PANIL Notes

Volume 30 Issue 1—Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League—PO Box 20375—Oakland CA 94620—December 2004

Library's future — want a say?

By Joan Dark

Everyone who loves and uses our library should be interested in its future. Everyone has probably also noticed that our library is too small.

The "Library's Future" Committee came into being after a meeting in August called by Councilwoman Jane Brunner to introduce the Aegis Development Co. which has plans to acquire the city-owned parking lot behind Long's drugstore including J's Hamburgers and the Key Route Plaza. The architectural model and drawings display showed 56 condominiums, dedicated parking including underground and a new library. There would be no gain of public parking spaces. Ms. Brunner emphasized strongly that the proposal was just that — very preliminary, subject to change or denial altogether if the neighborhood didn't like it.

From that initial meeting a "Library's Future" Committee was formed and in two meetings since it has been exploring various options. The Library building is owned by Citibank, and has been on a month-to-month lease for its entire lifetime. Citibank has assured the committee that it has no current plans for the building and is happy to be supporting a well-loved Oakland resource. One option may be expansion of the present building. Other ideas to explore: assessment district; acquiring a building elsewhere on the Avenue, or something not yet imagined.

We do know two things: we have great librarians and a wonderful library. Come to the December PANIL meeting for more discussion and information.

Neighborhood holiday events

PANIL's annual food drive for the Alameda County Community Food Bank will take place on Saturday, 12/11 at the Key Route Plaza Kiosk, 41st and Piedmont Avenue. Bring non-perishable items between 10 am and 2 pm. Thanks!

Open Studio: Jewelry Designer Diana Lovett, 12/4, 5, 11 and 12, 11 am to 5 pm, 29 Rio Vista, 658.9760

Plymouth United Church of Christ
424 Monte Vista Avenue, 654.5301
12/17, 7 pm, Neighborhood caroling
12/14, 5:30 pm, Christmas Eve service

St. Leo the Great Catholic Church
176 Ridgeway, 654.6177
12/24, 5 pm, Family Mass — 7:30 pm, Mass with choir
12/25, 8:30 am and 11 am, Christmas masses

Neighborhood Halloween parade. Thanks again to everyone who helped this year! (Photo: Phil Laing)

Preparing for spring!

In November Pleasant Valley Court and Ramona neighbors planted 300+ daffodils in the medians on Pleasant Valley Road. Gardeners: Mae Liu, Cliff Falloon, Ronile Lahti, Margitta Gardner, Henny Hoogenbosch, Colleen Truman, Sharon Jobson and Michael Wong. Thank you to Mt. View Cemetery for providing mulch. (Photo: R. Lahti)

THANK YOU Mike Lydon and Avenue merchants for the wonderful street decorations. PANIL wishes everyone a safe and happy Holiday Season.

Join the Piedmont Avenue School Reading Partners

To volunteer, call Ruby Long at 595.9514
or Donna Bersaglieri at 482.0862

PANIL Meeting

Wednesday, December 8, 7:30 pm, Piedmont Gardens, 110 41st Street, 11th Floor, Sky Room

Agenda: Future of our branch library

To place an item on the agenda, please call Ronile Lahti at 655.1723 or email rklahti@aol.com

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

PANIL *Notes* is the monthly publication of the Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League (PANIL). Writing, editing, and layout are all done by volunteers. Articles may be reprinted only with the permission of the editors. To submit story ideas or articles call Ronile Lahti at 655.1723 or email rklahti@aol.com
Circulation: 2,200 copies.

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Planning Questionnaire re: Future of the Piedmont Avenue Branch Library

The purpose of this questionnaire: In recent months there has been a great deal of discussion regarding the fate of the Piedmont Avenue Branch Library by the Library Commission, the Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League (PANIL) and Councilwoman Jane Brunner's office. PANIL believes that wide neighborhood input is desirable before any plans are finalized.

Background information: The current Piedmont Avenue Branch Library was built in 1931 as a private development. It has always been the neighborhood library but has never been owned by the city. At present it is owned by Citibank and is leased to the city for one dollar per year on a month-to-month basis. There is no threat of eviction, but it would clearly be advantageous for the city to own its own library in the neighborhood.

Meanwhile, the city's Library Commission is developing a master plan for the entire library system. This plan is looking at individual branches and their special needs, as identified in earlier surveys that asked citizens what services they wanted. The Piedmont Avenue branch was identified as needing a larger facility because it has the sixth-highest circulation of all libraries in the city (highest per square foot), because it has limited space for books and because it lacks meeting and program rooms.

In order to solve these needs, the Library Commission, in its draft plan, has identified three possible options for Piedmont Avenue (1-3 below). All of them involve building a new library building of 9,000 to 12,000 square feet – much larger than the current building of 1,700 square feet. Space for books would be moderately increased. Seating capacity, computers and program rooms would be greatly increased. From neighborhood meetings on the subject we added two more options (4-5) to consider. The options are:

1) Build a new library in the city-owned parking lot at 40th and Howe Streets. The new building would be located behind the red-brick Julia Morgan-designed building that fronts on Piedmont Avenue and would relate to it architecturally. It would have sub-surface parking to replace the parking currently on the site. Cost: at least $5.2 million. (Per Library Master Plan draft)
2) Build a new library elsewhere in the neighborhood, at an unspecified location on or near Piedmont Avenue. Cost: at least $3 million plus land costs.
3) Sell the entire city-owned parking lot at 40th and Howe (behind Long's Drugs) to a private developer, who would build 56 market rate condominiums over a privately-run parking garage, plus a new library. The new development would be 3 stories high on Howe Street between 40th and 41st. The library would not belong to the city, but would revert to the developer after 30 years (or perhaps longer).
4) Attempt to procure the existing library site from Citibank, and procure an adjacent property to allow for expansion. Cost unknown.
5) Leave the library alone.

At present, there is no funding for options 1, 2, or 3. They must be considered long-range plans until the city can come up with a funding source. Some neighborhood residents feel that the current library is valuable for its historic qualities, and have proposed that the city buy the building, should Citibank become a willing seller, and perhaps make a substantial addition to it (Option 3). There is no funding for this idea at present, either.

Questions regarding services and programs:

How important is it to you that the library have room for more books?
❑ Very important ❑ Somewhat important ❑ Not very important

How important is it to you that the library have room for more computers?
❑ Very important ❑ Somewhat important ❑ Not very important

How important is it to you that the library have meeting and program rooms for adults and children?

❑ Very important ❑ Somewhat important ❑ Not very important

Questions regarding aesthetics:

If the city builds a new library in the parking lot at 40th and Howe, how important is it to you that the new building have excellent aesthetic features, such as the fine materials, detailing and ornament that exist in the present library?

❑ Very important ❑ Somewhat important ❑ Not very important

If a developer is allowed to build housing and parking in the parking lot, how concerned are you about the proposed 50-foot height of the building along Howe Street?

❑ Very concerned ❑ Somewhat concerned ❑ Not concerned

The present library has some fine design elements that are common among older buildings, but which are rarely or never found in modern buildings. These include the Spanish tile roof, an open wood truss roof in the main wing and wood casement windows that open to admit fresh air. The building has also been the neighborhood library for a great portion of the neighborhood's history. Considering these facts, would you prefer that the city purchase and add to the present library (instead of building a new one) if this becomes possible?

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ No preference

Other issues:

The developer that would like to build housing, parking and a new library in the parking lot has stipulated that the new library would revert to the developer after 30 years (or perhaps longer). How concerned are you that the city would not have the library permanently?

❑ Very concerned ❑ Somewhat concerned ❑ Not concerned

Would you be willing to pay more in a private parking garage to support a new library?

❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Doesn't matter

Your comments:

Are you interested in attending future public meetings on this issue? If so, please provide (please print):

Name: Phone #: E-mail address:

PANIL wants to make sure that, whatever happens, the neighborhood ends up with a library that it will truly love. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire! Please drop your response in the drop box at the Piedmont Avenue branch library, mail to 47 Ramona Avenue, Oakland, CA 94611 or bring with you to the December 8 PANIL meeting.

Thank you to new and renewing members: Joanna Smith, Margaret and Paul Salop,Lucciola Children's Bookstore, Sarita Cordell, Crystal Weston, Christine Bloomingdale, Chifford Weingus and Mary Callahan, Stephen and Shannon Williams, Jerry Wolfe, Michael O'Connell, June Curtis, Doug Johnson, Lois Wahle, Stephen Thompson, Kerry Woodward and Mary Ann Brownstein, Kate Spohr and Terry Bottomley, Marda Woodbury, John Doyle, Ana Abraldes and Paul Berman, Naomi Yager, Libby Schaaf and Sal Fahey, George Horton, James Leventhal and Karen Klier

PANIL Calendar

PANIL Meeting

2nd Wednesday of the month,
(See page 1 for information)

Steering Committee

1st Friday of the month, 7 pm
655.1723

Glen Echo Creek Workday

2nd Saturday of the month
9:30 am, Monte Vista Avenue
654.1930

PANSA Meeting

2nd Monday of the month, 7 pm
Piedmont Avenue School Library
654.6591

Piedmont Avenue Branch Library

160 41st Street, 597.5011

Storytimes

Preschool
Wednesdays, 11 am
Toddlers
Wednesdays, 10:30 am

Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender Book Club
2nd Monday of each month
6:30 to 8 pm
This month's selection:
Fingersmith by Sara Waters

Create holiday *Clay Creations* with MOCHA
(Museum of Children's Art)
Friday, 12/10, 3 to 4 pm
Registration required

To place an item on PANIL's newsletter or web site calendars, email Minnie Sage at mamsage@earthlink.net.

Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League
P.O. Box 20375
Oakland, CA 94620
www.panil.org

Count Me In!

___Here's my check for $_____(minimum $15.00) to join PANIL.

___Please send me a safety whistle ($3.50/each).

Name/s_____

Address_____

Phone/Email_____

Mail to PANIL, PO Box 20375, Oakland, CA 94620
Contributions to PANIL are not tax deductible

Please check your expiration date

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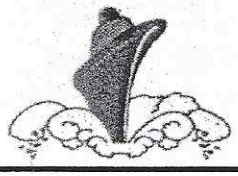
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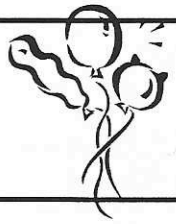
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