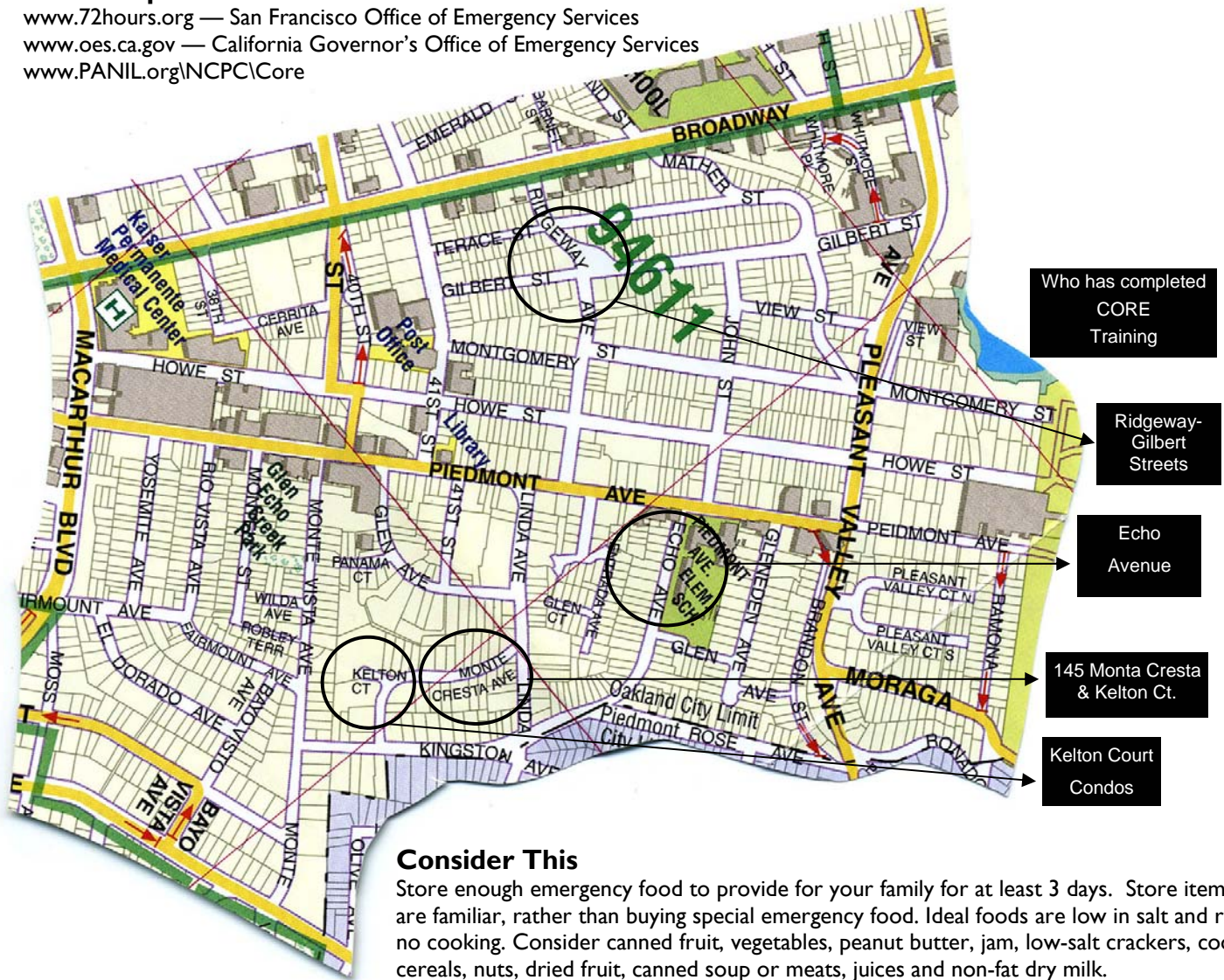
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Emergencies — Let’s Get Ready

PANIL NOTES continues to highlight the efforts in the neighborhood to prepare for emergencies. As we learn of groups that have completed Oakland’s CORE training, we’ll mark the area on the map. To host a training in your home or a location in your area, contact the Core Coordinator at 510-238-6351 or see www.Oaklandnet.com/fire/core/training.html. Attend PANIL meetings or use the PANIL website to find neighbors who want to join together to reach the minimum of 10 persons for a session.

More Helpful Websites

- www.72hours.org — San Francisco Office of Emergency Services
- www.oes.ca.gov — California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services
- www.PANIL.org/NCPC/Core



Consider This

Store enough emergency food to provide for your family for at least 3 days. Store items that are familiar, rather than buying special emergency food. Ideal foods are low in salt and require no cooking. Consider canned fruit, vegetables, peanut butter, jam, low-salt crackers, cookies, cereals, nuts, dried fruit, canned soup or meats, juices and non-fat dry milk.

[From www.72hours.org a site of the San Francisco Office of Emergency Services accessed 2-19-07]