



# PHRA NEWSLETTER

## PHRA is Celebrating its 40th Anniversary of Preserving the Neighborhood Character of Pacific Heights

### BUILDING HEIGHTS: HOW PHRA GOT STARTED

PHRA is proud to be commencing its 41st year of protecting the neighborhood character of Pacific Heights!

While our activities range from concern for the quality of neighborhood parks to the availability of public transportation for our



residents, certain issue have continued to occupy center stage over the years: commercial intrusions into and use of residential areas, CPMC's impact and building plans, schools and traffic issues draw significant attention from the PHRA board every year. First and foremost, however, tends to be the ever present push for increased density. Most

recently, PHRA had a leading role in defeating the City's Housing Element which called for substantial increase in density in a manner that would affect our neighborhood. It is perhaps fitting that PHRA was borne of an attempt 40 years ago by the City to allow for the "Manhattanization" of much of San Francisco.

The distinct residential character of Pacific Heights and much of San Francisco owe much to Charlotte Maeck, PHRA's founder. The story, in her own words, appeared in the 25th anniversary edition of the PHRA newsletter in 1999. It is beautifully written and we are republishing an excerpt below. We are sure you will enjoy it!

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On Friday, April 14, 1972, I received in the mail an innocuous-appearing lavender postcard for an announcement of a public hearing before the Planning Commission to rezone building heights of all residential properties in the City. The proposal for Pacific Heights was to zone up to 160 feet in height. The portent of this was eventual demolition of all structures in that area to make way for high rise buildings.

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### LAFAYETTE PARK RENOVATIONS TO BEGIN

May 5th was a big day at Lafayette Park. The official groundbreaking for the \$10+ million renovation of Lafayette Park was held with District 2 Supervisor Mark Farrell, a Pacific Heights resident, and SF Recreation and Parks Commission President, Mark Buell, leading the ceremony.

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## PHRA ANNIVERSARY (FROM PAGE 1)

Upon a friend's advice, 5,000 flyers title "Alarm, Alarm, Alarm" were printed and distributed on April 15th and 500 neighbors filled Calvary Presbyterian Church Hall on Monday, April 17, 1972.

The next evening, Tuesday, April 18th, the Pacific Heights Association [now PHRA] announced its existence. The City's Planning Commission decided not to vote on any proposals that evening. At our Wednesday morning meeting with the City Planning staff, we were advised that all of the citywide hearings had to be rescheduled and the Planning Department had to re-advertise in our area and also had to notify every property owner in our area of the PHA's request for a 40 foot height limit. The City advised us that in order to reach our goal of a 40 foot height limit, we would have to secure signed petitions in support of that limit from our property owners.

In the three weeks available to collect signatures, 72% of property owners were contacted. Of those, 92% voted for the 40 foot height limit. In addition, we gathered signatures of over 1,000 tenants. A massive effort and an impressive response!

The Planning Commission voted for Pacific Heights' requested 40 foot height limit except for the area south of Lafayette Park and the area south of the Presbyterian-Pacific Medical Center [now CPMC], which was mapped at 80 feet. This was unsatisfactory. The Association decided to bring the matter back to the Planning Commission through the Board of Supervisors. Supervisor Diane Feinstein carried our legislation. Our case won: South of Lafayette Park and south of the Presbyterian-Pacific Medical Center were re-mapped at 40 feet. Except high-rise use corridors, all Pacific Heights, the Marina and Presidio Heights are zoned 40 foot.

After all that effort, everyone thought our work was done. Not so! The City Planning Director advised the Association that now we had to redo our maps to reflect the lower heights. This meant lower occupancy densities had to be assigned to each lot. PHRA Board members and others walked every block in Pacific Heights to so. When the maps were ready Pacific Heights reflected mostly one family and

two family dwellings. The higher occupancy densities are intermingled with concentrations into the Laguna, Franklin and Gough corridors.

In January of 1978, the Pacific Heights Association was incorporated and the name was changed to the Pacific Heights *Residents* Association. The Planning Department revised the City's residential-commercial zoning. Commercial use could now occupy upper floors, expansion of schools, problems of Bed & Breakfasts and the Van Ness Corridor rezoning led to the intensified development we see today. The Residential Preferential Parking Program was established.

Future owners and residents of Pacific Heights must remain ever vigilant lest we suffer the breakup of single family homes into multi-dwelling units; commercial intrusion by the mechanics of Conditional Use (CU) permits; increased approvals of Variances from the Planning Code (mostly rear yard intrusion); inappropriate development of the Presidio and inappropriate intensification of neighborhood commercial streets.

Hopefully, Pacific Heights residents will always support their Association and as they walk our streets will reflect on how the zoning efforts of so many through the years has helped to preserve the character and quality of our neighborhood.

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This extract is from an article that originally appeared in the Summer 1997 issue of the Pacific Heights News, Published by the Pacific Heights Residents Association



VAN NESS BUS RAPID TRANSIT PLAN NEARING FINAL SELECTION; GEARY BRT PROGRESS

The San Francisco municipal transportation authorities are planning to convert Van Ness Avenue into a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor. Under the current proposal (see graphic) costing about \$90 million, two of the six existing traffic lanes will be eliminated. BRT lanes would flank the center median except at stations where the BRT vehicles

Separately, last year the Geary BRT project advanced its technical studies and outreach efforts preliminary designs for the project. Significant technical analysis is continuing, including detailed transit and traffic modeling of alternatives. For the corridor west of Van Ness Avenue, these include two center-running BRT alternatives, a side-running



would transition to the center of the roadway and be protected by right side boarding platforms. In order to gain the most transit time benefits, the proposal would also eliminate all left turns from Van Ness Avenue between Mission and Lombard streets with the exception of a southbound (two lane) left turn at Broadway. A meaningful amount of vehicular traffic is expected to divert to parallel streets including Franklin and Gough.

BRT alternative, and a No Project baseline. The study team evaluated where the project's western infrastructure (e.g., bus only lanes) could transition to mixed flow traffic/transit lanes and various options for the complex Masonic Avenue and Fillmore Street grade separated intersections. The study team is now assessing potential BRT lane transitions west of Van Ness Avenue (e.g., from center to side-running, or vice versa).

PHRA will keep you informed on the subject.

On April 30th PHRA heard from responsible authorities and noted its continuing major concerns with the scope of the project and lack of commitment by the City to address the major traffic impacts of the project. Furthermore, there has been no adequate analysis of a No Project alternative that instead of eliminating current traffic lanes would maximize traffic management and enforce double parking prohibitions. The City appears set on spending a huge amount of funds for very little time improvement, BUT with substantial negative impact on the surrounding streets and neighbors. The PHRA has communicated its concern to the City Board of Supervisors in writing.





CELEBRATE THE SPAN: SATURDAY, MAY 26 & SUNDAY, MAY 27

The Golden Gate Bridge is turning 75 years old and there will be many special activities in its honor – but no bridge walk included at this party! For detailed information, go to [www.goldengatebridge75.org](http://www.goldengatebridge75.org)

Celebrate, enjoy, and learn from one end of the northern waterfront to the other. From Fort Point to Pier 39, there will be music and dancing

on multiple stages, art exhibits at several locations, a ranger-led bike ride for kids by the YMCA, a Film Night in the Presidio on Saturday night, and a vintage auto display. Of course, there will be plenty of food. Don't miss the fireworks and grand finale starting at 9:30 pm on Sunday. Parking will be very limited, so come by bus or by bike.

IN THE PRESIDIO AND THE GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

PHRA participates in the Neighborhood Associations for Presidio Planning (“NAPP”) which represents neighborhood interests in the Presidio. NAPP works with both the Presidio Trust and the National Park Service.

Just in time for The Golden Gate Bridge Celebration, you can enjoy the new Plaza at the Bridge, opening May 25.

Look! A New Lookout at Lands End: Walk, bike or ride the #38 bus to Lands End, Point Lobos Avenue and Merrie Way. The brand new Visitor Center features exhibits and artifacts, a café, restrooms, and “green” features throughout.

40th Anniversary of the GGNRA: Coming up the end of October, all kinds of activities in all three counties that make up the GGNRA.

Inn at the Presidio: Just opened the beginning of April. Now you can overnight in the heart of the Presidio, adjacent to the Main Post. Historic Pershing Hall, once an elegant home for bachelor officers when the Presidio was a U.S. Army post, has been meticulously restored.

Useful web sites to visit are for the latest news: [www.presidio.gov/](http://www.presidio.gov/) and [www.nps.gov/prsf/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/prsf/index.htm)

THE CRISSY FIELD CENTER

Completed in January 2010 after six months of construction, the Center is a perfect example of sustainability in action. “EcoClad” siding, salvaged materials, solar thermal panels and a photovoltaic system that generates a big portion of the electricity used. But have you seen the recently installed “vertical-axis wind turbines” or the electric vehicle charging station? Altogether, the project is on track

to attain LEED Platinum certification for the U.S. Green Building Council – a major achievement.

LEED stands for “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.” There are many categories of buildings, including both new and existing buildings. In the Presidio 17 buildings have received this coveted designation.





## CALIFORNIA PACIFIC MEDICAL CENTER UPDATE

After a long period of quiet negotiations between the Mayor's office and CPMC, the approval process for CPMC's short term projects (Cathedral Hill and St. Luke's) has returned to public view, with the Planning Commission ratifying the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and giving their approval to the Development Agreement (DA).

Development Agreements are made between the responsible government agency (San Francisco) and developer (CPMC) on items that are not directly related to zoning codes, but are commitments the developer makes to get agreement to its project. DAs are common when a project will have significant impacts on the community as the planned CPMC operations will.

The CPMC DA is a laundry list of items - everything from local hire and job training agreements to how CPMC will address housing needs caused by its expanded operations to how CPMC will work with San Francisco to reduce health care costs that San Francisco City government will pay going forward. (Download the full DA at <http://tinyurl.com/cpmc-dev-ag>).

As with anything negotiated behind closed doors, the DA is controversial. Is subsidizing housing for CPMC employees good or bad? Is restricting the rates CPMC charges San Francisco to the rate of health care inflation plus 1.5% a good deal for the City's budget or not? Does paying for sidewalk landscaping mitigate adverse traffic impacts? The DA approval now moves to the Board of Supervisors, but the schedule for hearings is not available yet.

The EIR certification means the Planning Commission has certified that the EIR is complete and accurately assesses the impacts. PHRA disagrees and our related letter to the Planning Commission can be read at <http://phra-sf.org/cpmcdeiro42012plancom.pdf>. Our primary concern with this EIR is that it does not properly assess how CPMC traffic affects our neighborhood streets, and,

based on our long experience with CPMC's Pacific site, proposed mitigations will not be successful. At this time, the EIR for the Pacific site plans has not been completed, and PHRA expects this issue to arise again when the detailed plans for the Pacific site are finalized.

What happens next? The EIR certification will almost certainly be appealed to the Board of Supervisors; we will know by May 15. PHRA is not filing an appeal at this point, but may join in supporting the appeal filed by a coalition of

groups. The DA is being analyzed by the Board, and they may ask for modifications. So there will be more hearings.

At the same time, CPMC has proposed setting up a neighborhood working group to work on the plans for Pacific site projects. PHRA looks forward to participating on this working group, and the related public meetings to update the neighborhood on how the Pacific site plans are developing.

Look for updates on PHRA's website at [www.phra-sf.org](http://www.phra-sf.org). We may send an email alert asking for your help supporting a PHRA position. If you want to receive periodic updates on CPMC, send an e-mail to [cpmcneighbors@pw-sc.com](mailto:cpmcneighbors@pw-sc.com) and we'll add you to the distribution list.





... LAFAYETTE PARK RENOVATION (FROM PAGE 1)

Friends of Lafayette Park (FOLP) board members, Lynne Newhouse Segal, Corrina Bonomo, Shila Clement, Steffen Franz, and James Sievert also wielded “gold” shovels for the symbolic ceremony.

Although bond funding covered over \$10 million dollars of the renovation costs, park supporters have leveraged the bond money by raising additional funds for a beautiful and interesting custom-

designed playground. A tasteful “Donor Circle” similar to the walk at the Palace of Fine Arts will be situated at a central part of the park, near the playground, where donors of \$2,000 or more will be recognized with a personalized paver, medallion, or plaque.

If you would like to be included in the Donor Circle, please contact Friends of Lafayette Park ([friendsoflafayettepark.org](http://friendsoflafayettepark.org)) by May 30, 2012.

May 5 was also the last FOLP “Cleaning & Greening” day until the renovation is completed around May 2013. To celebrate the beginning of construction, and to thank the enthusiastic

volunteers, a volunteer-recognition party was held following the groundbreaking. The event was attended by a typically eclectic group of Lafayette Park volunteers and enthusiasts. Plans to visit other parks to “clean and green” during the renovation were discussed. Follow the FOLP website or the Friends of Lafayette Park Facebook page to learn more about substitute C&G projects.



The park will begin to be closed down in the following weeks. Off-leash dog areas will be provided throughout the renovation period. The playground and other parts of the park will be closed. You may follow the progress of the renovation and related news at [SFgov.org](http://SFgov.org) and the FOLP website. If

you experience or notice any unexpected impact on the neighborhood, please submit a comment to SFRPD, FOLP, or PHRA.

See you in a safer, brighter, drier, more fun and beautiful Lafayette Park in 2013!

**PHRA**

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