

May 2005

Volume 1, Issue 3, Series 2

# PHA Newsletter

*Published by the Panoramic Hill Association*

*Berkeley/Oakland, California*

## **Announcements:**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ELECTION**  
May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005  
4-7pm

**RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY**  
and receive a PHA sticker for your car!

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[PanoramicHill.org](http://PanoramicHill.org)

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ELECTION MAY 22<sup>nd</sup>!

Home of Tito and Margaret Maruza  
511 Dwight Place 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

### **Agenda**

Board Member nominations, Elections – Paul Salz  
Update on reverse 911 notification system – Dick White  
Road repairs update – Paul Abboud  
U.C. LRDP & Stadium update – Jerry Wachtel  
Second Access road open discussion

**Potluck – Please bring food to share**  
But you are welcome under any circumstances

## SPRING HOUSE TOUR A HUGE SUCCESS!

By Jeanne Allen

“Perfect weather, stupendous vistas, lovely gardens in full bloom and vintage houses in a great variety of architectural styles” were just some of the accolades used to describe the success of BAHA’s 30<sup>th</sup> annual Spring House Tour on May 1st. 1,500 paying tour-goers scrambled up and down the leafy paths on Panoramic Hill and patiently stood in long lines in order to gain entry to the 15 homes that were on view. This was a rare opportunity to see

examples of the residential architecture of Bernard Maybeck, Ernest Coxhead, John Hudson Thomas, Frank Lloyd Wright, William Wurster, Harwell Hamilton Harris and Walter Steilberg in a single afternoon. In addition to the homes, several gardens were also on the tour --including the one at 11 Mosswood Road where tea was served in front of a spectacular arched entryway designed by Julia Morgan. For many, the highlight of the day

was seeing the Weston Havens House designed by Harwell Hamilton Harris, a mid-century modern masterpiece that was recently bequeathed to the University of California College of Environmental Design. “It was one of BAHA’s best tours,” said Janice Thomas, co-Chair of the event. “Everyone—BAHA, the Panoramic Hill residents and the many volunteers, worked together to make the day an unprecedented success”.

## RAMBLES FROM THE PRESIDENT

**By Jerry Wachtel**

### A MOMENTOUS YEAR.

This year has been filled with dramatic events for our community, events both positive and negative. Many of them may mark turning points in the livability and lifestyle of Panoramic Hill, although it will be years before we know their true impact.

**HISTORIC DISTRICT RECOGNITION.** May 1, 2005 marked the culmination of many months of hard work by several Hill residents. Led by Janice Thomas, Fredrika Drotos, Michael Kelly, and others, the BAHA House Tour on this recent, brilliant Sunday was a true celebration of the rich history of early Panoramic Hill. If you were on the hill that day, you may have noticed the sparkling clean pathways and the superlative traffic control. This was all due to the hard work of our neighbors and friends. The Berkeley Path Wanderers Association (BPWA) led the clean-up effort with the participation of several Hill residents, and our very own Paul Abboud did a yeoman job of arranging, coordinating, and leading the traffic control volunteers. The tour commemorated the recognition by the State Office of Historic Preservation of lower Panoramic's status as a

State Historic District. Only some minor bureaucratic red tape stands between us and our official recognition on the National Register of Historic Places. You have heard and read in this newsletter and at recent PHA meetings of the significance of this achievement. It is a major accomplishment, the benefits of which will accrue, not only to those property owners within the boundaries of the designated district, but to all of us on the hill. Kudos to all involved. It demonstrates what can be achieved when a small group of concerned, caring folks come together to achieve a common goal. Volunteerism is alive and well on Panoramic Hill.

**THE UNIVERSITY'S LONG RANGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.** In contrast, this has been a year in which the University triggered a storm of protests from neighboring communities and activist organizations such as BLUE (Berkeleyans for a Livable University Environment) by issuing its LRDP. If the Plan is implemented as currently outlined in University documents, it may well mark the beginning of a significant deterioration in the quality of life for those communities in close proximity to the campus, particularly those of us on the southside. Indeed, the renovation/reconstruction

of Memorial Stadium will have perhaps the most direct short and long-term impact upon those of us on Panoramic Hill. Yet, despite occasional releases of carefully controlled information, the University has remained largely silent on plans for the Stadium and has refused all efforts to share their thoughts and plans with the affected communities at this early stage of planning – a time when cooperative change might still be possible. As this is written, we have learned that the City of Berkeley has, essentially, caved in to the University, by agreeing to settle its lawsuit (announced with great fanfare only 4 months ago) as part of some 20-year agreement that seems to have accomplished nothing. It appears to this writer that Mayor Bates' threats were totally without substance, and that the Council has acted like a good lap dog and gone along. It will be up to the affected communities to continue the good fight.

**ZONING AND MERGING.** This was a year in which the City of Oakland moved forward with a City wide rezoning effort, of which Panoramic Hill along with two other hillside communities was specifically addressed because of the City's recognition that future development on the hill

See President pg 3

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*"...we as a community must come to grips with this issue sooner rather than later."*



## President (continued from pg 2)

must be controlled given the fragile (and, in some cases, nonexistent) infrastructure, coupled with the high fire risk and constrained access/egress. Although the process has slowed as City staff attempts to gather more information about the issues, it has begun. Related to Oakland's rezoning initiative, the City recently held a public hearing before the Planning Commission about the creation of an ordinance that would force property owners of undeveloped, adjacent, substandard lots to merge them into one or more lots that meet minimum lot size requirements. The City's zoning and planning staffs believe that this is a necessary step toward their ability to control unbridled growth in communities such as ours. The City of Berkeley has had its own lot merger ordinance "on the books" for several years, and has, in the past few months,

begun to notify owners of affected properties of the City's intent to merge. Several lots that would be subject to merger under such ordinances exist on Panoramic Hill, in both jurisdictions.

### INFRASTRUCTURE.

Anyone walking or driving on Panoramic Way can't help but notice that the frequency with which the road is temporarily blocked by repair crews has increased in the past year. Failing sewers, broken guardrails, buckling pavement, and more – the rate of failure is increasing, and it is clear that we are living on borrowed time before some of these critical systems experience outright failure. As you can read in Paul Abboud's article in this newsletter, Berkeley's Chief Engineer in the Department of Public Works recently notified us that certain necessary road repairs cannot be undertaken without closing the road, something the City is

reluctant to do because "there is no secondary access at present."

Residents of Panoramic Hill have discussed and debated the need for, and desirability of, a secondary/emergency access road for many years. As our failing infrastructure makes apparent, and as Oakland's pending zoning changes make obvious, we as a community must come to grips with this issue sooner rather than later. Events of this past year make this clear. This coming year will be a time for action.

**A PANORAMIC HILL LONG RANGE PLAN.** As has been reported in this newsletter and at recent Association meetings, the PHA Board of Directors held an all-day retreat to begin the development of a Long Range Plan for the hill. As the events summarized above suggest, we as a community must take the lead for our own future – or we will be victims of outside pressures. We cannot rely on our City governments to act in our best interests, and

we can only operate from a position of strength in matters of zoning, development, and infrastructure if we have our own coherent, cohesive view of how such issues will affect us over the long term. The Board began with a difficult challenge but, by the end of the day, found it quite easy to identify and begin to prioritize the positive and negative factors of living on Panoramic Hill. In subsequent meetings, the Board has refined these lists, and we intend to use them as a means of framing the long-range plan. Much work remains to be done, and we will continue to keep you informed as we move forward.

This has indeed been a year of significant events that will affect Panoramic Hill well into the future. We have all been proud and excited to be a part of it. As always, we welcome your input, guidance, and participation.

## PHA BOARD TACKLES NEGATIVE FACTORS OF LIFE ON THE HILL

### By Dick White

At its November, 2004 retreat, your Board found encouraging agreement around the table on the positive aspects of life on Panoramic Hill. Now we're taking up the tougher task of dealing with the negative factors – threats to what some consider near-idyllic living conditions here. We have

two goals: seeking solutions to some of the problems, and, along the way, assembling a forward-looking planning document tentatively titled "A Long-Range Plan for Panoramic Hill". (If the University can do an LRDP – Long Range Development Plan -- why can't we do an LRP?)

To see where all the Board

members stood on the negative factors that are often cited, we used a technique employed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to find from a group of experts the most important environmental factors that threaten a particular species. To start our conversation, all the

See LRP pg 5

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*"A Long-Range Plan for Panoramic Hill". (If the University can do an LRDP – Long Range Development Plan -- why can't we do an LRP?)"*

## OAKLAND FIRE INSPECTIONS BEGIN IN JUNE

**By Eric Choate**

Oakland residents and property owners are reminded to clear their property of fire hazardous plant material before inspections start June 15<sup>th</sup>.

Properties not in compliance on June 15<sup>th</sup> will receive a notice to comply before re-inspections on July 19<sup>th</sup>. Failure to comply by July 19<sup>th</sup> will result in a \$200 re-inspection fee. Properties not in compliance after July 19<sup>th</sup> are subject to clearing by the City. Camille Rodgers, Oakland Fire Safety

Inspector, says “you’ll pay a lot more if I have to hire someone to clear your lot because I don’t have time to shop around for the best deal...”

This year, notices will be in triplicate form and include a diagram of your property with any problem areas identified. One copy will be left on your door, another mailed, and the third kept by the city for re-inspection purposes. Every property will receive a notice letting them know if they are in or out of compliance.

To mitigate erosion, Ms. Rodgers recommends

cutting hazardous plants to below 6” rather than pulling.

Ms. Rodgers asks residents to report any issues they believe are hazardous whether on private or city property and encourages us to “squeeze that assessment like an orange”, referring to the recently voted property tax for fire safety. Camille can be reached at 510-238-7392 or [croddgers@oaklandnet.com](mailto:croddgers@oaklandnet.com)

Residents can also take advantage of free pick-ups from Waste Management and a chipping program from East Bay Conservation Corp. For more information see [panoramichill.org](http://panoramichill.org)



*Did you know smoking in a hazardous fire area is prohibited by law? (UFC Section 1101)*

## Robbers Bind Students in Ransacking

**By Sonja Sharp**

*Contribution Writer (Daily Cal)*  
Friday, April 1, 2005

Robbers invaded the home of two UC Berkeley students near Clark Kerr Campus, tied them up with electrical wire and ransacked the residence late Sunday, police said yesterday.

Three robbers, covering their faces with jackets, invaded the victims’ residence on the Panoramic Way near Orchard Lane about 10:50 p.m., said Berkeley police Officer Steve Rego.

The victims were watching a DVD when a

woman they said they recognized from the area entered their home and begged to use the restroom, said one of the victims, who wished to remain anonymous for reasons of personal safety.

He could not say if the door was unlocked.

While the victims’ attention was on the woman, the victim said, two men claiming to have guns entered the home and told the victims to get down on the floor.

They searched the victims’ bodies for

personal property before tying them up with duct tape and electrical wire and pillaging the house, the victim said.

The robbers grabbed a number of personal items - including laptops, Playstations, alcohol, backpacks and cologne, the victim said.

“They took random stuff,” the victim said. “Whatever they thought looked expensive or they liked, they took.”

Before fleeing, one of the robbers helped himself to a drink of water from the kitchen, he said.

The robbers used the victims’ backpacks to carry stolen items and speeded away towards Memorial Stadium in a gray Nissan Altima.

Several minutes after the robbery, the victims freed themselves from the duct tape and called 911. Officers made several traffic stops in the area but were not able to find the robbers, Rego said.

See the complete article at:

<http://www.dailycal.org/particle.php?id=18171>

## LACK OF SECONDARY ACCESS IMPEDES INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

### By Paul Abboud

Over the past several months, multiple requests have been made by PHA Board Members Paul Abboud and Cathy Orozco via correspondence and in person to the Berkeley Department of Public Works regarding the need for improvements to the roadway in the 200 block of Panoramic Way, commonly known as the third hairpin. The need for repairing the uneven pavement, rotted guardrail posts and substandard guardrail system along this part of the street, as well as the uneven road surface adjacent to 140

Panoramic Way were acknowledged by Jeffrey Egeberg, Manager of Engineering for the Berkeley Department of Public Works.

In a letter to the PHA Board of Directors dated March 10, 2005, Mr. Egeberg wrote "While we understand and sympathize with you... the City's current budget deficit situation precludes us from planning improvements at this time." In defending the lack of a plan for improvements, he cited the limited street access for the neighborhood. "Any significant work in the public-right-of-way would block the only access to

upper portions of the hill, since there is no secondary access at present."

In his letter, Mr Egeberg noted that the City of Berkeley has been working with the City of Oakland on these "development issues." He was "hopeful that outcomes will be attained in the foreseeable future to allow us to address these infrastructure needs."

He did promise that 2 damaged guardrail posts along the 200 block of Panoramic Way, and the uneven road surface adjacent to 140 Panoramic Way would be repaired by May 30, 2005.

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*"...the City's current budget deficit situation precludes us from planning improvements at this time."*

## LRP (continued from pg 3)

Board members rated each of 18 negative factors that we had identified. Each gave 100 points to the one that they considered the most serious, and then assigned lower scores to the rest of the factors in proportion to their perceived severity.

When the results were tallied, at the top of the list were:

development (91), lack of a second road (84), University changes (79), and the bad conditions of the existing roads (71) and the sewers (68). The fact that the Hill lies in two cities with different policies was also highly rated (69).

The correlation of opinions on the ratings of these factors was good.

There are obvious relations among some of these factors. For example, the threat of development – especially the filling of now-vacant lots at the top of the Hill with dense housing -- is probably related to other rated factors. Wouldn't having a second road trigger vacant lot development? Wouldn't being able to connect Oakland residences to the Berkeley sewer system also encourage such development? And what about fixing the existing roads? Some of these

questions may be hard to answer, since they'll be matters of perception, but others may be answerable, such as how many buildings *could* be built on the presently vacant lots if today's building codes and ordinances continued in force.

We will seek answers to many of these questions from City officials in Berkeley and Oakland. We also intend to explore the extent to which the development that may occur can be controlled to leave trails, parks and publicly accessible scenic views.

One category of factors – the negative effects of University changes – can pretty much be separated from the others. We intend to continue working on it along with the others mentioned.

In the coming year, the Board hopes to focus on these problems and their possible solutions, and draw up a feasible long-range plan for the Hill.

## HOUSE ON THE HILL: THE FELDMAN HOUSE



Photo by Daniella Thompson

**By Jeanne Allen**

### VITAL STATISTICS

Address: 13 Mosswood Rd

Year Designed: 1939

Year Built: 1974

Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright

Wright's hexagonal, brick and redwood Usonian arrived on lower Panoramic Hill, late — 1972, and with a past. In the 1930's Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Bell approached Mr. Wright and asked him to design a modest house for them in the Hollywood Hills. The house Wright drew was an 800 square foot Usonian style that employed the same modular hexagonal design he used in 1936 for the Hannah House at Stanford. "The Bell House" was to be built from native materials and sited off Mulholland Drive with a commanding view of Los Angeles.

Mr. Wright's decision to put the house in the hexagon form eliminated almost all of the corners, and in

combination with expansive windows, allowed the living space to flow out onto the deck, making the interior appear much larger than its square footage implied. Unfortunately for the Bells, the cost of constructing a hexagonal house turned out to be wildly expensive. They were forced to abandon the project and Wright and Taliesin retained the plans.

In 1974, after Mr. Wright's death, Joe and Hilary Feldman went to Taliesin West in the hope that Olgivanna Wright would allow them to build a Wright designed house. After much deliberation, Mrs. Wright, Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer--currently Head of the Frank Lloyd Archives and Kamal Amin, a senior architect and structural engineer who had worked under Wright for 23 years, chose the unbuilt Bell House for the Feldmans. The house was sited on Panoramic Hill in Berkeley. Kamal Amin was assigned to oversee the project, which included completing the structural engineering plans for the house.

The construction took two years and followed the original 1938 plans as closely as the more modern building and seismic codes would permit. The most significant change was in

See HOUSE pg 7

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*"...Wright's decision to put the house in the hexagon form eliminated almost all of the corners..."*



Photo by Daniella Thompson

The hexagonal design is evident throughout the house.

## HOUSE (continued from pg 6)

repositioning the house plans to accommodate the western view and in significantly upgrading the seismic engineering. The house was built with board and batten construction from California clear heart redwood and 30,000 elongated bricks that were custom made to accommodate the design.

Anyone who attended the recent BAHA Panoramic hill Spring Tour would have to agree that the house is well sited. Much like it's original position in Los Angeles, hills and trees--redwoods, native

oaks and towering pines--also surround the Feldman House. From the veranda, one has a 200-degree view of the Bay Area that sweeps east from Oakland, to San Francisco, the Bay Bridge, Alcatraz and Angel Islands, the Golden Gate Bridge, Sausalito, Marin County to the Richmond Bridge in the west.

According to the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, The Feldman House is considered "...an important step in Wright's development of the Usonian house, following its introduction with the Jacobs I

House in 1936." It vividly incorporates Mr. Wright's aesthetics—low, sheltering rooflines, the prominence of the central fireplace and "the destruction of the box" in favor of an open floor plan.

Originally, The Feldman House was furnished with Wright-designed interiors including beds, tables, carpets and drapes. In 1978, these were donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and are now part of their permanent collection.

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*"...clear heart redwood and 30,000 elongated bricks that were custom made to accommodate the design."*

## ANNUAL BOARDMEMBER ELECTION

**By Jerry Wachtel**

The Annual Meeting of the Panoramic Hill Association is the time when we elect officers to the Board of Directors for the following year. Typically a nominating committee, Chaired by the Past-President, presents a slate of officers for consideration by the Members. This year, however, that was not necessary, because all nine of the current Board

members have agreed to run for office again. Therefore, the "official slate" of candidates will be the same folks whose names appear on the last page of this newsletter. This is not to suggest that you, or someone you know, should not seek office in this esteemed organization. During the Annual Meeting, any member in good standing of PHA may place his or her name, or the name

of any other member, into nomination for a seat on the Board. Should that occur, a formal balloting process will be held. Keep in mind, however, that there are many ways in which anyone can help the Association through volunteering to work on specific issues or serve on special committees. We encourage, indeed implore, those of you reading this to get involved.

## CLASSIFIEDS

**Housing Wanted:** Long time Panoramic Hill resident/renter, Dan Ruskin and his black and white Border Collie Jinx, hoping to stay on The Hill. Quiet, easy going, references. 510/644-9502 or [jinxdog@lmi.net](mailto:jinxdog@lmi.net)

**Real Estate For Sale:**  
Vacant Lot in 600 block of Panoramic, asking \$95,000  
[www.berkeleyproperties.com](http://www.berkeleyproperties.com)

3367 Dwight Way, 4 buildings on 2/3 acre, asking \$1,600,000  
[www.prurealty.com](http://www.prurealty.com)

**Seeking Donations:** Fellow Hill resident Eric Deam (19 Orchard Ln) is running a Marathon to raise funds for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and is asking for your support. 510-841-4825 or <http://www.active.com/donate/tntgsf/EDeam>

## Panoramic Hill Association

P.O. Box 5428  
Berkeley, CA 94705

E-MAIL:  
info@PanoramicHill.org

### *About Our Organization...*

The Panoramic Hill Association is a non-profit mutual benefit association dedicated to serving its members and community. The association strives to ensure the safety and preserve the character of the neighborhood by working with local officials throughout the year.

General meetings are held three times a year, with board members elected at the annual meeting in April.

Membership is a modest \$15 per household per year. Membership is not required to attend meetings.

**We're on the Web!**

See us at:

**[www.PanoramicHill.org](http://www.PanoramicHill.org)**

## Boardmembers

Jerry Wachtel	President	<a href="mailto:JerryWachtel@PanoramicHill.org">JerryWachtel@PanoramicHill.org</a>
Paul Abboud	Vice President (Oakland)	<a href="mailto:PaulAbboud@PanoramicHill.org">PaulAbboud@PanoramicHill.org</a>
Jeanne Allen	Vice President (Berkeley)	<a href="mailto:JeanneAllen@PanoramicHill.org">JeanneAllen@PanoramicHill.org</a>
Marcos Gandara	Vice President (UC)	<a href="mailto:MarcosGandara@PanoramicHill.org">MarcosGandara@PanoramicHill.org</a>
Cathy Orozco	Secretary	<a href="mailto:CathyOrozco@PanoramiHill.org">CathyOrozco@PanoramiHill.org</a>
Eric Choate	Co-Treasurer, Webmaster, Newsletter Editor	<a href="mailto:EricChoate@PanoramicHill.org">EricChoate@PanoramicHill.org</a>
Paul Salz	Co-Treasurer	<a href="mailto:PaulSalz@PanoramicHill.org">PaulSalz@PanoramicHill.org</a>
Maarten Kalway	CNA Liaison	<a href="mailto:MaartenKalway@PanoramicHill.org">MaartenKalway@PanoramicHill.org</a>
Dick White	Parliamentarian	<a href="mailto:DickWhite@PanoramicHill.org">DickWhite@PanoramicHill.org</a>

### PHA Membership Enrollment/Renewal Form Year 2005

Mail to:  
PHA Treasurer  
PO Box 5428  
Berkeley, CA 94704

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewing Member \_\_\_\_\_

Dues for the PHA are a modest \$15 per household per year. Membership base representing the majority of the Hill allows us to be effective in dealing with the various jurisdictions in matters concerning Hill residents.

## Calendar

Event	Date/Time	Location
Annual General Meeting & Election Agenda:	Sunday May 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2005 4:00pm – 7:00pm	Home of Tito and Margaret Maruza 511 Dwight Place
Board Member nominations, Elections – Paul Salz Update on reverse 911 notification system – Dick White Road repairs update – Paul Abboud U.C. LRDP & Stadium update – Jerry Wachtel Second Access road open discussion		