



# RICHMOND NEIGHBORHOOD COORDINATING COUNCIL

## "BUILDING NEIGHBORHOODS BLOCK BY BLOCK"

*"...of the people, by the people, for the people"*

2007

P. O. Box 485 - Richmond, CA 94808 - (510) 620-6512

July 25, 2007

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The Richmond Neighborhood Coordinating Council (RNCC) urges that Richmond's City Council reconsider its decision to combine the functions of the City's Design Review Board (DRB) and Planning Commission. That decision is unwise both in light of past experience and citizen reaction as we are hearing it. If it is not possible to reconsider the issue, we urge that no further action be taken to implement the decision until and unless design guidelines have been adopted. To proceed in the absence of such guidelines will only lead to applicant frustration, wasted Commission time, arbitrary and inconsistent directions, and, ultimately, bad decisions.

At its July 9 meeting, the RNCC convened a panel the purpose of which was to understand Council's action concerning the DRB and Planning Commission and to discuss the ramifications of that action. Councilperson Viramonte, Councilperson Butt and Planning Commission Chair Virginia Finlay made up the panel. The RNCC thanks the panelists for their participation.

It should be noted that Eileen Whitty, Chair of the Design Review Board, would have been a panelist but for her resignation in the previous week. Ms Whitty's resignation resulted, in part, from her discouragement about the prospects for design review in general and the DRB specifically. Eileen served with distinction on the DRB since its inception as well as on its predecessor board.

Nothing that was said during the panel discussion persuaded anyone in the room that Council's decision was in the best interest of Richmond's residents. Instead, the decision means, at least, 1) an increased workload for the Planning Commission, 2) a jury-rigged and much more limited design review, 3) greatly reduced opportunity for citizen input on projects both large and small, and 4) what appears to be license for developers to do what they please with projects and to do it quickly.

The RNCC takes special exception to Council's decision because the Design Review Board came to be, in part due to efforts by RNCC members working in response to citizen complaints from across Richmond that there seemed to be no control over projects. Citizen input was at issue then and it will be again unless this decision is reconsidered. At the very least, design guidelines formulated with citizen input need to be in place before any realignment of Board and Commission is undertaken.

### Neighborhood Councils

Atchison Village

Belding/Woods

Carriage Hills North

Carriage Hills South

Coronado

Cortez/Stege

Countryside

Eastshore

El Sobrante Hills

Fairmeade/Hilltop

Greenbriar

Greenridge

Hilltop Green

Hilltop Villages

Laurel Park

Marina Bay

May Valley

North & East

Panhandle Annex

Parchester Village

Park Plaza

Parkview

Point Richmond

Pullman

Quail Hill

Richmond Annex

Richmond Heights

Richmore Vill./Met. Square

Santa Fe

Shields-Reid

Southwest Annex

Triangle

Yours truly,

*Queen Graham (DW)*

Queen Graham, Vice President  
Richmond Neighborhood Coordinating Council

CC: RNCC Board

City Manager Bill Lindsay

Director of Planning and Building Services Richard Mitchell