

The Richmond is talking . . .

Adopt a storm drain this rainy season to prevent flooding at your intersection. Cleaning a drain doesn't take long and benefits everyone. More than 300 residents have adopted more than 500 drains around the city. Join them by going to adoptadrain.sfwater.org

Free sandbags are available at the San Francisco Public Works' Operations yard, 2323 Cesar Chavez Street (enter at the Marin and Kansas Streets gate). The limit 10 sandbags per household, and proof of residency is required. Learn more at sfwater.org/rainreadysf.

Driving along JFK drive just got a little bumpier. Nine speed humps have been installed west of Transverse Drive and continue west to the Chain of Lakes and the Great Highway. Other safety improvements include speed limit signs and speed humps. The posted speed is 25 mph, but a comfortable speed over the humps is between 15 and 20 mph. Remember, it's a park, not a speedway or a shortcut—please slow down. For more information, go to sfrecpark.org.

Richmond neighbors said goodbye in November to Thomas Myron Hooker, a homeless man who waved and smiled at everyone he met—and occasionally offered a share of the millions he was about to win. Friends rallied to pay for Thomas's cremation and filled the pews at his funeral mass at Star of the Sea, the church he frequented. Thomas, you will be missed.



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PAR and neighbors join forces

PAR has been active in land use development in the Richmond since its inception. PAR regularly monitors pending building projects and stays in touch with city agencies, architects and developers to provide public input. Notable examples include Safeway on Cabrillo and Seventh Avenue, the Alexandria Theatre, and Balboa Street improvements.

Some land use issues, however, may involve a single house or structure and a few neighbors. When a land use issue arises between neighbors, PAR's first move is to get the parties together to talk prior to the issuance of a building permit.

If there is no resolution, the San Francisco Planning Commission holds a public hearing to consider whether to approve, disapprove or modify the project (a discretionary review or DR). Their decision is based upon the materials and testimony presented by the permit applicant, the DR requester (PAR) and interested parties.

The planning commission has discretion over all building permit applications. Normally, this discretion is delegated to the San Francisco Planning Department, which approves applications that meet the minimum standards of the San Francisco

Planning Code, including the priority policies of Code Section 101.1.

This process—empowering a commission with the discretion to rule—is a semi-judicial one that is peculiar to San Francisco. The planning department itself, when unable to work out a compromise, can, and sometimes does, file a DR. The general procedure is approximately the same. Following a commission decision, either party may file an appeal to the San Francisco Board of Appeals within 30 days.

In the 1970s, when PAR was just getting started, there were a large number of developments that became known as Richmond Specials. These were two- or four-unit buildings that ostensibly met code. However, the ground floor was designed with the basic infrastructure to allow an additional unit or two after the final building department inspection.

PAR filed a DR on many of these projects, paying a \$50 filing fee each time. The department, realizing what was happening, finally exempted PAR from the fee. This led to the policy of exempting all recognized neighborhood organizations from the DR fee. Currently, individuals

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Winter 2017 PAR Meeting

A review of PAR's accomplishments in 2016, and a look at issues in 2017

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**Wednesday, January 18
7 to 9 p.m.**

Richmond Recreation Center
251 18th Avenue
(between Clement & California Streets)
Limited street parking is available.
Muni: 1 California and 38 Geary

Mountain Lake enjoys renewal

Mountain Lake, one of San Francisco's last surviving natural lakes and the only natural lake in the entire 80,000-acre Golden Gate National Recreation Area, is where visitors can enjoy a quiet oasis and a bit of natural history.

However, during the last 100 years, the lake has suffered. In 1939, a highway to the Golden Gate Bridge impinged on the lake, reducing its size. Pesticides from the nearby golf course and runoff from the highway spoiled water quality. Locals released pets into the lake,

forcing out native wildlife and damaging the ecological system.

With help from scientists, academic institutions and volunteers, the lake is rebounding. Polluted soil and invasive species were removed in 2013 and 2014, and native species, from underwater plants to the Western pond turtle to the Pacific chorus frog—the one that makes the classic "ribbit" sound—were returned.

Biologists Fue Her and Kristen Jones were recently at the lake, radio-tracking Western pond turtles that were born

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Letter from the President

Dear PAR Members,
It's hard to believe that 2016 is almost in the history books. This year, PAR hosted several well-attended community forums, including ones focused on affordable housing, District One supervisor candidates and general election ballot propositions. We also had four General Membership Meetings.

PAR continued to advocate for a public transportation plan appropriate to the Richmond, which will serve our future needs. We supported neighborhood-based associations by echoing their sentiments concerning transportation. Also in 2016, a committee of our board, comprising architects and folks well versed in housing issues, continued monitoring and weighing in on major housing developments in the Richmond, including those being planned for 3333 California Street, (the old Firemen's Fund site) and California Pacific Medical Center's California Campus.

In November, residents cast their votes to decide who, among many choices, would replace termed-out Supervisor Eric Mar as District One supervisor. When the votes were counted, we had elected Sandra Lee Fewer. Our supervisor-elect is a 50-year resident of the Richmond District, who understands

our neighborhoods. I believe that our new supervisor is well versed on issues affecting the Richmond and will be engaged with her constituents and responsive to our concerns. She is interested in housing affordability and thinks that the Richmond deserves a public transit system that is better than what the current Geary Bus Rapid Transit plan provides.

I have remarked on several occasions that the Richmond District will not outsource its future to city hall planners or anyone looking to exploit our neighborhood for profit. Those intent on implementing an idiosyncratic vision should reconsider their approach. PAR has engaged with city hall, developers and others in a collaborative spirit but has been emphatic that this community expects and insists on a collaborative process when it comes to a vision for the environment in which we live and work. PAR approaches these conversations thoughtfully by seeking input from community stakeholders in an effort to coalesce the voices of the many interested people and groups in the Richmond.

In this election, we saw a great deal of Political Action Committee money, estimated in excess of \$800,000, infused into the District One supervisor's race. From the comments I have heard, and the ineffectiveness of all that money, I believe voters in the Richmond reminded wealthy outside interests that our neighborhoods are not for sale. My hope is that the folks behind those PACs realized that it may be better to work with us than try to sway things with money.

PAR started the year facilitating a conversation between Muni and Richmond District stakeholders concerning the proposed

Geary BRT. We approached these meetings with a collaborative spirit and with optimism. In the end, any notion of good government had evaporated as Muni dismissed our concerns and simply distributed a new set of the same old narratives. The Geary BRT Citizen's Advisory Council, which meets at Muni headquarters on Market Street, declined our invitation to hold one of their public meetings in the Richmond. Seems that coming out this way was inconvenient!

Some bureaucrats may take exception to my use of the word "Muni," and would prefer a laborious explanation describing the County Transportation Authority and the SF Municipal Transportation Agency and how each operates. I choose to say "Muni" and leave it to the city's transportation collective to parse out what portion of San Francisco's status of having the third worst traffic congestion in the nation can be attributed to their handiwork—and to explain how Proposition K's transportation-related, tax-increase loss by a nearly two-to-one margin was anything other than a referendum on Muni's indifference to the public and the public's outrage over the consequences of some of their planning work.

Finally, I have noticed that graffiti seems to be on the increase in some parts of the district. If you are the owner of vandalized property, make a police report. From your report, the police can glean emerging trends and direct enforcement activities accordingly. If you see someone engaging in vandalism, call 911.

Please visit www.sfpar.org to learn more about PAR and consider joining.

Happy New Year!

Richard Coriea
sfparpresident@gmail.com

Officers & Directors

Officers

Richard Coriea, President
Nicholas Belloni, Vice President
Kate Lazarus, Vice President
Brenda Altman, Secretary
Christopher Wright, Treasurer

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Julie Burns	Claire Myers
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Herb Elliott	Marjan Philhour
Paul Epstein	Bill Shepard
Robert Fries	Andy Thornley
Sharon Gadberry	Antonio White
Jason Jungreis	Peter Winkelstein

Emeritus Directors

Fred Altshuler • Eugene Brodsky
Lynn Altshuler • Jim Lazarus • Ron Miguel
Paul Rosenberg • Michele Stratton

PAR Representatives in Other Organizations

Friends of Mountain Lake Park Playground:
Claire Myers
Housing Action Coalition: Dan Baroni
Kaiser Permanente Citizens Task Force:
Peter Winkelstein
Neighborhood Associations for Presidio
Planning: Paul Epstein, Sharon Gadberry,
Ocean Beach Master Planning Committee:
Julie Burns
Richmond Community Coalition: Nick Belloni

Michael Murphy—PAR's new board member

The newest member of the PAR board of directors, Michael E. Murphy, is a 40-year resident of the Inner Richmond. His wife, Mary Catherine, taught at Mercy High School, and his oldest grandchild is a first grader at Alamo School. Murphy enjoys guiding tours for elementary students at the Conservatory of Flowers and volunteering in habitat restoration work in Golden Gate Park.

He is a graduate of Harvard College and Stanford Law School and worked for almost 20 years as a judicial attorney for the Court of Appeals, First District, initially serving as an aide to Justice William Newsom, Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom's father.

Murphy wrote a history of the employee struggle to block the takeover of Continental Airlines and, galvanized by corporate

scandals of recent years, he has written a series of nine law review articles dealing with corporate governance and cooperative organization.

A member of St. Ignatius parish and a passionate environmentalist, Murphy was greatly encouraged by Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment. He has written articles on needed response to climate change in the national Jesuit journal *America*.

As a board member, Murphy hopes to bring his capacity for detailed analysis



PAR preserves unique neighborhood design

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without the exemption pay the fee of \$500 (which makes joining and supporting your local neighborhood association a good investment). As a general rule, DRs are heard about three months following a filing.

Recently PAR was contacted by neighbors living in the two-block area of Sutro Heights (47th to 48th Avenues, Geary Boulevard and Anza Street) to stop a project at 567 47th Avenue that was out of scale with the neighborhood's homes. In April 2015, the owners and architect sought to renovate the 1939 home (one story over garage) by essentially demolishing it and putting up a four-story house built far out in back and lacking required setbacks on the front and side.

Neighbors became concerned and wished the project could be scaled back in size and overall footprint. John Anzur, a concerned neighbor at 571 47th Avenue, contacted other neighbors about the project. One of those neighbors was PAR board member Bob Fries. Fries got the PAR land use committee involved and gave the neighbors information about the process of dealing with the planning department and, if necessary, how to file a DR. They contacted the planning department (specifically the Residential Design Team, RDT) and expressed their concerns.

In December 2015, the Residential Design Team reviewed the proposed project. The RDT understood all the neighbors' concerns and required the owners to make substantial changes.

Thereafter, the owners submitted revised plans that conformed in part to the RDT's comments. The RDT notified the neighbors that the project could go forward. Unfortunately, those plans contained design flaws that needed further changing. So, Anzur, Ron Miguel and Fries met with the RDT to point out the few remaining serious problems with the revised plans.

In response to the RDT report, Anzur walked the key blocks of the revised project and prepared a survey of the design of the houses. His summary showed that all of them are similar, built at about the same time and with similar styles. Only a few houses had been built up, and only one of those had more than a single additional floor, setbacks, etc., to accommodate light, air and ensure privacy for the neighbors. Anzur sent his findings to the RDT for consideration.

The RDT took these concerns under advisement. Meantime, the owners refused to revise their plans, so, in July, Anzur and PAR jointly filed the request for a DR.

On July 6, the RDT further commented on the revised project. This document required essentially all of the additional changes PAR and neighbors had requested. The RDT's final review and comments ensured that the neighbors—on 47th and on 48th Avenue (behind the proposed project)—would retain their privacy and light and air, consistent with the design of this unique neighborhood. The neighbors, Anzur and PAR's representatives (Fries, Miguel and Dan Baroni) prepared for and attended the October 20 DR hearing at the planning commission. The commissioners unanimously adopted the RDT's requirements to limit the size and scope of the proposed project.

The owners have a right of appeal to the board of appeals, but as of December 2, had not appealed. Because the vote at the commission was 7-0, it is highly unlikely that the appeal would change anything.

If the commission's decision stands, it will save the Sutro Heights neighborhood from this particular, outsized remodel, and it will set the precedent PAR asked for—keeping the consistency of the neighborhood's design and ensuring that neighbors' light, air and privacy will be preserved if later remodels are done. This broad confirmation of the importance of the design and privacy is why the PAR board decided unanimously to file the DR. While it was important to support the neighbors most affected, PAR understood the additional, broader need that all the houses in Sutro Heights be similarly protected. All members of PAR can be proud of this wonderful achievement.

Many thanks to the Sutro Heights team of Ron Miguel (PAR emeritus) Beret Pedersen, Jason Jungreis (PAR board member), Art and Sylvie Adams, Cheong Yong, Lisa Large, Paula Yue, Richard Baltz, Bruce Pray, Lynne Shimek, Bob Fries (PAR board member), Ilana Bar David, Dan Baroni (PAR board member), Maimi Hom and John Anzur, who contributed their time and effort to preserve the neighborhood character of Sutro Heights.

—Contributors: Bob Fries and Ron Miguel



The original style of this house at 567 47th Avenue will be respected during a remodel.

The Richmond is talking . . .

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The Mountain Lake Playground is more than 75 percent done with construction, including the stairs, steel "trees" at the overlook, walls, irrigation and drainage infrastructure, rough installation of the playground and much of the foundation work. Components of the play structure await completion, along with installation of additional concrete, rubber safety surfacing, landscaping, decking and reinstallation of the parcourse equipment and donor benches. The park opening will be celebrated sometime in February or March—stay tuned for details.



Presidio Building 1648, scheduled for demolition, was open for one last look during "Homeland Security," an exhibit produced by For-Site, featuring artwork expressing the devastation of war. During the Cold War, Building 1648 controlled a dozen Nike missile

sites; later, it was a secret headquarters for US military intelligence gathering. The Presidio Historical Association and others want to raise funds to preserve the building and open it to the public with historical exhibits, photographs, testimonies, memorabilia and events that will tell the stories of the Cold War, the backdrop for the Korean War, the Hungarian Revolution, the Berlin Wall, the Cuban missile crisis and the Vietnam War as experienced by the Presidio. The National Park Service plans to tear down the building because it blocks the views of Golden Gate Bridge, is unattractive and is costly to restore and maintain. To learn more, go to parksconservancy.org.

Proposition E dealing with tree maintenance was overwhelmingly passed by voters and will bring much-needed relief and stability to our urban forest. Friends of the Urban (fuf.net) has more information on Prop. E. or go to sfpublishworks.org/trees for information on tree maintenance schedules.

The SF Municipal Transportation Agency Livable Streets staff is using public input to compile a toolkit of potential traffic calming and safety

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Join PAR now and make your voice heard.

Membership is open to all persons living, working, or owning property in the Richmond District of San Francisco. PAR is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Your contribution is tax-deductible as provided by law.

Yes! I/we want to support the Richmond District.

First name(s)		Last name	
Name of business (for business members)			
Address			
City		State	Zip
Primary phone		Cell/other phone	
E-Mail <i>PAR respects your privacy and will not share your email.</i>			
Membership		<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> Business
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting membership, \$15.00/year and above			
<input type="checkbox"/> Subscribing membership, \$25.00/year and above			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor membership, \$50.00/year and above			
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron membership, \$100.00/year and above			

Please complete and cut out this form and mail it together with your check (payable to the *Planning Association of the Richmond*) to

PAR
5758 Geary Boulevard, Box 356
San Francisco, CA 94121-2112

THANKS for helping to support the quality of life in San Francisco's Richmond District.

Pay Your PAR dues online!

sfpar.org/site/join-par-via-paypal.html

to join, contribute or pay your dues the easy, electronic way!

The Richmond is Talking . . .

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improvement measures for Eighth Avenue and surrounding streets. These potential improvements include speed humps, painted roadway markings, traffic diverters and traffic circles. The SFMTA will be hosting an open house in the Inner Richmond in early 2017 to illustrate the proposed traffic-calming plan and gather community feedback on placement and feasibility of improvements. Email Charlie Ream, the SFMTA project manager, at charlie.ream@sfmta.com with questions or comments.

Mountain Lake

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and bred at the the San Francisco Zoo in anticipation of their eventual relocation when Mountain Lake was restored to health. The turtles are thriving along with stickleback fish, who have even begun breeding.

A rescue box for unwanted aquatic pets has been successful, but visitors who feed lake wildlife—despite clearly posted information regarding the ecological damage such feeding can cause—still present a problem.

The nearby renovated Mountain Lake Park Playground is nearing completion, and soon there will also be colorful signs depicting the cultural history of the lake.

To support Mountain Lake Park, drop in for volunteer work days every second Saturday, or come by anytime to watch the turtles and listen to the frogs—ribbit, ribbit.



The date code above your name on the mailing label indicates when your membership expires.

