

PAR Planning Association for the Richmond

40 years of neighborhood activism

The 1970s: Grassroots beginnings

Editor's Note: This year, the Planning Association for the Richmond celebrates 40 years of bringing people together to make this a better neighborhood for residents, businesses and visitors. The PAR newsletter will look at PAR's history, decade by decade, in each issue, starting with the 1970s.

Before there was PAR, there was SPUR (San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association), which, in the early 1970s, awarded grants to organizations willing to write neighborhood improvement plans.

Three Richmond residents, Pat Durham, Richard Klein (who became the first PAR president) and the Reverend David White of St. John's Presbyterian Church, spearheaded an effort to obtain a \$30,000 grant that would launch PAR. The grant came with office space and SPUR assigned Roger Hurlbert as PAR's neighborhood services advisor. They called in architect Piero Patri, founder of Whisler-Patri Associates, to draft a Neighborhood Improvement Plan for the Richmond. For purposes of the grant, the neighborhood's boundaries were narrowly set as Geary Boulevard to Fulton Street and Arguello Boulevard to Funston Avenue.

Since the grid of streets in the Richmond encouraged vehicles to treat the streets like thoroughfares, traffic calming was one of the plan's priorities, recalled PAR Board member and its long-time secretary/treasurer, Paul Rosenberg. According to the plan, forced turns and barriers were implemented and, after public outcry, soon removed.



Photo: Dennis O'Rorke, courtesy of the Western Neighborhoods Project
The intersection of Clement Street and Sixth Avenue now features a mini-market, but 40 years later, Schubert's Bakery is still across the street.

"In 1977, Ed Lawson actually campaigned for district supervisor on the slogan 'He fought the barriers and won,'" Rosenberg said. "We learned a lot about how to do—and not do—public outreach."

When the grant expired, PAR incorporated as a membership organization. At first, there were no dues. Anyone who signed the attendance list at two meetings was considered a voting member. Later, bylaws specified that anyone who lived, owned a business or property in the Richmond district—

with its western boundary defined as Ocean Beach and north to the Presidio—could become a member. Dues paid for office space, salaries and the new PAR newsletter.

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The Richmond is talking about . . .

CVS Opening at 32nd Avenue: PAR supported, and the Planning Commission approved, CVS Pharmacy's application for a conditional use permit. Fresh & Easy's plans to open a grocery on the same site are still pending.

Westside Water Treatment Plant: The last of four public hearings on this proposed facility will be January 27 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at 1155 Market Street, fourth floor. The agenda includes a report on the various proposed sites.

2-Clement Bus Line Terminus: The SF Municipal Transportation Agency acknowledged that the temporary terminus on Clement Street near 14th

Avenue can be dangerous for traffic heading north on 15th Avenue, and it is studying alternatives. PAR recommended either restoring the original terminus at Geary Boulevard and 33rd Avenue (with service reductions) or moving the terminus to Sixth Avenue near California Street.

Gardens to Replace HANC Recycling Center: The Rec-Park Commission approved plans for community gardens in place of the recycling center run by the Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council near Kezar Stadium. HANC promised to fight on. PAR did not take a position on this issue.

Fate of 226 Cabrillo Street: PAR continues to facilitate discussion among neighbors, city agencies and a developer over the future of the building on this site. While the existing building is uninhabitable, some neighbors believe it is an "earthquake shack," built after the 1906 quake and fire, and want to preserve it. A developer wants to build a three-story, six-unit apartment house.

Segways in Golden Gate Park: PAR has given qualified support to a plan to allow the Electric Tour Company to offer guided Segway tours of Golden Gate Park. PAR's support is contingent on the vehicles being used only on the

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The Richmond is talking about . . .

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park's streets and roadways. "We were particularly concerned that the tours not share pathways in the park with pedestrians and families pushing baby strollers, creating a dangerous situation," said PAR President. Ray Holland.

Two Closings on Geary Boulevard:

The Delano's grocery store closed in early December. "Our thanks go to the staff, many of whom worked there a long time, serving the community," said Lynn Altshuler, PAR board member. "Unfortunately this leaves the mid-Richmond without a full-service grocery,

which is a concern." A couple of blocks away, the quirky Video Café, both a restaurant and video rental outlet has also closed.

Alexandria Theatre site: There will be an informational hearing before the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission on January 19 at 12:30 p.m. The project's Negative Declaration is available for public comment until January 24. For more information, contact Chelsea Fordham at 415-575-9073 or Chelsea.Fordham@sfgov.org.

Telephone Poles Sprout New Boxes:

Brown boxes containing wireless data transmission equipment were added to telephone poles in late 2010. They were put up in advance of a Board of Supervisors vote on legislation,

effective in 2011, requiring permits and public notice for such installations. Residents of the Richmond and other neighborhoods spoke at the December 13 meeting of the Board's Land Use and Economic Development Committee, when the committee unanimously sent the legislation on to the full Board for a vote in late December. For more information or to comment, call 311 and ask for the Department of Public Works.



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Letter from the President

Dear PAR Members,
The new state and local officials elected in November 2010 are now in office, faced with an array of challenges: budgetary, economic and social.

Now, it is time for PAR to elect new members of our Board of Directors. They too will be addressing a range of issues: land use, transportation and community services, among others. I urge you all to attend the January 19 membership meeting, where you will have the opportunity to learn more about our Board candidates and cast your vote for PAR's future.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Board members, who because of competing demands from their businesses, families or other interests are leaving the PAR Board. Over the years, Lynn

Altshuler, John Kalin, Paik-Swan Low and Ron Miguel have all given generously of their time, expertise and dedication to make the Richmond a better place to live.

Once our new Board members are in place, one of our first tasks as a Board will be to review our current committee structure, including their areas of responsibility, membership and recruiting new members. We now have eight committees: By-Laws and Nominations, Community Services, Executive/Administrative, Federal Government Projects, Land Use, Parks and Recreation, Transportation and Marketing (formerly Communications and Membership).

If you have expertise or a passion for one of these topics, please consider

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PAR, the largest neighborhood organization in San Francisco, has been the voice of the Richmond since 1971.

To maintain its independence, PAR does not accept government fund or grants. PAR's only income is members' tax-deductible dues and contributions. You also may designate PAR to receive funds from United Way.

We gratefully acknowledge those members who have contributed more than the basic \$15 membership dues between October and mid-December 2010. since the Fall 2010 newsletter. Your generosity helps PAR thrive.

Please note that this is the last quarterly list of donors that will be in the PAR newsletter. Starting with donations received after December 15, 2010, names will be published annually.

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Forty years of district activism

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“Richmond Specials” not special at all

The original Neighborhood Improvement Plan advocated tightening zoning rules to prevent the construction of large apartment buildings.

“Our intent was to preserve the existing housing stock of two-flat and single-family houses, and the district’s neighborhood feel,” Rosenberg said.

“Developers decided to test the new rules by building to the full envelope of a lot, putting eight bedrooms on two floors, along with a kitchen, a wet bar and an extra bathroom per floor. After the building inspector signed off, they subdivided each floor into two, two-bedroom apartments. Not only did we get cookie-cutter architecture, it led to immense parking problems. Suddenly, you had a two-car garage for four units.”

These so-called “Richmond specials” gave PAR the issue that put the association on the map with residents, city officials and the developers.

After trying unsuccessfully to block permits through the appeals process, PAR began working with the Planning Department to create processes and rules to address issues of density, parking and neighborhood character and to prevent future Richmond specials.

That effort laid the groundwork for a lot of what PAR continues to do today: educating its members on land use and quality of life issues, carrying members’ concerns to city officials and providing a forum for discussion.

Now a mature, 40-year-old organization, PAR and its leaders “understand that we can’t simply oppose things; we have an obligation to make things better,” Rosenberg concluded.

Perspectives on PAR

“PAR is like a responsible parent watching over the Richmond. PAR speaks up about what it thinks is best for the neighborhood. Even when we end up on different sides of an issue, I respect the people who run PAR. They have integrity, wisdom and experience.”

Jesse Fink, owner

Toy Boat Dessert Café



“PAR is the institutional memory for the Richmond District and a valuable member of the community.”

Eric Mar

District 1 supervisor

“PAR is an original, one-of-a-kind, and its influence on the critical planning issues facing the Richmond district has been positive and long-lasting.”

Michael Yaki

former San Francisco supervisor

“Neighborhood groups wield a lot of power in the city on issues that can affect our quality of life. PAR has been a strong voice on behalf of the Richmond. It has become part of the city’s civic and political scene. It is respected, listened to and always supportive. It’s also reassuring to know that so many of my friends and neighbors are PAR members.”

Lynne Myers

Richmond District resident

“In the more than 20 years that I’ve lived in the Richmond District and many of my occupations—teacher at Washington High, notary and co-proprietor of the

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President’s letter

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joining a PAR committee; committee membership is open to all PAR members.

You can get in touch with me at 415-668-8914 or president@sfpar.org and I will put you in touch with the appropriate committee head.

SFVAMC Master Plan

The San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center is one of the largest institutions in the Outer Richmond.

Over the years, the SFVAMC campus has been built up without any apparent plan. That growth reflects both the increasing demand for essential medical services for recent and aging veterans and the fact that the SFVAMC has become one

of the nation’s leading centers for research in medicine for those who have served our nation so selflessly.

In October, the SFVAMC published a master plan laying out some of the alternatives being considered to address the burgeoning demands on its 29-acre campus. Public comments on what the scope of an environmental impact study of those alternatives should embrace were accepted through mid-December 2010. For a look at PAR’s comments, please visit our website at www.sfpar.org. We will keep you posted on developments.

Ray Holland

president@sfpar.org

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PAR Planning Association for the Richmond

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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	
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E-Mail <i>PAR respects your privacy and will not share your email.</i>			
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Please complete and cut out this form and mail it together with your check (payable to the *Planning Association of the Richmond*) to

PAR 3145 Geary Boulevard, #205 San Francisco CA 94118
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THANKS for helping to support the quality of life in San Francisco's Richmond District.

Perspectives

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 Gables—have allowed me the privilege to know many of this great neighborhood's residents. PAR's newsletter and website help keep me and my customers abreast of the important issues in the Richmond. It's nice to know that there is someone out there watching out for the little guy, while we are all busy making other plans."



Scot Brodie, owner
The Gables Stationery store

Winter PAR Meeting

• • •
 Board of Directors
 Election
 & other issues

Wednesday
January 19, 2011
7 to 9 p.m.

Richmond Recreation Center
 251 18th Avenue
 (between Clement &
 California streets)

Paid parking is available one block
 away in the lot behind the Alexandria
 Theatre between Clement Street and
 Geary Boulevard
 Muni lines: 1 California
 and 38 Geary

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