

# PAR Planning Association for the Richmond

## GGNRA management plan to be discussed PAR agenda going to the dogs

Fans of plovers and poodles, dog walkers and day hikers all have a stake in the proposed Dog Management Plan for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. That plan will lead the agenda at PAR's April 20 meeting.

Released in January 2011, the proposal lays out six alternatives in 21 separate areas of the GGNRA. Five of them, Baker Beach, Lands End, Sutro Heights, Fort Miley and Ocean Beach, are in or near the Richmond District. The PAR meeting will be an opportunity for people to ask questions, not to register formal comments.

Acknowledging that "passions run deep," Howard Levitt, the GGNRA's director of Communication and Partnerships, appreciates the thoughtful comments being generated. "People are asking important questions and are offering solid suggestions that will help us craft a plan that is wise and appropriate," he said.

### Finding Middle Ground

The draft plan is the latest step in a long-standing tussle over off-leash areas in the GGNRA. As the number of visitors has grown and efforts to preserve wildlife and vegetation have increased, tensions over dogs in the GGNRA have intensified.

The dog management plan is needed, according to the National Park Service, to preserve park resources for enjoyment by future generations, to promote visitor safety and to make local rules more consistent with other parks under NPS jurisdiction.

The "preferred alternative" proposed by the NPS would require dogs to be on-leash in most park areas and be allowed off-leash under voice control while being walked in seven areas where there is "minimal" impact to "sensitive resources and visitor experience." Throughout the GGNRA, the plan would bar dogs from areas "where impacts were unacceptable and could not be mitigated." Permits also would be required for walking more than three dogs in certain areas.

For example, in Sutro Heights, dogs would have to be on leash and would be prohibited from some sections of the park. "Sutro Heights is the heart of a neighborhood, as well as part of a national park," noted Allen Ackerman, one of an informal group of dog owners that meets in Sutro Heights. He hopes the plan finds some "middle ground" that protects people who are afraid of dogs and recognizes that properly trained dogs are safe off-leash.

"One win-win solution might be a system that qualifies dogs and their owners to work off-leash. Just like at the DMV, a dog and

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Dogs on- and off-leash enjoy the sights and smells along the beach.

### Spring PAR Meeting

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**Wednesday**  
**April 20, 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

## The Richmond is talking about . . .

**Alexandria Theater:** Development of the Alexandria Theatre site, vacant since 2004, is moving ahead. The mixed-use plan, which includes retail, housing, underground parking and a movie theater, won approval from the city's Historic Preservation Commission and is headed to the Planning Commission. The developer, Alexandria Enterprises, hopes to start work before the end of 2011.

**AT&T Sidewalk Boxes:** PAR joined San Francisco Beautiful and other organizations in protesting a categorical exemption from environmental review issued by the Planning Department that allows AT&T to place up to 750 utility boxes on sidewalks citywide. The boxes measure up to four feet by four feet, are two-and-half-feet deep and are flanked by vertical posts.

**Fulton Street Roadwork:** The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency is putting the cables that power the 5-Fulton buses underground. The project will start at 32nd Avenue and move, one block at a time, to Eighth Avenue over the course of 12 months.

**Proposed Changes to Bike Lanes in Golden Gate Park:** The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition wants the bike lanes on JFK Drive between Stanyan Street and Transverse Drive reconfigured into a two-way bikeway on the northern side of the road, with a buffer zone separating it from motor vehicle traffic. PAR is talking with the Coalition about modifying its proposal, by putting the lanes on the southern side of the road and extending them the entire length of JFK Drive, restoring motor

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## Letter from the President

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**D**ear PAR Members,  
In the Chinese lunar horoscope, the year of the hare (which started on February 3) should be calm and tranquil. Here in the Richmond District, that doesn't seem to be the case.

Economic turmoil continues to force more shops and restaurants out of business. However, one sign of progress is the upcoming opening of a Fresh & Easy grocery and a CVS pharmacy at 32nd Avenue and Clement Street.

The city also faces economic challenges. As departments develop their budgets for the 2011-2012 fiscal year, they must consider reduced services, new revenue sources and operational efficiencies. Most of these proposals will prompt controversy. To the extent possible, your Board of Directors will monitor and comment on proposals that affect the Richmond District.

Recently, our streetscape has been under attack. First, wireless data transmission equipment appeared on telephone poles—often no higher than seven feet off the ground and within feet of residents'

windows. After the fact, the Board of Supervisors passed legislation requiring advance notice of such installations. This legislation may also offer an opportunity to undo what has already been done through an appeals process.

Sidewalks are the next telecommunications battlefield. PAR and other groups are appealing the "categorical exemption from environmental review" that the Planning Department granted AT&T in February to install sidewalk cabinets for its "Lightspeed" cable network throughout the city.

These bulky boxes block sidewalk traffic, are favored canvases for graffiti taggers and could set an unfortunate precedent for similar "sidewalk furniture" from other sources. We need to find a balance between the quality of our Internet connections and the quality of our streets and sidewalks.

A lot is going on with our federal government neighbors. The Veterans Affairs Medical Center has published a draft master plan with four alternatives for development on the 29-acre campus. Last November PAR commented on the plan and its eventual Environmental Impact Report. In the meanwhile, construction continues on an 80-space parking lot, and the VAMC has started a shuttle bus service from Land's End (the temporary location of additional staff parking) to the campus.

In the Presidio, Caltrans work on the Doyle Drive replacement affects traffic on several major arteries. At the same time, discussions about the future of the Main Post are picking up. The Presidio Master Plan seems to be in a state of flux these days.

Finally, I encourage you to attend PAR's April 20 General Membership Meeting where the National Park Service's proposed Dog Management Plan for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area leads the agenda.

If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please let me know at [president@sfpar.org](mailto:president@sfpar.org) or 415-541-5652.

*Ray Holland*  
[president@sfpar.org](mailto:president@sfpar.org)

## Donor list moves to annual publication

Starting with this issue, the list of PAR donors will be published annually, in the Winter issue of the newsletter. PAR appreciates your donations and support.

## PAR Board welcomes Schultz

PAR members elected Cheryl Schultz to PAR's Board of Directors at the January 19 general membership meeting. She and her family have lived in the Richmond District for 13 years. Cheryl brings significant experience to her role on PAR's Land Use Committee.

"Several years ago, PAR helped us out when a neighbor wanted to build an oversized house next door to us," Cheryl said. "Having learned from that episode, I've been helping people work through Planning Commission processes with some success. As a member of PAR's board, I hope to be able to play a role in preserving the character of the Richmond."

## The Richmond is talking about . . .

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vehicle traffic on both Saturday and Sunday and identifying funding.

**Geary Bus Rapid Transit:** After a six-month hiatus, the Geary BRT Citizens Advisory Committee met in February to discuss updates to the transportation analysis, including trends in travel patterns, traffic condition metrics and models and to see drafts of preliminary station designs. The next meeting is anticipated in April. For complete meeting materials, go to [www.GearyBRT.org](http://www.GearyBRT.org).

**La Playa Safeway:** PAR and the office of Supervisor Eric Mar facilitated a neighborhood meeting in February where Safeway presented its latest redevelopment plan for the La Playa store. An updated virtual model, architectural and landscaping designs are available at [www.safewayonlplayasf.com](http://www.safewayonlplayasf.com).

## Dogs on agenda

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its owner would take a test to get a permit—to be renewed annually—that allows that dog to be off-leash. If you let your dog off-leash without a permit, you'd be fined. The Park Service would get some revenue, dogs would get some exercise and people and the parks would be safe," he said.

Read the plan and post written comments at [www.parkplanning.gov/dogplan](http://www.parkplanning.gov/dogplan).

### Officers & Directors

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Neighborhood Associations for Presidio Planning (NAPP): Paul Epstein, Sharon Gadberry, Ray Holland,  
Neighborhood Working Group for Presidio Master Plan: Ray Holland  
Ocean Beach Master Planning Committee: Julie Burns  
Presidio Restoration Advisory Board: Julie Cheever  
Richmond Community Coalition: Ray Holland

# PAR in the 1980s: Building a constituency

The Planning Association for the Richmond grew steadily in membership and in stature during the 1980s. It solidified its reputation as a watchdog on planning issues, especially in regard to safeguarding the district's neighborhood feel. While still on the alert against so-called Richmond specials, attention also turned to residents adding extensions and decks on the backs of buildings and seeking to add third, or even fourth, floors. PAR frequently found itself working with neighbors and the Planning Commission to solve issues related to height and footprint limitations.

In the 1980s PAR also turned more attention to activities by one of the district's biggest neighbors: the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Gene Brodsky, on behalf of PAR's Federal Government Projects Committee, filed numerous requests under the federal Freedom of Information Act, seeking to find out what the VAMC planned to build on the campus front lawn, just west of 42nd Avenue.

The information PAR received revealed that what looked like a two-story building when viewed from the campus would be

four stories high on the side facing the street, due to the slope of the lawn, and that the plans would have allowed for two more stories to be added later on. Ultimately, with the assistance of Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi's office, the VAMC agreed to build at the back of the campus, safeguarding a green buffer zone to shield the residential neighborhood from the institutional VAMC.

PAR also weighed in on the Richmond's largest residential and commercial development in decades: the retail strip and condominiums at La Playa, on the former site of Playland at the Beach. Today, PAR is facilitating discussions between Safeway and its neighbors on plans to redevelop the Safeway store that was built when the condominiums were new in the early 1980s.

PAR's willingness to stand up to federal agencies like the Department of Veterans Affairs set a precedent for spirited and substantive engagement in defense of the quality of life in the Richmond that continues to this day. (See the Ask PAR column below for more about PAR's Federal Government Projects Committee.)

## Ask PAR

*This month Julie Burns, co-chair of the Federal Government Projects Committee and Julie Cheever, PAR's representative on the Presidio Restoration Advisory Board, talk about PAR's relationship with various federal agencies.*

### • Why does PAR need a Federal Government Projects Committee?

*Julie B.:* The Richmond is unique in San Francisco because we share so many boundaries with land controlled by the federal government: the Presidio, the Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Those lands are governed by a number of different federal entities, including the National Park Service, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Presidio Trust. Our committee watches what all of those groups are doing, so PAR can be an effective advocate for solutions that benefit everyone.

*Julie C.:* Most federal agencies are required to have public comment at various decision points for projects. This committee helps us identify issues and formulate positions on them.

### • What is PAR's involvement with the Veterans Affairs Medical Center?

*Julie B.:* We want to make sure the VAMC integrates smoothly into the neighborhood. That means keeping a watch on development on the campus and its effects on parking, open space and access. It's thanks to PAR that we still have open

space along Clement on the VAMC campus, instead of a building.

More recently, PAR obtained a legal settlement requiring the VAMC to create an Institutional Master Plan for development and an Environmental Impact Statement based on that plan. And as part of the settlement, the VAMC now holds quarterly public meetings. Right now, we're following a proposal to build a five-story garage and emergency response center and an animal research unit.

### • How is PAR involved in the new Ocean Beach Master Plan?

*Julie B.:* This is a thrilling opportunity to guide the future of the remarkable westernmost edge of San Francisco. I represent PAR on the Ocean Beach Master Plan Advisory Committee. Ocean Beach involves so many different agencies, including Caltrans, various city departments, the California Coastal Commission and, of course, the GGNRA. We'll look at everything from wildlife and traffic to preserving Ocean Beach as a 'dark sky' resource. We're holding workshops to gather ideas and will create a couple of straw-man proposals, which will be open for public comment, probably in 2012.

### • What about PAR's working relationship with the Presidio Trust?

*Julie C.:* PAR is concerned with two aspects of the Presidio: development and environmental cleanup. In the environmental area, I sit on the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB). It's a forum for



The SF VAMC provides needed health care to veterans, is a major medical research facility and is the biggest employer in the Richmond. The federally protected historical landmark has several notable buildings on its 29-acre campus, including the Mayan Deco-style main hospital built in the 1930s.

community input and discussion on how to remove and remediate environmental contamination.

The removal of waste landfills above Baker Beach is an example of a project that a number of community and conservation groups supported. And while removal is the preferred solution for contamination in a public park, sometimes covering up the landfills is more feasible, which is what is happening at two landfills near the Presidio Landmark residences.

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## Ask PAR

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On the development side, PAR commented on renovation and building projects in the Public Health Service Hospital District, on issues that ranged from design to traffic, lighting and noise. Now, we are commenting on plans for the Main Post.

• **If I were to join the committee, what kind of things would I be doing?**

*Julie B.:* This is the federal government, so there's a lot of paperwork. For example, we've filed requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

*Julie C.:* There's a lot of reading too, but if you make up your mind not to be fazed by acronyms, the documents are pretty accessible.

*Julie B.:* And of course, there are meetings. Just like with any neighbor, talking and getting to know each other is really important.

• **Do you need special expertise to be involved?**

*Julie C.:* Not at all. The purpose of the RAB is to get a cross-section of community viewpoints, to allow citizens to contribute to decisions that will affect them. The Presidio is a better place because of citizen participation. It's great to walk there and see where public participation made a difference.

*For more information:*

Ocean Beach Master Plan: [www.spur.org/ocean-beach](http://www.spur.org/ocean-beach)

Presidio: [www.presidio.gov](http://www.presidio.gov)

VAMC: [www.sanfrancisco.va.gov](http://www.sanfrancisco.va.gov)

### Join PAR

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

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

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