

# Maxwell Park Neighborhood Council/Mayor Townhall meeting

December 17, 2005

The following presentations were made to the Mayor, Council members District 4 and 6, Senior Staff of the City & Police, and over 125 residents of Oakland, including at least 75 from Maxwell Park & the immediate neighborhood.

## *Traffic Neighborhood Action Team (Traffic NAT)*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Traffic NAT, or Neighborhood Action Team, that represents Maxwell Park is part of a joint NAT that combines the Maxwell Park NCPC (beat 28X) and the Melrose/High Hopes NCPC (beat 27X) in recognition of the fact that traffic does not acknowledge the artificial borders that separate our NCPCs. These neighborhoods share common thoroughfares and hence many of the same traffic problems. We have united in order to develop action plans to provide solutions across both neighborhoods.

### **FOCUS**

The Traffic NAT's main focus is that of **safety**. Increasing safety throughout our streets has the secondary benefit of bettering our quality of life through less noise and reduced blight from abandoned or illegally parked vehicles.

### **COOPERATION**

To further the Traffic NAT agenda in Maxwell and Melrose, we need to work:

- with city traffic engineers to develop solutions to identified traffic problems;
- with OPD on traffic enforcement;
- with Public Works on physical changes to the street;
- and with our neighbors on traffic safety education.

### **ACTION PLAN**

The Traffic Neighborhood Action Team of Maxwell & Melrose has put together an Action Plan for today's meeting, targeting one specific traffic issue we're seeking commitment from you on, Mr. Mayor. There are two obvious starting points for our joint Traffic NAT: speeding and reckless driving along High Street and Brookdale Avenue, as these provide two main routes into and out of our neighborhoods, with Brookdale on the dividing line between our NCPCs. By no means are these the only areas we have concerns about – there are many issues we have been addressing and will continue to address in the future. However, we must prioritize, recognizing that safety is our number one concern. Accordingly, our immediate focus is on High Street in front of the Boys & Girls Club, and we ask for the City's assistance in helping to make our streets safer for our kids.

#### **⇒ High Street traffic (or pedestrian) light**

1. Location: High St. near Suter St. in front of the Boys & Girls Club at 3300 High
2. Concern: Speeding cars and reckless driving (unlawful & ignorant use of left turn lane) make this a dangerous crossing point for our neighborhood children. Estimates are that 24,000 vehicles use High Street daily (the City can confirm). According to Maribel Corral, Branch Director for the Boys & Girls Club, there have been several close calls since the Club's opening a year and a half ago. Quoting Maribel, she says: "There have been three accidents involving our families (all related to speed). Two of our young members (under the age of twelve) have been hit by cars on High street. About 75% of our members walk here, and it can be extremely dangerous on High Street. Cars speed and drive

recklessly, especially in the evenings. It is even more dangerous for children now that it is dark and the weather inclement.”

3. Proposed Solution: Traffic Light or similar.
4. Prior Action Plan: Neighbors asked for a traffic light on High in front of the Boys & Girls Club. The City’s traffic engineers acknowledged it as a need. A state grant was applied for, and denied.
5. Status: Stalled (?) The safety concern has not diminished.
6. New Action Plan:
  - a. Request commitment from the City to:
    - i. Report back to Traffic NAT at the next meeting on January 26<sup>th</sup>;
    - ii. Exhaust all funding avenues within 90 days;
    - iii. Report back to Traffic NAT regularly thereafter until a set date for the light’s installation has been established (Traffic NAT can always be reached via email at: [trafficnat@yahoogroups.com](mailto:trafficnat@yahoogroups.com));
    - iv. Installation should not exceed one year from today, i.e. December 2006.
  - b. Neighbors commit to meet with the City to assist with any grant writing or related work, or further discuss the need.

### **WORKING TOGETHER: NEXT STEPS**

While Traffic NAT won’t look for a commitment on more than one specific issue today, we’d like to bring up an example of a circumstance in which we need the City’s help. I think all the neighbors in this room could learn from this, and those who are not in Maxwell Park or Melrose can take the answer back to their NCPCs to help them identify next steps in solving their traffic-related issues. This example is the need for **traffic calming along Brookdale Avenue between Monticello and Kingsland**. Speeding cars along this busy street bordering our two neighborhoods threatens the safety of ourselves, our children, our pets and our residences. We’ve been informed that 2600 Kingsland Ave., located at the base of the Brookdale hill from at Monticello, has been struck twice by vehicles. Neighbors have requested traffic calming along this section of Brookdale. Speed bumps were denied due to the grade, and a stop sign at the intersection of Brookdale and Rawson was also denied. This is an example where we, as a community, have identified safety concerns along a specific road, and while we don’t question the legitimate restrictions imposed by the city’s engineers, we need to work together to discover and implement alternate solutions to this and similar trouble spots.

Would you please tell us what our next steps should be in these cases where we’re at an impasse with respect to an identified need?

## *Blight & Beautification Neighborhood Action Team 12.17.05*

Good morning Mayor Brown, Chief Tucker and company. I’m Claire Antonetti, Chair of the Maxwell Park Blight & Beautification Neighborhood Action Team.

Mayor Brown, on Behalf of our Maxwell Park B & B NAT I’d like to thank you for creating this opportunity to work closely with your office on our designated B & B action project, the MacArthur/ Pierson Corridor, which has long remained a blighted gateway to the Maxwell Park and Mills College Community.

Our NAT has been focusing its attention on this area with help from our Council-Member, Desley Brooks, who has worked along closely with us. Recent news of the opportunity to receive additional support from your office has indeed been very timely for us, since we encountered a lack of continuity between the City and Caltrans, which has proven to be an obstacle. In a word, “clout” is what we required.

What our team has lacked in “clout” it’s made up for in ambition, which you will see by the scope of our project. Our primary goal is to regain a spirit of place in our community by making the MacArthur/ Pierson corridor a safe & beautiful gateway for which the residents of Maxwell Park can be proud. With added value as a prototype for other Oakland neighborhoods, facing similar problems.

Our plan concentrates on the Caltrans properties that impact this area so greatly. We seek to beautify the intersection and the surrounding area to equal our manicured neighbor (Mills College), to promote safety on foot & by auto, and to establish a safe, viable link between Maxwell Park, Mills College and the Laurel shopping district.

I've outlined our project for you today into three action -plan steps:

### **STEP ONE: Pocket Park and re-landscaping of Caltrans properties**

Develop plans & funding for a Pocket Park below the 580 over pass. This large unutilized, fenced off area creates an unsavory & unsafe, no-mans-land, unfriendly to foot traffic. The area is blighted & ill lit. We want to develop this portion of Caltrans land into a Pocket Park with appropriate new lighting, and landscape & hardscape, for the community to use and enjoy. Locating a park here will not only beautify the area, but it will also serve as a vital connection to the Laurel, and provide a focal point from which the rest of the project will spring. Acquiring funding for the design and implementation of this aspect of the project is where we will need your concerted help & guidance.

The adjacent areas also require attention. Throughout the years there has been no regular attention given to replacement of lost landscaping. Attrition of groundcovers, shrubs & trees throughout has left the area looking denuded, sparse and ill planned.

Your office has already put us in touch with **Otis Jackson, of Caltrans, Manager of Office of Public Affairs** to develop plans for re-landscaping these areas. We have outlined the specific areas that need attention, along with our idea for a Pocket Park and they are under consideration.

### **STEP TWO: Traffic Redesign**

In order to build a park we must sort out the existing traffic problems bordering the property. The problem originates from the Caltrans right-of-way at the westbound 580 off ramp and has long been a safety hazard. Through our pre-meeting work we are currently working with **Otis Jackson** (Caltrans) and **Joe Wang, Supervising Engineer from the city's Transportation Service Division**, who recently completed a preliminary review to redirect the traffic flow. And, as a result of this collaboration we have received assurances that there is a realistic solution to this problem.

### **STEP THREE: Caltrans Maintenance Schedule**

Developing a regular maintenance schedule with Caltrans. Our team agrees that after years of maintenance call-ins, complaint driven response to maintaining the Caltrans properties has proven ineffective. Instead we need a regular monthly maintenance schedule. According to Caltrans, there are only 6 people assigned to landscaping & maintenance for the entire 580 corridor, from the 238 interchange to 80. We believe the maintenance program suffers from insufficient manpower and we would like to see, you Mayor Brown work to resolve this issue with Caltrans.

We are ready to work with you & **Otis Jackson** to hammer out what it takes to develop a monthly maintenance schedule for those properties interfacing the MacArthur/Pierson corridor. And we think addressing the dearth of maintenance staff for 580 should also be negotiated, since every community along 580 faces the same problem. We would like to see our project be a catalyst for this change in Oakland.

Mayor Brown, there are other components to address at this intersection that include blighted apartments & abandoned vehicles on Pierson and a history of blight on the 76 Station property. We've recently established a working relationship with Delong Liu the new owner of the 76 Station who is in the process of redesigning a new station and wants to absorb maintenance along the Caltrans property in front of his station. We support Mr. Liu's intentions since; these highly visible properties have always been heavily blighted. Mr. Mayor, we need to roll all of these issues into the entire project in order to create a cohesive vision. As result of our per-

meeting work, attention is already being given to these issues with the help of **Eric Angstadt of Planning** and **Lt. Lawrence Green of OPD** traffic and **Otis Jackson**.

Finally Mr. Mayor our team pledges to set a date with your office in the coming month to establish a realistic timeline in which to complete our action plans. We are committed to working with you, Caltrans, De long Liu, 76 owner and the proper departments in the city in order to accomplish our goals.

Our commitment includes being prepared and present for scheduled meetings, sharing our resources and vision and completing designated action tasks. In return Mayor Brown we ask that you and your office be responsive, committed and accountable to the project. We ask that you work in concert with us to facilitate our goals to make our community an enhanced and more vibrant place in which to live. Thank you Mayor Brown for this opportunity.

## *Crime Neighborhood Action Team*

I want to thank the Mayor and his staff for arranging this meeting and for taking time from their busy schedules to meet with us this morning.

We have narrowed down our requests to you to two important issues:

### **First:**

***The Maxwell Park Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (MPNCPC) now has over 500 members on its email list. When a crime is committed in our neighborhood (28x), we all read about it and about our neighbors impressions and experiences with OPD's response or lack thereof. Of course we understand the police have limited resources and have to prioritize their responses, but this leaves us residents wondering what we can do to protect ourselves – it also leaves the victims feeling violated, helpless, and angry, very angry, in some cases. This discontent and anger is directed primarily at the Oakland Police Department -- the OPD's poor response to the legitimate needs of our neighborhood's homeowners and business people equates to poor public relations between police and our community. We all have endless e-mails in our home computers attesting to the frustration and anger toward the police department.***

Besides the poor public relations problem between homeowners and the police, this lack of response has a clear negative affect on the economic stability of our neighborhood.

Three examples:

1) Mr. Richard Langford who owns a land surveying company on the corner of Maybelle and MacArthur is going to move his business out of Oakland by the end of this month. He takes with him his \$400,000 payroll, all of which has gone to Oakland residents. He is moving his business to San Ramon "for one reason, and one reason only" (to quote him exactly): lack of police response or interest in his financial losses and his problems at that location. He has caught thieves with his survey equipment but gets no little or no response from the police when he tries to get cooperation from them.

2) Mr. De Long Liu, who owns the gas station on the corner of Pierson and MacArthur (across the street from the entrance to Mills College) has been robbed and vandalized over 20 times in 1 ½ years, robbed once at knife point and once at gun point). The police do not respond to 99% of his 911 calls, so when he is vandalized, he just files a report for insurance purposes – he doesn't even call the police. Actually, when the insurance company that covers the other three gas stations he owns in various parts of the Bay Area found out that he bought this station in Oakland, they cancelled his entire policy. (He has since found other, more expensive coverage.) Also he pays more business tax here in Oakland than his three other communities combined. His is an important business in this community – the economic impact on his business is certain.

Mr. De Long is making an effort to deal with all the problems at this intersection which includes abandoned cars, deteriorating OHA housing, CalTrans neglect, and non-stop drug dealing as well as traffic and garbage problems. And this blighted intersection is directly across the street from the well kept property of Mills College with a middle school on its property, and the bus stop that the school children and college students use.

3) Mr. Jose Ortiz is going to lease the commercial building on the corner of Virginia and High Streets, and try to build a decent business – perhaps a coffee shop and other retail sales. This building used to be a pizza take-out place for many years but has been derelict for quite a while. It has been and still is a very dangerous location. If the city had cleaned this corner up, it could have been a social and economic asset to our neighborhood for more than the 25 years that I've been here in this neighborhood.

**Therefore:** We would like to have an improvement in police response to our neighbors and the businesses in our neighborhood. We would like a prompt response to our calls and we would like to see a sincere effort to accomplish this. So my first question to you is: what can we do to facilitate this change in police behavior and promptness?

**Second:**

We are concerned with the effect that the controls imposed on the police department due to the consent decree have on efficiency and productivity. As we scanned the "Sixth Report of The Independent Monitors" (the report of the OPD's progress toward compliance with standards that were imposed), we noted the absence of the concept of "metrics" – that is, it's not clear to us how compliance is being measured, except by the opinions of the Independent Monitoring Team (IMT). This is significant because, if the folks who were hired (with our taxes) to improve OPD performance don't know how to measure performance, how can we expect the OPD to get up to 21<sup>st</sup> century management speed?

**Therefore** our questions are:

- Does the police department have processes in place for measuring performance in each department?
- What are those processes (i.e., are there detailed descriptions). How do they know whether their employees are doing their jobs properly? What are their "metrics" for productivity?
- How are the processes implemented?
- What processes are in place to improve performance?

Most large corporations are eager to qualify for adherence to *International Organization for Standardization* (ISO – see <http://www.iso.org/iso/en/ISOOnline.frontpage>) specifications, which require well documented quality control processes to be in place. ISO compliance is a necessity because customers demand it and its documentation is available on request. Moreover, these corporations do, in fact, adhere to their specs, because their customers are monitoring the quality of their purchases and will take their business elsewhere if they don't get what they're paying for.

Similarly, because it's in the OPD's interest to satisfy their customers (i.e., us):

- Does the police department have a process in place for measuring customer satisfaction?
- What is that process (i.e., we want a detailed description).
- How is the process implemented?
- What processes are in place to improve customer satisfaction?

And in reference to these questions: when can we expect some answers and what can we do to facilitate the process?

Martin and Susan Scolnick  
December 17, 2005