

## Guest Editorial: Sewall's View

BY SEWALL GLINTERNICK  
(Former Chamber Manager)

AGREEING to help edit the *Byline* while Mark Scott is on vacation gives me the opportunity to present some personal thoughts on the less than perfect conditions that exist for businesses in El Cerrito today.



Deborah Stevens, MarketPlace Magazine

I haven't published these thoughts before because I felt it might be inappropriate to do so during my 13

years as manager. But now, after many months of reflection since retiring, I have come to feel there are some suggestions I could offer that would improve things for both the Chamber and El Cerrito businesses.

A lot of good things have been happening in El Cerrito these past few years, but unfortunately, business has benefited from very few of them. For both the city and its residents it has

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## URM Law Okayed

BY SEWALL GLINTERNICK

DETERMINED TO prevent loss of life or injury should a strong or moderate earthquake hit the community, the El Cerrito City Council voted last month to amend its ordinance dealing with local un-reinforced masonry buildings most of which are in the local business district.

The amended ordinance approved by the Council October 5 puts the unsafe buildings into high, medium and low categories, makes retrofitting these structures mandatory, and sets timelines for completing the work.

Based on engineering studies, two of the 17 URM buildings in the city are in the city have been classified as high safety risks and another two as low. The remaining 13 are medium risks.

► See URM Ordinance, page 3

## ECPD Bicycle Patrol



Sgt. Shawn Maples of the El Cerrito Police Department gave an overview of the bicycle patrol to Chamber members at the October luncheon meeting. Chief of Police Scott Kirkland was also present.

Shoot On Site! Photo Services

## Holiday Round-Up Sale Scheduled

AFTER A DIFFICULT year, there are good times ahead for local retailers as the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce prepares to give business a big boost with its annual pre-holiday city-wide Round-Up sale. As work gets underway on El Cerrito Round-Up section in the December edition of *Marketplace* magazine, Chamber Manager Mark Scott, in a letter sent to all members, stressed the fact that in today's tight business climate "customer contacts are more important than ever."

"A strong showing in the pre-holiday Round-Up," he declared, "will show customers we are still strong and still here for their convenience by showcasing the wide array of goods and services available in El Cerrito."

While last June's business Round-Up was one of the best promotions held, plans for the December Round-Up will offer local advertisers much more public exposure than ever before.

Advertisers in the upcoming Round-Up will be able to reach their customers with time tested print ads delivered by direct mail to over 50,000 area homes. In addition, at the same time and at no extra cost, these same full-color advertising messages will be available on the Web at [www.marketplacecontracosta.com](http://www.marketplacecontracosta.com).

In his letter Scott pointed out that now is the time for all local firms, whether they are members of the Chamber or not, to capture new clients and retain old ones by reserving adver-

► See Holiday Round-Up, page 3

## New Director

DIRECTORS of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce named Sonja Givens-Thomas to serve out the unexpired term of the late Nick Bolla.

A 25-year veteran of the elder-care industry and a long-time active member of the Chamber, Givens-Thomas is the Executive Director of El Cerrito Royale, a 102 unit 145 bed independent and assisted living facility for seniors 60 and older located at 6510 Gladys Avenue.

A vice president of Berg Senior Services, she has served as Director of Social Services and Director of Activities during her 16-year career at the local facility and now directs Royale's state licensed independent and assisted living personal care programs.

# Safeway Gets the Target Store

BY SEWALL GLINTERNICK

**I**F ALL GOES WELL a brand new 66,500 sq. ft. Safeway store, complete with 13,600 sq. ft. of additional retail space and 240 parking spaces, will open on the site of the former El Cerrito Target facility no later than August 1, 2011, thanks to the tri-party agreement approved by the City Council last month.

**SAFEWAY**  Under the agreement the El Cerrito Redevelopment Agency waved its repurchase option on the closed Target store and, upon close of escrow between Target and Safeway, the old agreement between Target and the Agency will be terminated as will the \$672,900 loan the city still owes Target.

Understanding there has been some concern here that the fuel center Safeway proposed to build adjacent to Del Norte BART would preclude any opportunity for mixed-use transit-

oriented development on any part of the site, the grocery company agreed to give up its cash offer, remove the fuel center and retail space planned for a 33,773 sq. ft. parcel of land along Hill Street, and give the property to the city for future development.

The agreement also calls for the grocery company to expend more than \$487,000 or pay the city an in-lieu fee of \$487,000 to improve the Ohlone Greenway and retrofit the BART tracks. (Any developer of the Hill Street parcel will be required to repay Safeway 25% of the actual costs of this work.)

Comprehensive redevelopment of the entire Del Norte area has been contemplated for decades, and conveyance of the Hill Street parcel to the city is expected to prompt new efforts for a master plan for development of the area. In report that accompanied the proposed tri-party agreement,

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## GUEST EDITORIAL: SEWALL'S VIEW

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been the best of times; but for business it's the worst of times.

First I would like to address the problems that prevent the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce from doing the job it should. For years this organization has been blessed with a series of great presidents and directors who gave generously of their time and personal funds to keep the Chamber going. There are many members who loyally pay their dues every year, but do little else. As a result today there are too few people to help plan the group's promotions and practically no volunteers to staff the standing committees needed to maximize the Chamber's value to the business community.

Those who belong to the Chamber can't be blamed for this. Most members are people who must devote as much time as possible just seeing to it that their small businesses survive.

The Chamber itself has been forced over the years to spend the bulk of its time and efforts seeing that the organization finds adequate financial resources to keep going, rather than helping chart the course for the greatest possible improvement of the business community.

The next problem is posed by the many local residents who are content to display an indifference about the operation of their local government. Apparently, they're unconcerned about what's going on down at city hall where the bureaucrats have developed an operat-

ing system that effectively prevents the public from interfering too much in the governing process.

But, blaming the residents for not paying enough attention to local government, would be wrong. Their apparent lack of concern is simply the result of the fact they're satisfied that their property values and service have held steady while business has taken a big hit during the current economic downturn. Besides, today's economic conditions require most residents to concentrate completely on meeting the financial demands of their day-to-day existence.

The local government itself also deserves a close look. While all at city hall are courteous, intelligent and devoted, they are also subject to having to gain re-election or the economic pressure of having to justify their employment, even if it means working up a number of make-work projects.

You can't be too harsh in judging these officials. Those on the City Council are all good, well-meaning individuals who, for the most part, gain office without any real experience in what it takes to run a business in this community. Most of the city staff are equally ignorant of the problems the business community in El Cerrito must deal with.

While it is hard to find any individual to blame for these unpleasant circumstances, I respectfully suggest there are at least a few easily made improvements

that would benefit the Chamber of Commerce and its members.

First, individual Chamber members must begin to realize they owe this organization more than their dues. Without being specifically asked, they're going to have to volunteer their time if the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce is ever going to reach its full potential and operate like a well-oiled machine.

Next, while the city has been generous with the Chamber when asked in the past, city hall is going to have to stop thinking of this assistance as a "gift" and regard it as an "investment" in the city's future. After all, if the Chamber was not around to continuously promote El Cerrito and handle the concerns of local businesses, the city would have to hire more people or an expensive outside consulting service to do the job.

If city officials ever come to their senses and make financial support of the Chamber an integral part of the budget without unreasonable preconditions, it would eliminate the need for the management of this organization to spend the bulk of its time trying to raise money instead of concentrating on work to build the business community.

What it all boils down to is this: The El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce needs a lot more heavily committed members so those in local government can finally be convinced this organization should be used to provide them with a constant source of information about the needs and opinions of business here.

## SAFeway

► Continued from page 2

Redevelopment Manager Lori Treviño and Agency Counsel Jack Nagel said that, while the Hill Street strip was small, including it in a master plan and ultimately a redevelopment project would “allow for development cohesive with both the proposed Safeway store and surrounding BART and private property.”

Approval of the tri-party agreement brings to a temporary halt the long-time efforts of the Redevelopment Agency to bring business/residential mixed-use to the Del Norte area.

Earlier this year when both Safeway and Walmart were competing for the Target property, the Redevelopment Agency revealed it had raised the notion of mixed use development on the site with both companies. Both firms, the report declared, expressed a willingness to consider mixed-use development on the site, but not in the near future.

**Reminder: Chamber luncheon meeting is on  
Tuesday, Nov. 10th, at noon.  
Wednesday, Nov. 11th, is Veterans Day.**

## URM ORDINANCE

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Under the terms of the amended ordinance the owners of these buildings are all required to notify all their tenants of the availability of engineering reports by December 18, 2009. By May 18, 2010, they must send the city's building official a letter of intent indicating their plans for dealing with their building's seismic hazards.

The recently approved amended ordinance also sets timelines for the owners to present the city with their retrofit or building demolition plans.

The owners of high risk structures will have one year to submit plans and another year to complete retrofitting; medium risk structures two years to submit plans and an additional year to finish the work; low risk buildings get three years to submit plans and a year to complete the project.

The Council may consider allowing a one year extension to this timeline if it finds an economic hardship exists due to “prevalent economic downturn or difficulty in obtaining financing for abatement work.” Property owners may also appeal for a year's extension based on an historic analysis of their building.

Should an URM structure owner fail to comply with the terms of the amended ordinance, the city building official may order the entire building be vacated and remain empty until the law is complied with. If compliance hasn't occurred within 90 days of the building being shut down, the city official may order the URM be demolished.

Presenting the amended Seismic Hazards Identification and Mitigation legislation for approval on October 5 were Economic Development Projects Manager Dwayne Dalman, Building

Official Brian Fenty, and Community Development Director Mitch Oshinsky.

In their report to the three pointed out the ordinance was being amended

### Wait, There's More

WHEN IT COMES to earthquake safety in El Cerrito, it's not all over until it's all over! As the Council was approving an amended ordinance covering retrofitting of seismic hazards in un-reinforced masonry business buildings on October 7, officials announced staff was proceeding to focus on “soft story” buildings in El Cerrito that were in need of earthquake retrofit.

The staff report described “soft story” buildings as: “Wood frame, multi-family apartment houses constructed before January 1, 1978, where the ground floor portion of the wood frame structure contains parking or other similar open space that causes soft, weak or open wall lines, and having one or more levels above the ground floor.”

Community Development and Fire staff, the report said, have completed a survey of the entire city and have found that there are potentially 230 “soft story” buildings in El Cerrito.

The City Council was told that next the staff will schedule an outreach meeting with the affected property owners to inform them of their status. Then staff will prepare a “soft story ordinance” with retrofit and timeline requirements for Council consideration.

as the result of an “extensive amount of public outreach” which had been ordered by the Council.

“The feedback that staff received as the result of the outreach,” the trio reported, “was that no one is thrilled to spend the money, especially in these times. However, given the risk to life and safety, property and business the feeling has been that the program is reasonable.”

“While the retrofit costs is substantial, especially in these times, the cost of repairing or replacing an earthquake damaged URM building are substantially higher.”

They listed the cost of retrofit at \$20 to \$60 per sq. ft. (\$40,000 to \$120,000); cost to repair a damaged building at \$75 to \$150 per sq. ft. (\$150,000 to \$300,000); cost to replace an earthquake damaged building at \$200 to \$300 per sq. ft. (\$400,000 to \$600,000).

## HOLIDAY ROUND-UP

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tising space in the upcoming El Cerrito only Round-Up section in the *Marketplace*.

The holiday ad sales staff of Sewall Glinternick and Jeffrey Scott stand ready to help assist in the design and layout of old and new ads which must be ordered and paid for by November 10, 2009. Businesses wishing to participate in the pre-holiday promotion may get helpful hints for doing so or may reserve space by telephoning the Chamber office at (510) 705-1202 or Glinternick at (510) 652-9133.

By participating, Manager Scott declared, advertisers would be “helping the Chamber show the great strength of El Cerrito business at this time of great need.”

# Planning Begins for Tradeway Furniture Site

BY SEWALL GLINTERNICK

THE EL CERRITO Redevelopment Agency Board has started planning for use of the former Tradeway Furniture site which it bought earlier this year with over \$4 million from their Low and Moderate Income Housing Fund.

The Agency conducted a study session October 5th to help establish the Board's priorities for development of the Tradeway site in order to allow the staff to move forward in crafting a strategy for successful redevelopment of the property at 10860 and 10848 San Pablo Avenue.

In analyzing the feasibility of four different scenarios for possible redevelopment of the Tradeway property, staff pointed out that some type of development is more likely to be achieved in today's economic climate and other types stand a better chance after the economy improves.

## Study Results Revealed

Last year the Agency commissioned a feasibility study of a new mixed-use development with affordable senior rental housing. The study prototypes ranged from lower to higher density with and without a senior center and retail components, and with surface and podium parking. Each analysis assumed the Redevelopment Agency would contribute the land, and for each there were estimates of the total development costs and the resulting financial gap.

The plan with the smallest financial gap called for three stories with 52 units of senior housing, no senior center or retail uses, and surface parking. The plan with the largest financial gap called for three or four stories with 52 units of senior housing, a 15,000 sq. ft. senior center, and both surface and podium parking.

The second lowest gap was a site plan three stories high, with 47 units of senior housing, 5,000 sq. ft. of retail space, and both surface and street parking. The final development plan studied was four stories high with 90 units of senior housing, 5,000 sq. ft. of retail space, and podium and street parking.

## The Lessons Learned

In their report to the Agency Board, Redevelopment Manager Lori Treviño and Housing Project Manager Hilde Myall explained that higher density affordable rental housing, residential not mixed use, was most feasible, and that sources of affordable housing funding could not be found for non-housing uses.

Mixed-use and civic or commercial uses, they added, have a large financial gap unless another sources of funding or a

bankable tenant can be found. The Housing Fund, they added, must be paid back for any non-housing use.

The Agency can only spend 43% of its Housing Fund on age-restricted senior housing, must spend at least 40% on



very low income housing and no more than 34% on moderate income housing.

## Staff Recommendations

Staff recommended members of the Agency Board consider their goals for the Tradeway site and prioritize them in regard to affordable housing, near-term revitalization, mixed-use development, and development of a new senior center.

If near-term development is desired, staff recommended proceeding with a single-use affordable housing residential development. If a mixed-use development is desired, hold off until the economy improves, and if a senior center is desired wait until a financing plan is developed.

Staff also recommended the Agency Board issue a broad solicitation for affordable residential development that would also allow for senior, special needs and multi-family housing to see which proposal is most competitive.

## Consultant to Help

Prior to the study session the Redevelopment Agency Board approved a contract authorizing the firm of Keyser Martin Associates to assist city staff in solicitation and selection of a developer for the Tradeway site and to provide expert real estate advice relating to the negotiating of terms.

For a sum not to exceed \$42,000 the consultants will also evaluate developer proposals, analyze developer financial statements, prepare development pro formas, and independently analyze the feasibility of the proposals.

Keyser Martin will also contact lender and partner references, determine the warranted amount of public subsidy, and assist in negotiating of terms with the selected developer.

## Megino Retired; Bylaws Changed

BY SEWALL GLINTERNICK

A PAIR OF MOVES designed to “streamline” the operation of the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce came as the result of two meetings held by the organization’s Board of Directors last month.

At the Board’s regular meeting on October 7th the Chamber leadership decided that the duties of President Baylan Megino would be performed for the balance of the year by First Vice President John Stashik with assistance from Second Vice President Michelle Blackwell. Megino indicated that personal responsibilities made it impossible for her to carry out her duties. At a special meeting on October 20th, the directors voted to remove Megino from office.

Also approved at the special session October 20, the Board unanimously approved a two-step program to reduce the size of the organization’s governing body from 17 to 9 voting members.

In explaining this move, Stashik said current economic conditions made it extremely hard for the Chamber to con-

tinue to find 17 directors who could afford the time required for Board service. It was the unanimous opinion of the directors present, he added, that reducing the number of voting Board members to nine would be “a better fit for an organization of our size.”

Under the law change approved at this special meeting, effective at the installation meeting in January, 2010, when the terms of nine of the current directors is scheduled to end, four new voting members will begin a new two-year term of office while nine remaining old directors will serve out the last year of their term, cutting the Board down to 13 voting members with seven constituting a quorum.

The installation meeting in January, 2011, will mark the end of the final year for the remaining nine old 2010 Board members, who will then be replaced with five new directors elected to serve for two years. With the Board then down to nine voting members (five elected one year and four the next year), five members will constitute a quorum.

## Velocity Lock & Key



Shoot On Site! Photo Services

Locksmiths Eddie and Julie Pledger celebrated their first anniversary in business with a mixer held on September 22. The shop is located at 10058 San Pablo Avenue in El Cerrito.

## Lucky Stiff at CCCT

WHAT DO YOU get when you combine one dead guy, a nerdy English shoe salesman, six million bucks in diamonds, and a lot of dogs? The hysterically funny musical *Lucky Stiff!*



Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, the authors of *Ragtime*, and the

animated film *Anastasia* exploded on the musical theatre scene with this madcap murder mystery farce that takes us on a whirlwind adventure through London, Atlantic City, and Monte Carlo, as the cast tries to figure out who did what to whom!

*Lucky Stiff* opens Friday, November 6th, at the Contra Costa Civic Theatre and runs through December 6th. Performances Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday matinees at 2 p.m.

Tickets and information available at: [www.ccct.org](http://www.ccct.org).

## November Art Show at The Glenn

THE GLENN Custom Framing and Gallery of Art has announced their November show. Featured will be Don Hazen, one of the East Bay’s finest natural life photographers. He has been working on his photography and visual art skills for over 30 years. With his fine, artistic eye, and inspiring range of outdoor experiences, his natural life photographs speak to many people.

The Glenn will also be presenting “Words are Art, too.” Come share your *Six Word Memoirs* about art on our large bulletin board. Create it on the spot or bring something to tack up and share.

Both exhibitions run from November 3rd through December 5th. An artist’s reception will be held Friday, November 13th, from 7-9 p.m.

The Glenn Custom Framing and Gallery of Art is located at 7027 Stockton Ave., El Cerrito. Telephone (510) 558-1078.

## A Benefit at the Cerrito Theater: “Hotel for Dogs” Saturday, November 7, 2009, 10 a.m.

Admission: \$7 each (all ages).

Proceeds will benefit the Bruce King Memorial Fund for an El Cerrito dog park.  
Rialto Cerrito Theater, 10070 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito.



*Hotel for Dogs* is based on Lois Duncan’s novel.

Starring Emma Roberts, Don Cheadle, Lisa Kudrow, the story revolves around two orphaned teenagers who decide to turn an abandoned building into a safe haven for stray dogs. Rated PG.

## No Gift Fair

THE HOLIDAY gift fair planned for December 5th as a fundraiser for the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce has been canceled. Vendors who submitted deposits will receive refunds.



# El Cerrito

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
Linking Business and Community Since 1936

P.O. Box 538 • El Cerrito, CA 94530

## Monthly Luncheon Meeting Tuesday, Nov. 10th

Post Meridian Restaurant  
1568 Oak View Ave., at Colusa Circle, Kensington  
Noon-1:30 p.m.

**Special Guest & Speaker:**  
**Michelle Blackwell, EBMUD,**  
**Second Vice President, El Cerrito CofC**

\$20 members with advance reservations; \$25 non-members  
RSVP: (510) 705-1202 or e-mail [info@elcerritochamber.org](mailto:info@elcerritochamber.org)

## Thank you!

Our deep appreciation is extended to Chamber board member **Blaine J. Davis** of Edward Jones, for support in co-sponsoring the expense of printing and mailing this *Byline*.

**Blaine J. Davis**  
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## Calendar of Events

- November 2** City Council meets; City Hall, 7:30 p.m.
- 4** Chamber Board meets; location TBA, 8:30 a.m.
- 6** Loma Prieta Revisited; City Hall, 6:30 p.m.  
To mark the 20th anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake, come hear local residents recount their Loma Prieta earthquake experience and learn how you can better prepare for disasters.
- 11** Veterans Day holiday.
- 14** Garden Makeover: make your yard drought tolerant. 10 a.m.-noon, Community Center; register at (510) 215-4369. Space limited.
- 16** City Council meets; City Hall, 7:30 p.m.
- 17** Emerald Cities: Arts of Siam & Burma; EC Library, 7 p.m. Join Laurabeth Grieneeks Nelson, docent with the Asian Art Museum, for a slide presentation on this unique collection of stunning 19th century artworks from Siam and Burma.
- 26** Thanksgiving holiday. (Office closed 26th & 27th.)

### Chamber Officers

|                       |                                             |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| First Vice President  | John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics           |
| Second Vice President | Michelle Blackwell, EBMUD                   |
| Secretary-Treasurer   | Charlie Weaver, Certified Public Accountant |
| Past President        | John C. Stashik, Premier Graphics           |

### Staff

|           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| Manager   | Mark L. Scott |
| Secretary | Pat Berndt    |

## Byline

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