Chair Fetter called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Brant Fetter; Vice Chair Munoz; Boardmembers Ray Welter, Robin Welter; Eileen Whitty and Michael Woldemar

Absent: None

Staff Present: Jonelyn Whales, Kieron Slaughter, Hector Lopez, and Assistant City Attorney James Atencio

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

ACTION: It was M/S/C (Ray Welter/Robin Welter) to approve the agenda; unanimously approved by voice vote: 6-0 (Ayes: Fetter, Munoz, Ray Welter, Robin Welter, Whitty and Woldemar; Noes: None).

City Council Liaison Report - None

Public Forum – No speakers.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

Chair Fetter noted there are two items on the Consent Calendar and he asked if Boardmembers wished to remove an item from the Consent Calendar. There were no requests for removal of items.

Chair Fetter announced that any decision approved may be appealed in writing to the City Clerk within ten (10) days, or by Tuesday, June 9, 2014 by 5:00 p.m.

ACTION: It was M/S (Whitty/Ray Welter) to approve Consent Calendar Items 2 and 3; unanimously approved by voice vote: 6-0 (Ayes: Fetter, Munoz, Ray Welter, Robin Welter, Whitty and Woldemar; Noes: None).

Items Approved on the Consent Calendar:

CC 2. PLN14-086 WRIGHT AVENUE INDUSTRIAL OFFICE BUILDING
Description 
PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER A DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT TO CONSTRUCT A ±2,500 SQUARE FOOT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE BUILDING AT AN EXISTING 11.5 ACRES SITE.

Location 
488 WRIGHT AVENUE

APN 
560-280-012

Zoning 
M-4 (HEAVY INDUSTRIAL)

Owner 
PACIFIC ATLANTIC TERMINALS LLC

Applicant 
ROBILT INC.

Staff Contact 
HECTOR LOPEZ 
Recommendation: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

CC 3. PLN14-082 SANCHEZ’S TWO-STORY RESIDENTIAL ADDITION

Description 
PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER A DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT TO CONSTRUCT A ±1,088 SQUARE FOOT TWO-STORY REAR ADDITION TO AN EXISTING 846 SQUARE FOOT RESIDENCE.

Location 
2927 MORAN AVENUE

APN 
526-193-002

Zoning 
SFR-3 (SINGLE FAMILY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT)

Owner 
SCANNELL PROPERTIES

Applicant 
CARLOS SANCHEZ

Staff Contact 
JONELYN WHALES 
Recommendation: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Public Hearing(s)

1. PLN14-017 HILLTOP SPECULATIVE MIDDLE / HIGH SCHOOL

Description 
STUDY SESSION FOR A DESIGN REVIEW PERMIT TO CONSTRUCT A NEW SPECULATIVE MIDDLE / HIGH SCHOOL CONSISTING OF ±134,375 SQUARE FEET AT THE FORMER ALBERTSONS GROCERY STORE.

Location 
3000 – 3050 HILLTOP MALL ROAD

APN 
405-303-006, 405-303-007, 405-303-008, 405-303-009, 405-303-010

Zoning 
C-3-(REGIONAL COMMERCIAL)

Applicant 
HILLTOP COMMUNITY VENTURES, LLC (OWNER)

Staff Contact 
KIERON SLAUGHTER 
Recommendation: PROVIDE COMMENTS

Associate Planner Kieron Slaughter gave the staff report, stating the item is a study session for a speculative middle and high school on the outer edge of Hilltop Mall Road. He gave a brief overview of the project description, location, current zoning and request for a design review permit. He stated a new color scheme is being proposed and before the Board are a color and photo board, as well as a photometric plan. Staff submitted the first version of the project plans to a subcommittee and comments were provided to the applicant. In terms of environmental review, an Initial Study is being prepared by ESA environmental consultants and staff anticipates the result will be a mitigated negative declaration for traffic and no public comments were received on the project. The applicant invited neighborhood council groups and neighbors to an Open House and no one attended the meeting. Mr. Slaughter stated that Doug Giffin and members of Studio Bondy Architecture are in attendance to provide a presentation.

Boardmember Woldemar asked if the DRB’s approval of this project the only approval besides a building permit, and Mr. Slaughter noted that because there is no use proposed at this time, although permitted, it is just for the core shell and tenant improvements of the building.
Boardmember Woldemar said if there is a negative declaration, he confirmed it needed to be in place prior to the Board taking any action and the consultant considers pedestrian circulation, LOS and traffic impacts; however, the Board can focus more on access and circulation.

Boardmember Woldemar voiced concern with children walking and crossing the street and access issues and he reiterated the importance of the consultant considering these issues.

Boardmember Whitty asked for the definition of a spec school. Mr. Slaughter said they are constructing a school, but have not yet secured a tenant. They are in discussions with prospective schools and can shed some light on this. Boardmember Whitty confirmed it would be a private school and possibly operate as a charter school.

Doug Giffin, Hilltop Community Ventures, introduced Bill Cabana of Studio Bondy Architecture and gave a PowerPoint presentation of the project. He said they are the owners of the Hilltop Center and will be redeveloping it to make the Hilltop Middle and High School. He thanked the Board and staff for their assistance in the process and is looking forward to receiving feedback. He said the project is owned by Steve and Susan Chamberland, resident of Richmond and through Hilltop Community Ventures, it is being developed by Chamberland and Associates and he gave an overview of Hilltop Community Ventures. They partnered with Studio Bondy Architects, John O’Neil, Charlie Wilson Landscape Architects, and Sandis Civil Engineers to create a thoughtfully designed and flexible middle and high school campus. Studio Bondy Architects brings a wealth of knowledge to the project as they have completed over 100 school projects for more than 40 schools in the Bay Area and Sacramento. John O’Neil has built over 50 million square feet of real estate in the last 40 years.

Mr. Giffin stated that as owner and landlord of the proposed middle and high school, there are a number of goals. They first want to create a state of the art middle and high school campus. They have seen a tremendous amount of demand from school operators and they want to lease the property to a high quality school. They would be happy to provide references from those developments. He introduced Bill Bondy who will share the vision for the site.

Bill Bondy, Studio Bondy Architecture, said they have been a Bay Area leader in educational design in Pre-K through 12th grade over the last 28 years or so. The project proposed is a unique opportunity to reinvigorate what is currently a vacate grocery store in a shopping center site and make it into a vibrant school campus for middle and high school students. The developed portion of the site is surrounded by a steeply vegetated slope and the plan proposes to use the hillside to create intimate teaching spaces in-between the buildings and hillsides. These will be secure and function and he hopes to minimize the perception of being fenced in. The spaces created between the slopes in the buildings will secure as outdoor learning spaces, play spaces, and quiet and secure socialization spaces. Maintenance of the slopes will also offer environmental education and hillside sustainability studies and projects.

Mr. Bondy said the campus has access to about 10 bus lines and the site plan is set up to address the natural pedestrian traffic. It has a traditional campus feel with a central quad defined by rows of trees and flanked by the two, two-story buildings with a gymnasium at the head of the quad. The goal of their design is to create a wide variety of play spaces, social spaces and teaching spaces that can be adapted to building a dynamic educational program and a cohesive spirited campus life. The site has about 235 existing trees and 107 trees are proposed to be removed and replaced with 160 new trees and he briefly discussed their fair to poor condition, replacement locations, and drought-tolerant species. He stated the school will be
of concrete construction with vibrant colors, aluminum sunscreens, pre-finished metal panels and offsets to create walkable entry areas. He displayed another project developed in Alameda which serves as an example of sunscreens. Large window openings will be used to maximize natural daylight in classrooms and in all projects are of sustainable design. For this project they will achieve at least a silver LEED level.

The infrastructure of the building will allow for flexible arrangement of classroom spaces and larger, inter-active state-of-the art project-based learning spaces. The goal is to create a campus that provides an excellent home for a high quality school operator which can adapt to future needs.

Mr. Giffin stated that based upon the subcommittee’s feedback, they made a number of changes to the design package which he outlined to improve flow to and through the site:

- They continued the sidewalk along Hilltop Mall Road from the driveway to the eastern property line and removed a redundant stairway;
- Added salt finished integral colored concrete crosswalks throughout the site and are providing raised crosswalks in two locations;
- Extended several of the interior sidewalks;
- Corrected the site grades to ensure they all met ADA requirements;
- To enhance the character and performance of the campus, they modified the building paint scheme;
- Added trees along Hilltop Drive to fill in some gaps;
- Will have an existing tree rehabilitation and replacement program to help restore the quality of remaining on-site trees;
- They added considerable detail to the landscaping plans;
- Added renderings showing the detail of the outdoor gathering area along Shane Drive;
- They are planning to remove barbed wire from the top of the fence that runs along Hilltop Drive;
- They designed the buildings to be solar ready and are in the process of researching the design and cost for a photovoltaic system to provide about 75% of the project's power;
- Tonight, they provided hard copies of materials not previously received which include a new roof detail. They added color to the trash enclosures, and art fence panels to be incorporated into some of the fencing;
- Mr. Giffin said they put considerable thought into the feel and utility of the front of the campus including sliding wooden gates that would be open during drop-off and pickup hours;
- Coast live oaks will be installed as signature trees at the entrance of each classroom buildings;
- They provided additional detail in the concrete seat walls and planters; and
- They provided a sign program that includes removal of all existing project signage and installation of sign panels on concrete panels and two monument signs, one each at the project's driveways.

Mr. Giffin noted that the wooden gate concept comes from an elementary school that Studio Bondy designed. They took the curvy elements and made them more layered for a more mature middle and high school campus. The warmth of the wood provides a contrast to the surrounding materials and a welcome entrance to the campus while the metal frame provides
durability and strength and he described the 5 artistic fence panels’ location and design. He concluded the presentation and said they look forward to the Board’s feedback.

Boardmember Whitty referred to the slide showing the main entrance and said it is somewhat blindingly white and asked if they considered adding benches or other furniture for kids, parents, bike racks and some other type of pavement treatment. Mr. Giffin noted there are bike racks. The pavement is concrete with score marks and they were planning on putting lab black into the concrete mix to tone it down. Boardmember Whitty asked if it is permeable, as runoff will be extensive unless permeable pavers are considered. Mr. Giffin stated they are cutting down pervious surface on the site by 15%. They do not generally use permeable pavers because they have found with a dense clay soil, it does not percolate anywhere. They have tried to minimize pavement throughout the site but there is somewhat more at the drop-off area and they have bio-retention to treat it. He also noted that the color in the renderings is a bit off and they show very white. They can tone down the concrete with the black additive quite a bit.

Chair Fetter said he gets the impression that a lot of the proposed landscaping is not shown, and said there is a lot of grass.

Thomas Lego, Architect, said they were able to add specific planning that matches the scheme on some of the closer views but each plant is a data consuming item, so there is not a way to render them. He confirmed there is full landscape but it is hard to reflect it.

Boardmember Whitty said if the proposal includes the wooden sliding fence, one or two wooden benches would be helpful. She recognized there is a cement wall to sit on by the flag, but she asked for something more welcoming.

Chair Fetter stated this looks more like a college campus than a middle/high school as it lacks many seat walls, given the capacity of the school. Boardmember Whitty also referred to the plaque and small garden and suggested this could be something very interesting like a sculpture. Mr. Giffin stated this is how they found the artist for the fence panels, which will be integrated into the fences for the play area. Chair Fetter said the Board is just looking at the landscaping and he feels that modernism and stark forms work well when contrasted against soft forms of landscape and unfortunately it is under-represented in the renderings.

Charlie Wilson stated he has designed a few schools and they must anticipate a lot of use. The design team has gone to many schools and they found they lack trees, so they have tried to accommodate that. Boardmember Whitty said the trees will be great for the kids to sit around and study, and Mr. Wilson said they anticipated this and pointed to the patio area where it segways into a classroom space. Boardmember Whitty said although she sees no outdoor furniture. Mr. Giffin said if they ghosted out the trees, the Board could better see the areas and examples and he briefly discussed the Alameda School they designed.

Boardmember Whitty noted that EBMUD owns the land to the east which is an outdoor reservoir. She asked if they talked to them about doing any of the landscaping. Mr. Giffin stated there is a large, steep hill connecting their two sites which is natural. Other than restoring the trees and trying to bring back the health of existing trees, they are planning to leave this as natural.

Boardmember Whitty asked if they considered making any of the roofs living roofs. Mr. Giffin said no, as their hope is to cover most of the roof surfaces with photovoltaic panels right away.
Boardmember Whitty said she approves of the design and said the bright panels are crisp. Mr. Giffin added that they were trying to limit hardscape with the intent that whoever the operator is will include some furniture. They have also done a lot of mounding in various areas.

Boardmember Whitty asked about bio-retention and Mr. Wilson stated it is mixed throughout the site. Mr. Wilson said these are not just grass bio-retention areas but very lushly landscaped and because they are lower they do grow pretty well.

Boardmember Whitty referred to the school name and asked if there is a bell and Mr. Giffin said this will depend on the operator. They are bringing this through speculatively and flexibility is important. Boardmember Whitty said the Board would want to see the final plans once an operator is identified.

Boardmember Robin Welter said she really likes the way they integrated the bio-retention areas and where the athletic center was located. She asked and confirmed there is a 4 foot fence around the athletic field and 4 access points; two on the rear corner towards the gym as well as two accesses off of the front doors of the school. Boardmember Robin Welter suggested switching the trees by the entrances to a Chinese Pistache to add a little fall color.

Boardmember Robin Welter asked Mr. Giffin to talk about vehicular circulation and Bill Bondy said the traffic consultant is looking at the best rated service for the site, but it is designed to be double-stacked and during drop off hours, there will be a restricted one-way area, except for the rest of the day. There is some talk about whether or not the Shane Drive entrance will be open during drop-off and pickup or whether or not they would just have the one entrance or exits and they are waiting to hear back from the traffic consultant.

Chair Fetter noted the variety of traffic paths with buses and parents driving and he suggested having them separate but parallel and coming off one street and exiting another, which works well at most other schools. Mr. Giffin said one reason they were excited also is the significant access to public transportation. One of the nice things is that they are a professional property manager and will be involved in this so as not to create problems.

Chair Fetter asked and confirmed that the gymnasium multi-purpose and an assembly space. There are currently no bleachers but they could be put in. Mr. Bondy stated the building department usually requires certain seating numbers and fixture counts. Chair Fetter asked about outdoor learning spaces, and Mr. Bondy said many of their classrooms face out onto areas between the hillside and building. The idea is that those areas would be developed in conjunction with the operator to create benches and shaded areas where teachers can use the outdoors to teach a class or have kids do a project. Outside the science rooms, they might have
a flat area where they can run robots around, but the idea is to create possibilities for teaching both indoors and outdoors, and this comes from being in the environment and having projects reflect natural planet areas and birds and trees. Mr. Giffin noted there are grade level doors on the back of the campus and the idea is great. They pop open the doors, bring their chairs out and setup and do projects on the concrete. Chair Fetter said if this is to be proposed, it is not contained in the plans and if this is done as part of the project, he would like to see it reflected in the plans. Thomas Lego then displayed drawings showing the campus and areas where hardscape pieces are shown and minimize as an accessible area.

Chair Fetter asked about the designation of LEED equivalent and questioned whether this is LEED certified. Mr. Lego said their goal is to make it LEED certified, but the Richmond Green and Cal Green requirements get them there. They will have the building photovoltaic-ready and Mr. Lego said their approach to building materials is high sustainability, high recycle content, low VOV’s.

Chair Fetter said lastly, he said he has not seen many spec schools done and he asked what pushed them to do this. Mr. Giffin said the owners have done well and want to give back. They are not doing this for rent but for performance and if the school operator does not meet certain thresholds, they can part ways and find someone who will perform. Their goal is the performance of the school and not their return. The best way to achieve that is grading the schools out there. If they create it and see the demand, a charter or private school will be able to operate there.

Vice Chair Munoz asked if there will be changes in the presentation once the building is done for bus shelters. Mr. Giffin noted there are two bus stops directly across Shane Drive and they are working with staff to add a bus shelter to that stop to make it more usable. It has 4 major bus lines running at it and directly across the street at the mall there are also many bus stops as well. Vice Chair Munoz asked how they will address parking and Mr. Giffin said whatever operator locates there will have to manage the process and direct traffic. He said they have the ability to queue two rows of cars throughout the campus and there are two entrances for the primary drop-off which he pointed to. He said they are trying to create a nice campus and the idea is that gates would only be open during drop-off and pickup, at which case it is a secure site. There will be a second set of man gates next to the locking gates.

Chair Fetter asked if there is any kind of food service component in the auditorium, and Mr. Giffin said there will be services in other buildings but not the auditorium. Chair Fetter said there does not seem to be a lot of outdoor seating accommodations for lunch, and Mr. Giffin said there will be the ability to use the gymnasium for eating if needed. They built in flexibility in many different areas for students to be able to eat in various locations.

Boardmember Woldemar stated he thinks this is probably one of the best projects the Board has seen in a long time. It is well presented, well designed and he particularly likes how detailed the landscape plan was. He thanked Mr. Giffin for responding to many of the written comments, as well. In building the school without an operator, Boardmember Woldemar asked what would happen if this was used as an office building instead of a school, and asked if there would be enough parking. Mr. Giffin said there would be if they took out the play field. He further discussed Hilltop Drive as the access point for the mall and across from them now is a church. The group trying to buy this property was also a church and Richmond is seeing some of this transitioning.
Boardmember Woldemar said residential has also been discussed in and around the mall, as well, and Mr. Giffin said they spoke with Hilltop Mall representatives quite a bit and they were excited about having a school because it would attract housing.

Boardmember Woldemar said there are “poor” trees that were designated to remain and he would like to see a very specific work plan to deal with the replacement aspects. Many in the poor trees were eucalyptus and he questioned what they would be replaced with. There has been some discussion about the students and he asked where is there area for them to hang out, noting he did not see any vertical elements, any place he could stack a bunch of benches to overlook the campus, possibly a clock tower, and east and west of the playfield is a bio-swale which is usually where there are bleachers which could be used for eating, hanging out and for sporting events. He simply asked for more active elements for students.

Boardmember Woldemar commented also that he did not like lime green color and in earlier submittals they used blue. Mr. Giffin said they loved the blue and red scheme but were told to shift away from it because of gang colors, which is a real issue. They have come up with the alternative scheme they like, but this was the reason for the shift.

Boardmember Woldemar said in Alameda, carports with solar panels were done and he asked if this is planned here, and if so, they could tinker with the structural design of the carport itself. The applicant talks about solar ready on the roof and he asked if these are flat panels or stand up panels. And is there anything they could do to tinker with the height of the parapet. Mr. Lego said they can easily do a sectional study to show this. Mr. Giffin said the system they are looking at is more of a flat panel.

Boardmember Woldemar referred to the mounding and he was pleased it is going to occur but said the drawings do not show it. Regarding bus stops, it is particularly important in the afternoon when 200 kids get out, many are trying to fit in the shelter, and he asked that more be provided, such as a seat wall and discussion with the bus company about a different location such as somewhere more out in front of the building.

Boardmember Woldemar asked that all transformers, mechanical equipment, ground mounted be properly screened. Chair Fetter asked why the trash enclosure is so tall and Mr. Giffin stated they will check on the scale of this.

Boardmember Woldemar said he likes the use of the color as a “fun thing” and tried to find the logic in the placement of the color but he could not find one which is unique. He could not find the glass color and has a concern that the whole project in general is too white or light. All window frames and metal work is light grey aluminum. He questioned what would happen if the window frames were a different color, or the body color is varied, and it just felt just too white.

Boardmember Woldemar referred to the traffic discussion and drop-off and pickup, and he said it feels like chaos at the moment. The angled parking spaces are opposing the direction of traffic. Mr. Giffin said you pull straight in and the operator can determine how best to use the parking. It is primarily going to be used by staff and driving students and not people during drop-off hours having to interact with the flow of traffic. Mr. Slaughter’s thought was they could have a back in, but they were somewhat concerned with this because people would be confused by it. Mr. Slaughter noted it has been successfully implemented in front of Perry’s Elementary School now where they increased parking capacity and there is a bike route right behind the parking spaces. Best practice is not to put in angled parking in front of a bike route.
but reverse angles so they can see bicyclists when they leave. This has worked out great and it just takes signage and a little education.

Boardmember Woldemar referred to the northeast corner, south of the trash area and said there is a paved area and he confirmed it is the end of the fire access to the back of the building. He suggested doing a different paving. Regarding asphalt, at the southeast corner of the building, there is a basketball court and a segment of asphalt paving. He asked why this is not part of landscaping. The same sort of thing occurs at the full basketball court at the other building and he does not understand why this is here. Mr. Giffin said it has a roll up door so the idea was that a robotics classroom would use the asphalt area next to the basketball court. The other one is there because they need to get the fire truck over there to around the corner and they would pull hose from the area, which was worked out with the fire district. Mr. Giffin noted they already have signoff from the fire marshal on the plan.

Mr. Giffin stated he wanted to respond to a couple of comments and said they had talked about seating walls and kids being able to hang out, and this largely is what they view as seating on the surrounding hillsides and this is why they have created these nice private spots between the campus and the hillsides. Boardmember Woldemar asked what does the hillside look like, and he questioned the logic, but if there are some areas, he asked the applicant to show them and include nature trails, benches, and something with shade and more formal liked terrace seating, fountains, a bell or clock and sitting area.

Boardmember Ray Welter said to him the front elevation is very static. He knows it is a tilt up building but there needs to be something on the corner of a building or on both of them which is a marker. To a lesser extent, the entrances to the buildings seem to be hidden in the middle of them. He knows there are awnings called out but he asked for something taller at the entrances. Something at the roofline would help with the mechanical equipment and there might be some play with the parapet heights to give it a vertical element. His other comment relates to the color scheme and he wondered if the twin buildings could stay as they are, but for there to be a completely different color scheme for the auditorium because it is sandwiched between the buildings and could have its own identity and language, given its different use. Boardmembers concurred and discussed examples of other projects’ color schemes.

Mr. Slaughter summarized that comments include having more playfulness, whimsical attributes in the front, some landmark feature differentiating the center building, the gymnasium, more movement or interest when approaching the school given kids as young as 11 years of age, gathering spaces and seating areas, and these comments will be provided to the design team and they will return once the environmental document is complete. Boardmembers thanked the team for their presentation.

**Board Business**

A. Staff reports, requests, or announcements - None

B. Board member reports, requests, or announcements

Chair Fetter noted his absence at the next two upcoming meetings.

Boardmember Woldemar said he has been asking about getting resolution on City projects requiring design review. Ms. Whales stated staff is swamped with projects that have not been done and the City Attorney’s office has been working on several legal issues. It appears there
are no items for the next meeting, but hopefully at the second meeting in June, the resolution can be agendized. Staff is also in the process of trying to prepare a field trip to view projects.

Boardmember Woldemar said at the last meeting, the Board held significant discussion on complete applications, checklists, submittal requirements, and as a result, they concluded it would be appropriate to schedule a 3PM meeting so they could talk about these things. He prepared a memo suggesting there be a meeting on June 11th, but he has not heard anything back. Ms. Whales said as stated, staff is backlogged on projects but they are near completion and the Director should be responding.

Chair Fetter suggested holding such a meeting on July 9th and Ms. Whales stated they will look at staff’s availability, and she agreed to get back in contact with Boardmembers.

Boardmember Woldemar briefly described his request at the last couple of meetings on what the Board would be discussing relating to application submittal requirements. Ms. Whales confirmed that the majority of the Board would like a meeting to be held for the first June meeting to discuss DRB issues, and she can attempt to arrange to have staff present if they are not involved in other meetings.

**Adjournment:**

The Board adjourned at 8:00 p.m. to the next meeting on June 11, 2014.