

**DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEETING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, RICHMOND CITY HALL
1401 Marina Way South, Richmond, CA
September 24, 2009
6:00 p.m.**

BOARD MEMBERS

Michael Woldemar, Chair	Eileen Whitty, Vice Chair
Diane Bloom	Andrew Butt
Otheree Christian	Raymond Welter
Don Woodrow	

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Woldemar, Vice Chair Whitty, Boardmembers Bloom, Butt, Welter and Woodrow

Absent: Boardmember Christian

INTRODUCTIONS

Staff Present: Jonelyn Whales, Lori Reese-Brown, Kieron Slaughter, Mary Renfro, Hector Rojas, Allen Wolken, William Siegel, Richard Mitchell, Tom Butt

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 12, 2009:

ACTION: It was M/S (Woldemar/Bloom) accept the August 12, 2009 minutes; unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

ACTION: It was M/S (Whitty/Butt) to approve the agenda; unanimously approved.

Chair Woldemar noted any decision approved may be appealed in writing to the City Clerk within ten (10) days, or by Monday, October 5, 2009 by 5:00 p.m.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Chair Woldemar said the Consent Calendar consisted of Item 3.

ACTION: It was M/S (Whitty/Welter) to approve the Consent Calendar; unanimously approved.

Item Approved:

- 3. PLN 09-096 – CONCHRANE/CARROLL SECOND DWELLING UNIT** – Construction of a ± 640 SF second dwelling unit above a garage located at 865 Ocean Avenue (APN: 558-223-009. SFR-2 (Single Family: Very Low Residential) Zoning District. Owner: Cochran Christopher; Applicant: Jay Betts; Staff Contact: Kieron Slaughter. Tentative Recommendation: Conditional Approval.

PUBLIC HEARING

- 1. PLN 09-077 – (Continued from 8/26/2009) WEST CONTRA COSTA YOUTH SERVICE BUREAU ADDITION ON BROADWAY** – DESIGN REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL for a ± 1,418 SF addition to a commercial building located at 84 Broadway (APN: 515-331-021. C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial), SFR-3 (Single Family: Low Density Residential) Zoning District. Owner: West Contra Costa Youth Service Bureau; Applicant: Danilo Serrano. Staff Contact: Kieron Slaughter. Tentative Recommendation: Conditional Approval.

Mr. Slaughter said this item was continued from a previous meeting; the application is for a design review permit for construction of a 1,418 square foot addition to a commercial building located at 84 Broadway. Currently the site is a developed irregular shaped lot at the south east corner of Broadway and Carlson. The project site is improved with a commercial building built in 1952 and an addition was approved in 1999. The proposal conforms to both zoning districts as well as the General Plan of Richmond. The applicant has submitted additional information as requested by the Design Review Board at the previous meeting regarding landscaping and the parking lot area. Staff recommends conditional approval of the 4 findings and 17 conditions of approval before the DRB this evening. Are there any questions of staff?

Vice-Chair Whitty questioned Condition 5; two trees in the parking lot to mitigate the visual impact. The tree species shall be determined by the DRB or the Park Superintendent. She requested this be changed to only the DRB. She also questioned Condition 11 and asked if the lighting will be demonstrated to the DRB or the Planning Department. Mr. Slaughter answered it will be demonstrated to the Planning Department.

Boardmember Woodrow questioned if the fencing includes the large triangular section, and Mr. Slaughter said yes. Currently, there is fencing at the project site. Boardmember Woodrow asked if part of the site includes a refuse area, and Mr. Slaughter answered there is an area on site designated for refuse.

Boardmember Welter questioned if the existing structure is concrete blocks. Mr. Slaughter said the majority of the structure is concrete block, and the addition from 1999 is not. Boardmember Welter said he wants to make sure there is some type of treatment proposed for the area where the new and old sections meet, and that canvas awnings are put over the windows.

Boardmember Butt said the Board had requested a checklist form be submitted with all staff reports as part of a completed Design Review application. We also want some rationale for any items that are waived by staff. He does not see that in the packet and asked whether that will be implemented. One thing that is missing is a materials board. He asked what the canvas awning, and lighting looked like and whether the existing windows will be replaced with French windows. Mr. Slaughter answered the existing windows would be replaced with French windows, and that the DRB checklist is not something staff has included in previous DRB submittals. The Director of Planning and Building Services will need to submit a memo to staff requesting this change. Regarding material and color boards, he said sometimes applicants submit them and sometimes they do not. In terms of consistency, he agreed they should always request it. Boardmember Butt said it is one of the most significant components of a project's design, and he requested it as part of this project's package.

Boardmember Bloom asked if the landscape architect was in attendance. She pointed out many misspelled botanical names in the application. She also said there is a species missing in the landscape plan; there are so many possibilities that she cannot evaluate it. The Western Redbud does not look very good in the winter, and she voiced concern about the thinness of it. It also dies easily if drainage is not good. She would like to make sure that if the applicant really wants this species that a drainage test be performed.

Chair Woldemar questioned how big the Western Redbuds were and said he presumes they are 15 gallon since this is the minimum size required by the City. But, he believed the application to be incomplete.

Chair Woldemar asked whether Condition 7 was written prior to the landscaping discussion. Mr. Slaughter said he measured every area of the site and he calculated 10%.

The public hearing was opened.

Talia Hassan, Applicant, came forward for questions. Boardmember Woodrow asked if an area shown in the photographs but not on the drawings would be torn down. Ms. Hassan answered that the area is for an outdoor gazebo; it is not a building and for now it will stay. Boardmember Woodrow said he does not see anything on the plan showing where trash is stored. Ms. Hassan said they have been instructed by Richmond Sanitation to store trash along the fence line. Boardmember Woodrow asked where this is located on the drawings, and Ms. Hassan pointed out the location. She said they do not have an enclosure for their trash bins, but are amenable to the Board's suggestions.

Chair Woldemar said the refuse will be on the eastern end of the new addition. He asked if that will be screened and out of public sight, or whether there would be dumpsters outside. Ms. Hassan said they plan on beautifying the outside of the building and so they will definitely build an enclosure for their trash. Currently, dumpsters are out on the asphalt, but they are hidden from view of the street.

Chair Woldemar noted that most jurisdictions are requiring now that refuse areas are covered because of the Clean Water Act. He asked if she would object to the DRB adding a condition about the location, screening, and cover of refuse area. Ms. Hassan said she would not object.

Boardmember Butt asked what the tinting of the windows would be in the existing design. Ms. Hassan answered that the intent of the new windows is to create uniformity and modernization. The building will be stucco'ed in the same material on the old and new areas, and all windows will include awnings.

Boardmember Butt recommended replacing the existing windows but felt that the elevation is somewhat confusing, as the existing windows are non-divided picture windows and the new windows are divided lights. He encouraged using a non-divided light window, which is more of a commercial window.

Chair Woldemar questioned if the proposed divided light is true divided light or clip in, stating he thinks they are clip in which means it is easy to not put them in. Boardmember Butt said he does not think the applicant has decided what they will be. Ms. Hassan said it was recommended by the DRB that the windows match. She asked the DRB for guidance in order to match the windows and create consistency.

Boardmember Butt pointed out safety code issues. He said he sees no accessible entry to the building. It is 2 feet off the grade and there are stairs up to the floor. He thinks a ramp would be required by code, and that will take some space to construct. Ideally that would be something

indicated in the design. Also, looking at the photos he noticed parking spaces immediately in front of the building with benches only 1 foot away from the parking. He suggested wheel stops so that people sitting on the bench are protected. He asked for more clarification about the matching of the siding finish materials. Ms. Hassan answered she does not know the process, but the finished building will be a complete stucco job. Ideally, we will use all the same materials on the outside.

Boardmember Butt questioned whether there are plans to put equipment or skylights on the roof. Mr. Slaughter noted that Chair Woldemar had raised that question in an email and the only thing proposed for the roof is a skylight. There is no equipment proposed for the roof and the skylight would not be visible from the street. He also addressed accessible entry and said they are required to provide ADA access to the existing building but not for the addition.

Chair Woldemar said that when an addition is made to a building the State requires that 20% of the cost of that addition be spent towards accessibility requirements up to a threshold of \$110,000. If the addition costs more than that, then the entire building must be brought up to code. He noted that there is a ramp to the doorway at the notch of the existing building. It is too steep and leads into a hallway that is only 42 inches wide. The current access is probably not legal, and therefore, the applicant will need to add an accessible entryway to the building on the plans. It will probably modify the site plans to some degree, depending on the solution. This will then affect the issue of landscaping around the ramp. There are some unanswered issues that they will need to deal with in the conditions of approval.

Boardmember Bloom requested clarification of whether the triangular and corner areas are part of the property. Mr. Slaughter said they are. Chair Woldemar noted there is also a secondary fence that separates this property from the BART right-of-way. Boardmember Bloom said they should be able to utilize this as green space for future planting. Ms. Hassan said all of that property is theirs, but the space will be used for parking. Vice-Chair Whitty said the area where the gazebo is currently will be moved so the addition can go in. Boardmember Bloom said this is something to keep in mind and any leftover green space could be planted with trees or used for sustainability purposes.

Boardmember Bloom asked how they should address the plant selections and questioned if the applicant would have an opportunity to change things further in the process. Vice Chair Whitty suggested a condition be added that they will need to approve planting plans in the future. Boardmember Bloom believed the plan was a good first draft, but it needed to be developed with complete plant names.

Chair Woldemar asked whether it would work to go in along the fence and punch a 12-inch round hole in the asphalt to plant a 5 gallon jasmine vine, and install an irrigation line along the bottom of the fence. Boardmember Bloom said the asphalt might crumble, but plant-wise, it would work. She thinks the maximum amount of foliage in this site will make a real difference in the way it feels. She suggested using every opportunity to plant something.

Chair Woldemar said Broadway used to be one of the nicest streets in that part of Richmond, but now it has a lot of chain link fences. The applicant has expressed an interest in wanting the building to have an upscale look. The last time they talked a fair amount about the fence and the fact that it is right out against the sidewalk with no green space. He wondered what could be done to help it look better but still maintain security. One idea is to plant some vines along the fence in the asphalt area. Ms. Hassan said she thinks that is a great idea and will consider it. Ivy or a vine would look great along the entire curve. Chair Woldemar said that is one of the entrances to the civic center and this will be a nice building in a nice location and a green wall would work very well. Ms. Hassan said on the back end there is a triangular area on the side facing BART, and that fence is covered in vines and is beautiful.

Boardmember Welter said on the aerial view there is a slatted chain link fence in front of the property that appears to run parallel with the BART tracks. He questioned where that fence is located on the plot plan and whether it will be removed as part of the project.

Chair Woldemar said he looked at an assessor's map of this to understand it, and the words "24th street" are laid by the computer parallel to the property line, when in fact 24th street bends out like a wedge. The Board discussed the property lines and tried to come to an understanding.

Chair Woldemar believed that the confusion and questions suggest the application is not complete with accurate drawings. Mr. Slaughter said Attachment 1 shows the assessor's parcel map trace of the property line; it matches what the applicant has submitted and runs right underneath the BART tracks.

Chair Woldemar questioned whether or not the applicant is ready to go to construction on the project. He said they are reaching a point where there are a number of issues, and to try to write words to solve those issues will be difficult. He questioned whether Ms. Hassan would be able to return in another month with corrections and adjustments. Ms. Hassan said this would be acceptable, and she asked if they could scale down the project at the same time to reduce the number of bathrooms, include a large conference room, and convert some current space into offices. Chair Woldemar said yes, if it includes answers to the questions and issues brought up today. He suggested she meet with Mr. Slaughter to go over these issues as soon as possible.

The public hearing was closed.

ACTION: It was M/S (Bloom/Welter) to continue the application PLN 09-077 to the October 28, 2009 meeting; unanimously approved.

2. PLN 09-065 – (Held Over from 8/26/2009) TWO STORY ADDITION TO SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCE ON MODOC AVE – DESIGN REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL for a ± 784 SF second story addition to an existing dwelling located at 5507 Modoc Avenue (APN: 507-120-014. SFR-3 (Single Family: Low Density Residential) Zoning District. Owner: Paris Patron; Applicant: Carl Sherrod; Staff Contact: Jonelyn Whales. Tentative Recommendation: Hold Over to 10/14/2009.

ACTION: It was M/S (Woodrow/Bloom) to continue the application for PLN 09-065 to the October 14, 2009 meeting; unanimously approved.

4. SAN PABLO AVENUE DRAFT SPECIFIC PLAN STUDY SESSION – Study session to discuss the design guidelines located in Chapter 2, Volume 2 of the draft San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. Staff Contact: Lori Reese-Brown. Tentative Recommendation: No Action.

Ms. Lori Reese-Brown said the San Pablo Avenue Advisory Committee (SPAAC) is comprised of Richmond and El Cerrito SPAAC members. Over the past 1½ years they worked on the draft plan that consists of design review guidelines, transportation, demand uses, and design schemes along San Pablo Avenue. For the purpose of the meeting tonight, they will focus only on the design review section. She would like to receive comments on that section to take back to SPAAC members and the Planning Commission, as well as the communities of both cities.

Board member Woodrow questioned what effect the DRB's comments would have when only 15%-20% of the area of the plan falls in Richmond. Ms. Reese-Brown said this is a joint process and joint plan between Richmond and El Cerrito. El Cerrito wants the City of Richmond to be

involved in this process and there are members of SPEC from both cities. She hopes the plan will represent that joint effort.

Boardmember Woodrow said one example is where both cities were advised to adopt the kind of signage that El Cerrito has as compared to the signage Richmond has, and he questioned which was followed. Ms. Reese-Brown said after the plan is approved, both cities will look at it and discuss the parts they do not agree with. They will look at the sign plan and abide with it. This is why it is important to hear about changes to be made right now so they can be incorporated into the plan, or at least discuss the changes with El Cerrito and come to some consensus.

Chair Woldemar noted that he sat on the SPEC for two years. Boardmember Butt sat on it for 1½ years until he moved out of El Cerrito. He also noted that this item is on the agenda for a study session at the October 1st Planning Commission meeting. He questioned and confirmed that the Planning Commission would have the benefit of the Board's comments. He thanked the Planning Commission for comments and requested a final version of the Specific Plan so they can see that their comments were enacted. Ms. Reese-Brown agreed and said the comments they are receiving from the Board tonight will not be included in this draft plan when it goes to the Planning Commission. Instead, it will be a matrix where they show all comments received. They will not be able to put the comments in the plan by October 1st, but once they receive that matrix of comments, they will have an opportunity to decipher them and decide what changes to make. She said the purpose of this meeting is to hear the DRB's comments and try to incorporate them in discussions with El Cerrito.

Chair Woldemar asked for more information about the relationship between the information in the Richmond section of the Specific Plan and the General Plan, and also how the Specific Plan material will relate to the area north of MacDonald. Ms. Reese-Brown said the reason there are two separate plans is because they take care of two different areas. The General Plan takes care of citywide development and the Specific Plan is specific to the San Pablo Avenue corridor. The General Plan will make reference to the Specific Plan as it pertains to that corridor.

Mr. Mitchell said one reason for the two plans is to connect the two formats, use similar language, and similar assumptions. As far as the area north of the joint area, staff will need to complete this area ourselves since it is in Richmond. Some information in it may apply to the area north and some may not because it is a fundamentally different area, but the Specific Plan takes care of the corridor shared with El Cerrito.

Chair Woldemar asked when the area up north on the Avenue will be discussed and referred to this area because the Board will discuss a project on 23rd Street tonight. Mr. Mitchell said this will be a separate exercise because as one gets further up the street, the values need to change to reflect the things happening on that side. They will begin that process as soon as funding is available, possibly in a couple of years. Ms. Reese-Brown said they have a more realistic and aggressive date of completion for the Specific Plan to be adopted in January or February, 2010, and the General Plan will follow shortly after that.

Chris Beynon, of MIG, said the Specific Plan represents great collaboration between the cities of El Cerrito and Richmond, as well as both communities' desires. It is the culmination of hard work by committee members, community members, and staff. The purpose tonight is to accept feedback and comments from the DRB. The intent is to focus on Chapter 2, Volume 2, Design Guidelines, but they are open to other comments on the document.

Mr. Beynon reviewed the schedule and said they are targeting January for a Planning Commission and City Council hearing in both jurisdictions. The document has three main components. The first component is Volume 1, which outlines the bigger design concepts and

vision for the future of San Pablo Avenue. The second component is Volume 2 which is more technical and outlines zoning overlays and technical underpinnings with respect to transportation and infrastructure. Volume 3 is a set of technical appendices of different analyses conducted over the course of preparing the document.

Mr. Beynon said the vision for San Pablo Avenue is to intensify mixed use development at key nodes along the Avenue, and include more housing at those nodes and in areas between the nodes to boost the area's vitality. Leveraging the two BART stations is very important, as they are currently underutilized. From a character perspective, people have stressed high quality design along the Avenue. There are currently blank walls and dead spaces. Any new development or retrofitting of building should have ground floor transparency so that activating that pedestrian environment. Incorporating green design features are also very important. People envisioned this as a plan for the long term, 20 years into the future. The street itself should include pedestrian use, connecting people via bike and pedestrian routes to the transit nodes, including the bus lines that come into the area. Also important is beautifying the Avenue. The City of El Cerrito already has this underway and has made some improvements there with sustainable elements, green storm water infrastructure, and other elements. Connections getting across the Avenue are very important so that people have very safe walking routes across the street.

Mr. Beynon said the overall strategy and design concept is related to the nodes in four key areas: the MacDonald Gateway, the Del Norte BART station, El Cerrito City Hall and midtown area, and El Cerrito Plaza BART station. The MacDonald Gateway is seen as a place that needs more of a sense of entry, more livability, and a landmark aspect to it. The Del Norte BART station is envisioned as the most dense along the corridor, to leverage the great transit system. People could perhaps live in that area with only one car or no car at all. BART and AC transit are fully behind the plan to make this a livable area connected to transit. The plan for midtown civic center area and around El Cerrito City Hall is focused on beautification of the environment, landscaping, tucked in parking, lighting and materials, etc., and cohesion of both sides of the street, since one side of the street is El Cerrito and the other is Richmond. The Plaza area is focused on mixed-use, but not as intense as the Del Norte BART station area. In between the nodes they want to foster an environment that will allow for more housing. They will not eliminate any existing viable commercial services, but they want to create a corridor that is more vibrant from a residential perspective so that people can not only live in higher density developments at the nodes but also in lower scale products between the character areas. They need to be sensitive to transitions to neighborhoods east or west of the Avenue.

He said any private development should be consistent with the character strategy or vision for that particular area. They need to be very cognizant of existing single family detached dwelling neighborhoods as the plan is pursued. From a public perspective, the opportunity to connect the areas, creating smaller parks and open spaces, meeting transportation demand and management strategies, and traffic and parking strategies are important.

Brian Solen reported that they received more than 250 individual comments on particular items in the plan. Three themes emerged. First, they suggested the land use transportation and greenhouse gas connection, reducing auto trips, and emphasizing more pedestrian transit and bicycle use.

Second, they suggested reducing the requirements on parking so that there is more flexibility and not an overload of parking. This was done by providing ranges for each parking area. Residents were concerned with spillover parking in the neighborhoods as development occurs in the future. As a result, an implementation measure will be to study the parking impacts on adjacent neighborhoods as development occurs, and to mitigate that mostly likely through permitted parking for residences surrounding new development.

The third area is signage, and they are adding a new section on signage to make sure it is in scale, location of trees, fining businesses, etc. He asked the Board to give comments on these items since they have not yet been presented to a committee.

Vice Chair Whitty said the Design Guidelines are very well done. She started by reading the comments, which she thought were incredibly insightful. She came up with the same critical areas. Mr. Bayman emphasized that community comments were also very instrumental in refining the plan.

Vice Chair Whitty voiced concern about parking, but said that since this is such a long stretch of land and has so many different neighborhoods she will follow what the experts suggest. However, she is concerned about parking because she cannot find anywhere to park when she drives her car to go shopping and this plan will replicate that kind of parking difficulty. She was also interested in storm water management, and noticed this is included and she agreed with it. She suggested rain water catchment and grey water reuse. She also said building heights are an issue in such a long-term plan. Currently, that stretch of land is quiet and little, and she suggested keeping building heights as low as possible. She thinks the key to making this a nice area is the landscaping and suggested planting landscaping before the building occurs. The buildings themselves should be green, built with sustainable materials, and LEED certified.

Vice Chair Whitty said the El Cerrito Del Norte BART station part of the plan is very close to the freeway, and living area should not be there where it is so close. She wondered how the market is doing with regard to loft/mixed use housing and questioned if people really want to live between a freeway and BART. She suggested perhaps something else could be done there that would be attractive and emphasized the need to move slowly in developing the area and to listen to each neighborhood as to what they want to occur in the development of their area.

Mr. Bayman said the development will be phased over time since there is so much development to be done. The plan provides the overall vision, and as new proposals come forth it becomes a guiding document to help form the development. Given today's market, the amount of land and the jurisdiction along the corridor, it is not going to change overnight but will instead be an incremental process that will be monitored and shaped as it evolves.

Vice Chair Whitty pointed out the huge mixed-use housing development to be built on the other side is Mira Flores which was not mentioned in the plan. She questioned why they are showing Del Norte with transit housing, when 100 yards away there will be a huge transit housing development, and suggested the existence of too much transit oriented housing.

Boardmember Welter questioned if the nodes include higher density and taller buildings, and asked what would occur in the in-between areas. He asked if it would still be mixed-use/commercial, with residential overlay. Mr. Beynon said typically outside of the nodes there would not be mixed-use. It would depend on the different lot configurations, but would be lower scale like townhouses of 2-3 stories. They do not want to over saturate the Avenue and mandate mixed-use that ends up being empty. They want to have the mixed use at the more active nodes, and the in-between areas would be for other development.

Boardmember Welter said the plans call for a lot of the parking to be placed behind buildings. Because a lot of these parcels back up to single family residential, he wondered what those residents are saying about a parking lot being next to their residences. Ms. Reese-Brown said they will have a good number of trees and vines to buffer the parking lots that abut residential areas. She heard this from a lot of people in the community on the El Cerrito side, as well. Mr. Bayman said they want to keep the development closer to San Pablo Avenue and not + next to residential homes.

Boardmember Welter said he is also concerned about the amount of traffic currently at the BART stations. Adding more residential units could create more traffic. It is already very busy at the two BART stations and he hoped the traffic analysis will take into consideration that there will be even more traffic in those locations. He also strongly agreed with Jonathan Livingston's comments on the materials--using high quality materials to prevent deterioration.

Boardmember Woodrow said the document is clear and easily understood, except he asked for clarification of the meaning of "muse". Mr. Beynon said they should take another look at that term and agreed they need a strong glossary for the document. Ms. Reese-Brown said they used information from areas outside of the California region and even outside of the nation, and she thinks this is how the word got into the document.

Boardmember Woodrow said they have a long way to go before the word could describe the area and questioned how long it takes a tree of that size to grow. Boardmember Bloom answered maybe 6-12 inches per year, so it would take decades. Boardmember Woodrow said it should be understood that showing full-grown trees will not appear the way they are depicted until 20 years later. He pointed out it would be helpful to have examples of photos from their City rather than from other locations. He thinks the main issues are terminology, pictorial tools, and a sense of how much time is involved in achieving the final vision.

Boardmember Woodrow requested the addition of an ideal timeline. Mr. Beynon referred to pages 98-99 where the approach outlines timeframes.

Boardmember Woodrow thanked Vice Chair Whitty for pointing out that they cannot think of anyone who would want to live around the Del Norte BART station. He said he can hear the trains at his house. The highways, buses, and BART trains are all noisy. He thinks that part of the plan needs to be re-thought, does not think the market is large enough for this type of mixed-use living, and Mr. Beynon said the ideas from community and committee run counter to this. Mixed-use has been one of the growth areas in development around the country. Vice-Chair Whitty agreed it has been a growth area and confirmed with Mr. Bayman that the property had been sold and that people are looking more and more at options where they are closer to transit amenities. Those areas are holding up better price-wise in the current mortgage crisis than peripheral areas in suburbia. Vice Chair Whitty said a lot was built because it was funded through highway funding.

Boardmember Woodrow said it would be wonderful if the applicant could build in some thinking about how to connect to the Bay Trail routes and areas going west-east instead of just north-south.

Boardmember Woodrow referred to page 47 where they suggested cobblestone blocks, said they are a huge tripping hazard, and asked if they could give this some thought. He suggested thinking about the enhancing entry points to the street and said the traffic flow is a terrible experience. He had heard that when Target left, BART would turn the land into a parking garage. Mr. Bayman said this is not true; the land to the north of the parking lot was owned by BART. The Target lot is under private ownership and there is currently a proposal for a Safeway to go into that area. That said, there are concerns on the part of the City of El Cerrito that just re-utilizing that facility in its current form may not be the highest and best use of that land due to its proximity to the BART station. They are exploring ways to make Safeway part of a mixed use development. They will adhere to the vision of San Pablo Avenue, but balancing revenue generation with longer-term vision can be difficult.

Chair Woldemar said this is particularly interesting in relation to the other two Safeway stores, and he wondered if those would be moved.

Boardmember Woodrow said the second point of entry is at the south end. It is a great place, but access to shopping is difficult because it is hard getting in and out. The third point of entry is at MacDonald where there is a very good copying shop. It is worth turning left to get into their lot if one is going north on San Pablo Avenue. Mr. Bayman said for every situation in every parcel they cannot get to the parking level since they are focusing on the structural level.

Boardmember Woodrow questioned if there is any planning technique that can be called into play to dissuade people from driving cars in an area such as this. Mr. Bayman said there are a number of ways and provided examples of parking standards and limiting parking. He said it is also about providing more transit opportunities and accessibility and ease of walking and biking to those areas. No one is pretending they will eliminate cars from this area, but if they can mitigate some of the shorter trips by making this a nice walking environment, then it will help. Transit passes for certain developments and car sharing are things developments can do to reduce their parking standards and also encourage people to only own one car. This can be tied to new development. Boardmember Woodrow said those are things that are typically done by very big companies and he did not see this happening any time soon.

Boardmember Bloom said downtown Portland has free buses, and she suggested perhaps there could be some planning for certain centers along San Pablo with free busses. If there is a place to park and someone has errands along the Avenue, then this would be a possibility. Mr. Bayman said it would take a lot of planning and it requires ridership. The Emeryville Round is an example of connecting BART through Emeryville to the different companies and corporations in that area.

Boardmember Butt said the plan is a very impressive document. He spent a year on the El Cerrito Specific Planning Committee and has a unique perspective. He was glad to see a lot of his early comments were implemented. He has very little to add to the very comprehensive list of comments already included, but suggested the document needs to provide a clearer definition of "good design." This is difficult and a lot of it will fall on the projects that come before the DRB in the future. But, going into some detail about a material palette would be useful. The tendency for a lot of developers is to use inexpensive looking materials. El Cerrito Plaza is all stucco and does not hold up well or look good for the long haul.

Mr. Beynon questioned whether there were any particular materials that should be discouraged, and Boardmember Butt answered stucco; however, if used right, can be done nicely. Chair Woldemar suggested avoiding fake brick, but Boardmember Butt said he has used fake brick effectively on projects and thinks the detailing is how you achieve high quality. Mr. Beynon said if photos of materials that are examples of what they think is appropriate, they can be included in the document. Boardmember Butt felt that equally important would be photos of what they do not want to see.

Boardmember Butt asked how the Richmond nodal entry point is differentiated from some of the El Cerrito nodes. He thinks this is worth looking into differentiating the entry into Richmond areas versus El Cerrito. He also thinks bike connections going east-west, both from the greenway to San Pablo Avenue and from San Pablo Avenue to the Bay Trail, are important. He did not see that clarified enough in the plan and it should be delineated because if it is not then it may not happen at all or happen correctly. He requested that the Ohlone and Richmond connection be defined more specifically because it will be an important connection. He thinks specifying LEED or other green programs would be useful because, like good design, green buildings are hard to quantify and hard to regulate unless specific programs are included.

Re-use of buildings should also be discussed because there are a lot of buildings on the Avenue that could potentially lend themselves to re-use. Identifying the buildings that could be

re-used would be a nice component to the plan. Some of the buildings may be of historic value. He wondered why light rail has been ruled out as a transportation mode on San Pablo Avenue. Light rail might be a viable option to get people up and down that corridor. Mr. Bayman said light rail was brought up by the committee early on in the process, but there is no plan within the transportation agencies for it and 20 years from now is the horizon for developing anything like light rail.

Boardmember Bloom referred to a market in Oakland that was converted as a good example of re-use of buildings. Mr. Bayman asked where she would put something like that on San Pablo Avenue, and Boardmember Bloom answered Albertson's and Safeway buildings, but she felt that needed to be studied. She said most of the comments she is making today have to do with the artfulness of benches, concrete planters, etc. She suggested having the street look different stylistically from every other Main Street USA, so that it fits the style of Richmond. Mr. Bayman said Mayor McLaughlin pushed for public art along the street and he thinks they can look into infusing that more into the streetscape elements. Boardmember Bloom suggested making the benches and planters interesting and more personal and in keeping with the theme of the buildings, street, and local culture.

Boardmember Bloom pointed out the population is aging and more benches are needed on the street. She suggested making the walk enjoyable for people by including a lot of benches as rest stops for older people. Chair Woldemar questioned the need for restrooms, and Boardmember Bloom agreed that the question needs to be discussed.

Boardmember Bloom also said there are a lot of children on the street, and she suggested making the pattern of the paving interesting, safe, and permeable. She asked if they could have a path for kids. See Addison Street in Berkeley for creative treatments. Many of the comments she saw were to include kids play areas, but it would also be nice to have connections in between. There is going to be a Yellow Brick Road theme connecting parks in other parts of Richmond and perhaps this is something that could be incorporated.

Boardmember Bloom strongly suggested including the maximum amount of planting and landscaping as possible along the Avenue. Instead of building a wall where the parking lots meet neighborhoods, she suggested trees and shrubs. In general, when there is a possibility to plant something, she suggested increasing the number of plants. There is also the possibility of roof gardens and wall gardens. Mr. Bayman said they have a roof garden in the plan and they will add a wall garden. A wall garden is good for softening the surface of a blank wall. They are also called living walls.

Chair Woldemar went over comments from the advisory committee and felt one question is how specific should a Specific Plan be. On page 36, 1-D-5, there is a reference to a 15 foot minimum floor to floor dimension. There are also references to three-story, mixed-use building of 33 feet. There is a height limit of 35 feet and this means no roof variation. He suggested a 12-foot floor to floor, or a range of 12-15, would be a better approach. He also thinks very clearly there needs to be a good definition of height as to whether it is top of roof, centerline of roof, etc. Page 37, item 1-E-4, specifies 10-25 feet of residential setbacks and landscaping. If there are 25-foot setback along San Pablo Avenue, on both sides of the street, now the street is even wider. He asked if this is the kind of image desired for the street, or was it too suburban. He suggested doing setback numbers related to averaging, such as 50% of the frontage of the property shall be blank and the other 50% can be built, which will produce more variation. Mr. Bayman agreed and thought a 25-foot setback is too big. Chair Woldemar said if the objective is for some of these areas to be like a Manhattan brownstones, then this will not fit either one of these setbacks.

Chair Woldemar went over a series of notes about things to be included in a glossary, such as “light shelf” and other jargon. Also the wording “unless it is unfeasible” is wishy-washy language and he questioned who would make the determination of something being feasible or not. He suggested finding better, more specific words to describe that situation. On page 43, item 1-H-8, he wondered what unbundled parking meant, and what does it achieve. Item 1-J-8 explores specific kinds of grasses in landscape areas. He wondered why this area is so specific.

Chair Woldemar said he thinks there should be a whole section about landscaping on a more specific basis. He feels the zoning ordinance does not cover landscaping very well and he said some of the landscaping paragraphs incorporated into some of the current Specific Plans of Richmond were good examples. He also thought putting planter strips next to curbs (item 2-A-2-4) will be a problem for parking next to curbs. He suggested having a minimum of a two-foot wide curb so people can exit their cars. There has been a lot of discussion in El Cerrito over the years about the types of street trees. He suggested the landscape section should include a list of specific trees and shrubs that can be used, and a discussion be added about the use of root barriers. He referred to fence height on page 55 and requested deciding the correct number for fence height because it is 36 inches here but Richmond has a 44 inch height for residences.

Chair Woldemar questioned how the Specific Plan relates to the General Plan and how that relates to zoning. He wondered how certain issues will be dealt with in reality.

The public hearing was opened.

Public Comments:

Mary Selva, President of Richmond Annex Neighborhood Council (RANC), said they have been involved in this process since it was started. They are always involved in San Pablo Avenue because they all live nearby. Their lots along San Pablo Avenue are very shallow and the project backs up to 98% single family homes. Therefore, they want to be sure this will not impact the neighborhood, but at the same time allow them to double or triple in density over the next 20 years. This plan would do that, because most of the buildings on the Richmond Annex side are one-story buildings.

Ms. Selva said they are concerned about parking. They have always had an issue with parking in the residential neighborhood, because the Annex has narrow streets and small bungalows from the 1940s. Most residents park on the street. They have some side streets that intersect San Pablo Avenue and customers park on those streets. They have a 2-hour parking limit in some areas, but it is never enforced. They have very little police presence there and are concerned about this if they went to permit parking. They want to request an addition to the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan for buildings that are three stories or less. She distributed a handout showing the City of Albany’s provision for buildings three stories or less. That requirement provides a daylight plane for Solano Avenue and San Pablo Avenue in Albany. The reason this would be good for the Richmond Annex is to preserve a daylight area for buildings that back up against single family home properties where there is only a 5 foot setback.

Ms. Selva said they are also concerned about rear setbacks which should be changed to show that a daylight plane will be included with a minimal setback. Chair Woldemar said this also touches on the landscape buffer from residential to parking lots and he did not know if that dimension has ever been defined. Ms. Selva agreed and said it is important to have a good buffer there, especially if there is going to be parking in the rear. She referred to Volume 2, page 22, where there is a photograph of the lumber building that was saved and moved to the Richmond side of San Pablo Avenue. They love the design of that building and are very proud of that. She also thinks a photograph of the El Cerrito City Hall should be included in the plan.

Ms. Selva said some of the outstanding concerns of their neighborhood have come in through their email membership list. A lot of the concern right now is Central Avenue. A lot of the San Pablo Specific Plan includes Central Avenue from San Pablo Avenue all the way to Pier Street. Those are some changed areas along Central Avenue, where it is currently zoned residential. The proposal is to change it to mixed-use. Central Avenue is not a wide street and she thinks there are a lot of people living close to that area who are concerned about that change. There is also a changed area on the corners of Carlson Boulevard and Central Avenue, where there is a 65 foot maximum with a minimum requirement of 45 feet. That is very dense for that particular intersection. It is also proposed that the intersection of Central Avenue and San Pablo Avenue have this same minimum and maximum. She suggested lowering that to a 45-foot maximum.

Ms. Selva said other than these concerns they are pleased with the outcome of the whole process. She has heard residents requesting bringing a historical element to El Cerrito. It would be helpful to have historical guidelines for some of the buildings, to bring a certain character instead of "box" buildings to that particular area. Chair Woldemar agreed historical context would be worthwhile to explore as a way to give each node a certain image, other than just four-story buildings.

Garland Ellis, Vice President of RANC, said he has lived in the Richmond Annex area for 55 years and the trees were not there 20 years ago. El Cerrito started putting them in because they wanted to change the character of the Avenue. Also the center median was not there. They came in with a road project and put it in, and it became a barrier between the people of El Cerrito and Richmond. In the last 10 years El Cerrito put in a whole series of signage along San Pablo Avenue, and his neighborhood mentioned the same types of entities in Richmond but El Cerrito did not put any of those entities on their signs. He wants to work together with El Cerrito, but there are a lot of things between the two cities that are opposed to each other. He felt the concepts being discussed tonight would be completely different at an El Cerrito Planning meeting. A lot of the comments tonight have been more El Cerrito sided and a lot of comments made by people in Richmond never made it into the comments.

Mr. Ellis said given 55 feet building heights at the MacDonald Avenue intersection, the view will be looking down the freeway and this is not the view they want to have. The people who live behind that on the hill will have a view of only this towering building. They will not have a view back toward Point Richmond or the bay, because this towering structure will block that view out. The same concept will be around the Del Norte BART station, and everyone living in the hills in El Cerrito will have the same problem. In the mid-town area those buildings will block the views of people in Richmond Annex because they are on a hill looking back toward El Cerrito. He noted these building heights have been argued back and forth in El Cerrito, Berkeley, and Albany and it has gone up and down over the years. In Albany, they wanted to raise it up about 10 years ago, and they did, and people complained about the height. In 2003 the City of El Cerrito put forth their housing document and the proposals were 40-50 feet and people living nearby felt that was too high. He suggested lowering the building heights in the MacDonald area, specifically because there will be a lot of noise from the BART train turning at that location. He also suggested lowering the building heights in the Del Norte area and the midtown area on the El Cerrito side. He also suggested capping incentives on architectural elements at 10% of the building height.

Mr. Ellis also discussed parking and said there are not enough parking spaces for the lots and businesses on San Pablo Avenue. People will end up parking in the residential areas. Two new buildings have been added in the area in the last 2 years, and both of them were built right out to the property line with no room for parking. Then, with the trees that line the Avenue, the sidewalk is becoming minimal.

Chair Woldemar said the sidewalk there is at least 15 feet wide. Mr. Ellis said it is 17 feet from the property line to the street. Chair Woldemar asked how this is getting to be too narrow, and Mr. Ellis said 6 feet will be taken up with a line of trees. If anything will be put in front of that building, such as a table or bench, the sidewalk is getting down to 4-6 feet. Chair Woldemar said that is a matter of design, and it touches on the specificity of the Specific Plan. Right now it is not supposed to be that specific. Mr. Ellis said it does not necessarily need to be, but he is concerned about the architectural amenities proposed when the projects coming forth right now have no room for them.

Mr. Ellis said the lots are very narrow on the Richmond side. Around the Central Avenue/San Pablo Avenue area the building heights are proposed at 65 feet right next to a residential area that is 35 feet. There needs to be more of a transition zone shown in the overlay. Also he felt it is very important to remember that all of the bigger properties are on the El Cerrito side, and economics are going to drive what goes into those locations. Unfortunately, a lot of those bigger locations are going to need commercial type of anchor, which will develop the character of the Avenue. In most of the proposals he has seen so far, it has all been residential proposals, and there is very little to incent a larger commercial anchor to come into that area. This is going to either make or break that whole area. He also suggested using a time fare on public transit rather than paying for distance as AC Transit does. More thought needs to be given to older people coming down the hills and going to the stores. All of the residential developments that are being built have young, short term people in mind. There needs to be more of a long-term residential commitment to the community written into the plan.

Dave Harris, Richmond resident and member of RANC. His main concern is the parking. On his block it is already parked up all day long because the people that work along San Pablo Avenue park on his street. The high density, mixed-use buildings with only one parking space per 5 units should be one parking space per bedroom. He requested re-thinking the parking so as not to impact the side streets.

Chair Woldemar questioned if Mr. Harris would advocate a program like El Cerrito has around BART stations where residents have permit parking. Mr. Harris said this might work, but it is already to the point where people who work on San Pablo park on his street. Vice Chair Whitty questioned where workers parked, and Mr. Harris said they need to park on San Pablo Avenue and there needs to be enough parking provided for the commercial enterprises that go into the area. If there is going to be mixed use with apartments, then there will need to be enough parking for them, as well. Also, he said his block is used as an onramp to the freeway, and because his street is narrow, more density will create a horrendous situation on his block and all of the adjacent blocks.

Mr. Harris also said building heights over 35 feet on their side will block the hill view from his block. He thinks this will affect property values and he would not like it. If there is more density, then there is going to be a lot more activity in that area.

Jerry Yoshida, member of RANC, said parking is the main issue. He thinks that the Specific Plan needs to address not only the design, but also create something livable, viable for the community, and attractive for residents. He suggested encouraging retail and service businesses because they pay more and provide services to residents. He does not think Central Avenue should be in the Specific Plan for San Pablo Avenue. He also thinks it is really important to realize that the problem seen in other cities, such as Albany, is that you cannot see businesses. He suggested putting in small vertical signs to indicate where businesses are located. He has noticed that a lot of new buildings that go in do not incorporate responsible locations for signs and suggested it be incorporated in the design rather than be an afterthought. It is also important for any new developer to know the fire requirements so the building sites can be designed with that in mind, as well as security design issues to be

incorporated into the plan. Mr. Yoshida said he thinks lighting should be expanded to include protective lights in the alleyways and said he would like to see attractive downlights.

Ms. Reese-Brown thanked the members of the Design Review Board for their comments and leadership. Any further comments may be submitted in writing via email to the Planning Department, either through the City or through Mr. Mitchell. Mr. Bayman also thanked the Board.

The public hearing was closed.

- 5. PLN 09-035 – 23RD STREET STREETScape IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PRESENTATION** – Planned streetscape improvements to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety along the 23rd Street corridor by reducing the number of vehicular travel lanes, widening the sidewalks, shortening crossing distances for pedestrians and improving overall pedestrian and bicycle visibility. This is an information-only item and no action will be taken by the Design Review Board. The project is generally along the 23rd Street public right-of-way between Costa and Bissell Avenues. (APN: None). Various Zoning Districts. Owner: City of Richmond; Applicant: Richmond Redevelopment Agency; Staff Contact: Hector Rojas. Tentative Recommendation: Receive Staff Presentation.

Hector Rojas said they did not expect the last item to take so long. They have decided to hold over the item until the October 14, 2009 meeting so the Board will have more energy to focus on it. He will use the comments on the San Pablo Specific Plan to inform the project sponsors on 23rd Street. If the Board has any questions about what was included in the packet, they may email him with those questions or comments.

BOARD BUSINESS

Ms. Whales said she would like to have a special meeting about the exterior color of the Point Richmond bar. The Board discussed possible dates and settled on next Wednesday for this meeting. Ms. Whales said the Board will see her a second time after this meeting to discuss other aspects of the project, since it is an alteration of a historical building. Boardmember Welter questioned whether this needs to come before the Board for color only. Ms. Whales said it does because it is a historical building.

Chair Woldemar reported that the next meeting will include a second floor deck on Solitude Lane. He also noted he received an email from Ms. Renfro regarding handicapped parking on the street and it is indeed legal.

The Board adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.