A regular meeting of the Pittsburg Planning Commission was called to order by Vice Chairperson George Harris at 7:05 P.M. on Tuesday, March 9, 2004, in the City Council Chambers of City Hall at 65 Civic Avenue, Pittsburg, CA.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Dolojan, Garcia, Kelley, Ramirez, Tumbaga, Vice Chairperson Harris

Absent: Chairperson Leonard

Staff: Director of Planning and Building Randy Jerome; Planning Manager Melissa Ayres; Associate Planner Noel Ibalio; Assistant Planner Christopher Barton; and Civil Engineer II Alfredo Hurtado.

POSTING OF AGENDA:

The agenda was posted at City Hall on March 5, 2004.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Commissioner Ramirez led the Pledge of Allegiance.

DELETIONS/WITHDRAWALS/CONTINUANCES:

There were no deletions, withdrawals or continuances.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE:

PETE CARPINO, 151 El Camino Drive, Pittsburg, commented on the fact that Gladstone Drive had been closed and posted for “No Thru Traffic.” He noted his understanding that once speed bumps had been installed the road would be reopened, although that had not occurred. Mr. Carpino inquired whether there had been any changes to the General Plan in terms of
traffic or whether the closure of Gladstone Drive to thru traffic was in violation of the General Plan since Gladstone Drive was a designated collector street.

Planning Manager Melissa Ayres explained that there had been no amendments to the General Plan in terms of City streets. She explained that collector streets were intended to collect local traffic from the surrounding neighborhoods for disbursement to an arterial and were not intended to direct traffic from one neighborhood through the collector street to another neighborhood. She understood that the closure of Gladstone Drive was not in violation of the General Plan in that it would still allow those in the neighborhood to travel from the small streets onto the collector street and thereafter to the arterial.

Mr. Carpino expressed concern that City residents could not travel through Gladstone Drive and could not access the nearby medical building or Los Medanos College.

Director of Planning and Building Randy Jerome spoke to the General Plan roadway system which had shown Gladstone Drive as an existing collector street with a break in the street.

Vice Chairperson Harris noted that there was no longer a break in the street.

Mr. Carpino agreed that the break was no longer in existence. He explained that the concern was that local residents had been ticketed traveling through Gladstone Drive to the medical buildings on Gladstone Drive since no through traffic was being allowed through the roadway. He questioned again whether or not Gladstone Drive was a legal closure without an amendment to the General Plan.

Commissioner Garcia added that Gladstone Drive had been built from Leland Road to a barricade on the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) right-of-way. When the subdivision had been built, he stated that Gladstone Drive had been punched through. He too questioned the fact that City residents could not use that roadway since it had been posted for No Thru Traffic.

Commissioner Tumbaga recalled during a prior Planning Commission meeting that there had been residents who appeared before the Commission with concerns related to commute traffic and the speed of traffic traveling through the neighborhood. As a way to deal with that concern, speed bumps had been recommended for installation and had, in fact, been installed. The issue of through traffic had also been discussed. She understood that the No Thru Traffic signage was to prevent traffic from Loveridge to Leland Road using Gladstone Drive as a bypass route. She added that there were a couple of streets in the City that were similarly posted, such as Brookside Drive, which had specific hours where through traffic was not permitted.

Vice Chairperson Harris noted that the matter had been discussed by the Traffic and Circulation Advisory Committee of which he had been a member. He had personally made a recommendation for that street to be closed, to then allow the City Council to decide
whether or not the street should be open or closed and whether or not speed bumps should be installed. He recommended that staff review that situation in that the street should have been reopened since Gladstone Drive was a public street paid for by taxpayers. Once the speed bumps had been installed, the posted signage for No Thru Traffic was to have been removed. He requested that the staff and Council review that situation.

Ms. Ayres clarified that the closure of the street was not inconsistent with the General Plan and had likely been a political or traffic safety decision. She suggested that the issue could be referred to the Transportation Division for further review.

PRESENTATIONS:

There were no presentations.

CONSENT:

A. February 10, 2004 Minutes
B. 514 Railroad Avenue Building Improvement DR-01-41 (Extension of Approval)

MOTION:

Motion by Commissioner Tumbaga to adopt the Consent Calendar, as shown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kelley and carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Commissioners Dolojan, Garcia, Kelley, Ramirez, Tumbaga, Harris
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Chairperson Leonard

Commissioner Tumbaga stepped down from the dais as a result of a potential conflict of interest with agenda Item No. 1.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Item 1: Fort Knox Self-Storage Facility Landscape and Fence Revisions. UP-98-10.

This is a request to change the previously approved wrought iron fence to a block wall along the El Dorado Drive frontage and approval of the landscape plan for a site currently addressed as 3865 Railroad Avenue in the C-O-O (Commercial Office w/Overlay) District; APNs 088-072-062 and 088-072-065.

Associate Planner Noel Ibalio presented the staff report dated March 9, 2004. He recommended that the Planning Commission support the proposed fence changes as recommended by staff, and that the Planning Commission move to adopt Resolution No.
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9475, approving the proposed fence and landscaping changes. He recommended an additional condition to the resolution, as follows:

_The applicant shall maintain the wall free of graffiti._

Ms. Ayres added that staff had received a letter from Carole Gonzalez, 16 El Camino Drive, dated March 5, 2004 and Doris Becker, 239 El Dorado Drive in response to the proposed request for the landscape and fence revisions. Copies of both letters were presented to the Commission.

Commissioner Garcia inquired whether or not there would be any lighting proposed for the wall. He suggested that should be done in that the landscaping would disappear in the evening and there was no security from taggers [graffiti]. He recommended that some lighting be included on the fence, as had been proposed as part of the original wrought iron fence design.

Mr. Ibalio advised that no lighting had been proposed for the wall. In discussions with planning staff it had been determined that the lighting could be targets for youth to vandalize, which could also depend on the type of lighting or fixture that could be mounted in the wall. Staff otherwise had no objection to the placement of lighting on top of the wall.

Commissioner Ramirez questioned the type of surface proposed for the wall, whether it would have a pattern or be plain. He expressed concern that the wall could be an attractive nuisance for graffiti. He also expressed concern with the maintenance of the wall since it could become problematic for the neighborhood. He recommended a rough wall surface, one that would not show graffiti as much as a plain wall. He suggested the use of the same type of material that had been used for the Bypass Road near the park and the Power Plant. He added that it would take some time for the landscaping to hide some of the wall, which should also be considered.

Mr. Ibalio explained that the applicant had photographs of the proposed wall. He understood it would be decorative with recesses and would also have false pilasters to provide for recesses on the wall.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

PROONENT:

DAVID FALK, 5670 Starbird Drive, Discovery Bay, representing Fort Knox Self Storage facility, presented photographs of the proposed wall which will consist of a pre-cast concrete.

Vice Chairperson Harris questioned why the applicant was now changing from the originally approved wrought iron design to the proposed wall.

Mr. Falk explained that he wanted a better product for the site. Since the facility was called
Fort Knox Self Storage, he suggested that the solid wall would appear more like Fort Knox than would wrought iron fencing. He noted that he had not owned the project in 1998 when the wrought iron fence was approved. He also clarified that the wall was a totally separate issue from the U-Haul trucks. The wrought iron fencing could be installed if that was what the Commission preferred. He emphasized his intent to improve the quality of the facility.

Commissioner Garcia suggested that the wall would need lights to better illuminate the area. He suggested lights be added as a condition of approval and suggested that the applicant work with staff to work out those details. He otherwise inquired how soon the permits could be issued for the work.

Mr. Falk advised that the drawings had already been submitted to staff as part of the permit process.

Mr. Ibalio stated that the plans were pending approval based on any conditions the Commission might impose through the current process. Once the Planning Commission had approved the landscape and fence revisions, the plans would be forwarded to the Building Department for the issuance of building permits.

Mr. Falk stated that he could not give a specific date when the work would be done in that he had not spoken to his subcontractor who was located in Modesto.

Commissioner Garcia otherwise expressed concern with the U-Haul business although it was not related to the current application. He recognized that the applicant had applied for a separate use permit for that business. He emphasized that he had received a number of complaints about the speed of the U-Haul trucks through the front parking lot with many near misses in traffic. The trucks had also been found to speed down El Dorado Drive and behind the gas station. He urged the applicant to do something to get that situation under control before the Commission considered the use permit for the U-Haul operation.

Mr. Falk commented that he was unaware that had been a problem. He stated that he would speak to the drivers.

INTERESTED SPEAKERS:

SAL DiMERCURIO, 3751 Roundhill Drive, Pittsburg, advised that he owned a business at 3817 Railroad Avenue in front of the self-storage facility and the U-Haul business.

Mr. DiMercurio commented on the number of large appliances and other debris left in the back of his business, apparently from those renting storage units who were dumping items that were no longer wanted. He pointed out that the back of his business was actually the front of his building since there was no longer parking in the front. He asked that something be done to resolve that situation. He too commented on the speed of the U-Haul trucks through the site and agreed that something must be done to alleviate those problems.
Vice Chairperson Harris requested that Code Enforcement review the matter.

Civil Engineer II Alfredo Hurtado stated that he would speak with Mr. DiMercurio and would view the site.

GAIL PEARSON, 4068 Granada Drive, Pittsburg, explained that she co-owned a home with her sisters on Brookside Drive which ran parallel to Railroad Avenue, approximately four blocks east of the subject property. Not able to attend the prior Planning Commission meeting when the subject property had been discussed, she described the property as the biggest eyesore south of the freeway other than the area of West Boulevard. Ms. Pearson recommended that the applicant clean up the site and be respectful to those who live in the neighborhood. She was dismayed that all of the self storage facilities being built around the City and the County were beautiful facilities, while the Fort Knox facility was the worst she had ever seen. She also was not confident that the applicant would clean up the site. She pointed out that a wrought iron fence was to have been built five years ago and had not been done. She questioned the proposal that would now build a cement wall in the neighborhood.

In response to the Vice Chair, Ms. Ayres advised that the use permit for the U-Haul operation would be submitted to the Commission for consideration on March 23. The continuation of the possible revocation of the use permit for the storage facility would be considered by the Commission on April 13.

Commissioner Garcia also suggested that the applicant consider temporarily retaining the existing cyclone fence on the property and that staff allow the fence to remain until the landscaping had been planted and allowed to mature for six months.

Speaking from the audience and in response to the Vice Chair, Mr. Falk advised that the alleyway behind the property between the subject site and the adjacent residences was being kept clean of debris.

**MOTION: UP-98-10 (Revision)**

Motion by Commissioner Garcia to adopt Resolution No. 9475, approving changes to the previously approved plans for Use Permit 98-10 changing the wrought iron fence to a decorative block wall at 3865 Railroad Avenue, with the conditions as shown and with the following additional conditions:

? *The applicant shall maintain the wall free of graffiti.*

? *The applicant shall add lighting on the wall.*

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Dolojan and carried by the following vote:

**Ayes:** Commissioners Dolojan, Garcia, Kelley, Ramirez, Harris

**Noes:** None
Abstain: None
Absent: Commissioner Tumbaga [Recused], Chairperson Leonard

Commissioner Tumbaga returned to the dais at this time.

Vice Chairperson Harris stepped down from the dais as a result of a potential conflict of interest with agenda Item No. 2.

Commissioner Garcia Chaired the meeting at this time.

COMMISSION CONSIDERATION:

Item 2: Highlands Square Shopping Center remodel and Sign Exception.
AP-03-75 (DR)

Application by Douglas Messner requesting design review approval of architectural plans for the renovation of an existing 86,495 square foot shopping center (consisting of two buildings) master sign program, and sign exception for maximum height and area for the replacement of two existing freestanding signs located at 1317-1399 Buchanan Road, CN (Neighborhood Commercial) District; APN 088-460-002.

Assistant Planner Christopher Barton presented the staff report dated March 9, 2004. He recommended that the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. 9474, approving Design Review Application AP-03-75, (DR), with the conditions as shown.

Mr. Barton clarified that the resolution of approval had not included the standard condition for the expiration date of the resolution and that it should be added with an expiration date of March 9, 2005.

Commissioner Ramirez requested a clarification from staff about the sign heights being proposed by the applicant and those recommended by staff.

Mr. Barton clarified that the applicant had requested a 25 foot high freestanding sign for the Buchanan Road elevation, although staff determined that only 17 feet, not 25 feet was necessary to identify tenants from Buchanan Road due to the speed of vehicles on Buchanan Road which was considered to be low for a major arterial at 35 MPH. In addition, the elevation of the existing freestanding sign would not change and was currently placed at the street level and was not set back. There was no change in elevation to justify additional height.

PROPOSED:

DOUGLAS MESSNER, Sierra Pacific Properties, 3890 Railroad Avenue, Pittsburg, spoke to the fact that the shopping center was approximately 25 years of age. He noted that when the center had initially been constructed, Raley’s had occupied the center, although the Raley’s lease would expire at the end of this year. The property owners had
been working closely with Raley’s to continue their commitment to the community, and Raley’s had agreed to commit for an additional ten years. As part of the property owner’s commitment to Raley’s, the shopping center would be modernized and brought up to higher quality standards.

PETER STACKPOLE, Loving Campos Architects, explained that shoppers and retailers had increased expectations from the 1970’s in terms of what a shopping center must feel and look like. Desirous to meet the modern expectations and to improve the shopping experience at the center, a sense of scale would be created to address the size of the frontage of the building and the long visual reach to Buchanan Road, while improving the overall architectural character by modulating the façade to create a sense of individual places and identities.

Mr. Stackpole described the existing façade as quite long. To offer some identity they would be using several elements including improved materials with the use of cultured stone, stucco, higher quality materials and colors to offer a more attractive appearance. They would also be adding towers at several locations particularly at turns in the buildings and important corners to modulate the front and offer a sense of place. The associated roofs would also provide entry arches along the front to better identify the main retail areas. They would also be expanding all of the individual columns along the front offering strong architecture. Further, they would be creating areas for signage along the front to better identify the retailers.

In response to Commissioner Dolojan, Mr. Stackpole identified one parking space that would be removed to allow adjustments for handicapped parking. The parking in the front would remain as is.

MARK GASTINEAU, General Electric Sign Company, explained that if they were limited to a 17-foot high sign they would be placing the bottom of the sign on the ground. The existing sign was only four feet off of the ground now. He requested that they be allowed a 20-foot freestanding sign at the Buchanan Road elevation with the sign proposal to be modified to comply with that height, although they would have to keep some clearance off the grade to prevent any vandalism.

Mr. Gastineau also noted that they had asked that the minor tenants be allowed to use either single faced can signs or individual letter signs. Staff had asked that all new tenants use individual letter signs. He explained that they were trying to attract more regional tenants although there were still some "Mom and Pop" tenants in the center and there would continue to be until the regional tenants were brought in. He explained that the cost of the individual letter signs would be more than the single face cabinet signs. The landlord would also prefer the use of individual letters but would like the option of 20-foot frontages to allow the Mom and Pop tenants to be able to spend less on his/her signage.

Commissioner Garcia spoke to staff’s recommended sign height for the freestanding sign on Buchanan Road which he did not find inappropriate. He noted that there was a tendency with the lower signs that they would not be visible to passing traffic at all times.
He suggested that due to the size of the shopping center, the signage, as proposed, would be warranted. He also suggested that the City’s requirements were too stringent and should not have been so rigid since that would lead to variance requests.

Commissioner Garcia also understood that the existing tenants were not being asked to change existing signs when the center was remodeled due to the associated costs.

Mr. Gastineau understood that staff had recommended that the signs consist of individual letters as new tenants occupied the center. All regional tenants had individual letter signs, although that would be cost prohibitive for the smaller tenants.

Mr. Barton explained that the applicant had also applied for a Master Sign Program. The intent of the City’s Sign Code was that a Master Sign Program be put in place to permit some consistency of signs in the shopping center and prevent a mixture of different types of signs. The applicant had asked to be able to use the channel letters and use canned signs. Staff had suggested that that would work if there was a progression towards the use of channel letter signs in the future as the tenants turned over, which could be worked out if only new tenants were required to use the channel letter signs and where the existing tenants would be allowed the continued use of can signage.

In response to Commissioner Ramirez, Mr. Gastineau explained that if he was allowed the 20 foot height for the freestanding sign, he would try to maintain a four foot clearance. The top section would be crunched down to provide the height from grade. He noted that the smaller freestanding sign was approximately two feet from grade.

Mr. Messner requested clarification of the expiration date and inquired if that was the date when the project must be started or completed.

Ms. Ayres explained that pursuant to the City’s Municipal Code, the applicant would have to obtain a building permit by the expiration date or request an extension of the approval.

**MOTION: AP-03-75**

Motion by Commissioner Tumbaga to adopt Resolution No. 9474, approving AP-03-75 (DR) Design Review approval of architectural drawings for the renovation of an existing 86,495 square foot shopping center (consisting of two buildings), Master Sign Program and Sign Exception for maximum height and area for the replacement of two existing freestanding signs located at 1317-1399 Buchanan Road for “Highlands Square Shopping Center Remodel, Master Sign Program, and Sign Exception, with the conditions as shown, except that the freestanding sign at Buchanan Road was approved at 20 feet, and with the addition of the standard condition that Approval shall expire on March 9, 2005, unless... The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ramirez and carried by the following vote:

**Ayes:** Commissioners Dolojan, Kelley, Ramirez, Tumbaga, Garcia  
**Noes:** None
Vice Chairperson Harris returned to the dais at this time.

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Notice of Intent (to review/approve projects at staff level):
   b. Los Medanos Plaza Exterior Remodel. AP-04-44 (DR).
   c. Metro PCS Co-location at 2099 Range Road. AP-04-97.

The Commission acknowledged the Notices of Intent.

2. Update Advanced Planning Work Program

Ms. Ayres explained that she had provided the Commission with information on the advanced work programs that the Council had adopted recently. She noted that staff was to begin the comprehensive update of the Zoning Code, a process that would take approximately three years and which would be broken down into four phases. The Commission was provided with a timeline for those efforts. The Council would also be asked at its next meeting to appropriate funds to hire an intern to assist with that process. The Council had also approved a work program to begin the Inclusionary Housing Feasibility Study. The City had received two bids from consultants to prepare that study. The Council would also be asked to select a consultant. That work and the ordinance were to be completed by the end of December 2004.

Ms. Ayres noted that the Commission Conflict of Interest Statements were due by Monday, March 15, 2004. Further, she reminded the Commission that there were three seats coming up for vacancy, including Commissioner’s Tumbaga and Kelley and Chairperson Leonard. Applications were being accepted for those seats including applications from the current Commissioners interested in reappointment.

Mr. Jerome advised that the Commission had also been provided with a letter from the City Attorney and a copy of the code changes relative to the Council Committee recommendations for the reorganization of City Commissions. Some of the changes were that a Commissioner could be removed for cause, such as missed meetings with the criteria to be formulated by the Council. A two-year period was identified between terms before an individual could be considered for reappointment. In addition, staggered appointments to odd rather than even years had been recommended to ensure that the appointments to Commissions occurred a year after a Council election.

Further, all Commissions were to consist of seven members. The Historical Resources Commission had been reorganized with the transfer of the primary duties of that
Commission given to the Planning Commission which would have design review authority over any of the downtown areas or sites that could be designated as a historical resource. The Historical Resources Commission would now consist of seven members, with the Chair of the Planning Commission, Chair of the Recreation Commission, Chair of the Community Advisory Committee, the City Planner, Recreation Director and the Curator and Head of the Historical Society. The Commission must also meet at least one a year.

Mr. Jerome advised that the reorganization of the City Commissions/Committees would be brought to the City Council for a public hearing on March 15.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Commissioner Garcia reported that he had attended the TRANSPLAN Meeting on February 12, with a discussion on Measure C to be placed back on the ballot in November. There had also been discussions on eBART, where the ridership had been questioned that would justify the system and discussions on a recommendation to endorse Measure 2, which would raise fees on the bridge tolls an additional one dollar, which had been on the March 2 ballot, and which had been approved by the voters. He noted that the TRANSPLAN meeting scheduled for March had been canceled.

COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Kelly requested that code enforcement contact the property owner of the vacant parcel adjacent to the Arco Gas Station at Leland/Loveridge intersection to conduct weed abatement.

Commissioner Tumbaga expressed concern with the use of A-frame signs all over the City and the excessive use of banners. She also expressed concern with the fact that many businesses had an excessive amount of window signage, or postings, obstructing the views of the windows of the business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M. to a regular meeting of the Planning Commission on March 23, 2004 at 7:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers at 65 Civic Avenue, Pittsburg, CA.

MELISSA AYRES, Secretary
Pittsburg Planning Commission