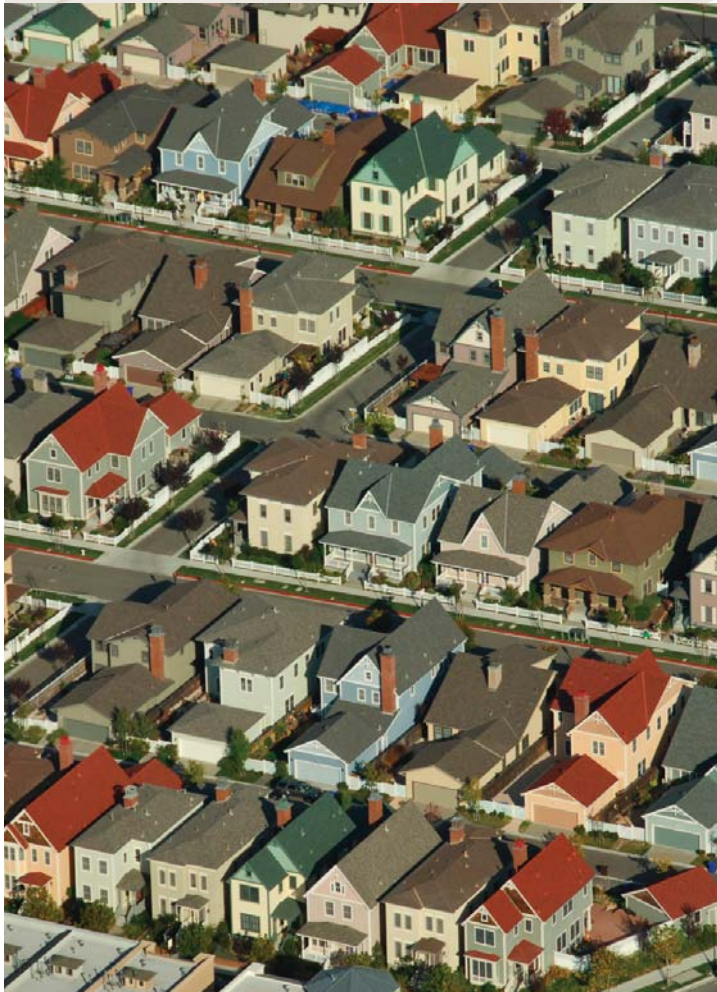


# the hercules hub

CITY OF HERCULES **REDEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY NEWSLETTER**



## New Town Center

### Why a New Town Center?

The “Old Town Center” of Hercules dates back to the 1890s when DuPont built a company town around the dynamite manufacturing and shipping facility. Since 2001, the Agency has been co-developing a “New Town Center” district of approximately 35 acres at the intersection of Interstate 80 and State Route 4.

This area is today’s geographic center of Hercules. It is located at a visible, regionally prominent, heavily traveled crossroad which should logically benefit from the hundreds of millions of dollars of public investment in the I-80 and SR4 freeways. But since construction of I-80 in 1959, the area has been neglected and blighted with underutilized and underserved parcels. An important connecting road segment, Willow Avenue, retains its historic character of a rural highway despite being in the center of town. Necessary modern water, sewer, drainage, power, and telephone services were not provided.

Lack of planned investment in the district’s roads is telling. Overall, the thoroughfares reflect a series of sensible small decisions made over many decades but without an integrated plan for development of the district. The result is a textbook example of the need for redevelopment, where public investment fell short, and market forces alone are unable to produce a desired and needed addition to the heart of today’s Hercules community fabric.

### Improving Transit and Mobility

The most visible and important part of this district is the Hercules Transit Center, owned by BART. It provides a major bus transfer terminal for the West Contra Costa Transit Authority (WestCAT). WestCAT provides local service to Hercules and nearby communities and express bus service to the El Cerrito Del Norte BART Station and San Francisco. Many passengers are also served by casual carpools loading at the Transit Center.

## Affordable Housing Program

The Affordable Housing Program (AHP) of the City of Hercules is one of the most progressive homeowner-centric programs in the Bay Area. Established by the Redevelopment Agency, the program consists of several programs to assist residents and business owners within the city:

- \* First Time Homebuyer Program
- \* Housing Beautification and Rehabilitation Loans
- \* Business Development Loans
- \* Quick Fix Loans

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## Brownfield Development Continues at Hilltown

One of the last pieces of the City of Hercules commitment to eliminating the historic brownfield sites is starting to take shape. The Planning Commission and City Council have reviewed and approved initial plans for Hill Town, a high-density, pedestrian-oriented master planned community that will occupy the site of the former PG&E oil storage facility at San Pablo Avenue and John Muir Parkway.

In 1998, the City of Hercules began a multi-year planning process to define future uses of the brownfield sites that occupied much of the City between Interstate 80 and San Pablo Bay.

The former California Powder Works site was transformed into the Waterfront District that today consists of the Promenade, Bayside, and Baywood neighborhoods, as well as the North Shore Business Park. Pacific Refinery has been replaced by Victoria By The Bay, a neighborhood of large single and multi-family homes overlooking San Pablo Bay.



The PG&E oil storage and pumping facility was built in the 1970's as part of a system to move fuel oil from Richmond to power generating facilities in eastern Contra Costa County. Regulatory changes made the facility obsolete, and it has been dormant for over twenty years. The Central Hercules Plan envisioned a development called Hill Town on the PG&E site.



Santa Clara Valley Housing Group acquired the property, and is working with the City to design a neighborhood of homes, passive and active parks, trails and neighborhood commercial. In keeping with the Central Hercules Plan, Hill Town is being designed in the style of an Italian hillside village.

The project takes advantage of the hilly and visually prominent site by developing a high-density, pedestrian-oriented master planned community. The pedestrian experience will be focused around public plazas, with stairways, other pedestrian corridors, and internal streets oriented, where feasible, along view corridors toward San Pablo Bay or to the east, as well as to onsite visual amenities, such as plazas with fountains.

The Planning Commission and City Council will be reviewing the proposed plans in public meetings throughout 2007.





# Affordable Housing

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## First Time Homebuyer Program

This program provides financial assistance in the form of a loan to qualified first time homebuyers wishing to purchase a pre-owned home within the City. Homebuyers must meet income eligibility guidelines established by the State of California and adjusted for Contra Costa County, to apply for assistance. For example, to be eligible a family of 4 must not earn more than \$100,600 per year. Generally, the Redevelopment Agency will provide 15% of the purchase price but will not exceed \$50,000. The loan becomes a silent-second, deferred for 10 years without interest accrual, and then repaid for 20 years at a 3% simple interest rate.

## Housing Beautification and Rehabilitation Loan Program

The Redevelopment Agency annually appropriates funds to loan income-eligible homeowners who require assistance in rehabilitating or beautifying their home to increase value and curb appreciation in their neighborhoods. The homes must be owner occupied and within the City of Hercules. Loans may be utilized for interior or exterior needs to include but not limited to: painting, fence work, curb and gutters, landscaping, drainage, repairs to decks, patios, porches or landings, plumbing, electrical or mechanical repairs or improvements. Typically, the loan maximum is \$25,000 and it is deferred for 10 years without interest accrual, and a repayment period over a 20 year term at 3% simple interest.



## Quick Fix Loan Program

The Quick Fix Loan Program operates much like the Housing Beautification and Rehabilitation Loan Program except that the Quick Fix Loan is just for exterior conditions that can be quickly fixed. The loan amount is set at a maximum of \$5,000 and is deferred for 3 years without interest accrual, and repaid over a 7 year term at 3% simple interest.

## Business Development Loan Program

The Business Development Loan Program (BDLP) provides low cost financial assistance to businesses within the City of Hercules. Typically, loans are intended for façade improvements, equipment purchases, debt restructuring, leasehold improvements, including but not limited to meeting Americans with Disabilities Act requirements, stucco, paint, doors, windows, signage, canopies, and other tangible improvements. Working capital, start up, or home-based businesses are not generally considered for funding. The BDLP offers a secured loan of up to \$75,000, of a term not greater than twenty-years and a simple interest rate of 3% per annum.

These are just a few of the programs administered by the Affordable Housing Program as established by the Redevelopment Agency. For further information, please consult our City Website at: [www.ci.hercules.ca.us](http://www.ci.hercules.ca.us) and select the "Living in Hercules" tab and then select the "Affordable Housing" tab. For the BDLP select the "Business" tab and then the "Business Assistance" tab below. You may also call us at 510.245.6517.

## Hercules Florist & Gifts



**(BDLP Recipient)**

"Hercules Florist combines stunning floral arrangements with superb customer service. They have arrangements in every price range, utilizing their designing

expertise to make artistic and beautiful bouquets.

The staff are always friendly and ready to assist with creative ideas that will meet all your needs."



## New Town

from page 1

During the morning rush, I-80 from Hercules to the Bay Bridge is the most congested Bay Area freeway segment. Caltrans is in the process of constructing two additional high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. The loop off-ramp from eastbound I-80 diverges from the I-80/SR4 transition roadway, which is a non-standard configuration and feeds street congestion in the evening rush.

Growth in the Hercules and surrounding areas has brought greater demand for regional transit services, and improved interface of the freeway system with the local road system. However, there were no funded plans for facility improvements. One of the chief reasons for redeveloping a New Town Center is to create the financial resources for needed improvements to the transit and freeway access facilities.

### Redevelopment Tools

The New Town Center project puts into operation many of the financial tools and powers available to the Agency under State law for public purposes. The New Town Center is the culmination of many years of effort by the City to reverse the unfavorable physical and economic conditions which have forestalled desired development in the Corridor.

- Beginning in 1998, City staff and policy makers began considering the benefits of a possible additional

or new uses for the Park and Ride Parcel.

- In 1999, the City approached BART with a request to relocate the Transit Center, and in 2000, BART agreed to cooperate.
- In 2001, BART made a technical assessment of alternative rail transit extensions into West Contra Costa County, including a route extension along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway right of way, along Willow Avenue, from Richmond BART to the City of Hercules.
- In 2001, the City adopted the Central Hercules Plan, which observed: "An existing cloverleaf exit ramp makes any type of development difficult. But a new alignment of Willow Avenue and a new exit ramp will ease the traffic going to the eastern neighborhoods. With the current cloverleaf alignment, nearly all traffic in Hercules must go through the intersection of Bayberry [Willow] and Sycamore Avenues. In addition, because of the layering and geometry of previous transportation corridors (first the railroad, and later the interstate) the intersection has been abandoned by pedestrians and all but the bravest of bicyclists. The remaining fragmented, oddly shaped parcels of land have been "lost space", tough to develop. With a redesign and realignment of [Willow] Avenue, a pattern of real city blocks can be created,



and some powerful pedestrian improvements can be made.”

- From 2001 to 2003, Agency staff and policymakers investigated and assessed the actual development potential for the Corridor District. The effort included consideration of the feasibility of creating a Town Center comprised of carefully-designed public spaces integrated with a largely commercial set of buildings. The effort also considered the objective of improving access to and capacity of the Hercules Transit Center as a regional transit facility and local transit hub. In 2001, the Agency acquired a major parcel from a private owner.
- In 2004, BART and the Agency formally approved a contract to exchange their parcels, after City and BART staff jointly concluded that the future extension of regional rapid transit to Hercules would be feasible, using a Transit-Oriented Development funding model, if the property exchange occurred.
- In 2004, the City and CalTrans assessed the potential for improvements in the freeway access ramps. The assessment was positive, and so the two agencies began a lengthy and complex engineering study process aimed at improving access to and from the freeways.
- In 2005, the Agency entered into a co-development contract with Hercules New Town Center, LLC, to provide development services.
- Since 2005, the streets and buildings in a New Town Center district have been on the drawing board.

### The Shaping of New Town Center

The Agency’s intent is for the New Town Center to be a pedestrian and transit friendly mix of residential, commercial, office, and public and quasi-public uses that are designed in an urban neighborhood of blocks, streets and buildings. It is to be a new destination downtown that serves as the central gathering, shopping, living and working place for Hercules residents and others from around the region. A fine-grain mix of uses, with care taken in setting the relationship of buildings to the street, with quality streetscapes, will be provided so that Herculeans will feel they are an ‘owner’ of a ‘real’ center of town, and not just a visitor to a private shopping center.

Several formal objectives have been established for New Town Center:

- Closely coordinate with BART and WestCAT to increase the capacity and service levels for regional and local transit.
- Establish streets, blocks and buildings to support a fine-grained mix of residential, commercial, office, and public

uses, including public parks and squares.

- Create a vibrant, urbanized place for shopping, working and living at the core of Hercules by establishing commercial and retail development in the area.
- Provide needed market-rate and affordable housing which will also establish New Town Center as an urbane, populated neighborhood.

### When?

New Town Center will be accomplished in phases. First, the Transit Center will be relocated to Willow Avenue along with needed improvements for pedestrian and vehicle access. Then, two mixed-use blocks of buildings will be constructed on the current Transit Center site. Subsequent phases will continue east along Willow Avenue.

Public hearings on the overall New Town Center program and the first phase construction, are expected to occur in late 2007 or early 2008.

### *Shinsen* (BDLP Recipient)

It means “fresh” in Japanese, and at Shinsen, that’s exactly what you get...

the freshest ingredients and a tasty new twist to a cultural food favorite...

sushi. Serving up sushi (and more) in a friendly and stylish ambience, Shinsen isn’t just appealing to the locals, it’s making a name for itself in the Bay Area food scene. But don’t just take our word for it, read what East Bay Express and the Contra Costa Times had to say about it.



And if the sushi alone isn’t enough to tempt you, check out Shinsen’s lychee mango cocktail (Man-chee)... made with sake, mango juice and the syrup and fruit of lychee. This libation is sure to please.

Shinsen has a recipe for success... freshness, bursts of flavor, and a friendly and inviting atmosphere.

## Rehabilitation of the Historic Civic Arts Building

The Civic Arts Building is located adjacent to the Promenade Subdivision along the waterfront, on Railroad Avenue behind the Historic Homes on Bay Street and next to Railroad Park.

The existing building is in disrepair and has been identified by the California State Historic Preservation Office as an eligible structure for the National Register of Historic Places. The project includes rehabilitating and restoring the site such that it meets historic guidelines and can be re-used as a commercial building, with an 8-space parking lot adjacent to the building as well as a large patio area at the West side of the building.



- **Building Details:** 2,100 sq. ft. single-story building, built in early 1900's.
- **Former Uses:** Residential, office, daycare. Has not been occupied since the early 1990's.
- **Suggested Uses:** Mixed use w/ kitchen, meeting space, open exhibit
- **Landscaping:** Trees and bushes to be planted as a buffer between the building and Historic Homes. Eucalyptus Trees to be trimmed.
- **View:** Unobstructed views of San Pablo Bay from both interior and exterior patio area of building.



Conceptual design plans were approved by the Planning Commission in October 2006 and by the Hercules Redevelopment Agency in November

2006. Construction to begin Summer 2007.

### Project Managers:

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City of Hercules

*Redevelopment Agency*

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