

State schools poised for financial windfall

By Ricardo Cano and Annie Vainshtein

Several Bay Area school districts and charter schools are poised to receive tens of millions in state grant funds to create and expand “community schools” that aim to assist needy students by providing a comprehensive menu of health, social and academic services.

The State Board of Education is expected to approve \$635 million in grants at its Wednesday meeting, a big slice from a \$3 billion program approved by the Legislature last year to create more schools that provide coordinated “wrap-around” support for students in poverty. The California Community Schools Partnership Program,

as it’s called, is likely to grow. Gov. Gavin Newsom’s revised budget calls for adding \$1.5 billion to the program amid a \$97 billion surplus that will balloon the state’s budget to a record \$300 billion. The Bay Area’s two largest school districts will benefit from the program. Oakland Unified is slated to receive the *Schools continues on C4*



Yalonda M. James / The Chronicle

Gov. Gavin Newsom’s revised budget seeks to add \$1.5 billion to the California Community Schools Partnership Program.



Photos by Laura Morton / Special to The Chronicle

The glass-enclosed Palm Court restaurant at the new RH home-furnishing store at San Francisco’s Pier 70.

Building restoration a Pier 70 milestone

By J.K. Dineen

It was two days before RH was to welcome more than 1,000 guests to its new showroom at San Francisco’s Pier 70 for a March opening party, and CEO Gary Friedman was eating French toast in the building’s glass-enclosed Palm Court restaurant.

He was not pleased. “Overcooked on the outside and squishy on the inside,” said Friedman, who built the luxury home furnishing company formerly known as Restoration Hardware into a global luxury brand.

It would not be the last time Friedman would try the toast, or everything else on the menu. He said he would test all of the items 10 times before opening day.

“You don’t get a second chance to make a first impression,” he added. “Especially in a town like San Francisco.”

That first impression was pushed back a couple months as Friedman tweaked the menu. The showroom finally opened Thursday, more than six years after plans were first announced.

“People ask, ‘When are we going



The 80,000-square-foot 1917 classical revival building, which used to house Bethlehem Steel, had been vacant for years before RH took over.

to open, Gary?” I say, ‘When we are ready,’” Friedman said in March. “We had to commit to a party but I don’t like to commit to an opening, especially with a new restaurant concept, until we have executed the menu over and over.”

RH has opened deluxe galleries with restaurants in more than a

dozen cities, including New York, Chicago, West Palm Beach, Dallas and Yountville in Napa County. The San Francisco restoration of a historic Bethlehem Steel building at Pier 70 is perhaps the most ambitious.

The 80,000-square-foot 1917 *Showroom continues on C3*

Governor revving up his gas tax refund plan

By Dustin Gardiner

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom took a victory lap Friday as he touted his proposal to use California’s record surplus to provide residents relief from high inflation — the centerpiece being his proposal to send \$400 gas tax refunds to vehicle owners.

But that focal point is far from a done deal. His approach continues to draw the side-eye from many Democratic state lawmakers, who say the refund push is shortsighted.

“There are better, more targeted uses for those struggling the most & deeper investments in schools & infrastructure,” tweeted Assembly Member Matt Haney, D-San Francisco, who doesn’t have a car and uses Amtrak to commute to Sacramento.

He added, “If we are going to give the money, let’s give the money regardless of a vehicle.”

Newsom, nevertheless, doubled down on rebates for drivers as he outlined how he wants to spend the state’s \$97.5 billion operating budget surplus. He has called for using about \$9.5 billion of that money to send refunds.

Legislative leaders have repeatedly rejected the idea and instead want to send payments to *Refunds continues on C4*

Atherton may OK townhomes to satisfy state building order

By Sam Whiting

The town of Atherton — where the typical home is worth \$8 million — will consider allowing the construction of townhomes for the first time in the 99-year history of the exclusive Peninsula community as it struggles to meet a state mandate to add housing.

Atherton Mayor Rick DeGolia said rezoning of the town would allow for construction of as many as 10 units to a 1-acre parcel.

“The way to get to the numbers the state is requiring is to add townhomes,” DeGolia said.

Silicon Valley billionaires have moved into the tiny town, population 7,000, over the past few decades, making it the richest place in America, but the wealth of its residents doesn’t exempt it from state mandates.

All cities statewide are under an order to increase housing or face both stiff fines and having the state take control of zoning. A public meeting in late April was attended by an estimated 100 Atherton residents, several *Atherton continues on C2*

Outrageous taxi charges underscore need for receipt

By Carolyn Said

After a quick trip in a San Francisco taxi, the passenger handed a credit card to the driver to swipe, then hopped out of the cab.

Soon, a gargantuan charge — thousands of dollars — appeared on the passenger’s credit card bill for the ride. Despite months of pleading, the bank insisted the passenger owed the money and relented only after being contacted by a reporter. Wait, you’ve heard this story before, right? The Chronicle’s

article about Margarita Bekker’s \$9,875 bill for an 11-minute Yellow Cab ride went viral earlier this year.

It turns out that Bekker wasn’t the only one with a supersize taxi fare in San Francisco.

Three people who read that story contacted The Chronicle to say that the exact same thing happened to them. Two of them, also in September, were charged by PayPal accounts using the same or very similar names as the PayPal account in the Bekker case. One was lucky:

Her Discover card flagged the \$7,800 fare for a 15-minute ride as fraud and never charged her.

The exorbitant taxi trips highlight some gaping holes in consumer protection, how social engineering can circumvent credit card protections and how consequences can be hard to come by. There’s also a clear moral for consumers: Always, always get a receipt.

The \$9,980 fare: Tom Williamson, 73, flew from his home in Vancouver, British Columbia, to San Francisco in Septem-

ber for some gigs playing his trumpet around the Bay Area. He took BART from San Francisco International Airport to the Embarcadero, then hopped a cab for the short ride to his Union Square hotel.

The next morning he got a text alert from Wells Fargo that his credit card had been charged \$9,980 the day before. “That was a bit of a shock,” he said. “I got in touch with Wells Fargo and said there must be some mistake; I clearly didn’t make this.” Wells told him it would cancel the card, send

him a new one and turn the case over to fraud claims, he said.

He was on the road for a month playing gigs. When he returned home, Williamson found a letter from Wells saying his claim had been denied. “They said their technology showed the chip (on the card) was used, and that means it was in my possession and the purchase was obviously authorized,” he said.

Banks now embed computer chips in most credit cards for more security than magnetic *Taxi continues on C2*

BAY AREA & BUSINESS

San Jose may reverse ‘discriminatory’ lowrider ban

By Jessica Flores

San Jose is considering reversing a decades-old ban on car cruising that officials say is “discriminatory” against Latinos and the lowrider culture — but law enforcement officials say they are worried revoking the ban could lead to more traffic-related crimes.

San Jose prohibited cruising on specific downtown streets in 1992 in response to crime and traffic-related incidents, often unrelated to the cruising itself, according to city officials.

While lowriders continued cruising the streets despite the ordinance, San Jose police have not enforced the law or issued citations related to it in decades, said Council Member Raul Perez, who wrote the proposal to lift the ban.

“There’s more than enough good reason as to why we should get rid of this (law),” Perez said. “There’s still more than enough protections for all of the other things that are illegal that we would want to continue to enforce that aren’t discriminatory in nature.”



Steven Martinez Jr. / South Bay Visions

Lowriders navigate San Jose streets. San Jose is looking to reverse a decades-old ban on cruising.

On Wednesday, a city committee voted unanimously to direct the city manager to take a number of steps to end the car cruising ban as part of the city’s budget process, including eliminating the fines, fees and signage on city streets related to the ban. The council’s vote also directs the city manager to look into how San Jose can further address incidents and behaviors that may arise from large gatherings at cruising events.

A final City Council vote on the legislation is scheduled sometime in June when the council plans to vote on its 2022-2023 budget, city officials

said.

Wednesday’s vote comes as lowrider communities across California are asking cities to lift decades-old bans on cruising. Lowriding began in the 1940s among Mexican American youth and endures as a celebration and expression of their culture.

In Sacramento, members of a local lowrider commission met with city and law enforcement officials in March to urge them to lift the ban. A similar 30-year ban was temporarily lifted in National City (San Diego County) where the city is allowing a local lowrider group to police them-

selves during cruising events, according to the San Diego Union-Tribune. Their first legal cruise was held June 6.

Unlike National City, Perez said he doesn’t think San Jose needs to do a short-term pilot to test whether they should lift the ban.

Instead, he said, city officials should work with San Jose police on preventing incidents that are causing injuries and deaths on city streets, such as speeding and sideshows. The city passed a law last year making it illegal to encourage or promote side-show events.

“It’s not cruising that we’re actually trying to enforce,” said Perez, who grew up cruising with his parents in San Jose. “It’s these other things that are happening that happen to also be illegal.”

Lowriding began in the 1940s among Mexican American youth in zoot suits, known as pachucos, in the U.S. Southwest, specifically in Los Angeles, would buy cheap vehicles and fix them, said John Ulloa, a professor of history and cultural anthropology at

Skyline College and a lowrider.

As people began to use hydraulics to adjust the height of the vehicles, some used the equipment to avoid citations and harassment from police officers for having the car too low to the ground, said Ulloa, whose research focuses on low-rider culture.

Over the years, lowriders have been criminalized due to a small minority of people, who are not involved in lowriding, causing trouble and the stereotypical representation of lowriders on films and media, he said.

“The banning of cruising is a form of institutionalized racism,” he said.

San Jose police Lt. Steve Donohue asked the city committee to “not take away this tool ... that we use to ensure the safety of the public.”

When the ordinance was created, Donohue said, it wasn’t only the cruising that caused problems but also the fights and other incidents that broke out because of it.

“This is something that while right now is

not a tool that’s been used very often, it is something that we do not want to lose out of our toolbox,” said Donohue.

“This is long overdue,” said Veronica Amador, who called in during Wednesday’s meeting to support the proposal. She said it was “frustrating” having to explain to her children why cruising isn’t allowed.

“We’re being criminalized for wanting to show our culture,” she said.

David Polanco, the president of the United Lowrider Council of San Jose, said Wednesday’s vote was “a good step forward.”

He said he hopes the Lowrider Council of San Jose can follow the footsteps of the San Francisco Lowrider Council in cultivating a stronger relationship with the city to continue the tradition.

“That’s the goal,” he said, “so that we can continue the culture and highlight it in San Jose.”

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Showroom, restaurant open at Pier 70 after long wait

Showroom from page C1

classical revival building had been vacant for decades in 2016 and had been looted of some of its architectural ornamentation over the years. Graffiti covered some of the wood-paneled and marble-clad surfaces.

The project restored the building’s circular entryway with a stairway featuring ornamental metal railings, octagonal bronze and glass pendant chandelier, cast stone walls over pink marble wainscoting, herringbone-patterned woods and coffered plaster ceilings. RH built a spiraling staircase to access levels three and four, with a circular skylight two floors above.

Once the studio of naval architects, the third level is now a 10,000-square-foot exhibition space with what RH says is the world’s largest collection of modern furnishings, lighting, textiles and decor created by one brand. At the top of the staircase is a vestibule with retractable glass walls that open up onto a garden overlooking the city and bay.

Friedman said the project is personal because he spent much of his early life in San Francisco. He lived in a one-bedroom apartment in the rear of a storefront at Balboa and 15th Avenue where his mother made and sold dog coats. His mother struggled with mental illness and they moved frequently — 21 times before Friedman turned 18. He graduated from high school in Sonoma and briefly attended Santa Rosa City College before dropping out and taking a job at a Gap store.

“I didn’t grow up around any luxury,” he said. “My mom and I got evicted out of apartments. We would be living somewhere for two months and she would say, ‘Honey, we are going to be moving tomorrow.’”

Friedman spent years looking for the right San Francisco building. The company worked on a proposal to take over the Palace of Fine Arts, but it turned out the seismic retrofit that the building

required would have been prohibitively expensive. They looked at the shed at Pier 28 as well as more typical retail spaces near Union Square.

“We are obsessed with great architecture — we either find it and re-adapt it or we build it,” Friedman said.

At Pier 70, Friedman was attracted to the Bethlehem Steel building’s “balance and symmetry,” bay views and architectural detail. Yet it was somewhat risky, as Pier 70 is far removed from both the luxury shopping in Union Square and the design district around Showplace Square.

“This is the furthest we have gone off the grid,” he said. “It’s been the longest project we have ever had. One of the most expensive we have had.”

At one point a tech company offered RH “a ton of money” to take over the building. Friedman declined. “We did not come out here to make money on a real estate play. We are trying to create a home for our brand in San Francisco,” he said.

Yet the neighborhood has evolved rapidly since RH first committed to Pier 70. Thousands of housing units have popped up to the south in Dogpatch and to the north in Mission Bay. The Golden State Warriors built the Chase Center, about a 15-minute walk from Pier 70. Crane Cove Park, the waterfront open space RH’s building overlooks, has become a regional destination.

The restoration of the historic building is a major milestone in the larger redevelopment at Pier 70, which will eventually include at least 1,100 housing units and as much as 2 million square feet of commercial space. Brookfield Properties, the master developer at Pier 70, has completed phase one of the infrastructure — streets and sidewalks and utilities — as well as the restoration of Building 12, which will eventually become a “maker’s hall” with boutique retail.

San Francisco Business Times reported last



Laura Morton / Special to The Chronicle

The neighborhood has evolved rapidly since RH first committed to the historic Pier 70 building.

month that the next phases of the project have been paused due to the pandemic and construction costs.

Brookfield Senior Vice President Jack Sylvan said the RH opening “is

fantastic for the continued evolution of the whole waterfront from Mission Bay Channel south.”

Friedman is trying to evoke a bit of old-school San Francisco elegance

he caught a glimpse of at the Emporium department store when he was a kid.

“We wanted to build a 1930s San Francisco vibe — a beautiful old-world place where, if you want a night out, you come and eat at the Palm Court,” he said.

The idea of putting a restaurant in a furniture store strikes some as odd at first, but works at RH galleries, said Friedman.

“Sometime our customers are in the galleries for days at a time so why not be hospitable? We blur the lines between residential and retail, to create spaces that are more home than store,” he said. “So if you are going to have someone come to your home

you are going to be hospitable and offer something to eat and drink.”

In addition to San Francisco, RH has now rehabbed historic buildings in Boston and Chicago, and is working on projects in London, Milan and Paris.

“The only thing that is consistent with these historic buildings is they are going to take three times as long and cost three times as much as you originally think,” he said. “But it’s worth it. To bring great historic architecture back to life is a gift.”

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Life Tributes

IN THIS SECTION

COLLINS, Rev. Denis

Rev. Denis E. Collins, S.J.

November 8, 1938 - May 2, 2022

Father Denis E. Collins, S.J. former assistant professor of education at the University of San Francisco and resident of Sacred Heart Jesuit Center, Los Gatos, died May 2, 2022 in a San Jose hospital at the age of 83. He was a member of the Jesuit order for 65 years, a priest for 52 years.

Fr. Collins is survived by his sister-in-law, Patricia Collins of Lebanon, Oregon and nephew, Brendan Collins of Lake Forest, Calif. Mass of Christian Burial will take place on Tuesday, May 17, 2022, 11:15 a.m. at

Sacred Heart Jesuit Center. Due to COVID restrictions, the funeral will be available livestreamed. For link and for a full obituary, go to the province website, www.jesuitswest.org/in-memoriam.

Donations in memory of Father Collins may be made to the Jesuits West Province of the Society of Jesus, P.O. Box 68, Los Gatos, CA 95031, or to a charity of your choosing.

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