

# HERCULES

RE: DEVELOPMENT



CITY OF HERCULES REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY NEWSLETTER VOLUME 2 ISSUE 2 Q1 2009

## MEETING CALENDAR

- **Redevelopment Agency/  
City Council**  
Second and fourth Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.
- **Planning Commission**  
First and third Monday at 7:00 p.m.
- **Community Services  
Commission**  
Second Monday at 7:00 p.m.
- **Library Commission**  
Third Thursday at 7:00 p.m.

*All meetings are held in the Hercules City Council Chambers, 111 Civic Drive, unless otherwise noted.*

## FEATURED EVENTS

- **Community Update**  
Saturday, April 4, 2009  
10:00AM-12:00PM at the Community Swim Center
- **City-wide Garage Sale**  
Saturday, April 25, 2009  
8:00AM-3:00PM  
For more information call 724-7105

## *In this issue*

- Grand Opening of Frog Pad Park
- Annual Tree Lighting Event
- Residential Stop Sign Information
- New Radar Activated Speed Signs
- John Muir Parkway and Tsushima Bridge Now Open

# City Plans to Extend and Expand its Redevelopment Project Area and Reinstate Selective Use of Eminent Domain

## What is Redevelopment and why does it matter in Hercules?

Redevelopment is a process that was created through State of California legislation to assist city and county governments in eliminating “blight” (i.e. a physical and economic liability to the community) from a designated area, and to achieve desired development, reconstruction, and rehabilitation including residential, commercial, industrial, and retail uses.

In 1982, the Hercules City Council created the Hercules Redevelopment Agency. Once the Agency was formed, it established a Redevelopment Project Area so it could undertake the activities allowed under California Law. A proposed Project Area must be blighted, and the existence of that blight must be definitively demonstrated. The City of Hercules made those findings in 1983 when it created the Dynamite

Project Area. As the name suggests, much of the land in this area was part of the former Hercules Powder (Dynamite) Company.

Today it includes many of our new neighborhoods such as Promenade, Baywood, and Bayside as well as the North Shore Business Park. Because of the success of the Dynamite Project Area and the continued need for blight elimination, the City went back to the drawing board and suggested the creation of another Redevelopment Project Area. That action was approved in 1999 when the City Council created Project Area Number 2, which includes the area that is now Victoria by the Bay and Creekside (aka Home Depot Shopping Center). The City then merged the two Project Areas to create what is now known as the Hercules Merged Redevelopment Project Area.

See Redevelopment, page 2

## Tax Increment Financing

Projects in Redevelopment Areas are funded through a pioneering concept approved by the voters of the State of California known as “Tax Increment Financing,” or TIF for short.

When a Redevelopment Project Area is formed, the property tax values on the tax roll at the time of formation become the tax “base” for redevelopment funding purposes. Through the efforts of a Redevelopment Agency to improve economic, environmental, social, and structural conditions in the area, property values presumably will increase. As these values increase, a portion of the value in excess of the “base year” becomes the incremental assessed value, or tax increment revenue, and is used solely by a Redevelopment Agency to fund its activities.

In this way, our Redevelopment Agency receives funding for further activities only if we are successful in improving the area’s overall economic health and vitality. It is important to note that Redevelopment Agencies do not possess any power to tax or assess. In fact, they allow property taxes that would normally go to agencies outside the City, to stay in Hercules for Hercules projects.

## ■ *Redevelopment from page 1*



*Much of the infrastructure at Victoria by the Bay was funded by the Redevelopment Agency*

### **How has Redevelopment helped Hercules?**

Redevelopment has benefited our community in many ways. It created the forum for the community workshops in 2000 that resulted in a Vision Plan for future development (aka the Central Hercules Plan). It helped finance much of the infrastructure (i.e. sewer lines, water lines and streets) throughout Victoria by the Bay, North Shore Business Park and along Sycamore Avenue which serves the Bayside, Baywood and Promenade neighborhoods. It also helped finance the Eden Senior Housing Project as well as the Library and continues to fund the City’s First Time Homebuyer Assistance Program. These are just a few of the projects that have benefited from Redevelopment and will continue to do so as long as the Redevelopment Agency exists.

You might think Redevelopment is just for the new parts of Hercules; but what about the remainder of the City that has been here for years? The benefits of Redevelopment reach far beyond the boundaries of the Project Area. Redevelopment allows us to improve

the entire community's image and our ability to attract quality businesses that we want and expect. Redevelopment efforts can repair and upgrade infrastructure like our streets which improves the appearance of and the circulation within the Project Area. For example, while John Muir Parkway, Sycamore and San Pablo Avenues are within the Project Area, all of our residents benefit from improvement to those streets. Additionally, many of our established families in the older sections of town have family members wishing to own a home. Our First Time Homebuyer Assistance Program, which is funded by Redevelopment, can help those younger families stay in Hercules and own a home. Finally, Redevelopment dollars can be spent outside the Project Area just as long as we show that there is added benefit to the Project Area.

### **How will Redevelopment help Hercules in the future and will it ever involve the use of Eminent Domain?**

Although much of what we set out to do in 1983 has been accomplished, our work is not done. There are still properties in the Project Area that are



*City's Corporation Yard in the Dynamite Project Area is ripe for redevelopment*



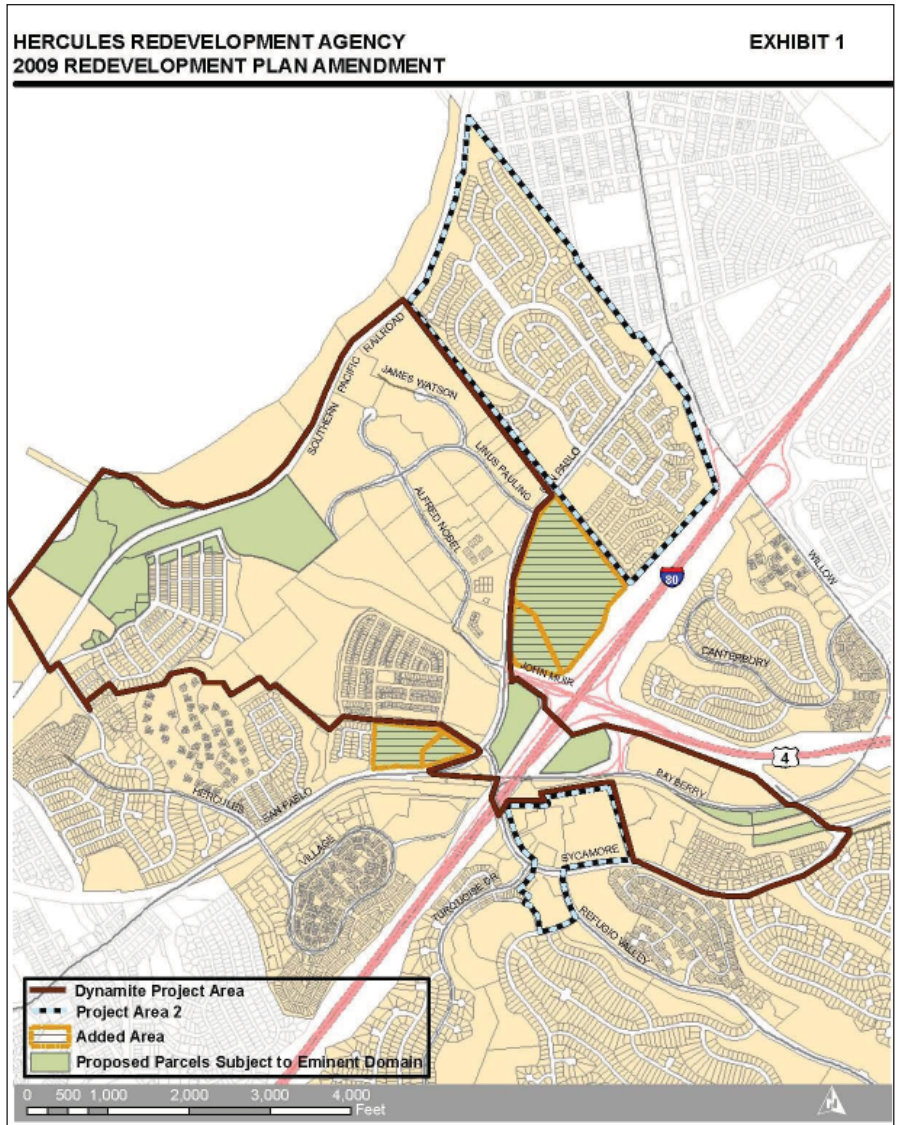
*Hilltown property adjacent to San Pablo Avenue & State Route 4 will be added to the Project Area*

either blighted or underutilized. As a result, our City Council and staff are working to ensure that these properties do in fact get developed. For example, the cost of the Inter-modal Transit Center at the Waterfront, which will include a train station, ferry terminal and bus depot, will cost upwards of \$80 million dollars. A cost the City alone cannot afford without the Redevelopment Agency. We are also trying to attract quality retail tenants to the New Town Center, Sycamore Main and Sycamore Crossing projects. We want to see the potential of the tank farm property (aka Hilltown) developed with its stunning views and location.

To ensure our continued ability to assist these projects, the City is



*Sycamore Crossing at the corner of Sycamore and San Pablo will be added to the Project Area*



*Hercules Merged Redevelopment Project Areas*

proposing to extend the life of the Dynamite Project Area from the year 2026 to 2036 and to add Hilltown and Sycamore Crossing to the Project Area. The City is also contemplating reinstating the Agency's eminent domain authority on selective non-residential parcels of land that are either undeveloped or underutilized such as at the Waterfront and along Willow Avenue. Should the Agency need to acquire these underutilized parcels (at fair market value) to ensure their ultimate development, the City would like to have the tools to do so.

The first step in accomplishing these goals is to conduct an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to study the environmental impacts of these actions on the City. A copy of that report will be available to the public in the Spring of 2009. For more information on this project or to receive a copy of the EIR when it becomes available, contact Liz Warmerdam at [lwarmerdam@ci.hercules.ca.us](mailto:lwarmerdam@ci.hercules.ca.us). ■



# Frog Pad Park

On Tuesday, October 14, a grand opening was held for the new Frog Pad Park, located at Sycamore and Willet, with over 150 people attending the event. Representatives from the Hercules Historical Society and Chinese Association of Hercules spoke about the co-sponsored memorial plaque and Ginkgo tree that is located in the northwest corner of the park to honor the Chinese laborers of the Hercules Power Company. Children of all ages enjoyed playing

on the new equipment and running on the cushy grass. The park was highly anticipated and residents from all over town came out to celebrate. Event attendees said they enjoyed watching the park progress and how thrilled they were that it is finally open. The park has many wonderful and unique features including two play areas, bucket swings, cement seating, with frogs stamped on top, and a beautiful trellis covered picnic area. The Ginkgo tree and memorial plaque

are another special addition to the park. A Ginkgo tree was chosen because of its ancient roots in Eastern China and distinctive characteristics. The bronze memorial plaque has writing in both English and Chinese and an aerial view of the Hercules Powder Works plant. Park visitors are encouraged to take a moment to reflect on the diligence and service of those fallen workers and enjoy not only the beauty of the Ginkgo tree, but the entire park.

# Tree Lighting Brings Holiday Cheer

This year's Annual Tree Lighting attracted over 300 participants who filled the Community Swim Center for entertainment, arts, crafts, cookies and pictures with Santa. The Sincerity Girls Ensemble kicked off the event leading the crowd in holiday caroles. Following a processional by the Hercules Police Explorers Color Guard, City Council and Mr. and Mrs. Claus, the 40 foot tree, covered with multi-color lights and ornaments, lit up the night. Participants then came inside the Swim Center to warm up and enjoy musical performances by the Boy Scouts of America Troop #693 and the Aerobi Kids. Following the performances, kids and even some adults got their picture taken with Santa or snacked on a warm holiday cookie.

## Community Swim Center Proven To Be Good Location

Even though the event attracts larger crowds every year, the City recently received some questions as to why the event is held at its current time and location. For those of you who have been a resident for at least a few years, you may remember when the City held the first tree lighting event at the City Hall complex. The lack of parking and indoor space in case of inclement weather prompted the

City to find an alternative location. Since the Swim Center is the City's largest facility, easily accommodating 300 and close proximity to parking, it was a natural choice.

The City then purchased a large, live tree for the site, eliminating the need to purchase a tree every year or store an artificial tree, however it also made the location more permanent. Discussions have occurred about moving the event to the Waterfront once this area is developed. Of course, this possibility is still several years away and there are other benefits to having the tree near the Swim Center. Since City staff are close by, monitoring the tree is much easier and the potential for vandalism is greatly reduced. City staff have also found many residents who come to the event, and are surprised to learn about all the programs the Parks and Recreation Department has to offer.

## Friday Date Adds Variety To City Events

Another question that has been asked is why the event is held on Friday. The City tries to offer events on a variety of days to accommodate Hercules residents various schedules. Many events already occur on the weekend such as the Cultural

Festival, Community Clean Up, Community Update and Farmers' Market, so this event was scheduled for a weekday to help maintain some diversity. In addition, the Community Swim Center is usually booked a year in advance for weekend activities, especially during the holiday season, so having the event on Friday keeps these valuable weekends open for private events which serve as important revenue generators.

## Consistency Helps Residents Plan Ahead

The City understands the difficulty in making an event that everyone can attend, however, we continue to strive to make our events accessible to all who would like to participate. Although it may seem that a location or date is chosen nonchalantly, there is actually a great deal of thought and planning put into the decision. Consistency then helps residents plan ahead. Since residents know this event is held on the first Friday of December, they can already mark the date for next year's event. So make sure to mark your calendar for December 4th, 2009 and join us at the Community Swim Center to help light our tree and celebrate the holiday season.





## and Read this Article

Have you ever been at an intersection and wondered why there is a stop sign? Or seen a car do less of a stop and more of a California roll? Or maybe you've heard a car slam on the brakes only to speed up moments later? If we have all witnessed, and possibly even been guilty of these types of incidents, then what is the point of stop signs?

When put in the right locations, stop signs can increase driver visibility, reduce traffic collisions, and improve traffic flow, however, stop signs are usually not an appropriate traffic calming tool on neighborhood streets. Research indicates that stop signs do little to reduce traffic speed but can be effective if located at intersections with high volumes of cars or low visibility.

If used unnecessarily, stop signs can actually make an intersection less safe since:

- **Drivers Don't Stop** - Unneeded stop signs are frequently ignored. Drivers on a major street may either roll or run through the stop sign because, in their experience, there is little cross-traffic. This puts pedestrians and cross-traffic at risk.
- **Drivers Speed Up After a Stop Sign** - Numerous studies nationwide have shown that speeds within a block of the stop sign are largely unaffected by the stop. Naturally, motorists have to slow down when approaching a stop sign. But, they often speed up quickly after the stop to make up for lost time.

Another issue with stop signs is that they increase noise and pollution. Stopping and starting causes increased tire and engine noise. Residents living close to and shortly after the stop will experience an increase in traffic noise due to drivers braking or accelerating. Even houses several

blocks away may experience the traffic noise increase as drivers try to gain 'lost' time. Stopping and idling at unwarranted stop signs also increases automobile exhaust and fuel consumption unnecessarily.

The Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) prescribes uniform standards for installing and maintaining traffic control devices on streets and highways, including the application of stop signs. The most common request the City receives regarding traffic calming is for an additional stop sign to make the intersection an all-way stop. According to the MUTCD, an all-way stop is appropriate for intersections when at least one of the following conditions exist:

- **High Volume of Cars** - 200-300 vehicles per hour for 8-hours on each of the intersecting streets
- **High Number of Accidents** - 5 or more reported crashes in a 12-month period
- **No or Low Visibility** - After stopping, drivers can't see conflicting traffic unless cross-traffic stops
- **Balanced Volumes** - each intersecting street has about the same volume of cars

City engineers are responsible for following the California MUTCD and recommending stop sign installation based on these standards. Brent Salmi, City Engineer, stresses the need for balance saying, "Installing unnecessary stop signs will only frustrate drivers and increase traffic congestion without addressing the real issue of vehicle speed." Due to the potential hazards unwarranted stop signs can cause for both drivers and pedestrians, it is the City's policy to ensure an intersection meets the MUTCD's standards before installing any type of traffic control device. This helps keep our roads and our residents safe.

# A Sign That Really Works

Radar activated speed limit signs are a less known traffic calming tool, but have recently been employed by the City at three locations: East on San Pablo Avenue near Hercules Avenue, West on San Pablo Avenue near Linus Pauling and on Sycamore Avenue near Willet.

Studies indicate these signs help reduce vehicle speeds, especially for drivers traveling over the speed limit, while not interfering with regular traffic flow. The signs serve as a reminder to drivers as to what speed they are traveling and help drivers to match their speed to the posted limit. “In our hurried business world, drivers often don’t realize how fast they are traveling,” says Public Works Superintendent Jeff Brown. “The radar speed limit signs are proven to reduce traffic speeds making them a great traffic calming tool.”



*The newest radar activated speed sign on Hercules Avenue*

Police Chief Fred Deltorchio is a big proponent of the signs. “The signs allow people to police themselves, so the need for officer enforcement is reduced or even eliminated,” says Deltorchio. Two of the signs were installed in November and the third sign was added the following month. “Virtually every comment we’ve received indicates drivers are more conscious of their speed and are slowing down.”

The signs pack a powerful punch making roads safer by lowering vehicle speeds, educating drivers, enhancing road engineering, reducing the need for officer enforcement and maintaining healthy traffic flows. With all these benefits incorporated into one traffic calming tool, its easy to see why these signs are popping up more in Hercules and in the Bay Area.

The City of Hercules utilizes many other residential traffic calming tools including:

- Roundabouts/Traffic circles
- Speed tables
- Smaller blocks/More street connections
- Modified curb returns
- Narrower roads
- Street striping

## *Staff and resources*

### **REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY BOARD**

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- **Affordable Housing Program**  
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- **Engineering/Public Works**  
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799-8241

*City Hall is located at 111 Civic Drive.  
Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
website: [www.ci.hercules.ca.us](http://www.ci.hercules.ca.us)*

### **ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION**

Hercules Re:Development provides an update on projects funded by the Redevelopment Agency and/or projects located within the Redevelopment Project Areas.

At times, updates on projects that are not located within the Redevelopment Project Areas will be featured, as these projects are anticipated to serve all areas of the community.

# New Bridge and Parkway a Smooth Ride for Residents



The recently opened Tsushima Bridge and John Muir Parkway have become quite a hit with residents of Bayside, Baywood, Promenade and Schuler Homes. The new route provides easy access to Interstate 80 and Highway 4 and simultaneously alleviates traffic congestion at the intersection of San Pablo and Sycamore.

Approximately 50 people, including city staff, contractors and residents, attended the grand opening on October 28 and were among the first to walk across the bridge. Attendees enjoyed light refreshments and a wonderful fall breeze.

Since the opening, residents have been expressing how pleased they are with the new bridge and parkway. Gerald Academia, resident of Bayside said, "It's really improved my commute. My wife and

I live close to Tsushima and the new route is a straight shot on to the freeway." Erwin Blancaflor, Public Works Director, said "For residents in the area, its only one stoplight to get on I-80, compared to the three drivers pass through taking Sycamore and San Pablo."

Before Tsushima Bridge officially opened, public works crews also striped Tsushima Avenue which encourages drivers to obey the residential speed limit of 25 MPH. In addition, police have increased the number of patrolling units especially during peak commute hours.

City staff will now begin Phase 2 of John Muir Parkway and another bridge, called Bayfront Bridge, which will extend the route all the way to the Waterfront and the future Inter-Modal Transit Center.



CITY OF HERCULES REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY NEWSLETTER



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