



OMVNA Newsletter

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NEWS

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February 22: OMVNA General Meeting

Presentation by Classic Communities

The first OMVNA General Meeting will be held on Monday, February 22 at 7:00 pm in the City Council Chambers, 500 Castro Street.

A presentation will be given by Scott Ward of Classic Communities on the planned development of a 4-acre parcel immediately adjacent to the Minton's parcel between Evelyn and Villa.

After the presentation, amendments to the bylaws will be discussed and voted on. The amendments cover issues related to elections as follows:

Anyone may be nominated for a position on the Steering Committee and all names will be put on the ballot. (Nominations may still be made from the floor at the time of voting and uncontested elections will be approved by voice vote.)

In an effort to make voting more convenient, voters may drop off their ballot at any time during polling hours.

The requirement that the election be held in the Fall will be changed to elections must be held prior to the end of the calendar year.

Please contact chair@www.omvna.org with bylaws for consideration.

The OMVNA Newsletter is distributed by volunteers to 2500 residences and 200 downtown businesses. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the OMVNA Steering Committee.

Editor: Deb Keller

E-mail: editor@omvna.org

Minton's Site Redevelopment

The Approval Process

by Alex Lew

The proposed Prometheus project at 455 West Evelyn Street was approved by the City's Development Review Committee (DRC) on January 8th, and comes before the Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) on February 10 at 7 pm in City Hall. The official agenda for the public hearing is released to the public at least 10 days in advance, so check the City's website beforehand.



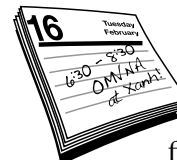
The EPC is a seven-person appointed commission that makes written recommendations to the City Council to approve, modify, or disapprove the project. If the EPC recommends forwarding the project to the City Council, it could be presented to the Council as soon as March. The City Council will then vote to approve, modify, or disapprove the project. Modifications, if any, can be referred back to the EPC for further review.

The project's development standards are governed by the 1994 Evelyn Avenue Corridor Precise Plan. However, the developer seeks a high-density project instead of the designated medium-density residential, so a General Plan Amendment is required in addition to the typical development project approvals.

(Continued on page 2)

Tuesday, February 16 OMVNA Mixer at Xanh

by Hugh Donagher, III



Mark your calendar for Tuesday, February 16, from 6:30 to 8:30 for the first of our 2010 OMVNA

mixers at one of the hottest drinking and dining destinations: XANH Restaurant at 110 Castro Street. Enjoy free nibbles while mingling with your neighbors.

Xanh has a full bar with a nice wine list and creative cocktails. If you haven't yet dined here, come for the mixer and stay for dinner.

RESTAURANT REVIEW

XANH

A Family Affair with Fusion Flair

by Hugh Donagher, III

Xanh has been a success story from the day the doors opened at their current location two years ago. The name is pronounced almost like the English word *sun* and depending on context or intonation can mean green, blue or fresh in Vietnamese.

The restaurant is truly a family affair, with sisters Amanda and Jade working the front of the house. The father helps and "tries to stay out of trouble." The mother is the chef and runs the kitchen.

A graduate of the Culinary Institute in San Francisco, she grew up in Da Nang province, where she would go to the local markets with her grandmother. They would shop for the family's needs and sample the dishes offered by the various street vendors.



(Continued on page 11)

Meet *the* Mayor



by Deb Keller

Our new mayor, Ronit Bryant, began her climb to power as Newsletter Editor of OMVNA. Might I too aspire to be Mayor someday? To find out, I walked down the block to Ronit's.

I found out that Council members are compensated \$6000 a year, and Ronit estimated that she spent on average about 30 hours a week as Councilperson. Which comes out to about \$4/hour.

As Mayor she now earns a whopping \$7200. Outgoing Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga estimated that she spent 40 hours a week as Mayor, so that would mean that Ronit's pay is *declining* to \$3.60/hour with her promotion. (Maybe I'll rethink my mayoral aspirations.)

A resident of Old Mountain View for the past 20 years, Ronit lives in the yellowest house in the neighborhood, where she and Cliff raised their three children, now all flown from the nest. Cliff has painted scenes on the doors that represent the dreams and fantasies of the five of them.

Meet the Man behind the Mayor

Husband Cliff is that rare species: a California and Bay Area native. However, Cliff spent 9 years in the UK, Europe and Israel to diversify his habitat experience.

Cliff has worked in the computer industry for 30 years, and enjoys searching used bookstores for that odd volume no one needs as well as going to the Opera House for a performance given by budding young singers.

Meet the Dog behind the Man

So we wondered. Which came first? Obama's Portuguese water dog or Diego, Ronit and Cliff's Portuguese water dog?

We put the questions to Cliff: "Are you merely Obama dog copycats?" Cliff vehemently denies this is the case and claimed they had been considering this breed for years, and in fact got their dog before the Obamas.

As a resident of Old Mountain View, what's Ronit's vision for the neighborhood? "Old Mountain View has a small-town feel to it, and I'd like to see that retained. It's the kind of neighborhood where people stop to chat and neighbors get together for a barbeque in the parks.

I asked Ronit about two developments now in the works in Old Mountain View.

Where does Ronit stand on the upcoming March vote on the Prometheus

Meet Ronit

You can meet with Ronit at **The Bean Scene Café, 500 Castro Street**, every Thursday from 9 – 10 am. And you can practice your Portuguese, Italian, German, French and Hebrew, with our multilingual mayor. If the Bean Scene doesn't work for you, what are other avenues? "The best way is email," said Ronit. ronit.bryant@mountainview.gov

development? "When the project comes to Council we'll see what it looks like. We'll be looking at questions like, does it fit into the neighborhood? And does it have a pedestrian orientation?"

What does she think of the ROEM affordable housing complex? "We started with a lot of discussion and public input, even including field trips to view different projects. Then we had more discussion and considerable work with the neighbors who were initially very concerned. In December, we had a study session about design options for the project, and the neighbors who came to the meeting were very pleased, feeling that their concerns had been addressed and that the project was going to enhance the neighborhood and our downtown.

"This a great example of the type of win-win solution I look forward to for all developments in Mountain View: a collaborative effort by Council, staff, neighbors, and the developer to come up with a really good solution."

Minton's Redevelopment

(Continued from front page)

The City recently released a mitigated negative declaration for the project (an Environmental Impact Report, or EIR, is not required.)

In addition to the Precise Plan, the City's 1992 General Plan provides long-range and flexible policy for development without providing specific zoning standards. Policy #44 calls for making land use decisions that support transportation alternatives to the automobile. Action #44A calls for encouraging mixed-use projects and the City's highest density residential projects along major transit lines and around stations.

At the State level, Assembly Bill AB32 and Senate Bill SB375 call for the California Air Resources Board to develop regulations and market mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2020, a 25% reduction. The impact of the bills will affect transportation and buildings, two of the major contributors to greenhouse gases. Having high-density housing near transit lines that serve jobs is thus a key component in reducing auto emissions.

If you want to learn more about the proposed project, the developer's website is www.455westevelyn.com. In ad-

dition, there is an architectural model at the Planning and Building Department.

Whether you are in favor or against the proposed project, I encourage you to get involved with OMVNA and attend the public hearings. While serving on the Palo Alto Architectural Review Board, I have seen several projects become better designed because of active citizen engagement.

Alex Lew is the current chairman of the Palo Alto Architectural Review Board and a resident of Old Mountain View for the past 7 years.

Letter from the Chair

by Laura Lewis



We are lucky to live in Old Mountain View. It is a place where each of us, despite our differences, our busy lives, and the changing world around us, belong. As I look to the coming year I am excited about the opportunity to build on this foundation and to find new ways to make our community even stronger.

One thing is clear. We live in a dynamic urban center that is evolving on a daily basis. The 2010 Steering Committee is dedicated to providing you with information on critical issues in a manner that is unbiased,

timely and useful. But the Steering Committee cannot replace your active voices in our city's government. With several City Council elections slated for the end of this

year it is more important than ever to learn more about the city that you call home. Whether it's attending a City Council meeting or simply a "Chat with the Mayor" I encourage everyone to find a way to get involved.

Our Neighborhood Association likewise is in need of helping hands. The Steering Committee is filled with individuals with new ideas and the energy to execute, but we are only eight people out of a community of 7,000. We welcome your viewpoints. We want to hear your ideas and need your help to make them a reality.

So let's get to work. Start by simply shaking the hand of a neighbor you have not yet met. Pick up the empty cup lying on the street. Or perhaps do even more. Join CERT, organize block parties, or participate on an OMVNA subcommittee. One thing is for sure. Each of you who decides that this community can and will be the best it can be will be an inspiration, a shining light. In one year from now, when we look back at the decisions we made and the new direction we took, we will be proud. We will be proud of ourselves and proud to belong to this wonderful community.

ROEM Development

51 Apartments Planned at Evelyn & Franklin

by Deb Keller

*Another development
in the planning process
is the project by
Santa Clara-based
ROEM Corporation.*

The site is currently a City-owned Caltrain overflow parking lot, and will be leased by ROEM, who will also design, maintain, and manage the complex.

This has been a contentious development, not so much because of the density, but rather because it's affordable housing, which means that it's aimed for families with an annual income less than \$64,000 for a family of four.

Typically subsidized housing gives preference to either people who have lived in Mountain View for at least 6 months, or people working in Mountain View for at least 1 year.

According to the City website, there are 10 other complexes that are City-subsidized or that have received assistance from Federal subsidy programs. For this project, the City is kicking in \$7 million.

The City in this case went through great pains to work with the neighborhood, including eight mediators working with the surrounding neighbors, and preliminary design before going into the DRC and EPC processes.

Meetings with opportunity for public comments are tentatively scheduled for February. Final Council vote on the project is scheduled for May 2010.

CALENDAR OMVNA

February 10, 7 p.m.

Council Chambers, 500 Castro Street

EPC meeting on Prometheus development

Open for 3-minute public comment at meeting. Email EPC if you cannot make the meeting but have an opinion.

(See Who Ya Gonna Call on page 9)

February 16, 6:30-8:30

OMVNA mixer at Xanh, 110 Castro

Don't miss this opportunity for meet your neighbors at the one of the hottest downtown destinations

February 22, 7 p.m. Council Chambers

OMVNA General Meeting

500 Castro Street

Mid-February

City Hall

Open House for General Plan 2030

Watch for time to be announced

An opportunity for the community to come and see what's being planned in the new General Plan.

February 8

Mountain View Chamber of Commerce

580 Castro Street, 7:30 p.m.

OMVNA Steering Committee Meeting

All Old Mountain View residents welcome. Please send agenda items to Chair@www.OMVNA.org

February

City Hall

DRC Meeting on ROEM project

Watch City website for date and time

Steering Committee Meeting Highlights

To see complete minutes for the January 7 meeting of the OMVNA Steering Committee, please go to www.OMVNA.org.

Letter from the Editor

My Thanks to Contributors!

I have to say that I was blown away by the offers to contribute an article. A BIG THANKS to this issue's contributors:

- Aaron Grossman
- Alex Lew
- Amerlin Wu
- Anthony Chang
- Hugh Donagher
- Laura Lewis
- Max Hauser

Let's keep it rolling! I'm looking for contributors for our next issue, with copy due on March 1. For wordcount, figure about 250-400 words (roughly 1-2 columns), but more or less copy is welcome.

All viewpoints are welcome.

Please contact me directly at editor@omvna.org and we can brainstorm ideas.

I'll also put a number of ideas on the website at www.OMVNA.org.

Check Out the Web

We've put all of the articles in the newsletter on www.OMVNA.org. Your comments are welcome! (as long as they're civil). Thanks to Shelly King for her continued work on the website.

Thanks to Delivery Network

There's other ways to assist without writing, and we're still looking for a Delivery Coordinator as well as folks who are willing to do a delivery route. Thanks to Julie Lovins who has managed this function for over 15 years, and to all of our distributors, a big thanks!



Thanks to our Graphic Artist

Noticed anything different about this issue? It's due to Melanie Kaye. Many thanks for the layout of the print version.

Full Disclosure

Finally, in the interest of full disclosure, I felt I should respond to an inquiry from Mike on Sierra posted on OMVNA talk during the contentious neighborhood elections.

Here's Mike's post:

I would like to know if any of the candidates are cat owners. I understand they are lobbying to turn the Bush-Mercy Park into an off-leash cat park and have already drafted a letter to city council touting full OMVNA support for rezoning.

Here are my questions for the candidates:

1. Do you own a cat? *Yes.*
He looks very rodent-like.
You may have seen him.
2. If so, how many? *One.*
3. Short-hair or long-hair? (I have allergies). *Short.*
4. Do you carry a picture of your cat with you? *God no.*
5. Has cat ownership ever caused you to miss an OMVNA meeting? *No.*
6. Will you cooperate with dog-owners on the Steering Committee? *Depends.*



Mike, basically I think your fears are misplaced and I think you are being childish and churlish.

From what I see from my vantage point on Loreto, the real threat is the little dogs, which are proliferating at an alarming rate.



Deb Keller
OMVNA
Newsletter Editor



455 WEST EVELYN

A proposal to re-develop the Minton's Lumber property into 213 pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented, "green" apartments.



www.455WestEvelyn.com

 PROMETHEUS



CERT won't save your bacon

by Aaron Grossman, OMVNA CERT chair

Recent earthquakes have reminded people that a big one is likely here as well. OMVNA CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), our own volunteer group, will help out when (not if) that happens. Just be aware of how limited that help will be — OMVNA CERT won't save your bacon!

Our first job is to get you to prepare before a disaster actually occurs and set aside food, water, and key supplies for your family. When a disaster happens and the phones go out and the police and fire departments are completely overwhelmed, our 50 volunteers will provide basic local communication and coordination via our walkie-talkie network and ham radio link to the Mountain View Office of Emergency Services.

We do not have the means to stockpile food, water, personal medicines, and other key supplies that you may need — that is up to you.

You can also join OMVNA CERT. It is fun, easy, and a great way to meet your neighbors. Most volunteers become a Local Coordinator (LC). They get a backpack disaster kit worth \$100 to use as long as they volunteer with us. The kit includes an LED waterproof flashlight, FRS/GMRS 2-way radio, hardhat, a med kit, and many other disaster materials.

During an emergency, LCs only provide assistance they are trained and qualified to give. While we definitely appreciate and welcome medical and other disaster-related skills in an LC, no special training is required, only good common sense.

Outside of disasters, being a CERT LC is a minimal time commitment. Our monthly radio check takes only a few minutes each first Wednesday at 8 pm sharp. The annual meeting early in the year is two hours long and attendance is requested, not mandatory. The same holds for optional drills during the year.

Contact me by email or cell #408 202-2802 for more info.



Water is *The Most* important item!

- Store 1 gallon/person/day.
- Water filters or purification tablets are useful.
- Your hot water heater has useful water, as do toilet tanks.

Food

- Store at least 3 meals/person/day for three days (72 hours).
- Canned, dry, powdered, or dehydrated foods (do not need refrigeration).
- High energy foods are peanut butter, jelly, nuts, and energy bars.
- Camping stoves and portable equipment are very useful but never use indoors.
- Disposable items save water.
- Don't forget your pets.

Toilet & hygiene

- No flush if no running water! Don't waste good water on this.
- Use trash bags or a camping portable toilet.
- Toilet paper & towels, hand disinfectant, personal hygiene products.

Warm Clothing & Bedding

- Be prepared for any season.
- Bedding or sleeping bags keep you warm at night if no gas or electricity.

Medication & First Aid

- First Aid kit, bandages, book.
- Any important medications
- If refrigeration needed, get a battery operated camping cooler for a car.
- Infant care, pet care, etc.

Tools/Equipment

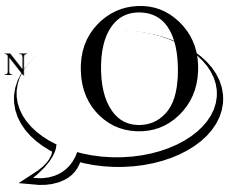
- Flashlight, portable radio.
- Broom, gloves, hammer, etc.
- Duck tape, rope, plastic sheeting.

Car or Office Kit:

- Water, energy bars.
- First aid kit, space blanket, whistle, money.
- Walking shoes, rain poncho/jacket, gloves.
- Flashlight, duck tape, tools, etc.

Documents

- Keep copies in a place safe from fire and water damage.
- Family, financial, legal, or key household information—you might be able to store these on a USB key.



In Support of Sustainable Development

by Anthony Chang

The proposed Minton's development represents a great opportunity for interested Old Mountain View (OMV) residents to engage in determining what Old Mountain View will look and feel like for many years to come. Many opinions have already been expressed on the OMOVNAtalk listserv. To express your opinion to the City of Mountain View, please visit <http://www.mountainview2030.com>.

Here is my personal story about why I support high-density development near the downtown Mountain View train station and why I think it will add to our neighborhood:

My wife and I moved to downtown Mountain View about 4 years ago specifically to live in a vibrant, walkable neighborhood. We love to walk to restaurants and cafes, parks, the library or bank, and retail shops. And with great access to public transit, I hop on Caltrain to work everyday. Then after renting in OMV for 2 years, we bought a townhouse at Bryant and California in what planners call a high-density complex (almost 40 units per acre), but we call it home. It has great features: doors and stoops that face the street and a courtyard that is perfect for impromptu playdates for our 2-year-old daughter and her neighborhood friends. I find it an absolutely wonderful place to live and welcome more similar developments like the Minton's development in OMV.

Some people have expressed concerns about the proposed Minton's development, and I believe many of these (such as parking) can be addressed without radically changing the basic nature of the development. I support the proposed new homes because I believe they will add to the character of the neighborhood, promote economic (and socio-economic) diversity in our communities, reduce greenhouse gas pollution and enhance our general quality of life. When we

walk instead of drive to the places we want to go, my wife and I are making healthy choices. This is a unique opportunity to provide homes for people across the street from great public transit (Caltrain, light rail and buses) and blocks from a vibrant downtown.

In addition, I believe the following features of the proposed development make sense:

- Neighborhood friendly design with porches or stoops that help promote community
- Adjustment to neighborhood feel with two-story buildings on Villa (where it will complement single family houses across the street) and four-story buildings facing Evelyn and the train station (facing the Caltrain parking lot)
- Good land use with an underground garage (which has seemed to work really well in many other apartment, condo and townhouse complexes in downtown, including the one I live in)
- Bicycle parking spaces
- Green building features

As a comparison point, the Crossings near the San Antonio train station serves as a good example of a close-knit development. Single-family homes, townhomes and a large condo

complex provide a nice mix of housing near transit choices. Several friends of mine who have lived at the Crossings for years tell me they really enjoy living in the neighborhood and don't find parking a problem. If you consider the proposed Minton's development in combination with the rest of the surrounding area (nearby townhouses and single family homes), the area near the downtown MV train station taken as a whole seems to closely mirror this successful mix of housing.

Just like many OMV residents, I care deeply about the character of this wonderful neighborhood we share. And I believe the proposed Minton's development can be a great addition to our neighborhood — just like developments like Park Place and the complex that I live in have done previously. Development that encourages walking, biking and riding transit and provides homes for families that will get to enjoy and become part of our vibrant, walkable community — sounds great to me.

If you are interested in joining a group of Mountain View residents interested in advocating on behalf of vibrant, walkable neighborhoods in Mountain View, please consider getting involved with the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning by contacting me at anthony.chang@gmail.com.



OPINION *In Pursuit of* GREEN

by Max Hauser

Many people welcome the goal of less car dependence. Building housing near efficient mass transit logically supports that. Equally logically, astute neighborhoods investigate, not simply embrace, developer proposals that play to that appeal, as they increasingly do.

Prometheus Revisited

Prometheus Real Estate Group (PREG) is not new to our neighborhood. Some neighbors closely followed PREG's 2006 planning of the "Wild Orchid" complex at Dana and Calderon, not far from the Minton's site at 455 W. Evelyn Ave. That project saw little neighborhood opposition at the time, though the final design exacerbated Calderon traffic backups.

Today, four multi-unit housing developments are pending near the Evelyn transit hub. As with the 2006 project and others, few people actually oppose redeveloping the Minton's site. The problem is the details.

Ever since some neighbors wrote to the Development Review Committee (DRC) last Summer, many have questioned PREG's proposed radical change to 2.44 times the maximum apartment density that the Evelyn Precise Plan allows on the site.

The Precise Plan is a long-term development vision, itself promoting dense housing near transit, but also harmony with the existing neighborhood. Another developer, who works within the Precise Plan, reported offering to buy and develop the property (a prospect far less controversial), but reported that the offer was refused.

Traffic, parking spillover, impact on schools, and the troubling precedent of a gross Precise-Plan departure concern neighbors who've reviewed PREG's proposal. Hence the unusual controversy.

Shades of Green

PREG for its part deploys marketing catch phrases like "green" and "transit-oriented," appealing but vague. Does "green" mean solar electricity or hot water, ultraefficient LED lighting? Not according to PREG's complete "green" features list. I found essentially typical modern local construction methods and amenities, low-flow toilets, and drought-tolerant plants. Many modern homes are similarly "green."

"Transit-oriented" housing has many possible interpretations. Marketers exploit that vagueness, rather than explain the local statutory definition: entrance within 2000-foot walk of a Light Rail and/or Caltrain station. Much current Old Mountain View housing therefore is automatically "transit-oriented."

How Many Use Mass Transit?

Individual residents may commute by mass transit, but the impact of this access on any significant population, as in apartment developments, averages to a consistent 9% drop in car trips compared to housing without mass transit.

From considerable data, our county's Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines require city Traffic Engineers to use that number in estimating traffic and parking at new developments meeting the definition. City staff arranged to rigorously measure this effect at an existing Mountain View development that meets the criterion, and recorded almost exactly 9%.

Though that number is well known to experts, well supported, and mandatory in 455-Evelyn planning, PREG's current marketing website omits to mention it, instead hinting at heavy train use and excess parking capacity. (Palo Alto, where four neighborhoods recently confronted surprise development side effects, knows all about such utopian claims.) Fortunate locals who *can* commute by rail also sometimes demonstrate a sincere, confident overestimation of how many neighbors share the option.

Green Marketing

Some people accept PREG's marketing claims at face value, or worse. One "green" group organizer called for an email campaign to City Hall, defending the proposal's "green features" (see above) and "affordable housing" (not at issue). The writer claimed critics want to develop the site like the area's "status quo," "a handful of single family homes." Compare critics' actual support of the Precise Plan's apartments; compare the same neighborhood's acceptance of PREG's 2006 proposal. The writer ignored actual criticism, history, and geography ("status quo" actually includes hundreds of apartments and condos). The real controversy, density, wasn't mentioned. Developers exploit such credulities in pursuing a different kind of "green."

Less Traffic?

In January, the curious environmental impact study appeared, PREG-funded. It predicts *lower* car traffic after redevelopment, assuming 1717 current daily trips at 455 Evelyn. That's current traffic from a *theoretical* "Building Material & Lumber Store" and the other modest tenants, not the actual trickle I've seen for years at Minton's (hard to mistake for Home Depot). The authors knew about that. If they ever saw the site of their study. Yet for some reason they substituted artificial traffic data, even though the study sent people out counting cars in 23 other locations.

Parking

The study also concluded "When the proposed project is 100% occupied, the expected garage usage is approximately 97.7%." That garage's 313 spaces include 46 guest (3 handicapped) and 267 resident spaces (6 handicapped, 2 car-sharing, 12 tandem). Unpredicted parking spillover from recent developments plagues neighboring Palo Alto, despite similar planning procedures. With other development pending, guest fluctuations, etc., that 97.7% garage occupancy is scant assurance that this particular development will be self-sufficient.

Editor's note: Add a comment for any article, at www.OMVNA.org. No anonymous posts, and civility required.

Does it *Pay* to Pay Attention?

by Deb Keller

Ever get one of those colored postcards from the City saying that there's some kind of meeting open for public comment? Typically I read them, note that the meeting is at an inconvenient time for me, and throw them in the trash.

How do I know what to go to? Is it even worth my time?

To answer the first question I met with Randy Tsuda, Community Development Director. Randy walked me through the steps of the development cycle.

The Players

First, let me introduce you to the players.

Development Review Committee (DRC) The DRC is made up of a project manager from the City and architects, who are paid consultants. The DRC generally holds 1-3 meetings for a project, and these look at features of the site and the plans. I went to one of these and found it pretty dull. They go over a lot of minutia. But if there's a development going up next to you, it's definitely worth going to, because these meetings determine how it's going to look.

Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) The EPC is made up of seven unpaid volunteers who are appointed by City Council for 4-year terms. Since the EPC deals with the more contentious issues, these meetings can be more lively.

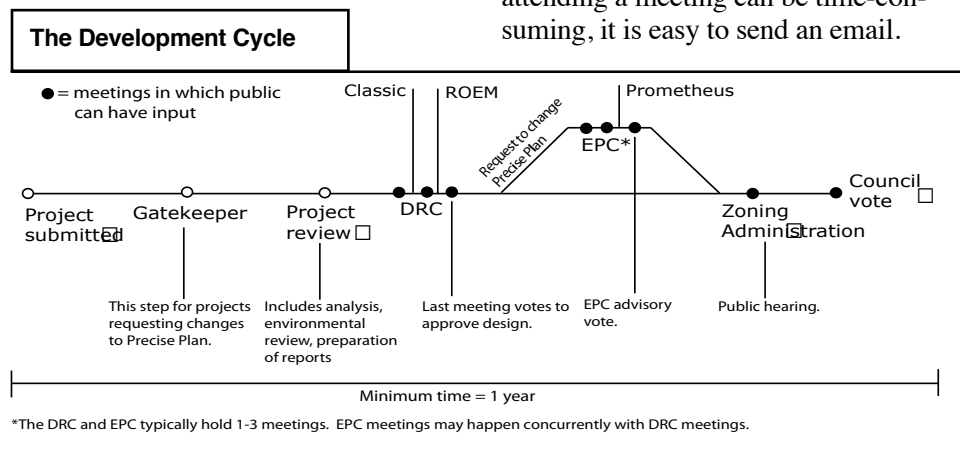
The EPC's vote is advisory only; Council does not necessarily need to follow their guidance. However, I think it's fair to say that this is one of the key inputs for Council.

City Council The Deciders. Council ultimately gives the thumbs up or thumbs down on a development project. Connecting with the seven Council members is naturally one of the more important things you can do.

Zoning Administrator (ZA) The ZA makes recommendations for large development projects, and holds a public hearing.

The Process

To make this simpler, I'll just consider three substantial projects that will impact Old Mountain View — by developers Classic Communities, Prometheus, and ROEM--and look at where they are in the process today. The process is illustrated below.



Two steps differ for the Prometheus project. The developer is asking for the Precise Plan to be changed. When a change is requested, there's a Gatekeeper step where the city decides whether the plan has merit and if City staff should be allocated or not. The second step that's added is that the EPC steps in.

A question I've heard in the case of the Prometheus development at 455 W. Evelyn is that it seems like the horse is before the cart. The project has been through four DRC meetings, futzing around about the porches, but the contentious issue of density won't be addressed until the EPC and Council votes at the end of what's typically a one-year process. Shouldn't the density issue be handled first?

In fact a developer can do that, but it's their decision. "Developers can turn in any project they want," noted Randy,

"and it's really up to them as to whether they go through the process to change the Precise Plan first."

Is it Worth Getting Involved?

I've heard opinions about local development ranging from cynicism to confidence that our City government is watching out for us.

The City does encourage neighborhood input. At the EPC, DRC, and Council meetings, public comment is allowed in a 3-minute statement. While attending a meeting can be time-consuming, it is easy to send an email.

I never paid much attention to development, believing "somebody" was paid to take care of all that. And then one day a new development appeared at the end of my street. One that I didn't much like.

I'm sure I got a colored postcard from the City about the development, giving me ample opportunity to learn about the project and voice my opinion. The point is this: Once a development is built, it's there to stay. The time to speak up is somewhere along the development process timeline..

Author's note: Many thanks to Randy Tsuda who was patient in helping me understand this process. All opinions, errors and omissions are mine. Please correct me on anything by adding a comment to the article on www.OMVNA.org.

DESIGN: Is the Prometheus Development Compatible with the Neighborhood?

by Alex Lew

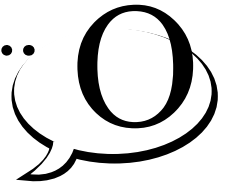
If your perspective of Old Mountain View consists primarily of the early 20th century storefronts and cottages, then I'd say the answer is an easy no. The proposed high-density apartment project is composed of two buildings, each of which fills up the equivalent of one city block. The two- to four-story buildings are larger than both the low-density old cottages as well as the more recent medium-density Classic Communities and Wild Orchid projects.

However, the downtown district does include a wide diversity of buildings, including high-density housing.

The developer's previous Park Place project (between Castro Street, Church Street, and High School Way) serves as useful benchmark. That project is primarily 3- stories, but the mixed-use buildings on Castro are 4-5 stories. Not too far from downtown, the largest building at The Crossings (Showers Drive and San Antonio Circle) and Domizile (550 Ortega) are also comparable precedents. Both of these four-story projects have about same site area as just one of the Prometheus buildings.

The proposed project includes some improvements to these precedents. The buildings are mostly four stories: along Evelyn Street, along a new street parallel to Bush Street, along a new pedestrian paseo, and around the courtyards. The buildings do step-down in height to three stories along Bush Street

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OPINION



and two stories along Villa Street. Many of the first floor units have individual entry stairs and porches so that the buildings are more interesting to a passing pedestrian and appear more like the neighboring houses. In addition, the developer's illustrative sketch perspectives of the Bush Street and Villa Street indicate more architectural variety of materials and colors than the uniform designs of The Crossings and Domizile.

In my opinion, there is a world of difference between the typical three-story housing infill developments that have been build downtown recently and the proposed, predominantly four-story, project. The shade that tall, continuous walls create, the reduced sightlines to the sky and hills, and the proportions of the trees and landscape to the facades all contribute to a design that is unmistakably urban.

I encourage everyone to look at the massing model of the project, which is currently in the lobby of the planning and building department, walk around the site, and then judge for yourself.

Look at the model of the project in the lobby of the planning and building department at City Hall...walk around the site, then judge for yourself.

Express Yourself

Meet in person

You'll find City Council and EPC (Environmental Planning Commission) members are very accommodating and are willing to meet with residents outside of meetings. Email individuals directly to arrange.

Get your feedback in early!

If you contact the EPC or Council in writing just before a meeting, it's hard for them to evaluate your input.

Email

EPC: Email Commissioners and copy Martin Alkire, the City Staff Liaison, at Martin.Alkire@mountainview.gov

Council: Email Council members, or go to www.ci.mtnview.ca.us/city_council/email_council.asp to give input to Council.

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Who Ya Gonna Call

for Me, It Was Most Certainly the Egg that Came First

By Amberlin Wu

www.homeschooledchickens.blogspot.com/

I was reading an article on how fresh eggs are one of the incredible super foods of our planet, containing nearly every nutrient a person needs to live on, and I started thinking about how one would get such fresh eggs. Well, it didn't take long for the animal lover in me to figure it out. I began calling and surfing and such to find out about chicken care and which chickens and such.

At the same time, I had been having serious problems with my health and have been housebound for a couple of years. I came home from a week long stay at Stanford hospital, and a dear friend had purchased four 2-day-old chicks. When your home is your world, four baby chicks are a magical addition, and if you have never had a baby chick fall asleep in the palm of your hand, I tell you, your life is not complete. Mochi, Marmalade, Kiki and Annabel served as my backyard jesters as I sat and rehabilitated in the backyard. I was astonished by their different personalities — Marmalade,

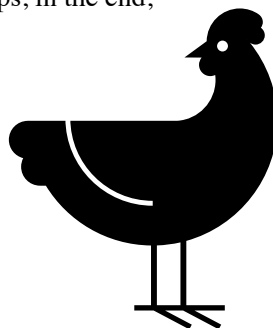
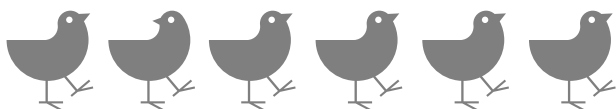
who follows you around the yard like a dog (along-side the real dog that lives here) and Mochi,

who is, without question, a reincarnated clown of some sort. Annabel ended up being a boy, which is not allowed in Mountain View, so he moved out with Kiki to keep him company, and the incubator moved in, which is a whole story in itself.

Chickens, I tell you, are only a few small steps up from goldfish as far as care and infinitely more endearing (not to insult all the of the lovely goldfish out there). They need food and water.

The coop needs occasional cleaning. They need to be let out each morning to spend the day fertilizing the yard and munch on bugs, and each evening at sundown they march their little selves back into their coops and snuggle up for bedtime. We lock the predators out for the night and that's it. The next day we do it all over again, only they are a wee bit bigger and a wee bit closer as our relationship grows.

Last week, they began to pay their way in eggs with golden yolks. Not only full of nutrients, but so beautiful and delicious! It's like getting body healing gifts every day. I don't know how long I will be limited to the walls of my home, but the chickens have made my world much larger. As I head off to the doctors for attempts at a cure, perhaps, in the end, it will be my chickens that heal me.



XANH

(Continued from front page)

Upon returning home, the grandmother would challenge her to make the dishes she had just tried, from memory.

The cuisine is Vietnamese "fusion." Their mission is "to fuse the culinary traditions of Vietnam with modern aesthetics and complexities." An example of this fusion is the spring-rolls that blend traditional Vietnamese with creative influences from other cuisines. My favorite is the spicy tuna roll — spicy ahi tuna with sliced mango, fresh lettuce, cilantro, mint, and crispy shallots, served with spicy vinaigrette. The crispy shrimp roll has Monterey Bay prawns, white and green onions, fresh lettuce, and mint and served with nuoc cham vinaigrette. The roll is very good, and



Xanh's stylish exterior at 110 Castro Street in downtown Mountain View matches the stylish, creative menu

the deuce roll combines two rolls in one: at the center is the crispy shrimp roll, which is surrounded by pork tenders, lettuce, mint, chives and carrots and wrapped again. There are half a dozen other rolls.

The menu is designed for sharing, which we are told is a fundamental cultural element. The idea is to pick one or two things from a few different categories — rolls, soups, greens, noodles, small plates, main plates and sides — and share it all.

While this is a favorite date restaurant for my partner Brian and I, the larger the group, the more things you can try! We went there for Brian's birthday this year with a group of eight, gave Jade a budget and told her "Don't bring menus, just bring food." Our guests were still



talking about the meal a week later. We now know how the kings and queens of antiquity felt during those banquets we read about in fairy tales, where plates of food keep dancing out from the kitchen.

The grapefruit salad is amazing. Served in a hollowed out grapefruit, filled with the fruit, poached shrimp, slivers of green apple, pineapple, red peppers, mint, shallots and black pepper. There is a papaya salad, a banana flower salad, a fresh apple salad and the Xanh salad, which has beef, greens, red and yellow peppers, mango, apple, avocado and pineapples served over great big Vietnamese rice crackers with a special dressing.

Favorites from the other categories of plates:

Fried calamari: coated in a mildly spicy batter and served up in a bowl with fried onions and jalapeño slices, the dipping sauce is amazing.

Shaking beef: cubes of marinated filet mignon, served over a bed of mixed greens and sliced cherry tomatoes.

Catfish in a clay pot: served in a covered clay pot, the catfish is caramelized and served with cilantro, ginger and thai chiles.

Baby pork ribs: The meat falls off the bone and it melts in your mouth.

And my partner swears he could live on for the rest of his life, garlic noodles, with or without huge garlic-seasoned grilled prawns. Served with grated Parmesan on the side and the most delicious fried garlic flakes garnishing the top of the pile of noodles.

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We have had every single item on the menu in the course of our regular visits, and have yet to be disappointed. The full menu is online at <http://www.xanhrestaurant.com>.

Lest we forget dessert, the chef was trained as a pastry chef. So don't skip dessert here — especially, the "Split Personality," which is big enough to split between four, let alone two, and is a delightful mix of raspberry and mango sorbets dipped in white chocolate. Also on the dessert menu are the chocolate

box (a cube of chocolate cake and mousse, I think, covered in chocolate), a chocolate mousse and some ice creams. All made on site.

Enjoy. Tell them Hugh & Brian sent you. Let us know what you think by leaving a comment at www.OMVNA.org.

[Editor's Note: Updated from a 2007 review.]

Xanh | 110 Castro Street | 650-964-1888
www.xanhrestaurant.com

