$8 million construction contract breezes through Hercules City Council

By Tom Lochner Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

HERCULES -- The City Council appropriated more than $8 million this week in approving a construction contract related to a planned center for buses, trains and ferries.

The contract, with Goodfellow Top Grade Construction LLC of Livermore, is for the San Francisco Bay Trail-related portion of the Hercules Intermodal Transit Center project. It provides for a 10-foot-wide, 3,700-foot-long section of paved trail, from the Victoria by the Bay subdivision to the future extension of John Muir Parkway, along with grading, drainage, sewer relocation, fencing, planting, irrigation and other related work as well as some track preparation. Amtrak Capitol Corridor trains that are supposed to stop at the future Hercules ITC run on Union Pacific Railroad-owned tracks along the shore of San Pablo Bay.

The $8.34 million contract -- $7,582,340 plus a 10 percent contingency -- will be financed by grants, including federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) and state Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds, as well as Measure J, Measure AA Bond and Measure WW Bond funds and an Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) grant, according to a city staff report.

The action Tuesday took all of five minutes, including quips and some banter between Mayor John Delgado and City Manager Steve Duran, followed by a brief presentation by William Silva, principal in d'Oro Construction Management and the city's consultant on the ITC project. Delgado voiced regret for the lack of "pomp and circumstance," citing the lateness of the hour, which was past 11 p.m.

By contrast, earlier in the meeting, the council spent almost 40 minutes, including 11 minutes listening to public comment, on a fee waiver of up to $1,500 for Hercules Library fundraising events at the Community Center.

Goodfellow's was one of only two bids received in June, according to the staff report. The other, from Bay Cities Paving & Grading, Inc. of Concord, was for more than $10 million, not including any contingency, according to the staff report. Fifteen interested parties had shown up at a pre-bid meeting in April, according to Silva.

The council approved the contract 4-0; Councilman Bill Kelly recused himself because he lives in the Promenade neighborhood adjacent to the future ITC.

Earlier this month, the council extended Silva's consulting contract for another year at $180,000, or $15,000 a month, through June 2014, praising him for his success in obtaining funding for the ITC.

Contact Tom Lochner at 510-262-2760 or tlochner@bayareanewsgroup.com. Follow him at twitter.com/tomlochner

A Bay Area Plan for Development and Displacement

by Gen Fujioka, 2013-07-29

On July 18 the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) approved a thirty-year "Smart Growth" regional plan. Most notably, the plan seeks to steer the majority of the region's real estate development into specified locations including most of San Francisco's eastern neighborhoods--despite projections that the strategy will displace tens of thousands and a finding by a state agency that it is in violation of state law.

Under the plan entitled 'Plan Bay Area,' San Francisco is expected to grow its population by over 35%, to over 1,080,000 by 2040 (by comparison, Marin' is asked to accommodate a 13% increase). Eleventh hour amendments spearheaded by progressives may eventually mitigate or at least soften some of the negative impacts but these broadly stated amendments to the plan leave their outcomes uncertain. And even as amended, the adopted plan fails to incorporate the primary recommendations of an alternative plan proposed by environmental and social equity advocates that would have distributed regional growth more evenly and yielded environmental and social equity outcomes ranked as "superior" even by the standards set by MTC/ABAG's own researchers.

Although it is too early to assess the full implications of Plan Bay Area it is already clear that if state regulators allow MTC/ABAG to proceed, this plan will have consequences unlike the region's 'vision statements' of the past. Plan Bay Area is literally a road map for public and private investment.

For the first time, this plan knits together land use planning with long term transportation investments—more than $280 Billion in roads, highways, and transit programs over the life of the plan. Where those investments go, private developers will follow with the blessings of regional planners. The plan's selected transit accessible target communities and neighborhoods for that intensive growth, known as 'Priority Development Areas' (PDAs), will then be expected to accommodate more than 60% of the region's growth in jobs and 70% of the new housing.

In the abstract, concentrating future development near transit comes across as sensible "Smart Growth." And for some relatively undeveloped PDAs, there will be few negative consequences.

But as critics have noted, many PDAs include existing mostly working class neighborhoods with high concentrations of renters. As a result of refocusing growth in these older urban communities, by MTC/ABAG's own very conservative estimates, the PDA strategy will put tens of thousands of families and seniors of modest means at greater risk of displacement, including most of the eastern third of San Francisco where a majority of lower income minority residents live and where many also work.

Some of the locations considered to be the best targets for smart growth today are those urban neighborhoods with transit reliant communities that persevered through decades of disinvestment from middle class suburban flight.

How do the regional agencies rationalize how their plan will put tens of thousands of existing Bay Area residents at risk of displacement? First, in their environmental impact analysis the agencies assert that although there will be local displacement at the community/neighborhood level, their plans for overall regional housing production will offset that loss by providing another place in the Bay Area for that displaced family to land. They also reference to San Francisco's rent control as a policy that will control for local displacement. And finally, they assert that the benefits of

improving neighborhoods will outweigh the impacts of displacement.

The inadequacies of the latter two claims are obvious to San Franciscans who have witnessed the gentrification of formerly economically diverse neighborhoods throughout the City. But the slight-of-hand logic of the first claim deserves additional attention.

Although the Plan Bay Area claims that it will "house 100% of the region's projected growth," the plan fails to explain how that housing will be affordable to anyone but the upper middle class and very wealthy. For decades, ABAG has been setting goals for housing production for cities and counties in the region, including goals for housing affordable to lower and moderate income households.

But the only goals that have ever been met entirely have been for market rate housing affordable only for upper income households. MTC and ABAG could have set more rigorous standards to achieve these affordability goals in Plan Bay Area. They could have also followed their staff recommendations to dedicate anticipated future revenue from the state's cap and trade program to affordable housing. But MTC and ABAG commissioners rejected those options. Instead, Plan Bay Area's claim to address the risk of local displacement by promising affordable housing regionally remains based upon its mythical affordable housing goals.

But those goals have been called into question by the state's Department of Housing and Community Development . The state agency has challenged the core policy of Plan Bay Area which allows cities and counties in the region to in effect reduce how much housing they will produce by failing to designate PDAs (shortly before the approval of the plan, Marin withdrew its PDA designations apparently for this purpose).

State law requires that all localities accommodate their 'fair share' of a region's need for housing production. In June, HCD found the PDA policy violates that law and instructed ABAG to revise the policy and adjust its goals. But ABAG disregarded HCD's instructions and approved the unrevised housing goals on July 18 along with the adoption of Plan Bay Area. HCD's response has not yet been announced. Whatever the state's next move, the survival of the region's economically and ethnically diverse communities is likely to require a concerted effort to divert Plan Bay Area from its present path towards unequal development and increased displacement.

Gen Fujioka is the public policy manager at Chinatown Community Development Center. For further supporting documentation see this link.

Marin Voice: A social-equity 'emergency?'

Posted: marinij.com

DID YOU KNOW you are living in fear? It's true.

According to Marin Grassroots, "the majority of Marin residents are increasingly in fear of participating in local government decisions ..."

So, evidently, if you are not in that majority, feeling actual fear, there is something wrong with you. In fact, you might be a racist.

This is the simplistic rhetoric of a dogmatic group that tolerates no dissent. Anyone who disagrees with them is a racist. The parallels to McCarthyism are unmistakable.

Marin Grassroots' press conference took Marin residents to task for daring to differ with the view that Marin needs to be urbanized (i.e. high density city-style housing).

Indeed, they are welcome to their view. But they engage in projection, seeing their own intolerance only in the other side.

By example, if you are among those who want to maintain Marin as the wonderful place it is, you are a "lynch mob." It is a powerful phrase used by Grassroots' director, John Young.

What an outrage to use such a heinous phrase, comparing political opponents to murderers.

And in no shortage of irony, this group does this to condemn what they feel is a lack of civility in debate.

Marin Grassroots' statement cites "implicit racial threats," yet inexplicably fails to specify any threat allegedly made.

You see, Mr. Young says he wrote to Gov. Jerry Brown, asking him to literally declare a state of emergency for Marin.

(If you don't see the emergency, perhaps you forgot that a majority of us are living in fear.)

Mr. Young claims this is not a political stunt. Presumably he understands that a state of emergency is a funding measure for counties stricken by devastation.

Mr. Young should tell us how much money he seeks and who gets it.

It is understandable that so many of our neighbors here in Marin are very upset about a regional government insisting we start converting from suburb to mini city.

The outrage comes when plans are made with little or no publicity.

Most San Rafael residents, even today, don't know that the Civic Center Station Area Plan creates a virtual Northgate City, authorizing five stories at Northgate Mall and Northgate III, putting apartment houses on top of stores.

Other locations go to five stories, too.

Supervisor Susan Adams held a meeting to hear constituents' concerns, but used half of the allotted time to lecture the audience — instead of listening.

Naturally, people got angry.

In contrast, San Rafael Mayor Gary Phillips held a meeting, made brief welcoming remarks and then stopped talking, saying he wanted to hear from us.

While there were occasional outbursts in reaction to claims that SMART had passed in Marin County (in Marin, SMART was voted down, failing to win a two-thirds majority), it was mostly a proper meeting.

Some speakers were angry, but their presentations were orderly.

Formerly an ACLU regional board member, I thought I was a liberal Democrat. But after I opposed Plan Bay Area, a Marin Grassroots hitman published a photo of me, captioned to associate me with the Tea Party.

Marin Grassroots is hypocrisy of the highest order, but great political theater. Its "glass house" is a wall of mirrors.

Randy Warren is a San Rafael lawyer. He is running for City Council on November's ballot.

ABAG and MTC rubber stamp One Bay Area Plan

Richard Eber

I guess it was a foregone conclusion that the directors of the **Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)** and their first cousins on the **Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)** would enthusiastically endorse the **One Bay Area Plan** that sets priorities for housing and transportation for the next thirty years. Citizens didn't stand a chance.

The ratification process was completed at a meeting last week at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Oakland despite stiff opposition of opponents from Marin, Santa Clara, Contra Costa and throughout the region. Determined citizens condemned a document that they felt came out of the depths of the central planning process of the old Soviet Union. Their comparisons of the One Bay Area Plan to the Five Year Plans used by communist regimes in Russia to subjugate the masses was met with deaf ears by the decision makers of the regional agencies.

According to ABAG and the MTC, it is up to the government to pick winners and losers in the urban planning process, This policy believes that private enterprise has lost its touch thus socialist planning methods are best suited to shape the Bay Area's future.

Following this gathering, opponents of the One Bay Area Plan went home depressed by defeat at the hands of left wing political forces that control the political process throughout the state. While people such myself felt marginalized for being *Tea Baggers, John Birth Society supporters, and Black Helicopter Conspiracy Nuts* in liberal blogs the following day, extremists on the left won an important victory for their cause.

I could not help but remember what Eric Hoffer postulated in his classic book **The True Believer**. According to the longshoreman philosopher, there is little difference in methodology at the far reaches of the left and right in totalitarian regimes.

No one on the unelected ABAG and MTC boards advocated allowing their constituents a direct vote on whether alleged climate change and carbon foot prints, and green house gases should be combatted by constructing high density housing in **Planned Development Area** (PDA). Somehow, these concentrated stack and pack apartment buildings close to BART and other public transportation are supposed to save the planet from destruction by whisking residents to jobs, schools, shopping and entertainment without the use of automobiles.

Bike lanes and pedestrian walkways would replace the roads where cars once graced, In this utopian world, motor vehicles use would be taxed to subsidize public transport. All of this while spending 73 billion dollars of tax payer dollars without their consent.

As described in detail on the **Public Advocates** and **6 Wins Network** web sites, the **Equity, Environment and Jobs (EEJ)** proposal was endorsed by ABAG and the MTC. According to this program:

1. Measures benefitting low income people of color will also assist the regions environmental and economic health.
2. Creating more public transportation will increase jobs by 40%
3. Constructing affordable housing near entry level jobs improves access to economic opportunity.
4. strengthen incentives and policies to protect struggling families from displacement by implementing rent control and subsidies to the poor.
5. Re-alocate housing more fairly in the region.

6. Investing in a robust local transportation operation is the most cost efficient way to maximize greenhouse gas reductions by reducing motor vehicle use.

Of course this EEJ economic and social engineering scheme was denounced by One Plan Bay Area opponents.It was pointed out by them that government sponsored housing has proven to be less than successful in the past. Speaker after speaker reminded the audience that ABAG and the MTC were taking away property rights of citizens guaranteed under the Constitution of the United States.

Others commented how is the government going to create more jobs when cap and trade along with excess governmental regulations are causing businesses to flee the state in record numbers? It was also mentioned that with all the guidelines attached with building PDA areas what incentive would there be for private enterprise to participate in these grandiose plans?

Those who condemned the One Bay Area Plan questioned scientific basis of concentration of population in congested urban settings benefiting the health of residents who populated these communities. A doctor stated that with high air pollution levels in PDAs, more cases of asthma, autism, heart disease, and other maladies could be expected. There were also arguments made by a meteorologist that climate change, if such a phenomena was truly influenced very much by man, it would not be materially effected by what ABAG and MTC proposed.

Over the course of the evening ABAG President Amy Worth of Orinda along with her cohorts on the two agency Executive Boards patiently listened to over 125 speakers spill out their guts pro and con in the one minute time limit allocated per person for public comment. By the time actual voting took place endorsing the One Bay Area Plan, most of those who packed the auditorium had left for home.

The largely empty halls of the Oakland Marriott which heard the impassioned pleas of activists who pleaded for a popular vote of the electorate to determine how tax revenues would be spent in the next quarter century were silent. The Eye Witness news crews were busy interviewing combatants earlier in the evening were long gone having returned to their stations to prepare for the 11 pm broadcast.

Contra Costa supervisor Federal Glover, who represented his region's interests by endorsing the One Bay Area Plan, had to stick around til the end of the evening to finish the business of the day. Despite some of the criticism expressed, the $100.00 stipend given ABAG board members hardly covered the grief and abuse they received from the public comment period. It was a long night for all.

Related Posts:

- Stack and Pack housing plan condemned at ABAG-MTC Hearing
- Comment period ends for One Bay Area Plan
- Dangerous propaganda in Plan Bay Area
- Danville residents challenge housing mandates from ABAG, MTC
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ABAG, MTC sued

Richard Colman

Plans to make drastic changes in the make up of the Bay Area's local communities have been met with a lawsuit. On Tuesday, August 6, a group called Bay Area Citizens sued the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

ABAG and MTC are regional governmental bodies involved in land-use planning and transportation planning.

Bay Area Citizens, a nonprofit group, filed suit in Superior Court in Alameda County, where ABAG and MTC currently have their headquarters.

Peter Singleton, a lawyer who helped found Bay Area Citizens, said in a telephone interview on Sunday, August 11 that the goal of the suit is to "shine a light" on the activities of ABAG and MTC.

According to Singleton, "Our suit accepts, for the sake of argument, that ABAG and MTC have the lawful authority to do what they are doing. Given that," he asked, "have they followed the law? We conclude that they have not."

Singleton said that ABAG and MTC used "flawed data" in their arguments for changing the nature of Bay Area communities.

Singleton said that the suit means that ABAG and MTC are now "proceeding at their own risk" instead of going ahead on an unimpeded basis.

ABAG and MTC, citing California law, want to reduce air pollutants that, according to some people, result in climate change.

On the evening of July 18-19, ABAG and MTC voted to support what is called Plan Bay Area, a plan to accommodate projected population growth in the Bay Area.

Plan Bay Area involves the construction of high-rise, high-density housing (so-called stack-and-pack housing) near transit hubs like BART stations. One of Plan Bay Area's goals is to get Bay Area residents to stop using their cars.

Plan Bay Area calls for changing the demographics of local communities. California housing law requires that cities like Orinda and Lafayette zone for large numbers of new housing units. These new units must be built predominantly for very low and low income residents.

In higher income communities (like Orinda and Lafayette), the housing must be constructed in a way that such cities (like Orinda and Lafayette) will become more demographically level.

Singleton said that Plan Bay Area's own models show that the plan's requirements for high-density housing and additional mass transit "will lead to no significant greenhouse-gas reductions."

"Plan Bay Area, he said, "succeeds in imposing massive new costs on Bay Area residents and communities while the plan sharply limits how and where Bay Area residents can live and how they can travel."

The plan, Singleton said, "Dramatically impairs residents' ability to make decisions in their own communities."

According to some people, greenhouse gases, which come from the combustion of fossil fuels like gasoline, accumulate in the earth's upper atmosphere, preventing heat from escaping the planet. Carbon dioxide, a product of fuel combustion, is considered a greenhouse gas.

The directors of ABAG and MTC are not elected publicly by voters. For example, Amy Worth, who is the chairperson of MTC, was not elected by the public to her MTC position. Worth, in 2010, was elected by voters in Orinda to the Orinda City Council. The job of mayor of Orinda rotates among city-council members, and this year Worth is Orinda's mayor.

Singleton said that there is a "huge question of political legitimacy" regarding ABAG and MTC.

Singleton believes that court arguments concerning the lawsuit will take place in January or February 2014.

(Disclosure: Richard Colman is a member of two groups that have the goal of preserving Orinda's environment.)

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- Angry residents confront Orinda Mayor and MTC chairperson,...
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- Residents protest Plan Bay Area at Orinda Council Meeting
- Unelected swarms of bureaucrats hope to harass Bay Area...
- Large crowd protests Orinda Stack and Pack Housing Plan

Napa Valley Register.com

Affordable housing report recommends higher taxes, fees

Raising more money will be hard, industry representatives say

17 HOURS AGO • PETER JENSEN

After months of deliberation that wrapped up earlier this year, a local affordable housing task force is ready for its report's public unveiling before the Napa City Council.

On Sept. 17, the City Council is scheduled to hear the report's recommendations to raise new funds for affordable housing projects and make it easier for developers to build them. Similar presentations will be made this fall to the Napa County Board of Supervisors and the American Canyon City Council.

Whether those discussions lead to actions increasing the supply of affordable housing locally remains to be seen. Some authors of the report doubt if the recommendations could be implemented in total.

The task force has set a goal of raising $5 million by 2018 for a revolving fund dedicated to building 60 units of affordable housing annually, mostly in the cities of Napa and American Canyon.

Raising that money could come from a myriad of ways, but would require local industries and developers to pay higher taxes and fees, according to the report's recommendations.

That could prove unpalatable if the industries balk, and little outreach has occurred to gauge their interests in paying more to fund affordable housing thus far. The focus now is getting the report to the elected officials, Supervisor Mark Luce said.

The report lists five steps, among numerous other recommendations, aimed at generating new revenue through taxes and fees.

One calls for establishing commercial and residential impact fees on developers in the city of American Canyon, and potentially increasing impact fees in the city of Napa and commercial impact fees in the unincorporated area.

A second step examines the possibility of getting Upvalley grapegrowers to increase the property tax assessment they currently pay for the county's farmworker housing centers from its current level of $10 per planted acre.

A third step involves asking the hospitality industry to sign off on increasing the transient occupancy tax, whose current rate in Napa County is 12 percent plus a 2 percent assessment for marketing efforts.

The fourth looks to increase the business license tax, while the final step would propose increasing the real estate transfer tax by .25 percent.

The report stops short of requesting specific increases, and that's intentional, said Randy Gularte, who represented Realtors on the task force.

This allows industries to gauge how much they're contributing to affordable housing needs — largely based on their workforce size — and how much they should pay.

"In order to do that we need help from our whole community," Gularte said. "How we do that is up to the industry itself."

Luce said he was lukewarm on the notion of raising new revenue through increased taxes and fees, but believes some other aspects of the report will be more effective in producing affordable housing.

They include recommendations to streamline the process of developing affordable housing, loosening some zoning restrictions in residential areas, promoting the creation of accessory second units often called "granny units," encouraging greater densities, and emphasizing workforce housing.

Luce called these the "low-hanging fruit" in the task force report, as those recommendations could be implemented more easily.

"Those are the kinds of things that would be able to make it more efficient," Luce said.

Rather than raise taxes and fees locally, Luce said he believed a better option would be to wait and see what could become available from the state and federal government as the economy improves.

"I haven't heard any winners yet," Luce said. "I don't think we're going to be jacking up fees or anything like that."

He compared the effort to the Napa River and Napa Creek Flood Control Project, in which a variety of groups, organizations, agencies and residents collaborated to solve a communitywide problem.

"It's kind of like the flood control project in that it will take a coalition," Luce said. "I think this report was sort of a state of the union kind of thing. It's the first step in the continuing discussion."

Chiles Valley grapegrower Volker Eisele, who represented the agricultural community on the task force, was similarly lukewarm to the notion of raising the property tax assessment on growers. The wine industry, he notes, is the only one currently paying a dedicated tax to pay for affordable housing.

Eisele said he has difficulty reconciling the difference between the county's next regional housing allocation — which has plummeted from past allocations — and the need stated in the report, which assumes a much higher number of units must be built.

"Until we have really resolved that question and addressed that question, it's hard for us to go forward," Eisele said. "The issue is, how do you do this properly?"

He said raising the property tax assessment is no easy task — doing so would require approval from the California Legislature.

"You can't just raise it a buck and then it's done," Eisele said. "You have to go to the Legislature."

The final report, however, could offer some solutions for the cities of Napa and American Canyon, Eisele said.

"It's maybe a road map for the city of Napa and the city of American Canyon," Eisele said.

On Tuesday, July 16, Worth presided at a turbulent meeting of the Orinda City Council. Scores of Orinda residents showed up to protest plans to construct high-rise, high-density housing in Orinda. About 170 units of the planned housing units are to be built in Orinda for low-income individuals.

Two days later, on Thursday, July 18, Worth, presided over a joint meeting of MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).

MTC is charged with reviewing the Bay Area's transportation needs. ABAG is charged with making land-use and housing recommendations for the same region.

At the July 18 meeting, held at the Oakland Marriott, over 100 individuals protested plans for MTC and ABAG to adopt Plan Bay Area, a program to build multi-story housing near transit hubs such as BART stations. Many of the protestors said that they wanted individuals to vote on any housing plans affecting their respective cities. About five people spoke in favor of Plan Bay Area.

At the MTC-ABAG meeting, a resident of Contra Costa County said that if Plan Bay Area is adopted, then all directors, officers, and employees of MTC and ABAG must "ditch" their cars, "surrender" their driver's licenses, and move into high-rise housing built near transit hubs. He added that transit villages will be meaningless if there is no mass transit. From July 1 to July 5 BART was on strike.

One individual at the Oakland meeting read a quotation from a prominent American. This well known American wrote: "I want to emphasize my conviction that militant tactics have no place in the function of any organization of government employees." The quotation comes from a letter written on August 16, 1937, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The MTC-ABAG meeting was supposed make plans for the construction of low-income housing in Bay Area cities. Despite widespread opposition, the One Bay Area was passed.

At the July 16 meeting in Orinda, a nonpartisan conservation group, Orinda Watch, presented the Orinda City Council with the petition bearing about 1,000 names. The petition asked that any plans to build new housing in Orinda be suspended or canceled.

Despite repeated pleas for an Orinda town-hall meeting to discuss the city's environment, the city council has refused to hold such a meeting. To date, the council has refused to allow Orindans to vote on any environmental changes to the city.

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- Residents protest Plan Bay Area at Orinda Council Meeting
- BART and the death of stack and pack housing
- State mandated Housing Element forces Orinda to build…
- Orinda citizens blast Stack-and-Pack construction plans
- Large crowd protests Orinda Stack and Pack Housing Plan

Marin Voice: Plan Bay Area is not one size fits all

Posted: marinij.com

PLAN BAY AREA will fit into Marin County and the rest of the Bay Area in very different ways.

In Marin, the plan supports the continued preservation of existing neighborhoods and small town characteristics that make the county so unique. It also ensures that all housing and land-use decisions remain at the local level where they belong.

This may come as a surprise to some given all the recent uproar.

Some background is necessary.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) was formed in 1961 to assure that any regional planning body would be controlled by local governments rather than the state or federal government. Since then ABAG has provided a forum for the discussion and study of regional issues and to develop policy recommendations.

Today, 50-plus years later, we continue that mission, led by a 38-member executive board made up of elected city council members, mayors and county supervisors.

Plan Bay Area, a state requirement under SB 375, looks to the year 2040 and charts a course for the Bay Area's first-ever Sustainable Communities Strategy. It seeks to accommodate needed housing growth and transportation investments within the nine counties, while at the same time decreasing greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks.

What does this mean for Marin County?

Plan Bay Area acknowledges where growth is anticipated using areas called Priority Development Areas (PDAs), which are neighborhoods where city councils and boards of supervisors believe that future growth brings positive amenities to their individual communities. A PDA designation does not change any local zoning, general plans or land-use controls.

Other parts of the Bay Area, using the plan criteria, are planning for more housing near jobs and transit, with many more units slated for the South Bay, Alameda County and San Francisco to meet higher projected job and population growth. This works because of our regional ability to discuss how and where housing should go.

What the plan does NOT do, is remove local control over where housing or other buildings can be built by developers, OR change local zoning to require high-rise development, OR demolish existing single-family homes.

Plan Bay Area is not radical, it is incremental, long-range planning that accommodates and recognizes the need to plan for future growth in very different ways. It recognizes that what Marin will look like in the coming decades is very different from what San Francisco and Oakland will look like.

What comes next?

Plan Bay Area is locally driven, with local voices defining where they want to see additional housing, retail, office and mixed-use development in their communities. Toward that end, starting in January 2014, local towns, cities and counties can add new PDAs, or modify, or remove previous PDAs. For instance, the Marin County Board of Supervisors recently informed us that they voted to remove both the Marinwood and Tam Junction neighborhoods from the potential Highway 101 Corridor PDA previously nominated.

We are happy to make that change to accommodate local decision makers.

Plan Bay Area will be revised in four years, allowing us to develop additional ways to engage and involve the public from the very beginning. We look forward to that effort, which begins again in 18 months.

Ezra Rapport is executive director of the Association of Bay Area Governments.

DAILY REPUBLIC

Friday, August 30, 2013 FAIRFIELD-SUISUN, CALIFORNIA

Plan Bay Area supports economy, environment, choices

By Linda Seifert

From page A9 | August 18, 2013 | 4 Comments

Local elected officials on the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission voted last month to adopt Plan Bay Area, the region's first integrated transportation and land-use strategy.

The plan, developed to meet the requirements of Senate Bill 375, seeks to accommodate needed housing growth and transportation investments within the nine Bay Area counties, while decreasing per capita greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. It also recognizes that the Bay Area's enviable economy cannot grow without building new housing in transit corridors close to the region's major employment centers.

With Solano County's population of 413,786 projected to increase 24 percent between 2010 and 2040, Plan Bay Area's proposed growth and conservation strategies aim to improve travel time from home to work and to schools while also improving access to open space, active recreation and services.

Contrary to what some opponents claim, Plan Bay Area is locally driven, with local jurisdictions defining where they wish to see future housing, retail, office and mixed-use development.

As part of the plan, elected officials from Solano's cities nominated 11 priority development areas including Vallejo's downtown and waterfront transit hub, the neighboring downtowns of Fairfield and Suisun City, and Vacaville's historic district. These areas are where local officials believe future growth brings positive amenities to their communities. The priority development areas are complemented by locally nominated priority conservation areas, which were designed to preserve open space and agricultural land.

A priority development area designation does not change any local zoning, general plan or land use controls. That is why local residents will continue to have the same voice in determining local land use decisions as they've always had. Solano County residents that don't live in a priority development area will notice little if any change. If anything, the plan should improve their quality of life.

Why?

Parts of the Bay Area – Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose – are already planning for more housing near jobs and transit to meet their projected job and population growth. Focusing more of the region's new housing in larger urban areas allows us to take some of the pressure off of smaller towns and rural areas, allowing them to focus on preserving small-town character, open space and farmland.

This type of long-range planning for the needs of future generations is essential to protect our economy and our quality of life. Plan Bay Area does not have any impact on property rights and it will not force residents to move from single-family homes or give up their cars.

Rather, it provides more options for the range of people who live here now by considering connections to transit, housing for all income ranges, proximity to jobs, and open space. It also provides more choices for your children and grandchildren whether they choose to live in a single-family home or an apartment and whether they choose to take public transit or drive their own cars.

Finally, attracting more jobs and revenue to Solano County will depend on our ability to better connect our employment centers with new housing and transportation investments and doing so in ways that reduce commuter traffic. As we implement the plan, focusing on our priority development areas, we will also be developing new strategies to mitigate traffic congestion on Interstate 80 and increase the efficiency of tracks serving both freight trains and commuter trains along the Capital Corridor (e.g. adding passing tracks).

Plan Bay Area is a work in progress, because we are required to update and revise it every four years, allowing us to learn from local best practices and new information. We look forward to developing additional ways to engage and involve the public when we revisit this process again in 2015.

To learn more about Plan Bay Area, visit www.onebayarea.org/.

Linda Seifert is chairwoman of the Solano County Board of Supervisors. The Association of Bay Area Governments is the official regional planning agency for the nine counties and 101 cities and towns of the Bay Area. Formed by local government leaders in 1961, it is recognized as the first council of governments in California.Seifert sits on the association's executive board.

Dave Cortese: Plan Bay Area makes sense for South Bay growth

By Dave Cortese Special to the Mercury News San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

What does Plan Bay Area, the recently adopted regional transportation and land-use strategy through 2040, mean for South Bay residents?

The Bay Area is as unique as its rural towns, urban centers and open space. We can choose our lifestyles, from beachfront housing to urban centers, suburban tracts to farms and ranches. Long-range planning for the needs of future generations is essential to protect our economy and quality of life.

With the Bay Area population projected to grow from 7 million to 9 million people, local elected officials and regional agencies developed Plan Bay Area by asking local cities and counties where and how they wanted to grow over the next three decades. Local governments working with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) nominated Priority Development Areas, as well as areas that they wanted to preserve, such as single family neighborhoods, open space and agricultural land. As a result, the Plan helps preserve small-town character and open space and maintains what makes our cities and towns unique. It also considers areas where local jurisdictions want to improve and expand housing near transit, jobs, and services.

Santa Clara County's bustling regional nodes like San Jose, job centers like Palo Alto and areas such as Milpitas that are planning for new mass transit connecting the East Bay to the South Bay will continue to thrive under this plan. Rural areas will continue to enjoy their local town character and the nuances that make them unique.

The Bay Area currently contains about 2.1 million single family homes. Under Plan Bay Area, by 2040 there will be about 2.3 million single family homes, 200,000 more than today.

In larger urban areas closer to jobs, more new housing will be available to help people make connections and reduce commute times and improve their quality of life. Focusing more of the region's new housing in these urban areas allows us to take some of the pressure off smaller towns and rural areas. The Bay Area contains about 1.1 million multifamily units, which will increase to about 1.5 million units in 2040. Much of this housing will be built in the region's larger cities.

Santa Clara County has 1.8 million residents with unique housing and transportation needs. The Plan provides options for the range of people who live here by considering connections to transit, housing for all income ranges, proximity to jobs and open space. Cities with larger employment nodes function better when workers are able to take transit to work. This reduces pressure on highways and reduces downtown congestion.

There is evidence to suggest that industries, in addition to locating at employment campuses, are interested in locating in highly functional city centers. An important element of Plan Bay Area will be to improve the connection from the East Bay to San Jose with new BART extension.

As a result of Plan Bay Area, many things will stay the same, and planning for new development will be coordinated in a supportive way.

The Plan was developed to meet the requirements of California's landmark 2008 Senate Bill 375. In two years Plan Bay Area will be revisited to make sure it is on track and adjusted as needed. It is not a static document but a work in progress.

Dave Cortese represents District 3 on the Santa Clara County Supervisor and is immediate past president of A BAG. He wrote this for this newspaper.

$8 million construction contract breezes through Hercules City Council

By Tom Lochner Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

HERCULES -- The City Council appropriated more than $8 million this week in approving a construction contract related to a planned center for buses, trains and ferries.

The contract, with Goodfellow Top Grade Construction LLC of Livermore, is for the San Francisco Bay Trail-related portion of the Hercules Intermodal Transit Center project. It provides for a 10-foot-wide, 3,700-foot-long section of paved trail, from the Victoria by the Bay subdivision to the future extension of John Muir Parkway, along with grading, drainage, sewer relocation, fencing, planting, irrigation and other related work as well as some track preparation. Amtrak Capitol Corridor trains that are supposed to stop at the future Hercules ITC run on Union Pacific Railroad-owned tracks along the shore of San Pablo Bay.

The $8.34 million contract -- $7,582,340 plus a 10 percent contingency -- will be financed by grants, including federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) and state Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds, as well as Measure J, Measure AA Bond and Measure WW Bond funds and an Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) grant, according to a city staff report.

The action Tuesday took all of five minutes, including quips and some banter between Mayor John Delgado and City Manager Steve Duran, followed by a brief presentation by William Silva, principal in d'Oro Construction Management and the city's consultant on the ITC project. Delgado voiced regret for the lack of "pomp and circumstance," citing the lateness of the hour, which was past 11 p.m.

By contrast, earlier in the meeting, the council spent almost 40 minutes, including 11 minutes listening to public comment, on a fee waiver of up to $1,500 for Hercules Library fundraising events at the Community Center.

Goodfellow's was one of only two bids received in June, according to the staff report. The other, from Bay Cities Paving & Grading, Inc. of Concord, was for more than $10 million, not including any contingency, according to the staff report. Fifteen interested parties had shown up at a pre-bid meeting in April, according to Silva.

The council approved the contract 4-0; Councilman Bill Kelly recused himself because he lives in the Promenade neighborhood adjacent to the future ITC.

Earlier this month, the council extended Silva's consulting contract for another year at $180,000, or $15,000 a month, through June 2014, praising him for his success in obtaining funding for the ITC.

Contact Tom Lochner at 510-262-2760 or tlochner@bayareanewsgroup.com. Follow him at twitter.com/tomlochner

A Bay Area Plan for Development and Displacement

by Gen Fujioka, 2013-07-29

On July 18 the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) approved a thirty-year "Smart Growth" regional plan. Most notably, the plan seeks to steer the majority of the region's real estate development into specified locations including most of San Francisco's eastern neighborhoods--despite projections that the strategy will displace tens of thousands and a finding by a state agency that it is in violation of state law.

Under the plan entitled 'Plan Bay Area,' San Francisco is expected to grow its population by over 35%, to over 1,080,000 by 2040 (by comparison, Marin' is asked to accommodate a 13% increase). Eleventh hour amendments spearheaded by progressives may eventually mitigate or at least soften some of the negative impacts but these broadly stated amendments to the plan leave their outcomes uncertain. And even as amended, the adopted plan fails to incorporate the primary recommendations of an alternative plan proposed by environmental and social equity advocates that would have distributed regional growth more evenly and yielded environmental and social equity outcomes ranked as "superior" even by the standards set by MTC/ABAG's own researchers.

Although it is too early to assess the full implications of Plan Bay Area it is already clear that if state regulators allow MTC/ABAG to proceed, this plan will have consequences unlike the region's 'vision statements' of the past. Plan Bay Area is literally a road map for public and private investment.

For the first time, this plan knits together land use planning with long term transportation investments—more than $280 Billion in roads, highways, and transit programs over the life of the plan. Where those investments go, private developers will follow with the blessings of regional planners. The plan's selected transit accessible target communities and neighborhoods for that intensive growth, known as 'Priority Development Areas' (PDAs), will then be expected to accommodate more than 60% of the region's growth in jobs and 70% of the new housing.

In the abstract, concentrating future development near transit comes across as sensible "Smart Growth." And for some relatively undeveloped PDAs, there will be few negative consequences.

But as critics have noted, many PDAs include existing mostly working class neighborhoods with high concentrations of renters. As a result of refocusing growth in these older urban communities, by MTC/ABAG's own very conservative estimates, the PDA strategy will put tens of thousands of families and seniors of modest means at greater risk of displacement, including most of the eastern third of San Francisco where a majority of lower income minority residents live and where many also work.

Some of the locations considered to be the best targets for smart growth today are those urban neighborhoods with transit reliant communities that persevered through decades of disinvestment from middle class suburban flight.

How do the regional agencies rationalize how their plan will put tens of thousands of existing Bay Area residents at risk of displacement? First, in their environmental impact analysis the agencies assert that although there will be local displacement at the community/neighborhood level, their plans for overall regional housing production will offset that loss by providing another place in the Bay Area for that displaced family to land. They also reference to San Francisco's rent control as a policy that will control for local displacement. And finally, they assert that the benefits of

improving neighborhoods will outweigh the impacts of displacement.

The inadequacies of the latter two claims are obvious to San Franciscans who have witnessed the gentrification of formerly economically diverse neighborhoods throughout the City. But the slight-of-hand logic of the first claim deserves additional attention.

Although the Plan Bay Area claims that it will "house 100% of the region's projected growth," the plan fails to explain how that housing will be affordable to anyone but the upper middle class and very wealthy. For decades, ABAG has been setting goals for housing production for cities and counties in the region, including goals for housing affordable to lower and moderate income households.

But the only goals that have ever been met entirely have been for market rate housing affordable only for upper income households. MTC and ABAG could have set more rigorous standards to achieve these affordability goals in Plan Bay Area. They could have also followed their staff recommendations to dedicate anticipated future revenue from the state's cap and trade program to affordable housing. But MTC and ABAG commissioners rejected those options. Instead, Plan Bay Area's claim to address the risk of local displacement by promising affordable housing regionally remains based upon its mythical affordable housing goals.

But those goals have been called into question by the state's Department of Housing and Community Development . The state agency has challenged the core policy of Plan Bay Area which allows cities and counties in the region to in effect reduce how much housing they will produce by failing to designate PDAs (shortly before the approval of the plan, Marin withdrew its PDA designations apparently for this purpose).

State law requires that all localities accommodate their 'fair share' of a region's need for housing production. In June, HCD found the PDA policy violates that law and instructed ABAG to revise the policy and adjust its goals. But ABAG disregarded HCD's instructions and approved the unrevised housing goals on July 18 along with the adoption of Plan Bay Area. HCD's response has not yet been announced. Whatever the state's next move, the survival of the region's economically and ethnically diverse communities is likely to require a concerted effort to divert Plan Bay Area from its present path towards unequal development and increased displacement.

Gen Fujioka is the public policy manager at Chinatown Community Development Center. For further supporting documentation see this link.

ABAG and MTC rubber stamp One Bay Area Plan

Richard Eber

I guess it was a foregone conclusion that the directors of the **Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)** and their first cousins on the **Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)** would enthusiastically endorse the **One Bay Area Plan** that sets priorities for housing and transportation for the next thirty years. Citizens didn't stand a chance.

The ratification process was completed at a meeting last week at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Oakland despite stiff opposition of opponents from Marin, Santa Clara, Contra Costa and throughout the region. Determined citizens condemned a document that they felt came out of the depths of the central planning process of the old Soviet Union. Their comparisons of the One Bay Area Plan to the Five Year Plans used by communist regimes in Russia to subjugate the masses was met with deaf ears by the decision makers of the regional agencies.

According to ABAG and the MTC, it is up to the government to pick winners and losers in the urban planning process, This policy believes that private enterprise has lost its touch thus socialist planning methods are best suited to shape the Bay Area's future.

Following this gathering, opponents of the One Bay Area Plan went home depressed by defeat at the hands of left wing political forces that control the political process throughout the state. While people such myself felt marginalized for being *Tea Baggers, John Birth Society supporters, and Black Helicopter Conspiracy Nuts* in liberal blogs the following day, extremists on the left won an important victory for their cause.

I could not help but remember what Eric Hoffer postulated in his classic book **The True Believer**. According to the longshoreman philosopher, there is little difference in methodology at the far reaches of the left and right in totalitarian regimes.

No one on the unelected ABAG and MTC boards advocated allowing their constituents a direct vote on whether alleged climate change and carbon foot prints, and green house gases should be combatted by constructing high density housing in **Planned Development Area** (PDA). Somehow, these concentrated stack and pack apartment buildings close to BART and other public transportation are supposed to save the planet from destruction by whisking residents to jobs, schools, shopping and entertainment without the use of automobiles.

Bike lanes and pedestrian walkways would replace the roads where cars once graced, In this utopian world, motor vehicles use would be taxed to subsidize public transport. All of this while spending 73 billion dollars of tax payer dollars without their consent.

As described in detail on the **Public Advocates** and **6 Wins Network** web sites, the **Equity, Environment and Jobs (EEJ)** proposal was endorsed by ABAG and the MTC. According to this program:

1. Measures benefitting low income people of color will also assist the regions environmental and economic health.
2. Creating more public transportation will increase jobs by 40%
3. Constructing affordable housing near entry level jobs improves access to economic opportunity.
4. strengthen incentives and policies to protect struggling families from displacement by implementing rent control and subsidies to the poor.
5. Re-alocate housing more fairly in the region.

6. Investing in a robust local transportation operation is the most cost efficient way to maximize greenhouse gas reductions by reducing motor vehicle use.

Of course this EEJ economic and social engineering scheme was denounced by One Plan Bay Area opponents.It was pointed out by them that government sponsored housing has proven to be less than successful in the past. Speaker after speaker reminded the audience that ABAG and the MTC were taking away property rights of citizens guaranteed under the Constitution of the United States.

Others commented how is the government going to create more jobs when cap and trade along with excess governmental regulations are causing businesses to flee the state in record numbers? It was also mentioned that with all the guidelines attached with building PDA areas what incentive would there be for private enterprise to participate in these grandiose plans?

Those who condemned the One Bay Area Plan questioned scientific basis of concentration of population in congested urban settings benefiting the health of residents who populated these communities. A doctor stated that with high air pollution levels in PDAs, more cases of asthma, autism, heart disease, and other maladies could be expected. There were also arguments made by a meteorologist that climate change, if such a phenomena was truly influenced very much by man, it would not be materially effected by what ABAG and MTC proposed.

Over the course of the evening ABAG President Amy Worth of Orinda along with her cohorts on the two agency Executive Boards patiently listened to over 125 speakers spill out their guts pro and con in the one minute time limit allocated per person for public comment. By the time actual voting took place endorsing the One Bay Area Plan, most of those who packed the auditorium had left for home.

The largely empty halls of the Oakland Marriott which heard the impassioned pleas of activists who pleaded for a popular vote of the electorate to determine how tax revenues would be spent in the next quarter century were silent. The Eye Witness news crews were busy interviewing combatants earlier in the evening were long gone having returned to their stations to prepare for the 11 pm broadcast.

Contra Costa supervisor Federal Glover, who represented his region's interests by endorsing the One Bay Area Plan, had to stick around til the end of the evening to finish the business of the day. Despite some of the criticism expressed, the $100.00 stipend given ABAG board members hardly covered the grief and abuse they received from the public comment period. It was a long night for all.

Related Posts:

- Stack and Pack housing plan condemned at ABAG-MTC Hearing
- Comment period ends for One Bay Area Plan
- Dangerous propaganda in Plan Bay Area
- Danville residents challenge housing mandates from ABAG, MTC
- Danville Town Hall, Jan 15 on One Bay Area plan that…

On Tuesday, July 16, Worth presided at a turbulent meeting of the Orinda City Council. Scores of Orinda residents showed up to protest plans to construct high-rise, high-density housing in Orinda. About 170 units of the planned housing units are to be built in Orinda for low-income individuals.

Two days later, on Thursday, July 18, Worth, presided over a joint meeting of MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).

MTC is charged with reviewing the Bay Area's transportation needs. ABAG is charged with making land-use and housing recommendations for the same region.

At the July 18 meeting, held at the Oakland Marriott, over 100 individuals protested plans for MTC and ABAG to adopt Plan Bay Area, a program to build multi-story housing near transit hubs such as BART stations. Many of the protestors said that they wanted individuals to vote on any housing plans affecting their respective cities. About five people spoke in favor of Plan Bay Area.

At the MTC-ABAG meeting, a resident of Contra Costa County said that if Plan Bay Area is adopted, then all directors, officers, and employees of MTC and ABAG must "ditch" their cars, "surrender" their driver's licenses, and move into high-rise housing built near transit hubs. He added that transit villages will be meaningless if there is no mass transit. From July 1 to July 5 BART was on strike.

One individual at the Oakland meeting read a quotation from a prominent American. This well known American wrote: "I want to emphasize my conviction that militant tactics have no place in the function of any organization of government employees." The quotation comes from a letter written on August 16, 1937, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The MTC-ABAG meeting was supposed make plans for the construction of low-income housing in Bay Area cities. Despite widespread opposition, the One Bay Area was passed.

At the July 16 meeting in Orinda, a nonpartisan conservation group, Orinda Watch, presented the Orinda City Council with the petition bearing about 1,000 names. The petition asked that any plans to build new housing in Orinda be suspended or canceled.

Despite repeated pleas for an Orinda town-hall meeting to discuss the city's environment, the city council has refused to hold such a meeting. To date, the council has refused to allow Orindans to vote on any environmental changes to the city.

Related Posts:

- Residents protest Plan Bay Area at Orinda Council Meeting
- BART and the death of stack and pack housing
- State mandated Housing Element forces Orinda to build…
- Orinda citizens blast Stack-and-Pack construction plans
- Large crowd protests Orinda Stack and Pack Housing Plan

Barnidge: A liberal, conservative, bleeding-heart redneck looks at Plan Bay Area

By Tom Barnidge Contra Costa Times Columnist Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

I once wrote a column about immigration reform that stirred angry emails from both sides of the debate. Because I sympathized with some concerns expressed by illegal immigrants, conservatives branded me a bleeding heart. Because I didn't embrace all of those concerns, liberals labeled me a redneck.

Some will tell you it takes a special skill to alienate both ends of the political spectrum within the constraints of 600 words. (Actually, it's not that hard.) But I'm not sure I deserve all the credit.

Maybe the anger at perceived ideological bias has as much to do with the beholder as the one expressing the view. When published opinions contradict your own, it's far easier to accuse writers of prejudice than to concede they might be on to something.

People hang labels on opposing views all the time, as I was reminded recently after commenting on two hot-button issues.

When I challenged BART workers' rationale for striking -- $60,000 to $70,000 salaries for a 37½-hour work week that almost guarantees overtime in a job with great benefits doesn't seem so bad -- I was called a right-wing, union-busting conservative.

A few days later, when I chided opponents of the regional land-use-and-transportation vision known as Plan Bay Area -- coordinating residential growth with transportation options makes some sense -- many readers saw me as a Big Brother advocate who'd drunk the socialist Kool-Aid and sworn allegiance to collectivism.

This is a far-fetched idea, I know, but it's conceivable that I sized up each argument independently, weighed the pros and cons, and offered an unbiased opinion as I understood the positions. That's how I make decisions at the ballot box. I don't vote straight party tickets.

I bristle when people talk about media bias, as if all journalists sign a secret pledge and participate in daily conference calls to determine what agenda we'll foist on the public. I don't even like conference calls.

My general support of Plan Bay Area, which aims to preserve the atmosphere and open space, begins with the premise that it's better to plan for growth than to build houses on every chunk of land where you can pour a foundation.

Moreover, the plan doesn't demand that automobile owners abandon their vehicles; it encourages construction near public transit alternatives. It doesn't require communities to build mixed-income residences; it encourages them to do so with financial incentives.

The easiest way to fight an idea you are determined not to like is to demonize it. So opponents' recurring assertion is that they will be denied property rights and forced from single-family homes. But if anyone bothered to listen at the July 18 plan approval meeting, ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapaport bluntly refuted that.

"The Bay Area currently contains about 2.1 million single-family homes," he said. "Under this plan, by 2040 there will be about 2.3 million single-family homes."

So, about those homes we're being forced out of: The plan anticipates 200,000 more of them.

Government agencies do many things poorly -- not that we have space today to talk about the Bay Bridge -- but there's nothing frightening I can find about Plan Bay Area.

I don't expect to change opponents' minds, of course. I'm part of the media, and we're biased -- either liberally or conservatively, depending on who's reading.

Contact Tom Barnidge at tbarnidge@bayareanewsgroup.com.

Barnidge: Plan Bay Area marches on, despite torrent of criticism

By Tom Barnidge Contra Costa Times Columnist Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

It will be years before anyone knows if the vision laid down by Plan Bay Area produces its desired results -- smarter development, more affordable housing, less traffic congestion, reduced greenhouse gases -- but no waiting is required for its opponents' assessment.

The land-use-and-transportation plan approved Thursday by the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission was pilloried in public comment as a social engineering experiment, an attack on property rights, an exercise in collectivism and an assault on the Constitution.

American freedom hasn't been this threatened since General Zod tore the roof off the White House in "Superman II."

If that portrayal seems at odds with the intentions of elected officials -- city council members and county supervisors -- who comprise the MTC and ABAG boards, it is. Their goal, they say, is to plan for population growth by urging communities to zone for mixed-income housing near public transit.

If urban sprawl is curtailed, open spaces can be preserved. If vehicular traffic is reduced, greenhouse gases will be, too. If employees have housing and easy access to work, more businesses will be attracted. There's some logic to it all.

"If you look at California's history for the last 50 years," said Orinda Mayor and MTC Commissioner Amy Worth, "so much of it has been development first, followed by transportation. This combines transportation with land-use planning."

It goes beyond that, say critics, who see a plan to accommodate the masses and envision tenements sprouting like weeds; who hear talk of enhanced public transit and see an attack on automobiles. From their howls of protest, you'd swear they were being dragged from their homes and locked up in dormitories.

ABAG and MTC officials were on various occasions likened to Karl Marx, Nikita Khrushchev, Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler. (Everyone forgets Mao Zedong.) If you are a fan of overstatement, this was a chance to see a hyperbole competition.

"Comrades and commissars of the Bay Area regional Politburo," said one contestant, "I'd like to thank you for providing me with the illusion of public input, which you intend to totally ignore."

One woman sang her bitterness, to the tune of "America the Beautiful":

"Oh, dutiful, great bureaucrat, he claims to speak for me.

"A lowly serf, hardly of worth, he knows what's best, you see."

Across 3¿1/2 hours, 161 speakers took turns at the microphone -- time goes faster if you count them -- and the vast majority came armed with biting attacks on officials' integrity, courage and patriotism.

Worth, who led the meeting, dutifully thanked each speaker for his or her comments, as if they'd complimented her on her appearance.

"On the one hand, it's tough," she said of the withering attacks. "On the other, I recognize this is part of the process. People get engaged because they care."

One voice of support came from Stephanie Reyes of Greenbelt Alliance, a nonprofit land-conservation advocate: "All parts of the plan revolve around public health, a beautiful place to live, housing choices and affordability. They get better under the plan, and without it, they get worse. I don't want to live in a place that gets dirtier in 25 years."

The plan does, indeed, look ahead that far, but it's revisited at regular intervals. So keep those hyperboles handy, folks. We'll be doing this again in four years.

Contact Tom Barnidge at tbarnidge@bayareanewsgroup.com.

SEVEN DAYS THE EAST BAY NEWS BLOG

FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2013

Bay Area Agencies Boost Support for Affordable Housing and Local Transit

TRANSPORTATION Jean Tepperman — Fri, Jul 19, 2013 at 6:00 PM

6

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Before adopting a sweeping thirty-year plan for Bay Area housing and transportation just after midnight Friday morning, the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) added significant provisions to boost support for affordable housing and local transit operations.

As **we previously reported**, a coalition of environmental and social justice organizations called "6 Wins for Social Equity" had been pushing for those priorities throughout the planning process, and claimed these last-minute amendments as victories.

Plan Bay Area aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by designing communities to require less driving, as required by a 2008 state law. The 6 Wins coalition developed a proposal that also emphasized social equity; the MTC/ABAG staff analysis labeled the 6 Wins proposal as environmentally superior to five others, including the one they themselves had developed.

One of the amendments adopted before the final vote commits the MTC to develop a "comprehensive strategy" for supporting local transit operations. Another requires local governments to adopt a plan for creating affordable housing as a condition of receiving grants from the One Bay Area Grants program, which provides funding for transportation infrastructure.

The third amendment concerned an estimated $3.1 billion the region is due to receive from the state's new "cap and trade" system, through which companies must buy permits to release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The final plan calls for an inclusive public process to set priorities for spending this money, focusing on the needs of disadvantaged communities

Spokespeople for the 6 Wins coalition said these victories were only a "first step" and vowed to continue advocating for the interests of low-income families and communities as the planning process continues.

THE SAN FRANCISCO APPEAL

BAY AREA LEADERS APPROVE LONG-TERM POPULATION GROWTH PLAN AFTER CONTENTIOUS MEETING

ABAG BAAQMD MTC PLAN BAY AREA by Bay City News | July 19, 2013 2:51 am |

A coalition of Bay Area leaders late Thursday night approved a long-term regional plan meant to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

The final vote on Plan Bay Area came during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) at the Oakland Marriott.

The two groups are made up of 21 Bay Area county supervisors, mayors and other local leaders.

Several hundred people, many who boarded buses from Marin and Santa Clara counties, packed a Marriott ballroom to protest the plan, voicing concerns that it will bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted “Let us vote!” or “MTC, don’t speak for me!”

Several dozen others from Oakland-based public transit advocacy group TransForm carried yellow signs expressing support for alternatives to the plan under the slogan “Equity Environment and Jobs” or EEJ.

According to the MTC, the plan is a “work in progress “ that continues earlier efforts to “develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way.”

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region’s nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

The federal government requires the agencies to update the plan every four years to keep up with shifting demographics and new data, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said.

“There are no easy solutions in this plan but…this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly,” said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing.

“It’s clearly a social engineering experiment,” Fairfax resident Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options – amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

“I’m really glad to see the region take this pioneering step,” said Adina Levin of Menlo Park.

The Bay Area is among the state’s 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night’s vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

Laura Dixon, Bay City News

Bay Area Plan Approved, Eklund Abstains From Vote

Opposition group Citizen Marin chartered a 48-person bus to the meeting, and several Marin residents seized on the opportunity to speak out against the plan.

Posted by Karina Ioffee (Editor), July 19, 2013 at 06:00 pm

Bay City News

A coalition of Bay Area leaders, including Marin County Supervisor Katie Rice, approved a long-term regional plan meant to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

Plan Bay Area was approved during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments Thursday.

Marin County supervisors Steve Kinsey and Katie Rice voted yes on both the plan and its environmental impact report, while Novato City Councilwoman Pat Eklund abstained from voting on both, according to the *Marin Independent Journal*.

Eklund is running for reelection this November. A message left for her Friday morning was not immediately returned.

The plan has been controversial from the get-go and Thursday night's packed meeting at the Oakland Marriott was no different. Several hundred people packed the hotel in protest, voicing concerns that the plan bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development.

Opposition group Citizen Marin chartered a 48-person bus to the meeting, according to the *Marin Independent Journal*, and several Marin residents seized on the opportunity to speak out against the plan.

"It's clearly a social engineering experiment," Fairfax resident and Marin Republican Party leader Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

"This plan has been wrong from the beginning," said Mill Valley resident Susan Kirsch, one of the co-founders of Citizen Marin. "You don't represent us. What we demand is the right to vote."

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted "Let us vote!" or "MTC, don't speak for me!"

According to the MTC, the plan is a "work in progress " that continues earlier efforts to "develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way."

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region's nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

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"There are no easy solutions in this plan but...this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly," said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options – amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

"I'm really glad to see the region take this pioneering step," said Adina Levin of Menlo Park.

The Bay Area is among the state's 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night's vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

Bay Area Plan to Accommodate Population Growth, Cut Pollution Approved

Some opponents of the plan said it would bring overcrowding to cities. Others wanted the plan to be put to a vote.

Posted by Stacie Chan (Editor), July 19, 2013 at 10:21 am

Credit: Plan Bay Area
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Written by Bay City News

A coalition of Bay Area leaders late Thursday night approved a long-term regional plan meant to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

The final vote on Plan Bay Area came during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) at the Oakland Marriott.
The two groups are made up of 21 Bay Area county supervisors, mayors and other local leaders.

Several hundred people, many who boarded buses from Marin and Santa Clara counties, packed a Marriott ballroom to protest the plan, voicing concerns that it will

bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted "Let us vote!" or "MTC, don't speak for me!"

Several dozen others from Oakland-based public transit advocacy group TransForm carried yellow signs expressing support for alternatives to the plan under the slogan "Equity Environment and Jobs" or EEJ.

According to the MTC, the plan is a "work in progress " that continues earlier efforts to "develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way."

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region's nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

The federal government requires the agencies to update the plan every four years to keep up with shifting demographics and new data, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said.

"There are no easy solutions in this plan but...this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly," said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing. "It's clearly a social engineering experiment," Fairfax resident Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options - amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

"I'm really glad to see the region take this pioneering step," said Adina Levin of Menlo Park. The Bay Area is among the state's 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night's vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

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Bay Area growth: Why not spread out into rural land instead of building in cities?

By Wendell Cox Special to the Mercury News San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

The last two centuries have brought unprecedented urbanization around the world. Large cities have become the norm by meeting the aspirations of new residents. Cities are primarily economic organisms and are justified only by improving the lives of their residents, by facilitating higher discretionary incomes and reducing poverty.

However, in recent years, those more concerned with what the city looks like and how residents travel have dominated urban policy. Regional plans had been adopted with virtually no attention to the economic impacts of their strategies. Urban expansion (which detractors call by the ill defined term "sprawl") has become the bugaboo, despite the fact that 97 percent of the nation's land is rural. The result has been to price people out of the housing market, severely restrict affordable housing for low-income households and increase traffic congestion, with its attendant costs.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the San Francisco Bay Area, under the Association of Bay Area governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission "Plan Bay Area."

Plan Bay Area seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing automobile use and by forcing people to live in smaller houses at much higher densities. Between now and 2040, more than three quarters of the new houses would be built in high-density, transit-oriented developments, called "priority development areas." It further suggests that fewer detached houses will be needed, despite a larger population. Priority development areas would also accommodate nearly two-thirds of all business expansion.

Little or no new development would be allowed on or beyond the urban fringe, where cities have grown organically since the beginning of time. Less draconian constraints on fringe development have been employed for 40 years in the Bay Area. This has led to a more than doubling of house prices relative to incomes, making a formerly affordable metropolitan area one of the most expensive in the world. This is not unexpected, since rationing of any demanded good or service, including land for houses, increases its price, other things being equal. At least partly because the first principle of livability is affordability, a net one-half million people have moved from the Bay Area to other parts of the country since 2000.

Yet, even after seeking to play musical chairs with the lives of 7 million current residents and a million additional residents who could move there by 2040, Plan Bay Area predicts that people will drive cars just about as much as they do now. But much of this traffic would be concentrated around the priority areas, which would intensify traffic congestion. The effect would be to radically alter the character of communities from Larkspur to Orinda to Morgan Hill, by crowding them with higher population densities and making traffic congestion and local air pollution even worse.

None of this is necessary. The United States Department of Energy forecasts that automobile fuel efficiency will improve materially by 2040. This would reduce Bay Area per capita emissions 49 percent by 2040. Plan Bay Area's policies are not necessary to reach the state's emissions reduction target.

The Bay Area has an opportunity to reject the policy overreach that has made housing so expensive and traffic congestion so bad. Plan Bay Area should be withdrawn. Officials should instead focus on facilitating the aspirations of present and future residents.

Wendell Cox, principal of Wendell Cox Consultancy (Demographia), an international public policy firm, is a PRI fellow and a visiting professor at a French national university. He wrote this for this newspaper.

From the San Francisco Business Times :http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2013/07/19/bay-area-officials-approve.html

Jul 19, 2013, 11:41am PDT

Bay Area officials approve controversial land use plan

Eric Young
Reporter- *San Francisco Business Times*
Email | Twitter | Google+ | LinkedIn

Bay Area officials approved a sweeping land use plan that has stirred opposition from a wide spectrum of groups.

The proposal, called Plan Bay Area, puts a premium on placing new, high-density housing near public transit and job centers in the nine-county region.

Plan Bay Area spells out how much new housing each of the Bay Area's 101 cities must accommodate in coming years. Overall it calls for adding almost 188,000 housing units by 2022 in response to a state law requiring every region in California to draw up building and transportation plans to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

Two local agencies — the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission — voted Thursday on the final plan, which took about three years to develop.

Supporters say Plan Bay Area provides enough housing to accommodate the growing region and helps promote economic vitality.

"Plan Bay Area is an historic and important step forward for our region," said Mark Luce, a Napa County Supervisor who also is president of the ABAG executive board. "It's the product of more than three years of collaboration between cities and counties to do our part to create a more sustainable Bay Area for current and future generations."

Opponents have attacked the plan for several reasons.

Many conservatives said they fear the plan will strip local governments of control over land use planning decisions. Others said that it was merely a poorly designed scheme to promote high-density housing.

"This plan will not reduce greenhouse gases," Kevin Krick, a member of the Marin Republican Party, was quoted as saying in the *Marin Independent Journal*. "It is clearly a social engineering experiment."

Some liberals had concerns with Plan Bay Area as well. Some said they feared that it could be used as political cover to push projects through the planning process without thorough environmental review. The state law behind Plan Bay Area allows cities to streamline the California Environmental Quality Act for housing plans.

About 80 percent of the new housing called for in Plan Bay Area would take place in so-called priority development areas, zones that have been identified by cities for their job-growth potential or proximity to public transit.

Cities that fail to meet housing goals outlined in the plan likely won't qualify for additional transit funding that MTC doles out to cities. Approximately $7.3 billion is at risk by 2040.

The plan is designed to be reviewed every four years for updating.

Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.

Sweeping Plan Would Limit Sprawl in Bay Area Communities

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UPDATE: *Plan Bay Area was approved just after midnight Friday morning by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments.*

Regional planners are voting on a new land use plan for the Bay Area on Thursday evening. Plan Bay Area, as it's known, is designed to cut greenhouse gas emissions 15 percent per capita over the next 20 years by focusing development in zones close to downtown areas and transit hubs.

The plan has faced

The plan aims to cut down on traffic by improving options for taking transit or walking. (Deborah Svoboda/KQED)

opposition from several regional community groups, who object to some of the proposed growth zones, called "Priority Development Areas."

"Most people still want a single family home," says Susan Kirsch of Citizen Marin, a Marin County group. "Many

of us believe we don't need to go to the four, five and six story building with the level of density that they're proposing."

County and city governments would retain control over land use decisions, but jurisdictions that adopt the plan's goals would receive prioritized funding through the One Bay Area grant program. It provides $14 billion over the next several decades for transportation projects.

"It really sets a broad tone for where do we want our region to head," says Stephanie Reyes of the Greenbelt Alliance. "Plan Bay Area makes a very bold statement that the Bay Area is done with sprawl."

Priority Development Areas under Plan Bay Area:

The plan is the result of SB 375, a bill passed in 2008 requiring regional agencies to help meet California's climate change goals through land use and transit planning. The Bay Area is expected to grow by 2 million people by 2040 and even under the plan, greenhouse gas emissions are expected to rise.

The Metropolitan Transpiration Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments will vote on the plan Thursday night at 6:30pm.

Tags: climate, greenhouse gas, land use, sb375, subfeature1, subfeature3, traffic, transportation

Category: Environment, News

Campbell council adjusts budget for Dell Avenue plan consulting fees

San Jose Mercury News
Posted:
MercuryNews.com

The Campbell City Council approved a budget adjustment of $325,000 for consultant services for the Dell Avenue Area Plan at its July 16 meeting.

The vote provided an additional $250,000 for the basic study without an environmental impact report plus an extra $75,000 if an EIR is required. It's part of the city's development plan to keep and attract growing startups and new businesses to the Campbell area zoned for controlled manufacturing.

The city is using the Planning Center, a consulting firm out of Berkeley, says city manager Mark Linder. The firm was chosen because of its broad experience. It was not the lowest bid, but the lowest-bidding firm had much less experience, Linder said in an interview.

With the significant interest the project has garnered, the city wants to combine the district with a light rail station at Hacienda Avenue and Winchester Boulevard, on a vacant plot of land next to Netflix. Light rail would lessen city traffic and provide an alternate means of transportation for workers, according to Linder.

The Dell Avenue zone offers about 82 acres with roughly 65 parcels or approximately 1.4 million square feet of building area. It houses outdated one- and two-story buildings that aren't practical for current users. In developing the plan, city staff prepared a request for proposals for planning the property's development.

Last October, before staff prepared the RFP, the city held a study session to clearly describe the plan's vision. The first step was to determine what is working in other communities. Council members decided they were looking for dense business-to-business companies and wanted to establish nonconforming payback provisions.

They hope to reduce unnecessary permit processing barriers and establish square footage to attract target businesses. They also would like to see industry diversification. The plan does not include any residential development.

Council members also hope to see improvements in land uses supporting businesses, street improvements, on-street parking and pedestrian connections throughout the development area and to the adjacent creek park.

Staff plans to look into regional grant opportunities addressing employment incentive areas through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments. ABAG has developed a new concept looking to strengthen job growth.

Campbell's council members initially required consultants to gauge the work and present a realistic project proposal. The proposal includes several methods of retaining established businesses and attracting new ones to the area. One would be to change the zoning to planned development. It would include exact standards allowing for greater floor areas or land use.

Another method would maintain the existing zoning and uses the area plan as a guideline. Current zoning permits allow increases beyond the maximum floor area ratios and could serve as a guide to explain how

companies could take advantage of those allowances.

Three community meetings were held during May and June,and another meeting is scheduled for Sept. 16. The draft plan for Dell Avenue will be complete Aug. 12. The city will follow that with joint study sessions on Aug. 26 and Oct. 15. The final planning commission recommendation will be presented Nov. 12 with the council decision scheduled for Jan. 7.

Cities express frustration with state's housing element

San Jose Mercury News
Posted:
MercuryNews.com

Many cities in California are wrestling with the state's housing element requirement, a tool used by the state in anticipation of future housing needs resulting from a projected huge increase in population.

Each local government is required to adopt a housing element as part of its General Plan to show how it plans to meet existing and projected housing needs of people at all income levels.

At a Silicon Valley Association of Realtors meeting, a panel of local officials expressed frustration with the housing element law.

Los Gatos Vice Mayor Steve Leonardis noted it is a constant challenge to meet the requirement, since Los Gatos is a built-out community.

The Regional Housing Need Allocation is the state-mandated process used to identify the total number of housing units each community must accommodate in its housing element. The state Department of Housing and Community Development has identified the total housing need for the San Francisco Bay Area for an eight-year period, currently from 2014 to 2022. The Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Committee are then charged with the task of developing a methodology of allocating this need to local governments.

Each city must show it can accommodate a certain number of very low-, low-, moderate- and market-rate housing units. Los Gatos, for example, must zone for a total of 619 new units, 313 of them being low and very low income. Saratoga is looking at 439 new units, 242 of those being low and very low income units.

Saratoga City Councilman Chuck Page said the current allocation does not make sense, since ABAG upped requirements for cities like Saratoga, Los Gatos and Monte Sereno, yet reduced the number for cities that have better access to transit.

Page said the only way Saratoga can comply with its housing requirement is by increasing height limits in commercial areas and providing first story retail and second story housing downtown.

Some cities are taking different approaches. Larger cities like Mountain View and Palo Alto are focusing on finding areas to create higher density zoning. Cities with smaller populations, such as Woodside, are looking at secondary units to meet their allocation. Monte Sereno is experimenting with an amnesty program for illegal secondary units.

Campbell Mayor Evan Low told the agents it is a constant battle with opposing views about housing in a community, especially in Campbell, where about half of residents are renters. According to the RHNA allocation numbers, Campbell must zone for 933 new units, of which 391 must be low and very low income.

If its housing element complies with state law, a city may qualify for some state funds, including transportation and park funding. Failure to meet RHNA numbers opens up a city to potential litigation from housing advocates.

In 2011, Pleasanton settled a lawsuit over its failure to meet its required RHNA numbers, costing the city more than $3.9 million. Last year Menlo Park settled a similar lawsuit. That settlement also required the city to adopt a housing element plan, as well as rezone sites around downtown to develop some affordable housing and provide funding to nonprofit housing developers.

Low emphasized the challenge before cities is not just that of meeting the housing requirement, but "doing it in a smart way that is meaningful to residents."

Information is presented by the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors at silvar.org. Contact rmeily@silvar.org.

Dick Spotswood: Marin GOP's same-sex marriage endorsement a bold move

Posted: marinij.com

MARIN'S REPUBLICAN PARTY just made a bold move making it unique in America. The local GOP became the first Republican county central committee in the country to support legalizing same-sex marriage.

It's an example of the Marin Republicans' effort to broaden their constituency consistent with the libertarianism that's asserting itself within party ranks.

According to central committee chair Kevin Krick of Fairfax, "A core tenet of Republican philosophy is that personal freedom is a right of every citizen and that includes the right to choose whom to marry, regardless of gender."

If Marin Republicans return to political relevancy they'll be a power when the electorate is already divided.

Think of the 2014 contest for two seats on the Board of Supervisors or the potential Susan Adams recall. Delivering almost 20 percent of the vote is always relevant.

lll

THE Ross Valley Sanitary District was in chaos after the resignation of its former general manager, Brett Richards, who is in jail facing charges of embezzlement and money laundering. From the day he was appointed to the district's board, past Fairfax mayor Frank Egger was a Richards critic.

Just when the agency's former GM fled to the Philippines and the agency teetered on bankruptcy, Egger was made board president. Given his years in local government, it was no wonder that Egger would do a first-rate job. He was key in putting the district on an even keel.

Adhering to the old adage, "no good deed goes unpunished," last Wednesday Egger was deposed as president after only one term by his supposed ally, director Mary Sylla.

Traditionally, district directors serve two sequential one-year terms as president. The vote was 3-2. Sylla joined old Richards supporters Pat Guasco and Peter Sullivan in dumping Egger and giving her the gavel. It's a victory for the district's old guard and a sign that change comes slowly to the troubled sewage agency.

lll

AT the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board/Metropolitan Transportation Commission joint meeting that overwhelmingly approved the controversial Plan Bay Area, Marin's three-person delegation was split.

Novato Mayor Pat Eklund, representing the cities of Marin, abstained while Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Katie Rice voted yes.

Kinsey was an enthusiastic supporter. Rice favored the plan while expressing reservations.

Eklund says that the abstention was her duty. That's true given that her bosses, the council members from Marin's cities and towns, were themselves either undecided or reluctant to take a public position on the highly contentious issue.

Of Marin's 11 municipalities, two, Novato and Sausalito, publicly voted to support Plan Bay Area and its goal to promote transit-centered high-density housing. Of the other nine, one, Corte Madera, voted "no project alternative." That's effectively a "no" vote. The other eight cities took a duck by officially voting "no position."

III

AT the last meeting of the "working group" making recommendations on the proposed Highway 101-Greenbrae-Corte Madera freeway project, a surprising revelation was made by Transportation Authority of Marin's executive director, Dianne Steinhauser.

She indicated that Supervisor Steve Kinsey, a former TAM chairman and longtime MTC commissioner, if asked, would request that the MTC extend the process of finalizing alternatives for the $143 million scheme for "two or three years."

Given the divisions over both the overall merits and the specifics of the Caltrans-led effort, more time to devise a rational blueprint makes sense. It's big news, since until then, the impression was that the freeway plan had to be finalized by Sept. 30.

Given his close relationship with powerful MTC executive director Steve Heminger, if Kinsey wants an extension, it will happen. TAM commissioners should now promptly ask Kinsey to secure the continuance.

Columnist Dick Spotswood of Mill Valley now shares his views on local politics twice weekly in the IJ. His email address is spotswood@comcast.net.

Dick Spotswood: Marin's pushback helped reshape bay plan

Posted: marinij.com

AT THE VERY END of the contentious Association of Bay Area Governments' Executive Board meeting, dominated by Plan Bay Area, something big went unnoticed.

ABAG adopted the hugely important Regional Housing Needs Allocation for 2014-22.

Despite widespread fears, the housing mandate assigned to Marin's unincorporated areas and its 11 municipalities for the coming eight-year cycle is reasonable, doable and makes sense.

Marin will end up building a fair amount of needed affordable housing while facilitating social diversity.

Now, if they choose, local planners should be able to build that housing in a non-disruptive manner.

That's good news for Marinites desiring to retain the county's "small-town ambience." It's a blow to housing activists determined to urbanize Marin.

Marin's final total allocation is 2,298 new housing units over eight years. That's only 176 units per year. Of those, 618 units are reserved for those with very low incomes, 367 for low-income families and 423 units for moderate-income households.

The balance of 890 units is for market-rate homes.

They are of secondary concern because the private sector will easily produce those in conjunction with new developments providing "inclusionary" affordable rental apartments.

Income definitions are based on statistics showing the average Marin County household with a family of four earns an annual gross income of $103,000.

Typical is Mill Valley. Over the next eight years, it must zone for 41 very low-income units, 24 low-income apartments, 26 moderate-income households and 38 market-rate units, for a total of 129 or 16 units per year.

That's in contrast to the 292 units Mill Valley was allocated under ABAG's preliminary numbers.

In Marin's unincorporated areas, where opposition to the Board of Supervisors' fixation on large-scale development is most keen, only 185 units of all categories are required over the 2014-22 horizon.

These allocations can be provided by second units, residential-over-retail construction and a limited number of higher-density developments.

Blockbuster housing projects that many feared are not mandated unless local jurisdictions decide to approve them.

The decision instantly shifts pressure from ABAG to boards of supervisors and city councils. That's precisely where it belongs since it puts voters back in control.

The defect in ABAG's approach is that environmental review for new housing is limited. We short-change new residents if we don't make certain there is adequate water, schools and transit without further worsening traffic.

ABAG's new restraint is due to planners' realization that most "Priority Development Areas" created pursuant to the now-adopted Plan Bay Area will be built in the South Bay, the San Francisco-San Jose region's prime job generator.

That took pressure off the North Bay. Marin's total housing allocation is 2,298 units.

Napa's is 1,482 and Sonoma must build 8,449 new homes. Contrast that to mandates for 44,036 units in Alameda County and 58,836 in Santa Clara County.

Few will publicly admit it, but Marin's popular resistance to the high-density housing threat helped move the focus to counties where political constituencies want more growth.

That shift certainly wasn't due to Marin's supervisors, who never understood how to address the public's outrage over the county's infatuation with high-density housing schemes.

Does ABAG's Final Regional Housing Needs Allocation eliminate Plan Bay Area's promotion of high-density subsidized housing?

Not necessarily.

There are financial incentives for cities and counties to pursue the fast-growth strategy. That means that if Priority Development Areas with 30-units-per-acre zoning are approved, the spotlight will properly be on Marin elected officials and planning commissioners.

Columnist Dick Spotswood of Mill Valley now shares his views on local politics twice weekly in the IJ. His email address is spotswood@comcast.net.

Novato/San Rafael Patch

Eklund: Abstaining on Plan Bay Area Reflects Marin Majority

Novato mayor explains her decision to abstain from last week's vote to approve controversial roadmap for region's transit, housing

Posted by Karina Ioffee (Editor), July 23, 2013 at 08:21 am

Novato Mayor and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) board member Pat Eklund is defending her decision to abstain from Thursday's vote on Plan Bay Area, saying the move reflects the same position most Marin cities have taken on the controversial regional transportation strategy to marry projected jobs growth with new housing development.

Plan Bay Area aims to curb greenhouse gas emissions and prevent further sprawl by mandating that counties and local governments meet allocations for new residential development near existing commercial centers and public transportation. Despite being approved by ABAG's board last Thursday, the plan remains deeply unpopular among some Marin residents, many of who say it strips cities of control over land use decisions and puts undue strain on traffic and water.

In Marin, only Novato, San Rafael and Sausalito specifically voted in favor for the plan, while seven cities abstained from taking a position, according to Eklund. Local jurisdictions were not required to vote for or against the plan, but must have a Housing Element, part of a city's General Plan, or constitution, certified by the California Department of Housing & Community Development.

"Because a majority of the cities in Marin took no position and because we had no time to work out the many concerns we have about this plan, I felt it my duty to abstain for voting," Eklund told Patch Monday. "I serve at the pleasure of all 11 cities and since the majority of the cities took a 'no' position, I felt it was only appropriate that I do the same."

Eklund, who has been mayor of Novato five times and is running for re-election this fall, denied that not taking a position on the controversial vote was a political move.

"It (Plan Bay Area) does not affect local control at all, but I have many other concerns," she said. "The projections for job growth and population need to be reevaluated. Also, locating housing near transit has not been proven to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Eklund added that she was also worried about the lack of outreach to residents and what she described as a "top-down approach" to decision-making.

"People haven't had an opportunity to be engaged in the alternatives, the impacts and the mitigation measures," she said.

Low-income housing OK'd for all of Orinda, not just downtown

Richard Colman

A law concerning the mandatory movement of low-income Californians into wealthier areas is cited in a report recently released in Orinda. On June 18, 2013, top Orinda officials released the report which describes mandated plans to create 118 low-income units in all parts of Orinda, not just in the downtown. As many as 538 new units could be created.

According to the report, California law "requires every county and city in the state" to have a plan to house low-income individuals.

The report states that so-called "second units" (like guest homes) could be utilized for low-income housing in Orinda.

The Orinda report was released as a "City Council Staff Report." Signing the report were Janet Keeter, Orinda's city manager, and Emmanuel Ursu, the city's director of planning.

The report notes that between 2007 and 2014, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), a regional government body, has assigned Orinda the task of creating 118 units for low-income people. Of these 118 units, 35 are for "extremely low" income individuals, another 35 are for "very low" income people, and 48 units for "low" income persons.

The report states that Orinda "could accommodate . . . the construction of 530 additional single family dwelling units . . . "

The report says that newly built second units on existing residential Orinda property "would be affordable to very low, low, and moderate income households." The report adds that [t]here are numerous homes in the City that have existing floor space with the potential for conversion to a legal second unit."

The report recommends that "the City explore a program to permit second units on lots where they are not currently allowed today . . . "

The report lists the Orinda city manager's office and the city's planning department as the "Responsible Parties" for the following statement: "The City recognizes second units as an essential part of Orinda's affordable housing supply . . . "

According to the report, "Second units are an important part of the City's affordable housing supply and are often rented at rates that are affordable to low and very low income households." The report adds: "To make such a program [low-income housing] viable for the homeowner, there must be an incentive to maintaining below market rents and limiting occupancy to qualifying households."

The report does not cover how putting more low-income people in Orinda might affect property values or schools in the city.

Related Posts:

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July 19, 2013

THE BERKELEY DAILY PLANET

Editorials

Harmony, Not Perfect But Intriguing

By Becky O'Malley
Friday July 19, 2013 - 04:23:00 PM

Trying to reconnect with civic concerns after a month devoted to family matters, I resolved to attend last night's meeting on Plan Bay Area, a topic which has generated considerable heat and some light on this site and elsewhere in the past few months. It was a joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments, which, the words of last week's press release from both bodies, is "an integrated transportation and land-use strategy through 2040 that marks the nine-county region's first long-range plan to meet the requirements of California's landmark 2008 Senate Bill 375, which calls on each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy to accommodate future population growth and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks."

What's not to like about that?

Well, I'd gotten other press releases from other organizations which indicated dissatisfaction with how the proposal on the agenda dealt with important considerations like the provision of affordable housing near job sites, displacement of residents from already affordable urban neighborhoods and inadequate provision for public mass transit. Berkeleyans who have a respectable record of civic involvement were skeptical. Journalists whom I respect had raised questions about the plan. Back in October, Tim Redmond in the San Francisco Bay Guardian had done an exhaustive analysis of potential problems, but I wanted to see for myself what all the excitement was about.

Kind of. But as the 6:30 start time for the meeting approached, intellectual torpor set in. I couldn't help remembering that my first assignment for the San Francisco Bay Guardian 40 years ago (surely not!) was covering the nascent ABAG, then housed in the basement of the Claremont Hotel, and I went to many, many meetings where nothing that happened proved to have future effect. This promised to be another one of those.

I did anticipate some interesting fireworks from some opponents. Zelda Bronstein on this site more than a year ago had identified a constituency of anti-Plan people who could loosely be described as Tea Party types, and they were expected to turn out in force.

When I check the MTC website for the agenda, I discovered an audio stream for the meeting, and lassitude won out. I chose to listen online while attending to household chores, and it's a good thing that I did. Zelda, who actually went to part of the meeting, reported a crowded room with impossible sightlines and uncomfortable chairs, while I in the comfort of home could hear the whole thing, including the mind-boggling public comment period.

If you have six hours to spare, you really ought to listen yourself.

I'm going to hope that one of our local policy wonks will be moved to do a news analysis on the actual or potential consequences of last night's meeting. What fascinated and bemused me was the tenor and passion of public comments, which stretched over a couple of hours at least, and the surprisingly harmonic convergence of left and right in many aspects of their analysis.

Bass notes were provided on what might be called the left, for lack of a more precise term. These were groups like the law firms Public Advocates and Earth Justice. The discourse of the evening centered on the proper role of government, and these commenters had no quarrel with the prerogative and even the duty of government to provide for the common good. They just wanted it done the right way.

If you want to mandate housing near transit, they said, it must be housing for all and real, funded transit, not just pricey urban condos and wishful thinking. And, they said, let's keep the beat steady by using CEQA to make sure what you're doing doesn't harm instead of help the environment.

By and large, at the end of the evening they seem to have gotten what they wanted this time.

On the treble end of the scale, including many of those who might be called right wing, you heard a great variety of the fantastical imaginings of citizens who desperately fear abuse of government power. This included some who could be called Tea Partyish, people who worry most about government spending and don't want to be told what they can do on their private property. You wonder how they can cope with local zoning laws.

But there were also themes emanating from very different spheres. I heard an unusually high percentage of Slavic accents among the commenters, people who described themselves as former residents of Eastern Europe, who feared that a communist or fascist coup was imminent. At least one person, a Berkeley resident, supplied an obligato by describing herself as an old leftist and a hippy, citing traditional counter-cultural worries about government spying on us.

All this seems like an echo of the current remarkably harmonious national uproar coming from both "left" and "right" about the federal government's role, as revealed by Edward Snowden, in acquiring records of what private citizens do with communication technologies. And then there's this week's revelation that along with "Tea Party" the IRS looked for the words "progressive" and "Occupy" on their BOLO (Be On the Look Out) lists used to check on those who sought 501c4 tax exemption status for non-profits which dabble in politics.

All in all, those who are wary of what government can and can’t do seem to have more in common than they might think.

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Published July 31st, 2013

Housing Controversy Forces Regular City Business into Back Seat

By Laurie Snyder

Orindans expecting to have their key policy concerns heard by the Orinda City Council at its July 16 meeting grew increasingly frustrated as 20 people from inside and outside of Orinda rose once again to express their opinions of Plan Bay Area and the impact it may or may not have on the community.

Although housing was not on the City Council's agenda, speakers opposed to Plan Bay Area lined up for the public comment portion of the meeting. Residents who came that evening for the scheduled public hearing on a proposed hike in city fees, a discussion with residents and business leaders regarding potential ways to resolve the downtown's increasingly challenging parking situation while maintaining public safety, and other city business, waited over an hour for their turn at the podium.

Following commentary by residents of the Crossroads neighborhood, the parking matter was continued over to an as yet unscheduled meeting for further discussion. The fee hike hearing proceeded smoothly (see the accompanying article).

So, what happened during the public forum?

The majority of the public forum presenters were members or supporters of the citizens' group Orinda Watch. Many have spoken during public forum sessions in previous council meetings, including Rusty Snow, Richard Colman, Chet Martine, and Chris Kniel, a former member of Orinda's Planning Commission. A fair number reiterated their belief that city leaders and staff have been working outside the full view of the public to update Orinda's General Plan in a concerted effort to bring high-density, low income housing to the downtown area - possibly even going so far as to rezone the area in a way that will double its density.

"The draft Housing Element update, discussed at multiple public meetings, includes the rezoning of a single site in the Residential Medium-Density (RM) district," according to city manager Janet Keeter. "This particular parcel is located behind the Santa Maria Church and is currently zoned for 10 units per acre. The proposed change would allow at least 20 units per acre. This change is an approach to meet the state law. No change to zoning of the other sites zoned RM is proposed."

Keeter also emphatically described reports that the city has already authorized 20-unit per acre zoning for the entire downtown as "false."

Speakers also voiced concerns and confusion regarding the height limits of Orinda buildings. Many had heard - through school email distribution lists and other e-messaging tools - that the council plans to raise Orinda's downtown building height limit to 55 feet. "No such proposal is before the council," said Keeter, who added that "there are no plans to revise the Orinda Municipal Code to make such a change."

Despite these responses by the city, Orinda Watch members continued to press council members on July 16 to withdraw Orinda's draft housing element. According to Orinda Watch's website, "The City Planning Director told a group of Orinda Watch members during a meeting on May 6, 2013 that the City did not need to update its General Plan to comply with state housing laws or to meet the City's needs at this time, and thus had no plans to do so."

City leaders disagree with this statement. The city cannot opt out; it is required by state law to have a housing element as part of its general plan - and to update it every five to eight years. Failure to adopt a compliant housing element in time for Jan. 31 certification by the Department of Housing and Community Development could have resulted in the loss of local land use authority, as well as the transportation funding which helps to repair and maintain Orinda's roads and drains.

HCD ruled June 12 that Orinda's draft housing element is compliant - the first time the city's

housing element has been in compliance with state law since Orinda incorporated in 1986. And on July 18 at a joint meeting of the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Commission, Plan Bay Area was approved.

Send your comment to: info@lamorindaweekly.com
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In Marin, affordable housing opposition stronger than ever despite Marin Community Foundation efforts

Posted: 07/27/2013 02:00:00 PM PDT

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James Bitter of Mill Valley addresses the Marin Planning Commission on Monday, July 8, 2013,...

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A prominent voice missing from the recent debate over Plan Bay Area was the Marin Community Foundation, which in 2007 announced that it was mounting a major effort to change Marin's "Not In My Back Yard" mindset.

In 2007, the foundation invited nonprofit advocates and developers of affordable housing to submit grant proposals for winning hearts and minds. And it proceeded to spend an estimated $400,000 on the initiative, over the next several years.

This year, however, the foundation was silent over months of heated debate around Plan Bay Area, a regional plan that seeks to promote the development of new, affordable housing along transportation corridors and near mass transit to reduce greenhouse gas production.

Given the furor that erupted around Plan Bay Area — much of it focused on the prospect for more higher density, affordable housing in Marin — was the foundation's effort a flop?

Thomas Peters, the Marin Community Foundation's president, said, "I'm very happy with the work that we did. It was intended to be a couple-year initiative and that's what we did. We never labeled it as a kind of anti-NIMBY campaign. We wanted to be sure that at least the facts were out there about affordable housing being a contributing factor to a healthy community, and not as some folks claim, a detriment."

Susan Kirsch, one of the founders of Citizen Marin, a coalition of neighborhood associations formed to oppose Plan Bay Area, said, "Marin Community Foundation is not the only community foundation that has taken this strong stance, to support building no matter what."

Much of the money spent went to the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California, an affordable housing advocacy group, and Greenbelt Alliance, an environmental advocacy group, to produce two reports.

Published in 2011, the first report, titled "Miles from Home," detailed the role that affordable housing can play in taking cars off the road and protecting against climate change. It noted that 60 percent of Marin's workforce commutes from outside county lines, where housing is cheaper.

The second report, published the same year, titled "Driving Home Economic Recovery," explained how additional workforce housing would create jobs and boost spending in Marin.

The Non-Profit Housing Association and Greenbelt Alliance also passed along $75,000 of foundation grant money to Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, a Novato-based affordable housing advocacy group formed in 2011.

Dianne Spaulding, executive director of the Non-Profit Housing Association, said, "I think part of why Marin has become a hot spot of concern for those opposed to affordable housing is because the initiative did what it was supposed to do. I think we have moved the needle on affordable housing in Marin; but it is a needle that moves slowly."

In addition to working with Greenbelt Alliance on the reports, Spaulding said her association scrutinized the housing elements of all 11 of Marin's municipalities. State law requires counties and municipalities to create housing elements in their general plans that foster the creation of a specified amount of affordable housing by identifying appropriate building sites and removing red tape that might block construction. The association came up with 33 sites suitable for the creation of affordable housing in Marin, ranked according to feasibility.

Spaulding said her association also developed a leadership program for current Marin residents of affordable housing to teach the residents how to tell their stories and took local elected representatives on tours of local affordable housing projects.

And Spaulding said her association has taken the initial steps to form a Marin Affordable Housing Coalition that would consist of such organizations as the Marin Organizing Committee, Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, Sustainable Novato, Sustainable Marin, Marin Grassroots, Marin Workforce Housing Trust and the League of Women Voters.

Jeremy Madsen, executive director of Greenbelt Alliance, said, "The biggest role that we played was to make it clear that affordable housing is an environmental issue. The more that we are able to accommodate homes for people who are part of our workforce in the cities and towns of Marin the less pressure we're putting on the natural environment, the open spaces of our region. This effort was a good start in a long-term process."

Annan Paterson, a former Novato city councilwoman and one of the founders of Stand Up For Neighborly Novato, said Stand Up has won the endorsement of 1,200 local residents and trained more than 50 people who live in or need affordable housing in Novato to be spokesmen.

"Our ability to do that has really helped to inform the debate," Paterson said. She said some members of the organization receive a stipend, but most are volunteers.

Lynn Wasley, another of Stand Up for Neighborly Novato's co-founders, said despite the foundation's efforts, the intense opposition to affordable housing that she once associated mainly with Novato seems to have spread throughout Marin.

Wasley said the Marin Community Foundation's absence from the Plan Bay Area debate gives at least the appearance that the foundation may have retreated some on the affordable housing issue.

"It's hard not to assume that the attacks on the Marin Community Foundation for what and who they were supporting, including Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, didn't impact them," Wasley said.

Peters, however, said the main reason the foundation chose not to participate in the Plan Bay Area debate was that it was too abstract.

"An awful lot of the debate is about pure hypotheticals," Peters said. "It has gone so far off the rails of what is actually going to be built that it is not an effective use of the foundation's focus or frankly my time."

Peters said, rather than engage in idle speculation, "We stay working with the people who want to have this happen: an owner who has a parcel that is appropriate to develop, a nonprofit housing developer, and somebody who has the consummate skill to put together a financing package for building."

Over the past 10 years, the foundation has contributed to the creation of more than 400 units of affordable housing in Marin through grants and loans.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In search of common ground in Marin

Thank you for the front page story "Nastier tone hits mellow Marin," July 21. I was ashamed and saddened by the heckling at the June community meeting. I was the only person in the room who stood up to support Susan Adams' work on behalf of our community. I think others in attendance who agree with me did not want to risk derision and bullying.

Along with many other Marinwood residents, I participated in an eight-year collaborative process to guide the derelict shopping center's redevelopment. The current Bridge Housing proposal now before Marin County came out of numerous community meetings, input from hundreds of people, and multiple development ideas, as well the economic realities for redevelopment. It's a solid start to a well-designed addition to our neighborhood, a vibrant center for grocery shopping, coffee-drinking, and local errands by foot and bike. I welcome residents of the new apartments and feel confident that they will love Marinwood as much as we do.

It's critical that Marinwood, and all communities, work together for the common good as opposed to individual preconceptions and self-serving interests. If we can't find respectful common ground, the future of our children looks bleak indeed.

Kathleen Gaines, San Rafael

Michael Macor / The Chronicle

Marin County Supervisor Susan Adams has drawn the ire of her constituents.

The Press Democrat

Is your road on Plan Bay Area list?

Tuesday, July 23, 2013 at 5:03 by Road.Warrior

The new Plan Bay Area was adopted last week, outlining transportation and land-use projects to be funded through 2040 within Sonoma, Napa and the other seven Bay Area counties. It's dependent on receiving an anticipated 292 billion in federal, state and local money, but includes the following road projects.

Is your pet project among them?

Metropolitan Transportation Commission spokesman John Goodwin breaks out the expenditures, saying, "Nearly 88 percent (or $253 billion) of the transportation funds will be used to maintain and operate the highways, transit systems, local streets and roads, and bridges we already have. Another way of looking at the distribution of the revenues — which include fuel taxes, transit fares, bridge tolls, property taxes and dedicated sales taxes — is by mode of transportation.

"Maintenance and operation of the Bay Area's existing transit systems will receive about 55 percent ($159 billion) of the revenues. The remainder includes 33 percent for street, road, highway and bridge maintenance; 7 percent for transit expansion; and 5 percent for roadway and bridge expansion."

Here's a list of road projects that made the list. (Figures are in millions and represent cost, committed funding and discretionary funding.)

SONOMA

Realign **Route 116 (Stage Gulch Road)** along Champlin Creek to improve safety, adding shoulders to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists $ 12 $ 12 $ -

Widen **U.S. 101** for HOV lanes from Pepper Road to Rohnert Park Expressway (Central Phase A) $ 109 $ 109 $ -

Improve channelization and traffic signalization at **Route 116/Route 121** intersection (includes Arnold Drive improvements) $ 15 $ 5 $ 10

US 101 North Project – Phase B- **Airport Boulevard interchange** improvements and Airport Boulevard $ 43 $ 43 $ -

Improve **U.S. 101/Old Redwood Highway** interchange (includes modifying/replacing existing 2-lane interchange to at least a 5-lane interchange and improving ramps) $ 43 $ 43 $ -

Improve local circulation at various locations in **Town of Penngrove** (includes improvements to Main Street, Petaluma Hill Road, Adobe Road, Old Redwood Highway and U.S. 101/Railroad Avenue) $ 40 $ 20 $ 20

Widen **Fulton Road** from 2-lanes to 4-lanes from Guerneville Road and Piner Road $ 4 $ 1 $ 3

Extend Farmers Lane from Bellevue Avenue to Bennett Valley Road as a 3-lane or 4-lane arterial (includes a bicycle lane and sidewalk) $ 58 $ 29 $ 29

Improve **Bodega Highway** west of Sebastopol (includes straightening curves near Occidental and adding turn pockets) $ 2 $ 1 $ 1

Convert bridges in Sonoma County from 1-lane to 2-lane $ 19 $ 1 $ 18

Widen **U.S. 101 for** HOV lanes (one in each direction) from Rohnert Park Expressway to Santa Rosa Avenue (includes interchange improvements and ramp metering) $ 69 $ 69 $ -

Improve **U.S. 101/East Washington Street** interchange (includes new northbound on-ramp and improvements to southbound on-ramp) $ 22 $ 22 $ -

Install traffic signal system on **Route 121** and improve channelization at 8th Street $ 3 $ 0 $ 3

Implement **Marin Sonoma Narrows Phase 2** (Sonoma County) $ 220 $ 14 $ 206

Implement landscaping along the HOV lanes on **U.S. 101 between Steele Lane and Windsor River Road** $ 2 $ 2 $ -

Improve channelization and traffic signalization on **Mirabel Road and Route 116** $ 5 $ 5 $ -

Construct Suburban Center intersection improvements at **Route 12 (Farmers Lane) and 4th Street** $ 7 $ – $ 7

Local streets and roads operations and maintenance $ 2,303 $ 2,199 $ 104

Widen **Rohnert Park Expressway** from 2-lanes to 4-lanes between Snyder Lane and Petaluma Hill Road (includes new bike lanes in both directions, curb and gutter, sidewalk, landscaped median, and traffic signal devices/improvements at Petaluma Hill Road) $ 9 $ 9 $ -

Widen **Snyder Lane** from 2-lanes to 4-lanes between southside of “G” section and Southwest Boulevard $ 5 $ 4 $ 1

Widen of **Golf Course Drive West** (formerly Wilfred Avenue) from 2-lanes to 4-lanes between the 1999 City Limits west of Redwood Drive to the Urban Growth Boundary (includes four travel lanes, a bike lane on both sides, sidewalks, landscaping, and traffic signals at Redwood Drive, Labath Avenue, and Dowdell Avenue) $ 5 $ 5 $ -

Construct an interchange with bicycle and pedestrian enhancements at **Route 12/Fulton Road** $ 70 $ 27 $ 43

Improve interchange at **Hearn Avenue/U.S. 101** $ 46 $ 5 $ 42

Construct bicycle and pedestrian crossing at **U.S. 101 and Copeland Creek** $ 6 $ – $ 6

Implement Sonoma County's **Safe Routes to School** program $ 20 $ – $ 20

Enhance **bus service** frequencies in Sonoma County $ 104 $ – $ 104

Implement **bicycle and pedestrian improvements** countywide $ 118 $ 14 $ 104

Implement **Windsor River Road/Windsor Road/NWPRR Intersection** improvements. Re-configure intersection and improve railroad, vehicle, pedestrian interface. $ 9 $ 9

Widen **Airport Boulevard** from 2-lanes to 5-lanes between Ordiance Road and Aviation Boulevard $ 36 $ 13 $ 23

Implement **Marin Sonoma Narrows Phase 1** (Sonoma County) $ 123 $ 123 $ -

Implement Sonoma County's **Climate Initiatives** program $ 21 $ – $ 21

Conduct environmental studies and preliminary design for the proposed **SMART commuter rail extension from Windsor to Cloverdale** (Phase III) $ 15 $ – $ 15

NAPA

Implement Napa County's **Safe Routes to School** program $ 6 $ – $ 6

Improve **traffic signalization** countywide $ 3 $ – $ 3

Construct round-abouts between **California Blvd and Freeway Drive on First Street** $ 15 $ – $ 15

Construct new southbound **Route 221 to southbound Route 29 flyover**, including auxiliary lane to Route 12/Route 29 $ 5 $ – $ 5

Construct interchange at intersection of **Route 12/Route 29/Airport Road** $ 6 $ 2 $ 4

Construct curb cuts and accessiblity improvements in **St. Helena** $ 2 $ – $ 2

Improve signalization along **Main Street from Sulpher Springs to Mills Lane** in St. Helena $ 1 $ – $ 1

Extend Devlin Road from **Airport Boulevard to Green Island Road** $ 12 $ – $ 12

Construct corridor improvements in **Yountville** $ 1 $ – $ 1

Construct **Madison Ave. bypass to Route 29** in Yountville $ 1 $ – $ 1

Improve intersection at **Petrified Forest Road/Route 128** $ 3 $ – $ 3

Local streets and roads operations and maintenance $ 1,252 $ 1,142 $ 110

Construct corridor improvements along **Route 29** $ 26 $ – $ 26

Reconfigure northbound **Route 29 off-ramp at Lincoln Avenue** $ 3 $ – $ 3

Construct a **bicycle and pedestrian undercrossing** along Napa Creek $ 1 $ – $ 1

Construct intersection improvements at **Silverado Trail/Third Street/Coombsville Road/East Avenue** $ 5 $ – $ 5

Rehabilitate **Green Island Road** $ 5 $ – $ 5

Widen intersection at **Napa Junction Road/Route 29** $ 4 $ – $ 4

Implement l**ighted crosswalks** at five intersections in St. Helena $ 0 $ – $ 0

Build out countywide primary **bicycle network** $ 20 $ – $ 20

Create new road and transit configuration on **Route 29 through American Canyon** with connectivity to the Vallejo Ferry, including BRT, potential HOV, and other roadway innovations $ 12 $ – $ 12

Widen R**oute 12 (Jameson Canyon)** from 2 lanes to 4 lanes from I-80 in Solano County to Route 29 in Napa County (Phase 1) $ 140, $ 140, $ -

KALW People

July 24, 2013

Controversial Plan Bay Area adopted by regional planners

By Isabel Angell

Credit Isabel Angell
James Bennett of Sonoma county shows his opposition to Plan Bay Area

Last week, two regional government groups voted to adopt Plan Bay Area. An estimated two million people are moving the Bay Area by 2040 – that's a 30 percent increase. Plan Bay Area creates sweeping transportation, housing, and environmental recommendations for cities to handle that growth.

ABAG (the Association of Bay Area Governments) and the MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) adopted the plan early Friday morning, after a six-hour public meeting that began Thursday evening.

At its centerpiece, Plan Bay Area says 80 percent of growth should be contained in Priority Development Areas, or PDAs. These PDAs are places like downtown San Jose and Oakland's Jack London Square, areas that are close to public transit and can handle higher-density housing. The idea is to prevent more sprawl by building up existing land, and creating walkable, transit-oriented communities.

The plan also lays out requirements for cities to plan for affordable housing, more transportation infrastructure, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Local governments won't be forced to comply with Plan Bay Area, but adopting it would give them more access to grant money if they choose to redevelop.

Last week's meeting included a lengthy public comment section, with well over 150 people signed up to talk. The crowd was mostly opponents of the plan who brought large signs and were prone to chanting. During their comments, opponents repeatedly called on ABAG and the MTC to let the public vote on Plan Bay Area. Chiefly from Marin and suburban Alameda and Sonoma counties, they complained that decisions made by the regional bodies violate the local governments' independence. Liz Manning of Mill Valley summed up the beliefs of many opponents.

"To all the political bureaucrats sitting here, if you're so hot on this plan, please lead the way, get out of your cars, and move into the stack-and-packs yourselves," she said. "For those of you who still have your integrity intact, please find the courage to vote against this unconstitutional atrocity."

Many said the plan's intention to create the higher-density PDA'S threatened their suburban lifestyle and accused ABAG and the MTC of trying to artificially change the way people live. Some even invoked comparisons to the Soviet Union and China.

Supporters showed up in large numbers as well, cheering whenever someone spoke in favor of the plan. Many of the supporting speakers were young, and talked about how they and their peers are giving up cars. They said they want a Bay Area that's full of opportunities to bike, walk, and take public transit.

In some places, growth is already trending toward creating transit-oriented development. Oakland has Fruitvale Village, and Walnut Creek has the Contra Costa Centre. And just north of San Jose, the city of Milpitas has plans for a community that will center on its new BART station.

Letters To The Editor
Letters

TODAY'S LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor, July 23

Marin knows value of planning

I was embarrassed that your editorial on Plan Bay Area ("A solid plan - now follow it," July 20) found it necessary to call out the antiplanning, anti-affordable-housing ideology of a busload of residents from Marin County who attended the plan hearings.

Most people here understand the importance of living near transit to reduce driving and help curb climate change. They also trust their duly elected local officials to balance the interests of the whole community when making planning decisions - a local power in no way diminished by Plan Bay Area. I'm particularly proud that San Rafael has already done its fair share by establishing Priority Development Areas around its two new train stations.

I remain hopeful that reasonable, responsible and civil discourse will prevail in Marin. After all, even the plan opponents saw the practical wisdom of taking a bus to the proceedings.

William Carney, San Rafael

Tyranny of the tenant groups

Joel Engardio ("Addicted to rent control?" Open Forum, July 22) makes valid points, especially noting that rent-controlled tenants are in the same demographics as other San Francisco

dwellers, so why should real estate wealth be shifted, in many cases upward, to people who don't need it? Only because it suits our demagogic politicians who cater to tenant activists and rent-control entrepreneurs. Tenants are the majority, and rent control illustrates how majorities can run riot over minorities, ultimately to the detriment of all.

José Selva, San Francisco

Preventable tragedies

Regarding the "tragic accident" of the fire truck killing the 16-year-old Flight 214 crash victim at San Francisco International Airport: Is it an accident when equipment is not kept up to date, even knowing that the improvements must occur eventually? I predict the liability for the young girl will be higher than the cost of the equipment that was repeatedly recommended and not installed. Other equipment not working was the electronic glide path monitor. I realize there is an older visual system, but when did these pilots train with it? If the old system was so great, why is it superseded?

Christian Gronbeck, San Rafael

Focus on heroes and victims

Was "Rig that hit girl had no sensor" (front page, July 22) the third or fourth or fifth headline about a rescue truck hitting a girl?

We mourn for Ye Meng Yuan and for all who died and were severely injured in the crash. But could we please hear a little more about those rescued? How are they doing? How are the rescuers doing? How are they sleeping at night (if at all)? It's time for the press to stop focusing on every possible thing that went wrong. Please report a little more on everything that went right. Imagine if this crash happened in an area less able to respond.

Dawn Isaacs, San Francisco

Why people are so angry

A July 23 letter writer misses the point when he asks, "Do you think for one minute if George Zimmerman were black that we'd be having these demonstrations?" Of course not, because if Zimmerman were black, he wouldn't have been exonerated. He'd probably be sitting on death

row, as is statistically demonstrated by the disproportionate number of blacks given the death penalty compared with whites convicted of the same crime.

The letter writer may be unaware of the case of Marissa Alexander, an African American woman who was sentenced to 20 years in Florida for firing one shot into the wall during an argument with her abusive husband. She missed him entirely. She used the same defense as Zimmerman, who was exonerated for killing an unarmed teenager.

It's these inequities that are what people of all colors should be demonstrating about.

Angela Zack, Napa

Media coverage

It would help ease the tensions between races if TV anchors and radio hosts would describe the Zimmerman-Martin encounter properly.

It really went down this way: "In the rain and darkness armed neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman followed the hooded teen, Trayvon Martin, who challenged the guard with profane words and quick blows, toppling both to the ground until a shot rang out, leaving the unarmed youth with quick fists dead at the scene." That is how it would have been described by newspapers in former times.

Here, stripped of the racial overtones and prejudice, it is reported chronologically. Martin didn't know Zimmerman came armed, yet challenged his authority. How different the outcome if Martin was courteous, deferential or polite when encountering Zimmerman, like: "How can I help you?" Or "Can you help me find my way around these parts?" You can defuse many situations and rise in society with uncommon courtesy.

Pit O'Maley, Alameda

SEND US A LETTER TO THE EDITOR
SUBMISSIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

PREVIOUS LETTERS

Letters regarding Trayvon Martin, July 22

Livermore Independent

Plan Bay Area

Joanne Hottendorf, Livermore | Posted: Friday, July 19, 2013 12:00 am

I agree with Mayor John Marchand, this issue of Plan Bay Area is not understood by the average citizen of Livermore. More information needs to be disclosed by ABAG to the people of our town. If the truth be told this plan has long range goals of placing as many people next to public transportation as possible in the years to come. Their argument is that pollution control and traffic reduction are necessary which they are, but the answer is not to convince people to stack themselves in roadside apartments next to BART just like Dublin. The area around the Dublin-Pleasanton station is quite the eyesore and it's headed to Livermore if we allow ABAG to plan our future. We have been paying tax money for BART to come to Livermore for a long time and we need it here, but ABAG doesn't have the interests of Livermore at the heart of their plan.

This is all part of the larger solution planned by The United Nations called Agenda 21. I urge all citizens to google, "Agenda 21 Maps." The computer screen will display the larger plan for all of the US by the end of the 21st century. It includes the slow reduction in privately owned land by convincing people over the century that we are polluting the country with private usage of our land and the fact that nature needs to reclaim this nation(and others if you probe further). The first step has already been completed, by setting up these agencies filled with appointed, not elected people all over the country. They go by the acronyms, ABAG, PBA, ICLE and others.

Please educate yourselves before our government completes these plans without our consent. We should be able to vote on these issues and not have all of it planned by unelected officials.

Thank you Mr. Marchand for looking out for the people of Livermore. Lets keep BART on 580 and keep our own plans for the use of our city.

Select FILE --> PRINT to print this topic.

Pleasanton Weekly

Local leaders say No to regional plan

Tim Hunt, posted by Tim Hunt, a resident of the Castlewood neighborhood, 1 hour ago

The Bay Area's regional planning and transportation agencies, despite howls of protests by hundreds if not thousands of residents concerned about local control, passed the new growth plan for the nine counties that is dubbed Plan Bay Area.

It grows out of legislative action that required the regional agencies to develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gases (a consequence of AB 32 signed by one of California's worst governors, Arnold Schwarzenegger who now is back where he belongs making movies) that mandates a response to climate change regardless of the cost.

Building high density housing around transit lines, particularly BART stations, has been transportation policy for years, but residents are worried that higher density housing may be coming to their community or neighborhood. The law driving this is different than law that resulted in Pleasanton losing a law suit over its housing cap and its failure to zone for middle and lower income housing despite the abundance of jobs in the city.

Opponents fear that whatever local control exists will be lost by the big stick of cutting off transportation funds if a community is not in compliance. There certainly is a big government, big brother aspect to it, although there also is a simply logic to surrounding the huge investment in transit lines with housing nearby to encourage its use.

What's notable is when the final votes were cast Pleasanton Mayor Jerry Thorne and Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty were among the five No votes. To be fair, Senator Mark DeSaulnier, who represents the Livermore and San Ramon valleys, authored the legislation that required the plan.

Pleasanton turned loose a gas man on the infestation of ground squirrels on the Bernal property along the Marilyn Kane trail this month. The cute pests breed like rabbits and their burrows create substantial hazards for any person or animal walking or running off the paved path.

Initially, the city controlled the squirrels with poisoned bait, but has shifted to carbon monoxide, thus the four-wheeler that was towing around a gas tank with multiple hoses. The varmints simply go to sleep when burrows fill with the odorless gas. It is a humane solution to controlling pests.

Comments

halfwaytoconcord.com http://www.halfwaytoconcord.com/low-income-housing-okd-for-all-of-orinda-not-just-downtown/

Low-income housing OK'd for all of Orinda, not just downtown

Richard Colman

A law concerning the mandatory movement of low-income Californians into wealthier areas is cited in a report recently released in Orinda. On June 18, 2013, top Orinda officials released the report which describes mandated plans to create 118 low-income units in all parts of Orinda, not just in the downtown. As many as 538 new units could be created.

According to the report, California law "requires every county and city in the state" to have a plan to house low-income individuals.

The report states that so-called "second units" (like guest homes) could be utilized for low-income housing in Orinda.

The Orinda report was released as a "City Council Staff Report." Signing the report were Janet Keeter, Orinda's city manager, and Emmanuel Ursu, the city's director of planning.

The report notes that between 2007 and 2014, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), a regional government body, has assigned Orinda the task of creating 118 units for low-income people. Of these 118 units, 35 are for "extremely low" income individuals, another 35 are for "very low" income people, and 48 units for "low" income persons.

The report states that Orinda "could accommodate . . . the construction of 530 additional single family dwelling units . . . "

The report says that newly built second units on existing residential Orinda property "would be affordable to very low, low, and moderate income households." The report adds that [t]here are numerous homes in the City that have existing floor space with the potential for conversion to a legal second unit."

The report recommends that "the City explore a program to permit second units on lots where they are not currently allowed today . . . "

The report lists the Orinda city manager's office and the city's planning department as the "Responsible Parties" for the following statement: "The City recognizes second units as an essential part of Orinda's affordable housing supply . . . "

According to the report, "Second units are an important part of the City's affordable housing supply and are often rented at rates that are affordable to low and very low income households." The report adds: "To make such a program [low-income housing] viable for the homeowner, there must be an incentive to maintaining below market rents and limiting occupancy to qualifying households."

The report does not cover how putting more low-income people in Orinda might affect property values or schools in the city.

Related Posts:

- State mandated Housing Element forces Orinda to build…
- City Council votes for Low-Income Housing plan for downtown…
- Angry residents confront Orinda Mayor and MTC chairperson,…
- Large crowd protests Orinda Stack and Pack Housing Plan
- Low-Income housing in Orinda: government run amok

Marin Readers' Forum for July 31

Posted: marinij.com

GROWTH

More poor planning

Marin Supervisor Steve Kinsey (Marin Voice, "A smarter way to grow," July 25) argues that SB 375 is a departure from past policies on growth in California. This is simply not true.

The pattern of reducing local control of planning has had a long history, but began to accelerate in the 1960s. Efforts to build housing along transit corridors dates back before that as Fair and Williams demonstrate in their 1959 text, "Economics of Transportation."

In fact, historian Kevin Starr shows in his book, "Inventing the Dream" how Collis P. Huntington (one of the Big Four rail robber barons of California history) used his influence to build train cars and rail service in the Los Angeles area. These rail lines were inspired by the idea that they would promote real estate speculation and the building of suburbs which they did.

They were the model for later sprawl.

We can see the recent results of the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Bay Area Council and their relations with Caltrans in our highway and building correspondence. If you note the completion of the Richmond Parkway connector to 880 and 580 allowed for a new exit for the 10s of thousands of sprawled housing developments into the valley along the Richmond-Antioch and Walnut Creek area along 680, that have been built in the past 10 to 15 years. We feel this "planning" each evening during the commute where thousands (approximately 20,000 to 30,000 extra cars) of commuters to the valley bypass paying the Bay Bridge fare by passing through Marin on Highway 101.

Since Marin only has 101 as an emergency exit in a disaster, this is not a very prudent situation.

Tolls on the Golden Gate should either be reversed or made $3 both directions to reduce this massive traffic jam that endangers our citizens.

I think we have to ask why our regional planning has produced so few successful answers to our problems. Why, if the bridge is overwhelmed now, was a completely new bridge added to double the capacity? Why is no second tube for BART in the works? Why are there no plans to double the ferries? In short, why is only building more market-rate housing the only solution, since there are no funding mechanisms for subsidizing low-income housing for people earning less than $40,000 a year?

This situation is only one example of poor planning and Bay Plan Area is filled with others.

Niccolo Caldararo, Fairfax

Money-driven planning

High-density housing is just more evidence that our politicians — national, state and local — govern to the lowest common denominator.

Somebody dangles money in front of these politicians and they act like a bunch of trained seals.

Is there any relationship between highway funds and high-density housing? What about the additional police and fire, where is that money going to come from? What about the schools, are they ready for, or can they handle, an increased student population?

There is more than one layer to this onion, and it needs to be peeled to the core. Like I've said before, these politicians will be long gone when the problems start.

Phil Sherriff, Novato

GAY MARRIAGE

Counting votes

So the Marin Republicans have finally seen the writing on the wall, after reading hundreds of polls and now think they can fool the rest of us to believe that they support gay marriage.

Phooey!

Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, laid his political life on the line nine years ago because he believed in his heart that we (gays) deserved the same respect and opportunities that he and his wife enjoyed.

The civil right for us to love, marry and have families is now part of the platform of the Democratic Party.

But to quote poor misguided Kevin Krick, the Marin Republican chairman, "Over the last couple months, we've been analyzing the data and looking at it from a purely quantitative standpoint. We tried to base our decisions on facts, not feelings, like any company would do. We asked ourselves, 'What is it we can do to improve our product.'"

Marin Republicans must think we voters are morons if they think they will ever convince us that they truly support gay marriage.

Apparently, they will do anything and say anything "to improve our product."

Bill Jones, San Rafael

TRANSPORTATION

Stepping backward

Heart-felt congratulations to the Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District for coming up with a fee for ferry users to park at the Larkspur Ferry Terminal.

Piling the parking fee onto the charge for taking the ferry will surely encourage drivers to choose the ferry's mass transit option instead of driving into the city.

Welcome back to the 20th century.

John Cutler, Mill Valley

novato

More parking needed

Oma Village will be my new neighbor and I am supportive of the project.

I expressed my concern with Homeward Bound on two occasions, only for the lack of parking. Ten parking spaces for 14 units which will house families is a gross lack of vision.

I guess these residents will not be allowed to have friends, family or relatives visit.

Oma Village is not a homeless shelter.

Residents will be allowed to live and prosper. Children will grow up and want cars. Children have friends that drive cars.

It is unbelievable to me that the Novato City Council was so non-chalant about this issue. Is it because Hamilton is not a desirable voting block?

What is going to happen is that Bolling Drive will become a parking lot, and that affects me as a neighbor of Oma Village. No one listened.

Therese Mahoney, Novato

POLITICS

Limited options

All of the children of our presidents go to private schools because of the security needed. The possibility of being kidnapped is great.

I remember the Bush girls saying how they hated to have Secret Service on dates with them.

The people that hate the president will think up anything to criticize him. What a shame.

Helen Vidaurri, Greenbrae

Health

'A freeing document'

Thank you, Dr. Bill Elliott (Plus Health & Fitness, July 29) for your very clear and helpful advice about the need to make a "lifecare plan" in the same way we plan for our economic future.

As a hospital chaplain, I have seen how the failure to have such a document causes needless pain and misunderstanding when no agent has been named to make those difficult decisions in our name.

Do yourself and those you love an enormous favor by making out an Advanced Healthcare Directive, which can be downloaded free online http://ag.ca.gov/consumers/pdf/ProbateCodeAdvancedHealthCareDirectiveForm-fillable.pdf and discussed, as Dr. Elliott suggests, with your own doctor, lawyer or clergyperson.

It is a wonderful, freeing document which will give you and those around you legitimate peace of mind — because you will have made your own choices clear, in advance.

Elisabeth Payne Rosen, San Rafael

In Marin, affordable housing opposition stronger than ever despite Marin Community Foundation efforts

Posted: marinij.com

A prominent voice missing from the recent debate over Plan Bay Area was the Marin Community Foundation, which in 2007 announced that it was mounting a major effort to change Marin's "Not In My Back Yard" mindset.

In 2007, the foundation invited nonprofit advocates and developers of affordable housing to submit grant proposals for winning hearts and minds. And it proceeded to spend an estimated $400,000 on the initiative, over the next several years.

This year, however, the foundation was silent over months of heated debate around Plan Bay Area, a regional plan that seeks to promote the development of new, affordable housing along transportation corridors and near mass transit to reduce greenhouse gas production.

Given the furor that erupted around Plan Bay Area — much of it focused on the prospect for more higher density, affordable housing in Marin — was the foundation's effort a flop?

Thomas Peters, the Marin Community Foundation's president, said, "I'm very happy with the work that we did. It was intended to be a couple-year initiative and that's what we did. We never labeled it as a kind of anti-NIMBY campaign. We wanted to be sure that at least the facts were out there about affordable housing being a contributing factor to a healthy community, and not as some folks claim, a detriment."

Susan Kirsch, one of the founders of Citizen Marin, a coalition of neighborhood associations formed to oppose Plan Bay Area, said, "Marin Community Foundation is not the only community foundation that has taken this strong stance, to support building no matter what."

Much of the money spent went to the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California, an affordable housing advocacy group, and Greenbelt Alliance, an environmental advocacy group, to produce two reports.

Published in 2011, the first report, titled "Miles from Home," detailed the role that affordable housing can play in taking cars off the road and protecting against climate change. It noted that 60 percent of Marin's workforce commutes from outside county lines, where housing is cheaper.

The second report, published the same year, titled "Driving Home Economic Recovery," explained how additional workforce housing would create jobs and boost spending in Marin.

The Non-Profit Housing Association and Greenbelt Alliance also passed along $75,000 of foundation grant money to Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, a Novato-based affordable housing advocacy group formed in 2011.

Dianne Spaulding, executive director of the Non-Profit Housing Association, said, "I think part of why Marin has become a hot spot of concern for those opposed to affordable housing

is because the initiative did what it was supposed to do. I think we have moved the needle on affordable housing in Marin; but it is a needle that moves slowly."

In addition to working with Greenbelt Alliance on the reports, Spaulding said her association scrutinized the housing elements of all 11 of Marin's municipalities. State law requires counties and municipalities to create housing elements in their general plans that foster the creation of a specified amount of affordable housing by identifying appropriate building sites and removing red tape that might block construction. The association came up with 33 sites suitable for the creation of affordable housing in Marin, ranked according to feasibility.

Spaulding said her association also developed a leadership program for current Marin residents of affordable housing to teach the residents how to tell their stories and took local elected representatives on tours of local affordable housing projects.

And Spaulding said her association has taken the initial steps to form a Marin Affordable Housing Coalition that would consist of such organizations as the Marin Organizing Committee, Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, Sustainable Novato, Sustainable Marin, Marin Grassroots, Marin Workforce Housing Trust and the League of Women Voters.

Jeremy Madsen, executive director of Greenbelt Alliance, said, "The biggest role that we played was to make it clear that affordable housing is an environmental issue. The more that we are able to accommodate homes for people who are part of our workforce in the cities and towns of Marin the less pressure we're putting on the natural environment, the open spaces of our region. This effort was a good start in a long-term process."

Annan Paterson, a former Novato city councilwoman and one of the founders of Stand Up For Neighborly Novato, said Stand Up has won the endorsement of 1,200 local residents and trained more than 50 people who live in or need affordable housing in Novato to be spokesmen.

"Our ability to do that has really helped to inform the debate," Paterson said. She said some members of the organization receive a stipend, but most are volunteers.

Lynn Wasley, another of Stand Up for Neighborly Novato's co-founders, said despite the foundation's efforts, the intense opposition to affordable housing that she once associated mainly with Novato seems to have spread throughout Marin.

Wasley said the Marin Community Foundation's absence from the Plan Bay Area debate gives at least the appearance that the foundation may have retreated some on the affordable housing issue.

"It's hard not to assume that the attacks on the Marin Community Foundation for what and who they were supporting, including Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, didn't impact them," Wasley said.

Peters, however, said the main reason the foundation chose not to participate in the Plan Bay Area debate was that it was too abstract.

"An awful lot of the debate is about pure hypotheticals," Peters said. "It has gone so far off the rails of what is actually going to be built that it is not an effective use of the foundation's focus or frankly my time."

Peters said, rather than engage in idle speculation, "We stay working with the people who want to have this happen: an owner who has a parcel that is appropriate to develop, a nonprofit housing developer, and somebody who has the consummate skill to put together a financing package for building."

Over the past 10 years, the foundation has contributed to the creation of more than 400 units of affordable housing in Marin through grants and loans.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Marin Readers' Forum for July 19

Posted: marinij.com

'Quasi-government zealots'

All the talk about Association of Bay Area Governments, Priority Development Areas and high-density housing reminds me of a time long ago when San Francisco erected the Sutro Tower.

Beautiful as it is, the justification was to improve TV transmission capabilities. This at a time when cable was just coming to market. Today, we all have cable and no one uses a roof-top antenna to receive television broadcasts.

ABAG and PDAs are working to concentrate high-density housing near transit hubs so that we can enable folks to not drive a car to work and thereby reduce our carbon emissions. This at a time when hybrid and electric cars are just coming to market. Tomorrow (soon) we will all be driving electric cars, our carbon emissions will be zero.

The insistence of these quasi-government zealots to enforce these measures on us makes no long-term sense and one can only wonder about other motives. As Watergate's Deep Throat wisely said, "follow the money."

Steve Fabes, Sausalito

Respect for others

Before we can have reform or new regulations for the use of public trails and open space, we have to have respect for others, human and animal and for authority.

Sadly, this is lacking in our current environment.

Parents need to instill these qualities in their children from a very young age. There is an overwhelming sense of entitlement in this county, exhibited by both adults and teenagers that has got to stop.

No amount of regulation will be successful until the populace is willing to follow the rules.

Linda Riedel, Novat0

Observations from 101

Another day sitting in Highway 101 traffic, another night reading the IJ full of complaints lacking constructive solutions.

Sure, we can sit around and hope the magical candy train from Sonoma will one day solve everything, but even a best case scenario is years away.

Roads and cars are here to stay and what we need are practical solutions that involve roads and cars. Here's one: add metering lights to all those same freeway entrances that create the same backups every

day. It's a simple fix that gets the cars on slower and works wonders.

While we're at it, let's get the cars off faster at places like Third Street by fixing the lights and/or intersections there to keep the traffic from backing onto the freeway. Cars that back up isn't just bad for traffic, it's dangerous.

City traffic lights and intersections are an easy fix that can be done by local leaders; no need to whine and wait for federal involvement.

Here's another one open to a creative solution: Find a way to charge a toll to all those transient commuters working in places like the Presidio, but living in the East Bay.

Ever notice how the Richmond Bridge routes are jammed up in the evening, but not in the morning? No bridge tolls in that direction and it's better than taking city streets to the Bay Bridge.

Come on car people of Marin; let's get some real car solutions.

JJ Jackson, Novato

Marin Readers' Forum for July 24

Posted: marinij.com

PLANNING

Corte Madera's growth

No city in Marin has benefitted more from regional infrastructure and planning than Corte Madera.

The two "regional" shopping centers and other retail, lodging and auto dealerships in the Highway 101 corridor fund more than 50 percent of the town's tax revenues — a far greater share of their municipal budget than any other community in the county receives from these sources and overwhelmingly the most on a per capita basis.

However, these sources of income for Corte Madera are also among the leading generators of traffic and low-income jobs in the region.

Councilmember Carla Condon's response to this significant and ongoing regional impact is to offer the rest of us (who are effectively bearing these burdens) self-congratulations for the heroic efforts of her city council to drop out of the Association of Bay Area Governments.

I suppose the true heroes in this saga are the other city councils and city staffs in Marin who balance their budgets and provide quality services without the largess from which Corte Madera benefits.

Corte Madera town council members would be well-advised to stop their paranoid ranting about regional planning and instead take responsibility for the continuing impacts that they have created by working cooperatively with other cities and agencies in the area.

Bruce Dorfman, Mill Valley

Losing local control

Your front-page headline on July 20 announced a historic moment in Marin.

What the majority of the people of Marin wanted was ignored, we were sold out and lied to by our representatives.

You quoted Supervisor Steve Kinsey, "I voted yes on the plan knowing that it doesn't reduce local control over land use ..."

That is one of the biggest lies in Plan Bay Area.

Our local governments don't have the resources and money for the attorney fees it would take to fight the development that will be imposed on us. This was a done deal even before the vote.

It is crucial that the representatives who voted for this plan be replaced in the next election.

Diane Hoffman, Fairfax

'Socialist scheme'

Besides loss of local control, Plan Bay Area is too much of a socialist scheme of sustainable development, which does not meet the needs of local communities.

I was cut off from saying the above by the one-minute-per-speaker limit as the regional transportation and land-use plan came to a final vote Thursday night in Oakland.

Thank you Pat Eklund for not voting for this plan.

What's wrong with Plan Bay Area is that it won't do any of the things officals claim it will do; using the same approach does not fit all areas of the Bay Area. Marin is suburban and is already meeting the goals of AB 32.

We don't need some giant plan for housing. Local people are perfectly capable of planning all kinds of infill housing with smaller construction projects.

Stack-and-pack 'em housing starts to deteriorate immediately because of fast turnover in occupancy. We end up with trashed housing and crime in the neighborhood.

Basia Crane, Kentfield

MARIN CITY

Don't blame police

I read the article in Sunday's paper about "the deepening rift between the African American Marin City residents and the Marin County Sheriff's Department."

If you miss a court date, you will have a warrant out for you. If you are known to drive on a suspended license, they will arrest you. If you sell drugs, they will arrest you. If you try to hit a police officer with your car, they will shoot you.

It doesn't matter if you're an African American, Indian, Asian, white or any other race.

If you commit a crime, you will be arrested.

Get over it. Stop playing the race card, it's getting old.

You wonder why the police are not warm and fuzzy. It's hard to be warm and fuzzy when they are throwing rocks and shooting at you.

If you think it is an easy job, go on a ride along with an officer for a few hours. This may be a good training ground and a wakeup call for the citizens of Marin City.

Glen Alberigi, Novato

RECALL

Misleading attacks

Justin Kai's July 14 letter has sunk to a new low. Residents of the first district have had to suffer through ugly and misleading attacks from recall proponents for months, but including Supervisor Susan Adams' family in his attacks is going too far.

No, Susan Adams is not "exploiting" her family, but I wonder if Mr. Kai is suggesting the Marinwood meeting was unsafe for children?

Mr. Kai wrote of exploitation, but I ask as a taxpayer who is footing the bill for this $250,000 recall, who is it that is really being exploited for the gain of a few?

Housing is always a difficult issue here in Marin, but we cannot lose our civility over it. I agree with Susan Adams that we must at least discuss these issues in a fair, civil and democratic way.

As we move forward on these issues, we can agree to disagree, but those who advocate recall need to stop the personal attacks.

Jerry Maletsky, San Rafael

Uncivil behavior

I recently submitted a letter deploring the behavior I witnessed at Supervisor Susan Adams' Marinwood town hall meeting.

Justin Kai's July 14 letter compels me to write again.

He has gone beyond spreading misinformation and fear tactics to including Susan Adams' family in his latest attack.

Ms. Adams, not the recallers, convened the meeting at Marinwood. Most of the audience was there to be informed and have a reasonable conversation.

The community center had one microphone, and it was the recallers who were yelling, interrupting the speakers, refusing to give up the microphone and trying to intimidate anyone who disagreed with them.

It exposed for all to see the ugliness of the recall organizers.

I would hope that we could remain civil as we discuss these important issues. Personal attacks are unwarranted and unproductive.

Marcia McLean, Novato

county

Let the people know

Kudos to the Marin IJ for pursuing access to public records in the matter of public employee working conditions.

When Marin settles (or loses) lawsuits over employee harassment, discrimination, etc., it is the taxpayers who pay the bill.

Citizens have a right to know details when our own employees make grievance filings.

Marin should not be like San Francisco, which allowed former housing chief Henry Alvarez to run amok, abusing employees for so long before the public could learn. Liabilities risked by public employees should be shown the light rather than get swept under the carpet. It is better for our employees.

It is better protection for the public.

The Marin IJ should be given the files as requested.

Randy Warren, San Rafael

Marin Readers' Forum for July 26

Posted: marinij.com

Recalls send message

Recalls involving Marin supervisors are rare. The last recall of a Marin County board member occurred in 1961 during the heated debate over the fate of the Civic Center when Supervisor J. Walter Blair was ousted and replaced by Peter Behr.

The idea of recall to some is a waste of $250,000. Not necessarily so.

If the present action does remove Supervisor Susan Adams, it will put on notice to the remaining supervisors that they also can be removed.

Perhaps their future actions could be more in line with what their constituents feel they are lacking now.

They are not impervious to recall.

We have been short-changed by their spending ways, slush funds, the Association of Bay Area Governments, etc.

Gerard S. Sample, Mill Valley

Enabling lawbreaking

It has been a few weeks now since the trail incident that badly injured an equestrian and her horse.

The IJ has been full of blame since this incident — mountain bikers and skittish horses. Lack of enough trails and single track trails.

But to me the blame rests clearly and squarely with the Marin County supervisors who for 15 years have encouraged the discussion of accommodating expanded mountain bike use onto single-track trails barely wide enough for two humans or one horse.

Is it any wonder that we find so many mountain bikers using single-track trails?

And yes, they are. These riders are just getting a head start on what our supervisors have encouraged them to think is going to be their legal right.

Our supervisors have failed to say no and have encouraged dangerous misuse of our trail system.

As our supervisors express their horror at the injury from this most recent equestrian injury and the fleeing riders, they should be looking directly into a mirror. They have found the problem and it is them.

Phil Paisley, Ross

Fighting to save sprawl?

"Rebels with a Cause" is a must-see for anyone who wants to know how Marin was saved.

The people who worked for the preservation had a vision that saw the beauty of the wild places as something inherently valuable in its own right.

They bucked the current trends of the day, which assumed that all development was a good thing.

They didn't shout down their opponents at meetings, defame people, bully or threaten the local leaders. They collaborated with their opponents, the West Marin ranchers, which not only helped create the parklands, but ultimately preserved Marin's local agriculture as well.

The visionaries of today are not the unruly mobs that storm the Plan Bay Area meetings crying "socialism."

Those people are not protecting large tracks of natural landscape, they are protecting low-density sprawl.

Plan Bay Area opponents are right in line with the current view of the day that all development is a bad thing. The true visionaries are the organizations like TranForm and Greenbelt Alliance that lobbied hard to get our state, regional and local officials to understand that, for future growth to reduce traffic and greenhouse gases, it needs to be integrated with shops and jobs, and be near transit with good bike and pedestrian facilities.

This is the very definition of small-town character.

These are the current day "Rebels" from the movie, putting forth a positive vision for the future, and bucking the trends of the day.

Plan Bay Area is the continuation of the efforts of the latter-day "Rebels," continuing to protect open space by directing new development toward our city centers.

Wendi Kallins, Forest Knolls

Marin Readers' Forum for July 27

Posted: marinij.com

HOUSING

A better objective

If Mr. John Young and Marin Grassroots want to help the poor in our county, they could protest the wipeout of the facility to aid young children by Women Helping All People in Marin City.

WHAP provides after school snacks and a safe place for children to do homework.

The Marin Housing Authority seems determined to crush this wonderful, free service to the community.

Instead of a phony attack on phantom lynch mobs (read citizens who are concerned with forced fracture of local zoning regulation), Marin Grassroots should focus on a problem at once real and tragic.

Deke Welch, San Rafael

'Malevolent rhetoric'

God made us all.

We must have a civil discussion on affordable housing where we listen to each other instead of the current name calling and hateful accusations.

The lack of public decorum at the Marinwood meeting, the rancor and the ugly statements showing bias from some present should not represent Marin or its residents.

The behavior of the activists from Concerned Marinites who held a rally accusing people of being racists at the Pickleweed meeting of Citizen Marin, a group that opposes the current Bay Area regional housing plan, should not represent Marin or its residents.

The malevolent rhetoric and personal attacks being written by people on both sides of the affordable housing issue under every article, opinion piece or letter about affordable housing that appears in the online Marin IJ should not represent Marin or its residents.

We need affordable housing so those who work in Marin can live in Marin.

It doesn't have to be the controversial Plan Bay Area from the Association of Bay Area Governments, which calls for high-density, 30-units-per-acre housing that has caused so much dissension in Marin.

There are many ways, in addition to the high-density ABAG plan, to reach our affordable housing goals for both rental units and home ownership.

They should all be explored.

However, progress is not going to happen until there is an open dialogue that not only allows people to

speak about their positions on affordable housing, but for others to listen to the reasons for those positions.

An open decision-making process needs open dialogue.

Phyllis Metcalfe, Corte Madera

Thanks to Grassroots

Kudos to Marin Grassroots for taking a public stand on uncivilized public behavior!

My daughter has developmental disabilities. Last weekend she asked what a PDA is.

I explained, and told her about the Terra Linda meeting in which one speaker proclaimed that no one from Terra Linda will ever ride the SMART train. I told her some citizens are working to have PDAs — affordable housing and transit-oriented development — removed from Marin's future plans.

My daughter said, "I'll ride the train. And I will live in that housing."

My daughter has lived in this city much longer than some of the most vocal Citizen Marin people, and is positively involved in civic activities.

But speakers at recent Marinwood and Terra Linda community meetings say people like her are undesirable, a person who commits crime, one of SMART's "no one."

I have elderly friends in San Rafael who can no longer drive. They treasure the ability to live in housing near public transit and services. They have lived, worked, voted and paid taxes in this city for decades.

These opponents of affordable housing say they are "no one" as well.

There are many "no ones" who live in our city and help make it a civil, civic community. They don't interrupt speakers in public meetings, or call people who disagree with them names, or bully public officials to get their way.

And they are just as much citizens of Marin as members of Citizen Marin.

Gail Napell, San Rafael

Another city abstains

In my July 23 Marin Voice column regarding the Plan Bay Area, I mentioned that Mill Valley had "indicated their support for the Plan Bay Area."

I have since been notified that the Mill Valley City Council did not take a position on the Plan Bay Area, which reinforces my vote as a Marin representative to the Association of Bay Area Governments to abstain from supporting or opposing the preferred scenario of the Plan Bay Area.

I am sorry for any misunderstanding.

Pat Eklund, Mayor, Novato

Remember Marincello

It seems that the philosopher Kenneth Minogue had in mind our county when he wrote, some time ago: "We (citizens) must face up to the grim fact that the rulers we elect are losing patience with us."

Plan Bay Area, high-density developments along Highway 101, affordable housing, creek regulations, the SMART train, flood control in Ross Valley, the TEAM program and honors classes at the Tamalpais Union High School campuses, the huge freeway overpass at Greenbrae, the oyster farm, county pensions reform and even sheriff's deputies called in to silence the protest of homeowners. In each and every occasion our representatives fight tooth and nail the desires and interests of the citizens who elect them.

A wider and wider divide has been building up between the residents and the career politicians who receive marching orders (and funding) from outside power centers that do not really care about our community. Our politicians might still live among us, but their allegiances are clearly somewhere else.

As an immigrant from Europe, I have always admired and cherished the ideal of local control, one of the core values of the American republic. Our democratic tradition starts at the most local level. Anything like Plan Bay Area, that undercuts our sense of responsibility, is to be feared.

It is quite an irony that the same day that its front page announced the controversial approval of Plan Bay Area, the Marin IJ also published a positive report on the documentary "Rebels With A Cause," the story of the fight to keep large swaths of open space in Marin from development.

People fondly remember that fight because "they see the ability for ordinary citizens to make lasting change," says Nancy Kelly, one of the filmmakers.

Remembering the Marincello fight should be a wake-up call for all Marin residents. It is time to realize that our political class has run its course, and that our generation needs a new breed of individuals ready and willing to actually serve the people they represent.

Benedetto Cico, San Anselmo

MARINWOOD

Support for housing

I live in Marinwood and have good relations with my neighbors. We talk about our dogs, the weather and the beautiful blue, cloud-dotted skies.

I support the Association of Bay Area Governments, am against the recall effort and would like to see some form of affordable housing at Marinwood Plaza.

I'm sure there are at least a few others who feel as I do, in all or in part.

Perhaps it's time for them to think about writing a letter to the IJ, too.

Susan Meyers, Marinwood

tiburon

Get the spelling 'strait'

The Marin Independent Journal has repeatedly written of "Racoon Strait" over the years, instead of "Raccoon Strait." I presume this is dictated by editorial policy. Your policy is incorrect and should be changed.

The name of the channel of water separating Angel Island from the mainland of Marin has been a long-standing source of confusion. It was to prevent this type of perplexity that the United States Board on Geographic Names was created as a federal body in 1890. With the surge of activity in the West it became important to document the host of new names.

The board debated whether it should name this water-channel Raccoon Strait, Raccoon Straits, Raccoon Strs, Racoon Straits or Racoon Sts.

Some information the board used to decide the name came from the San Francisco sub-office of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, which stated that the strait was named after the British warship HMS Raccoon. The communicant had used information from the Spanish archives, even though the communicant had already written "no reliance can be placed upon the spelling of proper names in Mexican-Spanish or California-Spanish."

The board decided on the name "Raccoon Strait," approved June 4, 1895, which became the official name up to 2013. In the board's third through fifth report, its definition read; "Raccoon; strait between Angel Island and mainland, San Francisco bay, Cal. (Not Racoon)."

In consequence, Coast Guard maps have consistently used this official spelling. The recently distributed 'Southern Marin Community Map Book' of Spring, 2012, twice names the channel Raccoon Straits (tut-tut, should be 'strait').

The wrinkle in this tidy story is that the British warship was actually named "HMS Racoon." I personally reviewed the original log book in London, written in beautiful clear script by Captain Black, commander of the ship. Unquestionably, the ship was named "Racoon."

There are a number of reasons the error might have occurred, but for the 118 years since giving the official name as "Raccoon Strait," the board has remained firm.

The only way to use "Racoon" for the strait is after the board officially changes the name. Historical correction is secondary to maintaining the valuable purpose of the board.

The official name is "Raccoon Strait," which should be used by everybody. No person nor organization can unilaterally change the name.

I ask the IJ to get into the correct line.

Hillary Don, Belvedere

TRANSPORTATION

Finding consensus

Monday's meeting of the Highway 101 Greenbrae Corridor Advisory Working Group produced something not seen often in public discourse these days — consensus.

At the end of a long and sometimes contentious meeting, the Working Group voted 7-0 to forward recommendations on southbound features for the Greenbrae interchange. I thank everyone involved — committee members, staff, consultants, and the public for their conscientious work.

We have more to do, but it is clear we are beginning to make real progress.

I do want to correct the record regarding the schedule. These meetings were planned to end in July, though the group had discussed extending the date. I opened Monday's meeting by announcing that we could extend the work if we made significant progress, and suggested we discuss it at the end of the meeting.

Indeed, after staff returned with information requested by the Working Group, and the group reached consensus on the southbound improvements, we discussed possible future meeting dates. The group selected two in August, and voted to ask the Transportation Authority of Marin board for funding to continue this process.

There was nothing unclear about this conversation, and I will certainly urge the entire TAM board to continue to support our important efforts.

We have two significant areas to discuss in our upcoming meetings — bicycle and pedestrian facilities and northbound improvements.

I encourage the public to participate. We can work towards consensus by continuing our focus on reaching agreement.

This work is too important to do anything else.

Alice Fredericks, Tiburon, Chair, Transportation Authority of Marin

Progress was 'buried'

I read with interest your recap of the July 22 Greenbrae Interchange Working Group's meeting, as I am a member of the Working Group. Unfortunately, your description of the meeting read like a meeting different from the one I attended.

Most importantly, the group reached unanimous consensus on key areas related to improvements for southbound 101.

This positive news was buried near the end of the article, following derogatory quotes from anonymous sources and an apparently disgruntled Corte Madera representative.

The article quoted unnamed members using unfair, personally derogatory language directed at chair Alice Fredericks for supposedly never discussing why this was scheduled to be the last meeting.

However, Fredericks explained the schedule at the beginning of the meeting, and rightly suggested members discuss further meetings at the end, once we've seen the progress we made.

At the end of the meeting, I proposed, and Fredericks and the rest of the group agreed with scheduling more meetings in light of the significant progress we had made. There was no controversy whatsoever on this issue at the meeting.

The article then also quotes a disgruntled member from Corte Madera for claiming that it was somehow "disturbing" that Transportation Authority of Marin staff provided information to the group that was actually requested by the group at a prior meeting.

Contrary to a small minority, most of the Working Group is committed to reaching consensus to improve the congestion at this important Marin hub.

Tom McInerney, San Anselmo

Marin Voice: A greener approach to planning

Posted: marinij.com

I HAVE LIVED IN MARIN virtually my entire life. I know the history of this county, respect its core conservationist and community values, and I bring that knowledge and those core values to my decision making as county supervisor.

I am a believer in planning — specifically land-use planning — because it is the primary tool used to implement and assure that a community's values are embedded in the blue print for future development.

Those of us who live in Marin are beneficiaries of prospective land-use planning and development decisions made back in the 1970s which had the specific intention to prevent sprawl, target growth, preserve our agricultural lands and protect our open space.

Plan Bay Area is a regional effort to apply similar values and achieve similar objectives throughout the Bay Area with the added goal and responsibility of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It also fulfills a statutory requirement (SB375 adopted in 2008) which requires the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission to develop and adopt an integrated transportation and housing plan for the Metropolitan Bay Area region of which Marin County is a part.

Plan Bay Area is not a mandate to build housing. It does not erode, diminish or supersede local control, local planning or local decision-making authority for this county or any other in the region. The County of Marin as well as each of our cities and towns have general plans in place that prescribe land use and zoning. Changes to those general plans can only be made by the local governing authority (the Board of Supervisors or city council) not by ABAG or MTC or other regional agencies.

Marin County and the entire Bay Area region stand to benefit from planning that seeks to encourage all counties (and jurisdictions within them) to plan for future growth/development with foresight that reduces sprawl, protects our agricultural lands and open space, links future job growth with housing and transit, and as a result reduces vehicle miles traveled and green house gas emissions.

That said, this first edition of Plan Bay Area is far from perfect — for example:

• The plan does not identify or address how communities will fund the expansion of public infrastructure necessary to accommodate projected growth, should it occur;

• The plan does not address water resources and whether there is adequate supply to support projected future growth;

• The plan needs to do a better job addressing and respecting differences in size, density, and community character of cities throughout the Bay Area;

• Neither Plan Bay Area nor its DEIR come close to adequately addressing or accounting for sea-level rise, acknowledging the need for climate adaptation strategies, as well as identifying the funding mechanisms necessary to support implementation;

• The plan does not recognize or account for local projects or programs that reduce greenhouse gas

emissions such as Marin Clean Energy.

But perhaps the biggest problem of all, has been the process in which Plan Bay Area was developed. Though years in the making, the general public did not become engaged or involved until the end and by then most major policy decisions informing the plan had been decided.

Plan Bay Area will be updated on a four-year cycle. The beginning of that update should begin the day after it is adopted.

Authentic engagement and involvement by local delegates, planners and the public early on in the revision cycle will make for a process that builds confidence, and results in a better plan and planning tool for Marin County and the greater Bay Area.

Marin Supervisor Katie Rice of San Anselmo is the county's representative to the Association of Bay Area Governments.

Marin Voice: Bay plan is a guide for smarter growth

Posted: marinij.com

CALIFORNIA here I come "..."

Well, so many came that our state will grow by millions in the decades ahead, even if nobody else could get in.

That is reality. Californians also share a universal interest in secure and prosperous lives, yet it remains an elusive aspiration for many.

Add in global environmental threats and you have the raw ingredients of a monumental planning challenge.

In 2008, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed SB 375, a law responding to those forces. It mandated combining two existing regional plans, one addressing population growth and the other transportation priorities, into one. It added two other daunting challenges to be addressed; climate change and the cost of housing.

Plan Bay Area is our nine-county response to SB375.

Last week, I, along with most of the other locally elected representatives from around the bay who serve on the boards of two regional agencies, voted to approve it. Only one member voted "No," and one abstained.

But don't mistake that for universal support. Many Marin residents vehemently oppose the plan, while others think it doesn't go far enough for all people to have improved transportation, housing and job opportunities.

The plan commits our regional agencies to work on shaping our future, yet recognizes that land uses will continue being decided locally. To quell misleading fears, it explicitly states "Adoption of Plan Bay Area does not mandate any changes to local zoning, general plans, or project review.

The region's cities, towns and counties will maintain control of all decisions to adopt plans and permit or deny development projects."

Such unequivocal language was good enough to get my "Yes" vote, but of little relief for those who believe state and regional planning is intrusive, undemocratic, and will force homogenous urbanization on our communities.

Many critics also object to prioritizing growth along transit corridors. They prefer either expansion into outlying farms and open space, or simply rejecting further development in Marin. Many also condemn SB 375's specific requirement to plan for housing people of all income levels as unwarranted social engineering.

Many legitimate concerns have come forth. Planning for water supply, sea level rise, quality schools and protecting community character warrant careful attention and are getting it. Marin's water districts have

confirmed sufficient supplies to meet the plan's projected growth.

The county is busy preparing for rising seas, school districts have historically adapted to increasing and shrinking enrollments and will keep doing so, and most projects already face careful design review.

However, many of the criticisms have been misleading.

Contrary to assertions that Hong Kong is coming here in a one-size-fits-all high rise assault, Marin's historic slow growth and low-rise character can continue. Only 1 percent of the Bay Area's future population growth over the next three decades is assigned here, and SB375 allows local governments to keep existing environmental review practices unchanged.

Housing within walking distance of shops, parks, and transit hubs in our existing towns is a good fit for Marin. It reinforces our Countywide Plan focus on the Highway 101 corridor, which is exactly what has guided Marin land planning since the 1970s. It makes our investment in the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit train, ferries and bus service more cost effective. It allows existing single family neighborhoods to see only incremental change as remodels and second units get woven in.

It is important to remember that this is a plan, not a project. It points us in a direction, but only subsequent local decisions will determine whether the goals are embraced.

Since SB375 plans must be updated every four years, the debate it has stirred about Marin's future can and should continue. The passion people feel about the place we call "home" is an asset.

By considering our present situation, listening to widely diverse views, and imagining together how to make things better, Plan Bay Area can become a powerful civic tool rather than the destructive power play some suggest.

Marin Supervisor Steve Kinsey is the county's appointed representative to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

Marin Voice: Marin's overreaction to Plan Bay Area

Posted: marinij.com

MARIN OPPONENTS of Plan Bay Area showed up in force on the night of July 18 in Oakland to shout down the regional plan, which passed despite their efforts. While they succeeded at being loud, they were strikingly uninformed about the nine-county regional transportation and land use plan.

Many said, "Why don't you just leave us alone and let our towns decide on our own futures?" But someone has to do regional planning; not just to access nearly $80 billion in state and federal project funds, but also to coordinate the transportation facilities that make inter-county travel possible.

With a population of 7 million people in the Bay Area, rush-hour driving now means crawling in heavy traffic. We cannot build our way out of this — unhindered regional auto travel is no longer physically, financially or environmentally possible.

Instead, better transit service is needed if people are to conveniently travel outside their towns and counties.

Opponents of the regional plan act as if the future will take care of itself. Marin's own traffic congestion should be proof that growth without a well thought-out plan creates serious problems.

While the Pentagon Papers, Iran-Contra and NSA domestic surveillance are reasons for a healthy distrust of government, opponents of Plan Bay Area take that to a level approaching paranoia. They claim the U.N. is plotting to take away their guns and their property rights, and force them into high-density housing. They seem gripped by the fear that the regional plan will harm them personally.

I wonder where these bizarre ideas came from, and why people accept them so uncritically.

Perhaps the biggest misunderstanding is over local control. Nothing in the regional plan forces any jurisdiction to do anything. Regional agencies don't have the legal powers to make planning and zoning decisions.

(Yes, there are requirements to plan for affordable housing, but that is a state mandate, not a regional one.)

Local governments — not the regional agencies — defined the "Priority Development Areas," which are where they would like to locate future jobs and housing.

The state requires planning for housing for a growing population. The strategy of the Bay Area's regional plan is to concentrate the new housing in walkable communities with good transit, with these benefits:

• It leaves existing single-family neighborhoods undisturbed.

• It reduces future traffic, because new residents drive less.

• It reduces emissions of air pollutants, including greenhouse gases.

• It is economically feasible, because young adults and empty nesters want to live where they can walk to stores, cafes and restaurants.

• It preserves open space.

Overzealous opponents seem to want to close the county's borders and freeze both time and the county's racial makeup. Yet the projected growth in population comes mostly from our own children and grandchildren, plus some of the people who will work here.

Santa Clara County is projected to have 26 times more housing growth than Marin, which is projected to have the lowest percentage growth of all the Bay Area counties. Yet Marin residents sent in more comments objecting to the regional plan than any other county.

These Marinites have vocalized their uniquely overwrought grievances in a series of combative public meetings.

With norms of respectful conduct out the window, anyone with opposing views faced a threatening mob mentality.

This oppressive behavior undermines the willingness of residents to participate in government, either as elected officials or community volunteers.

This is no way to solve problems. Managing inevitable growth requires rationality and a willingness to listen to others.

It's not an option to demand that the future not come to Marin.

David Schonbrunn of Sausalito is president of TRANSDEF.org, a transit advocacy organization.

Marin Voice: My vote on Plan Bay Area

Posted: marinij.com

IN JANUARY 2012, I was honored to be elected by mayors and council members of the 11 Marin cities to be their representative on the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board.

Thursday was a tough night. After consulting with representatives of Marin cities I represent on the ABAG board, I determined that it was my duty to abstain from voting on the Final Environmental Impact Report and "Plan Bay Area," which is an integrated long-range transportation and land-use/housing plan for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The plan, which ABAG and MTC have worked on for three years, is our Sustainable Community Strategy that identifies how the Bay Area will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent from cars/light trucks by 2040 as required by SB 375, while focusing on where housing should be provided based on Bay Area economic growth.

The plan raised a number of very serious issues for Marin — and, we simply did not have enough time to work with our community members, "stakeholder" organizations and municipalities to resolve those issues; and, some of those issues couldn't be resolved by their very nature.

ABAG/MTC received over 588 written/verbal comments on the plan. Four hundred of those were written comments from individuals, of which 171 came from Marin residents, many objecting to the potential "priority development areas" in Tam Valley and Marinwood, recently withdrawn by the Board of Supervisors.

Those individuals, along with other Marin community members, dug deeper and raised additional issues, challenged the population and jobs growth projections, the assumption of GHG reductions, and proposals to streamline California Environmental Quality Act in PDAs — that's perceived as "gutting" environmental review.

Most importantly, the public expressed, loud and clear, it wants to maintain local control.

Since I represent the Marin cities on ABAG, I reached out to my colleagues and encouraged them to have public meetings to garner community feedback. I held several meetings with ABAG delegates on the city councils to ascertain how Marin cities should cast our one vote (mine) on the ABAG board.

Of the 11 cities, three (Novato, Sausalito, Mill Valley) indicated their support for Plan Bay Area, one (Corte Madera) voted for the "No Project Alternative" and seven (Belvedere, Tiburon, Larkspur, Ross, San Anselmo, Fairfax and San Rafael) took "No Position." "No Position" is just that — they chose not to take a position for or against any of the alternatives.

Given the majority took "No Position," it was my duty on July 18, to cast an abstention vote for or against the Plan. After hours of testimony, the ABAG/ MTC Boards voted to approve the Plan Bay Area with changes:

• ABAG: 21 Yes, 5 No, 1 Abstention

• MTC: 12 Yes, 1 No

As we go forward, I will advocate for ABAG/ MTC to have open dialogues on what worked well and what needs improvement so we don't repeat past mistakes.

Both ABAG/ MTC need to find a better way to involve the communities at the local level in updating the plan that's due in four years.

I will recommend we start now by working backward from 2017 to ensure there is adequate time for a bottom up effort where the public, stakeholder organizations and elected officials are brought into the process early on. I will continue to advocate for enough time that allows each city, town and county to vote.

We, the elected officials on ABAG/MTC, need to look at options and select the best approach for projecting the population and jobs growth, whether locating housing near transit/transportation reduces greenhouse gas emissions as projected and how needs in our schools, parks and recreation, public safety, etc. can be addressed with the anticipated growth.

I hope that by changing the process and making improvements to the plan, we will have a plan in 2017 that satisfies our individual community values while contributing to the region's values of preserving our environment while having a prosperous economy where everyone has a place to call home.

Novato Mayor Pat Eklund represents Marin cities on the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board.

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Not Even Silicon Valley Escapes History

By Alexis C. Madrigal

The precise center of Silicon Valley when it was the most important manufacturing region on Earth is now home to Super Space Self Storage.

I was able to map this location thanks to Richard E. Schmieder, who drove 6,000 miles around Silicon Valley, collecting the addresses of more than a thousand corporate headquarters, branch offices, restaurants, and hotels. He published this exhaustive niche Yellow Pages as *Rich's Guide to Santa Clara County's Silicon Valley* in 1983.

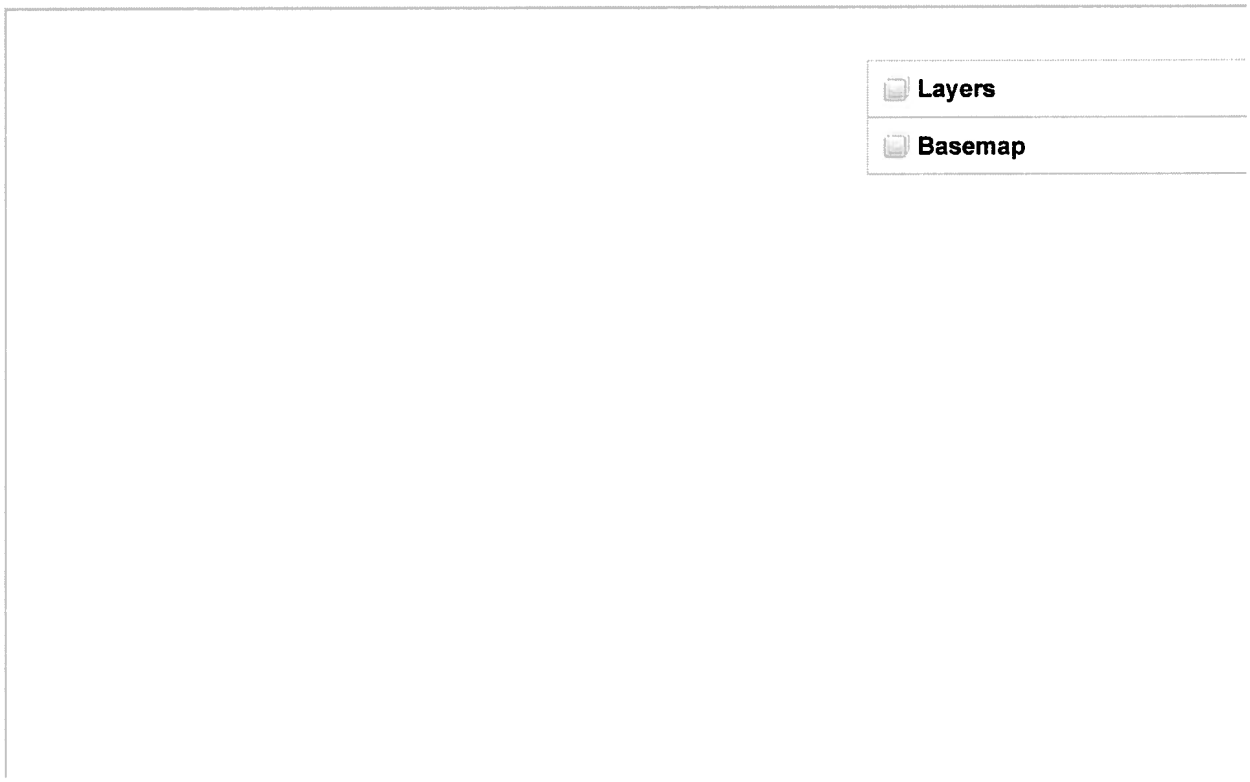
I discovered a copy of this rare book in Berkeley's library system and realized that it was a fantastic dataset: If I stuck all of the locations onto a map, I could reconstruct the Valley as it was 30 years ago, *right before* the Japanese manufacturers and the forces of globalization pulled and pushed chip production to East Asia. And though the *idea* of Silicon Valley does not allow for history, the place, itself, cannot escape it. The Valley we know now, the Paypal-Google-Facebook one, got built right on top of the original boom towns.

In our Internet-happy present, it's easy to forget that up until the mid-1980s, Silicon Valley was an industrial landscape. Hundreds of manufacturers lined the streets of Sunnyvale, Palo Alto, Cupertino, Mountain View, and San Jose. This is the Silicon Valley when AMD, Apple, Applied Materials, Atari,

Fairchild, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, National Semiconductor, Varian Associates, Xerox, and hundreds of other companies made their products right here in the Bay.

The Valley was as important a manufacturing center as Detroit or Pittsburgh were. This was the place making the foundational technology of the era, and it brought prosperity to the region. Between 1964 and 1984, Santa Clara County added 203,000 manufacturing jobs, according to a report by the Association of Bay Area Governments; 85 percent of them were in high-tech. Another economist found that Santa Clara County's manufacturing growth had driven the economic well-being of the entire Bay Area during that period. Without the growth of Valley manufacturing, the San Francisco and Oakland's economies would have severely suffered, not to mention the rest of the country's. This was the industrial heartland of America, even if it was nestled against the San Francisco Bay.

In other words, *Rich's Guide*, I realized, would let me map this first peak of Silicon Valley, the one that gave meaning to the term high-tech. With substantial help from my colleague on *The Atlantic Wire*, Philip Bump, we put this map together. If you worked in the Valley at the time, it should take you back to the days of Ampex, Varian Associates, and the Rusty Scupper. But there's plenty to see, even if you only know the area by reputation.



For example, you'll find Apple headquarters at 20525 Mariana Ave, just across De Anza Boulevard from the current HQ at 1 Infinite Loop. They were part of a little cluster of companies just off Interstate 280, south of the hottest action up closer to Highway 101. Most of the rest have not survived -- Braegen Corp., Iconix, International Memories, Tymshare, Four-Phase Systems. Yet these same people would have all visited the Peppermill Lounge for some 80s-"fern bar" refreshment.

After geocoding all these points -- i.e. finding all their latitudes and longitudes -- I could compute the average of all the locations on the map. In a meaningful sense, the spot was the very center of the corporate ecosystem that we call Silicon Valley in 1983.

My math says it's located in Sunnyvale, south of 101 between North Wolfe Road and the Lawrence Expressway at precisely *37.38260152 degrees north, 122.0094996784 degrees west.*

As luck would have it, this spot was smack in the middle of the headquarters of chipmaker and long-time Intel rival, Advanced Micro Devices, or AMD, in a complex centered at 901 Thompson Place.

The AMD headquarters in 1975 (David Laws)

This is what it looks like now, in its self-storage incarnation:

Google Maps

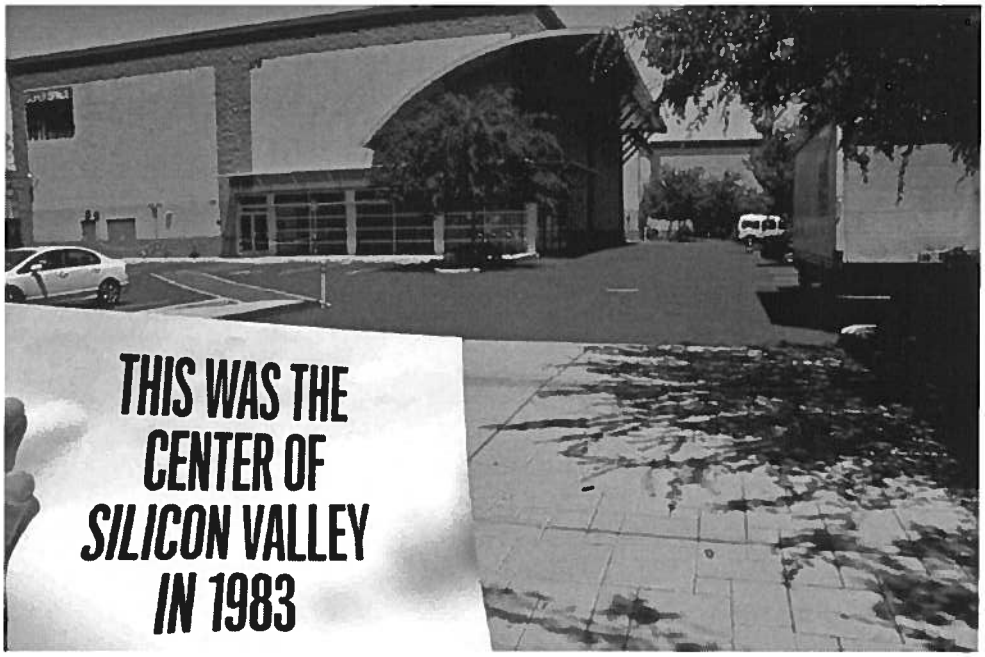
We can see the back of the Super Space Self-Storage. There is no sign of the AMD buildings that once stood here.

I had to see for myself what had become of the center of the Valley, so I got in my car and headed across the Bay Bridge and down the peninsula. I'd use the single block surrounding the center of the old Valley to understand what had happened to this place not as a footnote in a history of the computing industry, but as a landscape. What I found was second-generation suburbia with a far more complex story than the standard Silicon Valley narrative about cherry orchards and the making of a glorious revolution.

* * *

As always, it was sunny in Sunnyvale. I got off at the exit for Moffett Field, the set of facilities that made this area a hotbed of early aerospace (and therefore computing) activity. After a few lights I made a left onto the Central Expressway and zoomed past endless town homes and old suburbs onto Arques Avenue. I parked the car at the Super Space Self-Storage, took out the memorial sign I'd printed, and walked across the street to take some wide-angle photographs of the building.

There was nothing particularly interesting about it. Like most self-storage locations, the building is blocky and windowless. It's nestled in-between a massive Lowe's and Cheetah's, "a small neighborhood strip club," according to a Google Plus review. As I snapped away, a single pedestrian walked by, an Asian man in khakis and a tucked-in, short-sleeved collared shirt. Traffic came and went: a Camry, a Jeep, a Subaru, big white van. Just another part of the great California carscape, it would seem.



The center of Silicon Valley, 1983 (Alexis Madrigal).

As I walked back across the street, I found a big guy walking towards me. "Well, you got our curiosity piqued," he said, pointing to my camera. He had a soul patch and wore an checked Oxford monogrammed with the name of the self-storage place. All-in, he looked like Ted Dansen, if Dansen lifted weights. This was Geoffrey Taylor, manager of the facility.

I explained myself to him, trying not to sound completely ridiculous. "And so, I calculated that, in 1983, this was the center of Silicon Valley, and I came down here to see it --"

"And you ended up at a Superfund site," he said.

I did?

"This was AMD," Taylor continued. "They manufactured chips here."

I went inside and met his staff, enjoying the air conditioning. They told me about the building's many amenities for the discerning self-storage customer: climate-control, special locks, security systems. "Who needs this type of service?" I asked.

"I'd say 75 percent of our clientele is transient engineers working for the tech companies," Taylor told me. They were almost all from India and east Asia.

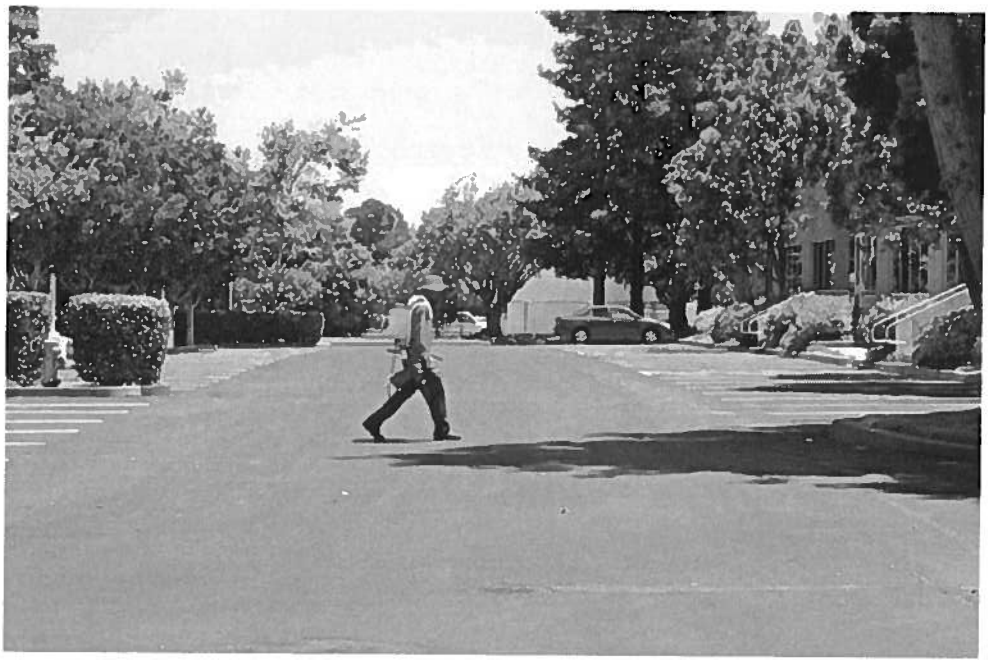
I left my car in the parking lot and headed southeast. Past Cheetah's, there was a large office building being leased by two commercial real-estate brokers named Dixie Divine and Doug Ferrari.

The businesses around were an odd melange: a Bank of America, two auto-body shops, the 5-Star School for Music, a semiconductor company called Synerchip, a signal-processing designer called Teledyne Cougar, and Sri Ananda Bhavan, a bustling south Indian restaurant. At the corner of Deguine Drive, a newly built retail space sat empty, looking almost precisely like the sad, shuttered video stores you see all over America.

Deguine was wide. The landscaping was so regular, it mocked the idea of nature. Tree, door, tree. Here and there, a knoll created by a bulldozer, sodded with grass from Oregon.

Empty office buildings and parking lots abounded. A couple gardeners wandered among them, working solo, carrying chemicals on their backs, ensuring the for-lease billboards looked nice.

Tree, door, tree (Alexis Madrigal)



"Gardening" (Alexis Madrigal)

Heading up Deguine, I noticed that there was a steady stream of pedestrian traffic, largely older Asian women. Many were headed to and from Nine Star University, a Chinese medicine school located in an old office building it shares with an acupuncturist, a sports medicine group, and the China-focused Christian Leadership Institute.

Right next door, Nine Star operates California University Silicon Valley, which caters to IT professionals with the pitch that you'll learn "from instructors with titles like CEO, CIO, CFO, COO, Sr Manager, Marketing SVP, Venture Fund Manager and other real industry positions." In a clear sign about who they're selling education to, their domain CUSV.org autoforwards to CUSV.in, as in India. The university certainly has Silicon Valley-level chutzpah. "Whether you are considering Harvard, Stanford, Santa Clara University, MIT, Georgia Tech, San Jose State, UCLA, or for that matter any other top grad school," they declare, "you will want to choose CUSV to ensure your competitive advantage and maximize the NPV of your expected career income stream."

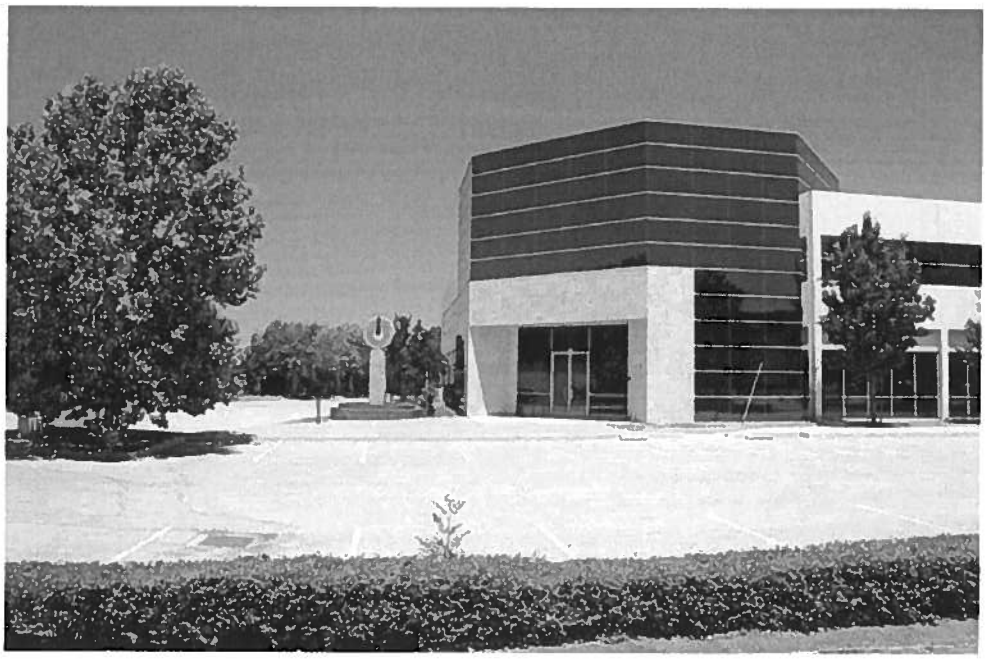
Nine Star University (Alexis Madrigal).

Across the street, UMC, a very large Taiwanese semiconductor foundry, has its North American headquarters. I had to admire the symmetry of its building. Humans could only besmirch it.

UMC (Alexis Madrigal).

At the next intersection, I turned left. Across the street, a man talked on a cell phone in front of BioCurious, "your Bay Area hackerspace for biotech." What are they working on? For example: "We are attempting to insert these genes into other algae, Arabidopsis and Petunias to build a glow-in-the-dark plants. Avatar, here we come!" So that's going on there.

To the right of BioCurious, there was a batterymaker for motorcycles called Shorai. To the left, a Mediterranean restaurant called the Agape Grill. If you were to have a gyro at Agape under the tall, tall palm trees or a Coca-Cola umbrella, you would look across the street at the America Chinese Evangelical Seminary, as well as the Sacred Logos Resource Center, which appears to be another Christian evangelical group catering to Chinese immigrants. These buildings were all beige with glass doors, one and a half floors. There are hundreds of thousands of structures that look just like these across the region and nation.

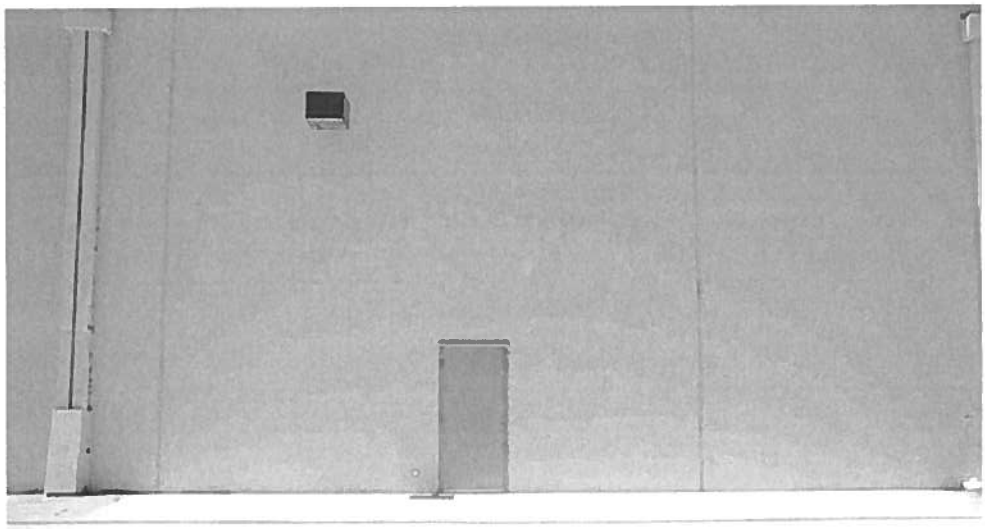


An empty building (Alexis Madrigal)

Another massive empty office building stood out for its hexagonal dark glass atrium and the sculpture just outside its locked doors, which looked like a sundial set permanently to noon.

I found all the white people in a packed parking lot attached to a strange looking building that turned out to be a climbing gym and yoga studio called Planet Granite. I watched toned people go in and out for a few minutes, and then headed back towards my car, cutting through the loading area at the back of Lowe's.

Between the massive blank walls, I was the only human around.



Lowe's loading area (Alexis Madrigal)

I could not parse this neighborhood. It didn't make sense.

When I got home, I found out that for 30 years, and all around the block I'd surveyed, an intense remediation effort was underway. For as long as I've been alive, there has been a plume of chemicals underground at that spot, extending 4,000 feet north, up past 101. Everyone hoped these chemicals wouldn't make it to the water supply before it could be pumped out and treated.

* * *

In contemporary descriptions of Silicon Valley as it was being built, every writer seems to note the absence of smoke stacks. A miracle! A clean industry! A better industrial capitalism!

The aesthetic was intentional. These factories of the future were designed to look like buildings on a college campus, which is to say, Stanford. The Stanford Industrial Park (later, the Stanford Research Park) set the visual standard from its founding in 1951 onward. There were rules governing which parts of the industrial apparatus could be visible, so as not to detract from the idea that these were locations for scholars, not laborers.

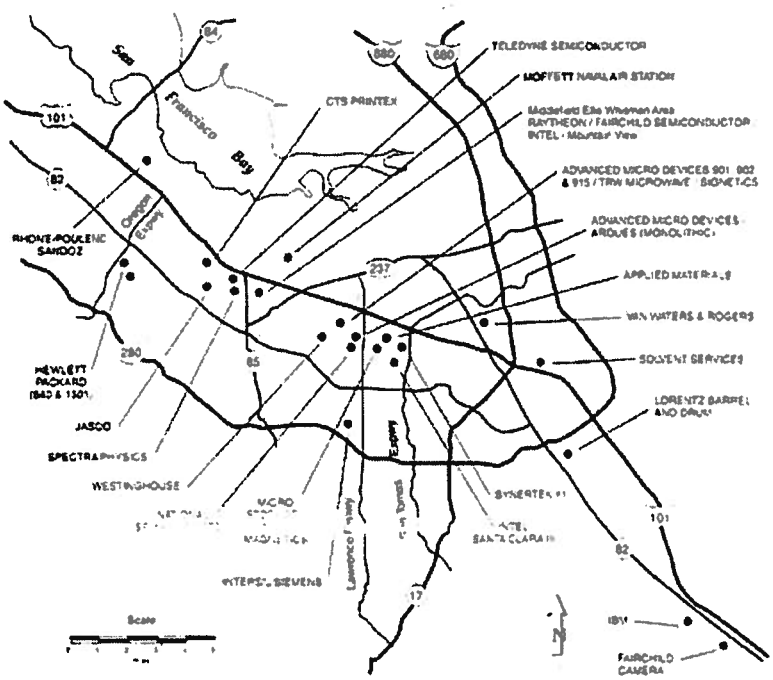
"Companies had to follow strict building codes, which included 'complete concealment' of things like smokestacks, generators, transformers, ducts, storage tanks, and air conditioning equipment," environmental historian Aaron Sachs wrote in 1999.

Other municipalities wanted to encourage similar developments, and as Sachs concludes, "Stanford Industrial Park essentially replicated itself several times over--each time spurring the construction of new expressways and strip malls in neighboring areas." What began as Stanford dean and Silicon Valley godfather Fred Terman's dream to build "a community of technical scholars" in pleasant industrial parks became the architectural standard for the entire high-tech manufacturing world.

But the manicured look and feel had consequences. Storage tanks were placed underground, out of sight and out of mind. Until suddenly, in 1981, people in south San Jose living near Fairchild

Semiconductor and IBM realized they were drinking water contaminated by the two firms' manufacturing plants.

That touched off a search to see if similar leaks were occurring at other sites. "Anyone who looked for leaks found them," Will Bruhns of the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Board told the San Francisco Chronicle in 2004. The final count found that 75 of the 96 underground tanks in the south Bay had contaminated the ground and/or water around them.



Superfund sites in the South Bay (California Regional Water Quality Control Board).

Before the leaks were found, underground chemical storage was not regulated by any level of government. Or, in the current industry parlance, the semiconductor industry was regulating itself. And their methods for preventing and detecting leaks of known toxic chemicals were recklessly, absurdly ineffective.

Planet Granite is located on a site contaminated by Philips Semiconductor. So is Lowe's. The empty octagonal glass building is a TRW Microwave Superfund site. I'd been walking on a paved-over environmental disaster zone, colonized by whoever wanted to benefit from lower leasing prices and a lack of NIMBY opponents.

There are six Superfund sites within a couple miles where the Super Space Self-Storage now stands. Shockingly, Santa Clara County has more Superfund sites than any other county in the nation. By comparison, the entire state of Illinois only has 13.

The cluster of contaminated sites, with the plume extending upwards in the are labeled "Offsite Operable Unit" (California Regional Water Quality Board).

The contamination at the AMD site at Thompson is not the worst in the Valley. Toxic chemicals only reached aquifers near the surface, and did not hit the public water supply. Nonetheless, beginning in July of 1983 with the discovery of volatile organic compounds in both soil and water at the site, remediation began. The main contaminant of concern was tricholoroethene (TCE). Leaking acid neutralization systems were removed along with 217 cubic yards of soil. Groundwater was pumped out and through filtration systems with first one well, then three, then five. Thirty-eight more wells pump the commingled contamination from the AMD, Phillips, and TRW Microwave sites. They run roughly east-west along Duane Avenue, Carmel Avenue, Alvarado Avenue, and Highway 101. All this water gets released back into the water table after it is treated.

The cleanup effort is massive. From the mid-1980s through 2008, 231 million gallons of groundwater were pumped up and treated. Beginning in 2005 (around the time the company sold the site to the people who built Super Space Self Storage), AMD began to deploy in-situ bioremediation, after realizing that the efficiency of the groundwater pumping system was declining. In essence, molasses (literally, molasses) is pumped into the subsurface to feed colonies of microbes, who can degrade TCE into harmless compounds.

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board judged the bioremediation a success; it has managed to reduce TCE concentrations by 90 percent, though the process is on-going, according to the lead project manager with the Water Board, Max Shahbacian.

"They are doing whatever they can," Shahbacian told me. "Some of that contamination you can't capture. Some is stuck to the clay soils. Some has gone off site. They are cleaning it up as best they can."

"A lot of the big companies, except the big oil companies, they are pretty good about cleaning up," he said. "They've been cleaning this site for many years and they're going to continue to doing that."

So, 30 years after the contamination was discovered in July 1983, it's probable that what remains of the plume of chemicals is unlikely to contaminate groundwater. A victory for our age.

* * *

And in the meantime, the people who live here are creating the lives they want on the carcass of this old industrial system, whether that's DIY biotech labs, south Indian restaurants, California University Silicon Valley, rock climbing gyms, or Chinese evangelical training facilities.

What we see here is not simple suburbia. This is a landscape that industrialists, government regulators, and city planners sacrificed to create the computer industry that we know today. It has as much in common with a coal mine or the Port of Oakland as it does with Levittown or Google's campus. All of which should lead us to a simple conclusion: the Silicon Valley of today is a *post-industrial landscape*, like the lofts near downtowns across the country, like Lansing, Michigan, like Williamsburg, like Portland's Pearl District.

What we see now is a surreal imitation of the suburban industrial parks and commercial spaces of yesteryear. They're built atop the past's mistakes, erasing them from our maps and eyes.

And yet, as the humans eat dosas and climb fake mountains and learn acupuncture and buy lap dances, beneath the asphalt and concrete, the microbes eat toxic waste sweetened with molasses, cleaning up our mistakes.

A revolution began here. And this is what's left over.

This article available online at:

http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/07/not-even-silicon-valley-escapes-history/277824/

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Officials approve controversial Plan Bay Area as Marin opponents turn out for Oakland vote

Posted: marinij.com

Members of the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transmission Commission voted early Friday to pass Plan Bay Area and its accompanying environmental impact report. The votes on both documents were virtually unanimous.

In a vote after midnight, Marin County supervisors Steve Kinsey and Katie Rice voted yes on both, while Novato City Councilwoman Pat Eklund abstained from voting on both Plan Bay Area and the impact report.

In an email following his vote, Kinsey wrote: "I voted 'yes' on the plan knowing that it doesn't reduce local control over land use. It actually commits the region to embrace long-standing principles reflected in Marin's protection of ag and open space, while encouraging limited new development along transit corridors.

"Voting 'no project' would not only be unlawful under state legislation, it would increase greenhouse gas impacts, sprawl and transit inefficiency," he wrote.

After months of discussion and half a dozen public meetings in Marin County alone, the regional transportation and land/use housing plan ignited a storm of controversy in Marin.

Vocal opponents of Plan Bay Area were vying with supporters of the plan and those who want more emphasis on mass transit Thursday night as officials were prepared to take a final vote on the proposal. Public speakers were limited to one minute.

When her turn came, Susan Kirsch, one of the co-founders of Citizen Marin, called all the opponents in the hall to join her at the podium.

"This plan has been wrong from the beginning," Kirsch said. "You don't represent us. What we demand is the right to vote."

Linda Rames of Mill Valley, who also spoke, said, "You are so cynical that you don't care about the municipalities that you represent."

Kevin Krick, a leading member of the Marin Republican Party, said, "This plan will not reduce greenhouse gases. It is clearly a social engineering experiment."

While expecting defeat, Marin opponents were out in force to watch their local representatives cast their votes.

Citizen Marin, the coalition of Marin neighborhood groups that united to oppose Plan Bay Area, chartered a 48-seat Marin Airporter bus to shuttle plan opponents to the meeting, which took place in the 500-seat exhibition hall of the Oakland Marriott hotel in downtown Oakland.

Passengers included: Corte Madera Mayor Diane Furst, Larkspur Mayor Dan Hillmer, Sausalito

Councilwoman Linda Pfeifer, former Fairfax mayor Frank Egger, supervisorial candidate Toni Shroyer and Randy Warren, who is running for a seat on the San Rafael City Council.

The decision on the plan was up to the Association of Bay Area Governments' 38-member executive board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's 21 commissioners. Both groups include elected public officials from throughout the nine-county Bay Area. Rice and Eklund serve on ABAG's executive board; Kinsey is a MTC commissioner.

A collaboration of four regional government agencies, Plan Bay Area sets out housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008. The state law requires each of California's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks 30 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.

The plan seeks to channel 80 percent of the Bay Area's housing growth and 66 percent of its job growth into "priority development areas." These are areas typically located along existing traffic corridors, near mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money.

Opponents of the plan, such as Citizen Marin, assert that it robs counties and cities of their control over land-use decisions and will result in high-density apartment developments that will degrade Marin's pristine environment and erode its small-town character. But another group of Marin residents, Concerned Marinites to End NIMBYism, have defended Plan Bay Area, asserting that opponents of the plan are really worried that the creation of higher-density, more affordable housing will attract lower-income, more ethnically diverse residents to the county.

Responding to a drumbeat of criticism from Citizen Marin and other opponents, county supervisors last week voted unanimously to withdraw Marinwood and Tamalpais Valley from consideration as "priority development areas."

Opponents of Marinwood's participation in Plan Bay Area have launched an effort to recall Supervisor Susan Adams. Randy Warren, a businessman and San Rafael attorney, has said his opposition to Plan Bay Area motivated him to run for San Rafael City Council in November.

It was clear at Thursday's meeting that officials have been listening to the criticism of Plan Bay Area. One of the revisions to the plan underlined the fact that it will not rob local jurisdictions of their control over land-use decisions.

The plan was altered to read: "Adoption of Plan Bay Area does not mandate any changes to local zoning, general plans, or project review. The region's cities, towns, and counties will maintain control of all decisions to adopt plans and permit or deny development projects."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

John Horgan: One size does not fit all along the Peninsula

By John Horgan San Mateo County Times San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

Despite the persistent desires of some influential social planners, one size does not fit all.

Recently, there has been considerable angst along the Peninsula on regional government mandates on housing construction that is designed to accommodate anticipated population growth.

The Association of Bay Area Governments, in concert with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, has come up with a plan to encourage building future dwelling units as close to mass transit routes as possible.

Communities that comply with the dictates of what is called "Plan Bay Area" would be provided with taxpayer-funded grants. Last month, the proposal was approved by officials of both ABAG and MTC. Not everyone is thrilled. You don't have to look far to see why some folks are unhappy.

Massive, new apartment buildings near SamTrans and Caltrain routes are the antithesis of what the suburbs were once all about.

These huge structures, many of them bulky and unattractive eyesores that have been foisted on an unaware populace, amount to urbanization run amok.

Fortunately, not all Peninsula towns are on board with this stark alteration of the local landscape. Take Hillsborough for example.

That leafy hamlet of about 3,000 pricey homes is not buying into Plan Bay Area, although city authorities are watching the proceedings carefully as you might imagine.

According to Hillsborough Director of Building and Planning Elizabeth Cullinan, the town's regulations allow for a minimum lot size of at least a half-acre. Only single-family homes -- the second quarter median sale price of which was $2.6 million -- are permitted.

Hillsborough does not contain apartments, condominiums or commercial structures of any kind. Sidewalks and stoplights are few and far between.

Plan Bay Area simply would not work there, even though the eastern border of the burg is located on or near El Camino Real, a major SamTrans bus corridor.

Cullinan noted that Hillsborough has worked with ABAG on its proposal. "We participated in the process," she said. "We were speaking for ourselves. There doesn't seem to be a problem."

That's encouraging. Suburban communities that desire to maintain their individual character ought to be able to do so without any sort of high-minded intimidation by environmental activists or anyone else with an aggressive agenda.

Sensitive buzzword

Speaking of forced change, the movement to mandate more diversity, simply for its own sake, on a variety of local governing boards, including the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, is picking up steam.

The emphasis, at least so far, seems to be on the key matter of racial or ethnic balance. But, surely, there is more to this simple buzzword than that.

Different backgrounds also involve such characteristics as religion, gender, marital status, affluence (or lack of same), profession, education, etc.

The issue of race or ethnicity is important and, certainly, any number of legal rulings have emphasized that point. But other factors ought to have a bearing on the diversity question too. Qualifications should also play a key role.

Otherwise it's a disservice to everyone. Competence ought to trump everything else.

John Horgan's column appears Thursday. You can contact him by email at johnhorganmedia@gmail.com.or by regular mail at P.O. Box 117083, Burlingame, CA 94011.

Orindans battle over state-required housing element

By Jennifer Modenessi Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

ORINDA -- Outrage over how the city of Orinda plans to accommodate future housing for residents of all income levels to meet state requirements is reaching a boiling point. Now, a number of angry residents -- and some out-of-towners -- are demanding the city withdraw its "housing element" from state review and form a citizen's committee to come up with a plan they say reflects what residents want.

Members of the group Orinda Watch told the city council Tuesday that they want them to address a list of requests that includes the withdrawal of the draft housing element from state review; a review of the plan by Orinda residents, and its "correction" and resubmittal to the California Department of Housing and Community Development, which certifies the element. The group also said an online petition has garnered hundreds of signatures from people supporting its demands.

"Orinda Watch requests that these issues be put on the Aug. 6 city council agenda and at that meeting, the city council and staff provide complete and satisfactory responses to the concerns of Orinda Watch and the citizens of Orinda regarding these matters," said resident Rusty Snow.

Snow and others have for weeks pressed the city to address their concerns about the state-mandated housing element, which was submitted in June. Some residents are arguing the city is planning to change Orinda's general plan to rezone portions of downtown and allow higher density housing there. They also claim the city wants to increase the residential zoning density from 10 units per acre to 20 units per acre, and rezone a site near Santa Maria Church to at least 20 units per acre to permit high density housing there. Other people argue that the housing element process hasn't been transparent.

The remarks, like those made at past meetings, came during a period of public comment on non-agendized items. City rules do not allow council members to respond to issues that are not on the agenda for discussion.

However, Councilman Steve Glazer did attempt to address concerns about the housing element process and the council's input. He also tried to clarify that a draft had been submitted and no final decisions made. City Manager Janet Keeter said staff had received direction from the council at various points, and had updated officials on what had been submitted.

Glazer also asked whether the council has any obligation to do anything that has been submitted to the state. Keeter said the council did not.

Council members have not asked staffers to place Orinda Watch's request on an upcoming agenda, but Keeter did say Wednesday that staff does intend to bring matters on the housing element and process back to the council. She did not give a timeline.

State law requires that all local governments have a "housing element," a plan to accommodate future residential development, in their general plans, and that those plans be updated every eight years. Orinda's document must show how the city plans to accommodate housing for the "regional housing needs allocation," managed by the Association of Bay Area Governments. That needs allocation is

income-based and provides projections for market-, moderate-, low- and very low income housing. The city is required to show it can provide land for -- but not build -- 218 housing units in the 2007-14 housing needs allocation cycle.

The certification would be Orinda's first.

State HCD officials notified the city June 12 that the draft housing element is in compliance, but the city will have to zone for a carry-over of housing units not included in the previous element. HCD spokesman Eric Johnson explained that the department assumes Orinda will zone for the 28-unit shortfall in the final housing element it adopts.

Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu says the city plans to rezone a 3.2-acre parcel of land near Santa Maria Church to accommodate 20 units per acre of future housing there and fulfill that unmet need, as well as affordable housing in the current cycle. He said it is not the city's responsibility to develop the land, only to provide the zoning. The site is currently zoned for 6 to10 units per acre.

A spokesman with the Diocese of Oakland -- which owns the property -- said the diocese has no plans to change the use of the property and that it is studying the rezoning with their attorney.

Orinda must adopt the element before it can be certified by Jan. 31. Cities cannot opt out of the housing element, according to HCD.

SF Chronicle

Plan Bay Area adopted by regional planners

By Michael Cabanatuan **July 22, 2013**

Bay Area planning officials adopted a regional plan early Friday morning that aims to steer development toward urban areas near mass transit and stem suburban sprawl.

The votes by the boards of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments to approve what's known as Plan Bay Area concluded a seven-hour meeting crowded with sign-waving critics and a three-year process involving dozens of public hearings across the region.

The plan, through 2040, melds the association's regional housing plan with the commission's regional transportation plan, and is the Bay Area's attempt to satisfy state legislation that requires 18 metropolitan areas to develop strategies to house future population growth while reducing greenhouse gas emissions from cars.

Plan Bay Area lays out a strategy that encourages Bay Area cities and counties, which control land use, to put the majority of the 2 million additional people expected to move to the region in the next three decades in areas near public transportation. It establishes about 160 "priority development areas," zones cities and counties have identified for future growth, mostly denser development.

In walking distance

The areas are generally within walking distance of shopping, dining, recreation and public transportation, including rail stations. They include urban areas such as Mission Bay in San

Francisco, Oakland's Jack London Square and downtown San Jose as well as suburban centers including downtown San Rafael, Walnut Creek and Fairfield and Suisun City's waterfront.

The plan hopes to direct 77 percent of future growth to those areas with incentives including grants for affordable and higher-density housing and priority in receiving transportation funds not already committed for other uses.

The idea of encouraging denser development and greater use of public transportation has angered many conservative groups, particularly in Marin County and southern and eastern Alameda County who believe the plan is an effort to control development and eliminate the suburban lifestyle.

Critics showed up at Bay Area Plan meetings in increasing numbers as the plan rolled forward, and they dominated the crowd of about 400 at Thursday's meeting at the Oakland Marriott. Groups of opponents from Marin and San Jose chartered buses to the session. Many of them waved signs reading: "No Plan Bay Area," "One size doesn't fit all" and "Marxist Transportation Commission doesn't speak for me."

More than 120 people spoke at the hearing, most of them to blast the plan. Several insulted the commission and board members or pleaded with them to reject the plan, which they called unconstitutional and socialist.

Susan Kirsch a member of Marin Citizens, a group opposing the plan, marched to the podium with about 100 supporters waving signs.

"This plan has been wrong from the start," she said. "You don't represent me. You don't represent us. What we demand is the right to vote."

Backers outnumbered

Plan supporters, including transit, open space and clean air advocates, were outnumbered but argued that the region needs to cut air pollution and slow climate change, sentiments that drew

boos from the opponents. Many were younger people who argued that they want alternatives to cars.

"I represent a generation that doesn't want to drive everywhere," said Clarissa Cabansagan, transportation advocate for TransForm, a regional transit advocacy group.

Adoption of the plan probably won't stop the fight over it. Critics plan to sue, challenging its constitutionality. And since the plan needs to be updated every four years, planners will soon be starting over.

Michael Cabanatuan is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: mcabanatuan@sfchronicle.com Twitter: **@ctuan**

Market Watch

July 19, 2013, 12:50 p.m. EDT

Plan Bay Area Charts Course for Stronger Economy, Cleaner Air

$292 Billion Transportation Blueprint

OAKLAND, Calif., Jul 19, 2013 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) last night adopted Plan Bay Area, an integrated transportation and land-use strategy through 2040 that marks the nine-county region's first long-range plan to meet the requirements of California's landmark 2008 Senate Bill 375, which calls on each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy to accommodate future population growth and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. Working in collaboration with cities and counties, the Plan advances initiatives to expand housing and transportation choices, create healthier communities, and build a stronger regional economy.

At an evening meeting in Oakland, MTC and the ABAG Executive Board jointly approved both the final Plan Bay Area -- which includes the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy and the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan -- and an associated final Environmental Impact Report. The ABAG Executive Board separately approved a state-mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation for 2014 through 2022. MTC separately approved the 2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which updates the list of Bay Area projects that receive federal funds, are subject to federal action, or are considered regionally significant; as well as a final Air Quality Conformity Analysis that establishes both the TIP and Plan Bay Area comply with federal air pollution standards.

"Plan Bay Area is an historic and important step forward for our region," explained Napa County Supervisor Mark Luce, who also serves as President of the ABAG Executive Board and as an MTC Commissioner. "It's the product of more than three years of collaboration between cities and counties to do our part to create a more sustainable Bay Area for current and future generations."

Noting that Plan Bay Area is the successor to Transportation 2035, the long-range plan adopted by MTC in 2009, Commission Chair and Orinda Mayor Amy Rein Worth described the new plan

as evolutionary rather than revolutionary. "For decades, MTC has been charged by state and federal law to produce a long-term regional transportation plan, while ABAG has been responsible for assessing regional housing needs. Plan Bay Area puts these elements together in a way that makes sense."

Projecting a healthy regional economy, the Plan anticipates that the Bay Area's population will grow from about 7 million today to some 9 million by 2040. "Maintaining our region's high quality of life," continued Worth, "will depend on making wise decisions about transportation, housing and land use."

Plan Bay Area provides a strategy for meeting 80% of the region's future housing needs in Priority Development Areas (PDAs). These are neighborhoods within walking distance of frequent transit service, offering a wide variety of housing options, and featuring amenities such as grocery stores, community centers, and restaurants. Identified by cities and towns across the region, the PDAs range from regional centers like downtown San Jose to suburban centers like Walnut Creek's West Downtown area, and smaller town centers such as the Suisun City Waterfront. The Plan funds mixed-income housing production and locally-led planning in PDAs.

Plan Bay Area's transportation element specifies how some $292 billion in anticipated federal, state and local funds will be spent through 2040. Nearly 87 percent (or $253 billion) will be used to maintain and operate the transportation network we already have. Another way of looking at the distribution of the revenues -- which include fuel taxes, public transit fares, bridge tolls, property taxes and dedicated sales taxes -- is by mode of transportation. Maintenance and operation of the Bay Area's existing public transit services will receive about 54 percent ($159 billion) of the revenues. The remainder includes 32 percent for street, road, highway and bridge maintenance; 7 percent for transit expansion; and 5 percent for roadway and bridge expansion. A $3.1 billion reserve comprised of anticipated future funding through the California Air Resources Board's Cap-and-Trade program for greenhouse gas emissions accounts for another 1 percent of expected revenues.

The final Plan Bay Area can be viewed on MTC's website at www.mtc.ca.gov, and on ABAG's website at www.abag.ca.gov. MTC is the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area's transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency. ABAG is the official regional planning agency for the Bay Area's cities and counties.

http://cts.businesswire.com/ct/CT?id=bwnews&sty=20130719005699r1&sid=cmtx6&distro=nx

SOURCE: Metropolitan Transportation Commission

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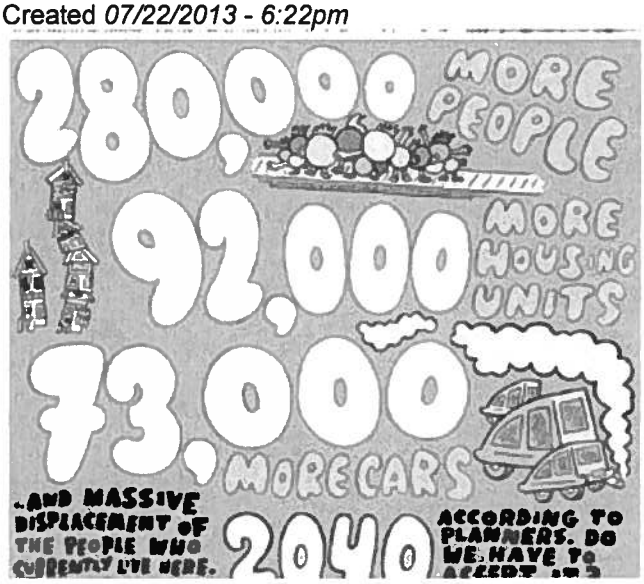
Street Fight: Plan Bay Area falls short of a worthy goal

By *steven*
Created *07/22/2013 - 6:22pm*



Plan Bay Area was the subject of a Guardian cover story on May 28 and public forum on June 12.

Last week's adoption of Plan Bay Area [1] by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission was a watershed moment in regional planning. The plan links regional planning to state policies mandating reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and aims to limit future sprawl by accommodating 2.1 million people, 1 million jobs, and 660,000 housing units largely within the existing built-up areas of the nine-county region.

Newly designated priority development areas (PDAs) will enable modest-density, walkable development in city and suburb alike, while preserving both existing single-family neighborhoods and open space. In a time of urgent need to address global warming, the Bay Area has once again proved a leader by enabling compact housing around transit, and its supporting studies expect the per capita greenhouse gas emissions from driving to decline by 15 percent in 2040.

This will not save the world and it's not without some challenging byproducts — such as preventing displacement of low-income residents [2] from San Francisco and other urban centers — but it is a start. And in a nation hell-bent on denying the urgency of global

warming, it is refreshing and inspiring that someone, somewhere, is trying to do something.

Yet the transportation component – the lynchpin and impetus of Plan Bay Area, according to many local leaders –is mediocre, uninspiring, and inadequate. Despite land use policies enabling compact development, 80 percent of all travel in the Bay Area will still be in cars in 2040, not much different from today, and far short of the real change that is needed in this time of urgency. With 2 million more people, this is a recipe for gridlock, inequity, and ecological disaster – not sound public policy.

It should be no surprise that a big part of the problem is funding. The MTC, charged with assessing future regional transit potential, identifies just $289 billion between now and 2040 for roads, bridges, and transit — far short of what's needed. At $10.3 billion a year that may seem like a lot, but upwards of 87 percent of this is already committed to maintenance of existing roads and transit– not transit capacity expansion. New homes and jobs might be focused around BART and Caltrain stations, but because there's no real capacity expansion, the current iteration of Plan Bay Area can't even reach its own modest goal of 74 percent of trips by car in 2040.

With 2 million more people, cumulative emissions from driving will actually increase by 18 percent because so few new residents will be able to squeeze onto our already crowded transit systems. Today BART is breaking ridership records but it is crowded. Extensions to far flung suburbs might be worthwhile but they don't expand capacity in the system's core. What we need is a second BART line and/or Amtrak service between San Francisco and Oakland, but this is absent from the plan. Meanwhile, most mainline Muni buses and railcars are currently jam-packed, yet San Francisco is somehow expected to absorb 92,000 housing units in Plan Bay Area.

Supervisors David Campos and Scott Weiner, representing San Francisco in the Plan Bay Area process, are to be commended for drawing attention to the transit problem and for asking MTC staff to show how to meet future funding gaps. By broaching the subject, they show that San Francisco might be poised to lead on this critical issue. But Campos and Weiner, working within the "fiscally constrained envelope" as framed by MTC planners, were only seeking to cover deficits for existing service – not visionary expanded service. In the end, there was no real vision for adequate transit capacity expansion.

This foretells a troubling transit future – and one that will likely be more and more private. While many San Franciscans decry the proliferation of Google buses and other private corporate shuttles hogging Muni stops, these buses do lay bare the transit conundrum in the Bay Area. Without well-funded, visionary capacity expansion of public transit, those with the means (and high wage jobs) will shift to private buses while everyone else is left to duke it out on crowded highways, buses, and trains.

This conundrum demands that progressives in the Bay Area ramp up their transit politics to lead locally and nationally. The debate about transit finance needs to be redirected – away from regressive local sales tax measures (which often include more roads) back towards more progressive measures, such as transit assessment districts – which could require developers who profit from Plan Bay Area's growth incentives to adequately finance transit expansion.

The debate needs to move away from demonizing public transit employees to a discussion of the role and responsibility of corporate health care, banks, and the real estate industry in causing economic instability (which has harmed public transit finance more in the last decade than a bus driver expecting a living wage and healthcare). The debate needs to move away from creating new roadway capacity, such as exclusive toll lanes, and focus on how to convert existing highway lanes into transit-only lanes with fast, frequent, reliable regional bus service open to all.

Plan Bay Area is a living document, a work in progress. Within the next four-five years it will need to be revised and can be improved. The current version of the plan, weak on transit funding, has been dominated by a loud, irrational mob of Tea Party cranks bent on sabotaging anything that hints of progressive ideas. They were successful in diluting Plan Bay Area. While a smattering of progressive transit activists showed up and attempted to shape the plan, next time the plan needs a broader progressive movement — including housing, social justice, and environmental activists — to demand a truly visionary transportation plan.

Jason Henderson is a geography professor at San Francisco State University and the author of Street Fight: The Politics of Mobility in San Francisco. *We'll be sharing his perspective regularly in the Bay Guardian.*

Development Plan Bay Area Transportation Jason Henderson

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KQED

forum
WITH MICHAEL KRASNY

MON, JUL 22, 2013 -- 9:00 AM

Plan Bay Area is Approved

Mon, Jul 22, 2013 -- 9:00 AM

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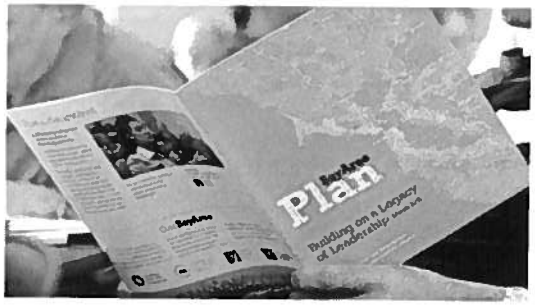

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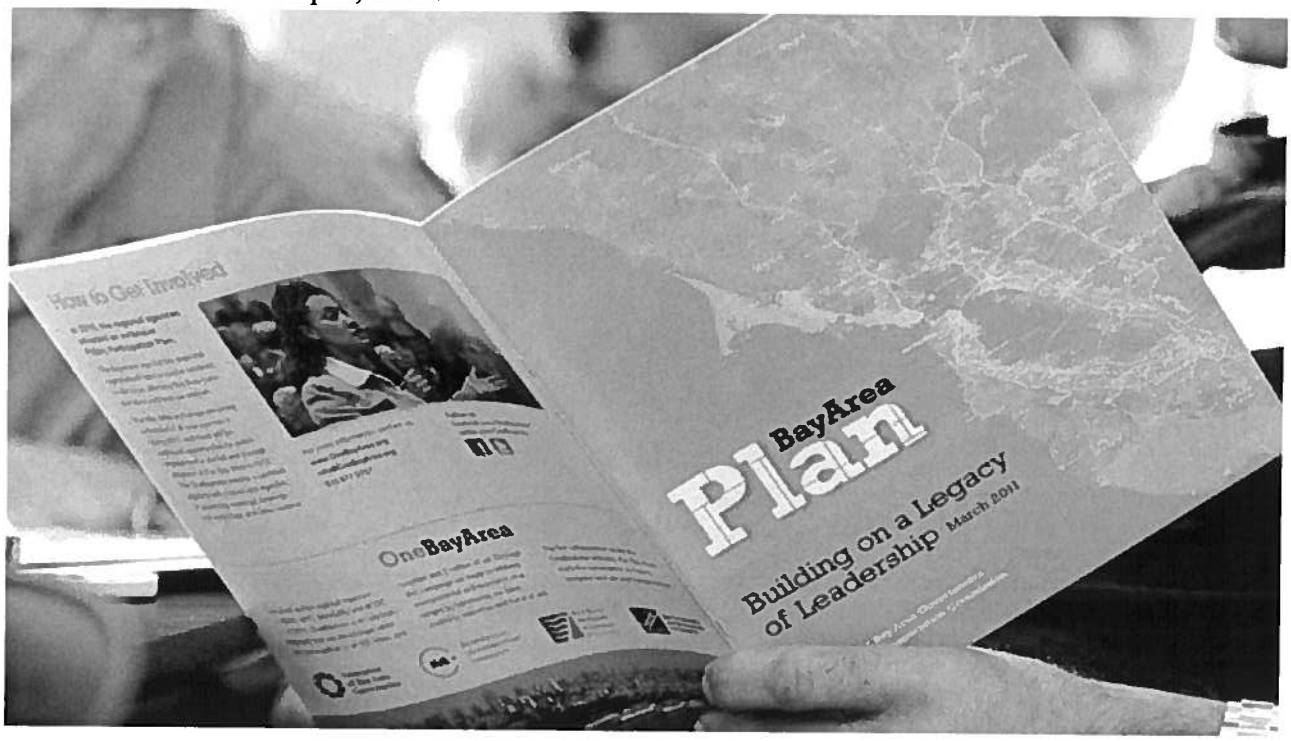
A Plan Bay Area pamphlet at a meeting in Mountain View in April, 2011.



Knight Foundation/Wikimedia Commons

A Plan Bay Area pamphlet at a meeting in Mountain View in April, 2011.

The San Francisco Bay Area is expected to grow with 2.1 million people by 2040. Plan Bay Area, a regional transportation and housing plan to accommodate this growth while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, was approved Friday by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. We'll discuss the plan, and hear from critics who fear the plan will lessen their local autonomy and erode the small town character of their neighborhoods.

Host: Michael Krasny

Guests:

- Angela Hart, writer for SF Public Press
- Bob Silvestri, Author of "The Best Laid Plans: Our Planning and Affordable Housing Challenges in Marin"; resident of Mill Valley
- Ken Kirkey, planning director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission
- Stephanie Reyes, senior program director of Greenbelt Alliance
- Tom Rubin, mass transit consultant

More info:

- Sweeping Plan Would Limit Sprawl in Bay Area Communities (KQED Science)

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Friday
July 19, 2013

THE BERKELEY DAILY PLANET

Plan Bay Area Passed by MTC, ABAG

By Laura Dixon (BCN)
Friday July 19, 2013 - 08:42:00 AM

A coalition of Bay Area leaders late Thursday night approved a long-term regional plan meant to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

The final vote on Plan Bay Area came during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) at the Oakland Marriott.

The two groups are made up of 21 Bay Area county supervisors, mayors and other local leaders.

Several hundred people, many who boarded buses from Marin and Santa Clara counties, packed a Marriott ballroom to protest the plan, voicing concerns that it will bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted "Let us vote!" or "MTC, don't speak for me!"

Several dozen others from Oakland-based public transit advocacy group TransForm carried yellow signs expressing support for alternatives to the plan under the slogan "Equity Environment and Jobs" or EEJ.

According to the MTC, the plan is a "work in progress " that continues earlier efforts to "develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way."

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region's nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

The federal government requires the agencies to update the plan every four years to keep up with shifting demographics and new data, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said.

"There are no easy solutions in this plan but...this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly," said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing.

"It's clearly a social engineering experiment," Fairfax resident Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options - amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

"I'm really glad to see the region take this pioneering step," said Adina Levin of Menlo Park.

The Bay Area is among the state's 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night's vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

Uploaded: Friday, July 19, 2013, 6:25 AM

SAN RAMON express

Plan Bay Area passes

Officials adopt plan to accommodate growth, cut pollution

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A meeting in Walnut Creek in the spring drew a few angry Danville residents vociferous in their belief that it was a plot to force low-income housing on wealthy communities.

Heather Gass, a Danville realtor, carried a sign that said, "ABAG and MTC don't speak for me. This is a rigged meeting."

"Stop lying to the public. This is about socially engineering our lives," Gass told the panel of MTC and ABAG representatives.

She was one of four with Danville connections who spoke at the meeting.

Terry Thompson of Alamo also spoke.

"This is all about central planning. It didn't work in the Soviet Union and it won't work here," he said. "There's no such thing as regional government."

-- Laura Dixon. Contributed to by Dolores Fox Ciardelli.

— Bay City News Service

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Plan Bay Area Slated for Approval

Posted: Friday, July 12, 2013 12:00 am

Plan Bay Area Slated for Approval

ABAG and MTC are set to approve a nine-county Bay Area plan created to establish policies that are designed to help curb pollution emissions and promote balanced jobs and housing growth between now and 2040.

The two agencies' executive boards will meet jointly at 6:30 p.m. on July 18 at the Oakland Marriott City Center, 1001 Broadway, Oakland to consider Plan Bay Area (PBA).

The meeting is on the day that the state set for compliance with SB 375, which requires the 18 regional planning agencies in the state to have an approved Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The two executive boards will approve the final plan, final EIR, an air quality analysis and funding contained in a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

On July 12, committees from the two agencies will meet at 9:30 a.m. to review the final documents. The documents will then be passed along to the executive boards. That meeting is scheduled for the auditorium of the Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter, 101 8th St. Oakland.

The plan has been in the making for several years. There have been more than 600 comments on the draft plan submitted by public agencies, stakeholders, neighborhood groups and concerned individuals.

Outreach meetings were held in every county. Revision recommendations were taken at a meeting June 14.

Supervisor Scott Haggerty, a member of both MTC and ABAG, pushed for more recognition of the severe traffic congestion on Interstate 580, which he said will only get worse.

Haggerty said he wanted to see specific language in the plan addressing that, and the fact that congestion on Interstate 580 is choking off the ability to ship goods by truck in the area.

Haggerty said that more than 70 percent of the East Bay truck trips are within the I-580 corridor. He asked for a financial commitment to finance ways to alleviate this congestion. He also wanted language added that talks about preserving existing industrial land, so that there is less need to ship in goods from longer distances.

Haggerty said that the plan should also include involvement in agricultural preservation by local farm groups and agricultural commissions.

Opponents at the same meeting said that the new plan will take planning control away from cities and counties, an opinion they have stated during past hearings. They called the plan social engineering.

However, ABAG representatives state that the documents leave planning up to cities and counties. The numbers set in the plan are goals. Special areas, called Planned Development Areas (PDA), can be eligible for special funds, if and when available.

The cities already have planned growth in the PDAs.

Figures released by ABAG show that the number of housing units in Livermore are expected to grow by 9700 units or 32 percent between the listed 2010 level and 2040. The PDAs are located in the downtown, on the east side, and at the Isabel BART station.

In Pleasanton, growth is expected to add 7700 more units, a 28 percent increase, with Hacienda Park as the PDA.

Dublin will grow by 8430 units, or 54 percent. The PDAs there are identified in the Downtown Specific Plan area, Town Center and the Transit Center.

Livermore Mayor John Marchand told The Independent that the problem with PDA funding for residential growth is that no funds would come for the necessary local infrastructure cost, such as increasing police and fire protection and improvements for water and sewer. "It's simply money for housing. It does provide for all of the planning," said Marchand.

JOBS SAID TO BE UNDERCOUNTED

Employment growth constitutes the other main goal in the plan. A good jobs-housing balance needs to be achieved.

The plan's goals for job creation by 2040 are undercounted, according to Marchand and Dublin Mayor Tim Sbranti.

Employment goals in Livermore by 2040 are expected to bring an increase of 14,760 jobs, or 38 percent. Marchand said that PBA has not counted the many technology jobs projected to locate in the city's technology park, i-GATE, and at the Livermore Valley Open Campus.

Those tech jobs are important both for demands on city infrastructure, and the fact that thousands of people will be able to ride BART to those jobs. The job growth should be recognized as qualifying Livermore for transportation money from PBA.

Sbranti agreed with Marchand about Livermore's need for transportation money. The lab jobs strengthen the whole Valley's economy. Extending BART to Livermore will help Dublin commuters travel to new tech jobs, said Sbranti.

As for job creation, Dublin shows an 88 percent increase by 2040 in jobs in the PBA statistics. That might sound like a high percentage, but it undercounts Dublin, said Sbranti. It ignores the hundreds of thousands of square feet that Dublin has zoned in certain areas for offices.

In Pleasanton, job growth is expected to be up by 28 percent, with Hacienda Park adding 5410 jobs, which would be the location of about one-third of the total job increase for the city.

URBAN AREAS WIN, VALLEY LOSES

Marchand and Haggerty pointed out that of the first funding already allocated to PDAs, nearly all went to projects in Berkeley, Oakland and Fremont, with virtually nothing for the Valley. Sbranti said that a small amount of money went to Wheels.

Haggerty told the policy committee meeting in June 14 that the major urban areas in the nine counties come out winners in funding for PDAs, but the suburbs and rural areas will receive nothing.

Some of the protesters at the meeting said that a vote of the people should decide the plan. Haggerty asked questions of BART staff about whether it would be feasible at least to seek an advisory vote, and delay adoption of the plan until June 2014.

Staff members said that the law is specific about the final date, which is July 18. If there were a delay, it could mean having to start another EIR. Haggerty said he wanted a clear opinion on a delay to allow for a vote of the public by the meeting July 18. A majority of the committee members did not support the idea.

ABAG president Mark Luce, a Napa county supervisor, said that even if it went to a vote of the people, the voters "probably won't even know what they're voting on, much less the impacts."

Leon Garcia, mayor of American Canyon, said he thought the whole process for public input has been "fair and equitable."

Novato Mayor Pat Eklund said, "The outreach has not been good, Leon. You need to be involved from the beginning. I have to tell you, people don't understand what this is about."

The Independent, JULY 25, 2013

Plan Bay Area Passes, with Haggerty, Thorne Voting No

A joint meeting of the executive boards of two regional agencies approved Plan Bay Area, an integrated strategy for land use and transportation designed to curb greenhouse gases and provide more affordable housing opportunities for a growing population.

The boards of ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) voted July 18 in Oakland to approve the plan. The vote came in time to meet a state mandate set in 2008 by Senate Bill 375 for 18 metropolitan areas to have a plan to implement housing and transportation policies.

Twenty-one ABAG board members voted to support the plan, five were opposed, and one abstained. Two of the dissenting votes came from Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty and Pleasanton Mayor Jerry Thorne.

Haggerty serves on the MTC board as well. The board voted 12-1 for Plan Bay Area. On the MTC board, Haggerty cast the lone vote in opposition.

Haggerty's chief of staff Shawn Wilson said, "Haggerty still thinks that a plan of this magnitude should have been voted on by the people."

Haggerty, at an earlier ABAG committee meeting, made a motion to have the ABAG general assembly, which consists of more than 100 members, vote on Plan Bay Area, but he lost the vote.

Thorne told The Independent that he voted against Plan Bay Area because of his concern about how much local control over land use is being taken away by the state Legislature.

"They will tell you it (the plan) is voluntary, and it's not impacting local control. But they are attaching transportation financing. You won't have a shot at getting the tax dollars if you don't follow the plan," said Thorne..

ABAG voted separately and unanimously on approval of a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) list. ABAG talked to each city and county about the jobs-housing balance in those communities, negotiated back and forth, and came up with the numbers.

Thorne said that while he does not like the concept of RHNA, because it interferes with local control, he thought that ABAG "went through the process, as prescribed. They put up the numbers, as prescribed."

More than 150 speakers from the audience were each given one minute to comment on the Bay Area Plan and RHNA numbers, and used three hours to do so. Most focused on Plan Bay Area. Opponents appeared to outnumber proponents.

Opponents disliked what they perceived as loss of local control in land use planning, which some of them equated with socialism and totalitarianism. They singled out the lack of a direct vote by the people on the plan

Critics also said they saw a bias in favor of transit support, instead of their preference for more money for more street maintenance projects.

Several people said they do not want to live in "stack and pack" housing, and "do not want their cars taken away" from them.

There was also a big delegation of supporters in the audience, which totaled more than 200 people. They cited more affordable housing opportunities, healthier air, and better jobs-housing balances in communities as benefits of Plan Bay Area.

Plan Bay Area was also the topic at the Livermore City Council meeting July 22 for Judy Galletti, who spoke during the public forum.

Galletti said she was disappointed that no one from the Livermore council was in attendance at the Oakland meeting to speak against Plan Bay Area. She said that several lawsuits are being planned against the agencies' adoption of the plan.

Plan Bay Area receives final approval, local elected officials defend effort to address global warming

Posted: marinij.com

Elected officials representing the nine county Bay Area voted nearly unanimously just after midnight on Friday morning to approve Plan Bay Area — after listening to more than three hours of often contentious public comment.

Nearly all of the 500 seats in the Oakland Marriott's exhibition hall in downtown Oakland were filled when the climatic conclave began at 6:30 p.m., but only a hardy few hung on for the final vote.

A 40-year, regional transportation and land-use housing plan, Plan Bay Area ignited a storm of controversy in Marin County. The plan was designed by four regional government agencies to conform with a state law that requires each of California's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks 30 percent by 2020 and a full 80 percent by 2050.

The plan seeks to channel 80 percent of the Bay Area's housing growth and 66 percent of its job growth into "priority development areas." These are areas typically located along existing traffic corridors, near mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money.

Opponents of the plan assert that it robs counties and cities of their control over land-use decisions and will result in high-density apartment developments that will degrade Marin's pristine environment and erode its small-town character. Supporters counter that opponents of the plan are really worried that the creation of higher-density, more affordable housing will attract lower-income, more ethnically diverse residents to the county.

The decision on whether to approve the plan, and an accompanying environmental impact report, was made by the Association of Bay Area Governments' 38-member executive board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's 21 commissioners.

Marin County Supervisor Katie Rice and Novato City Councilwoman Pat Eklund serve on ABAG's executive board, and Supervisor Steve Kinsey is a MTC commissioner.

Both Kinsey and Rice voted to approve Plan Bay Area. Eklund abstained from voting on the plan and, with the exception of Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty, who voted against approval of Plan Bay Area, Eklund was the only member of either body who failed to vote for the plan.

Eklund was also one of several Associated Bay Area Government members who abstained from voting on the impact report; no member of either body voted against approval of the impact report.

Kinsey said, "I voted yes on the plan knowing that it doesn't reduce local control over land use. It actually commits the region to embrace long-standing principles reflected in Marin's protection of ag and open space, while encouraging limited new development along transit corridors."

Rice said, "Plan Bay Area is not a mandate to build housing. It does not erode, diminish, or supersede local control, local planning, or local decision making authority for this county or any other in the region."

Eklund could not be reached Friday for comment.

Citizen Marin, a coalition of Marin neighborhood groups that united to oppose Plan Bay Area, chartered a 48-seat Marin Airporter bus to shuttle plan opponents to Thursday's meeting.

Passengers included: Corte Mayor Diane Furst, Larkspur Mayor Dan Hillmer, Sausalito Councilwoman Linda Pfeifer, former Fairfax mayor Frank Egger, supervisorial candidate Toni Shroyer and Randy Warren, who is running for a seat on the San Rafael City Council.

The group's leaders had said it was important for opponents to be there to witness the votes by Marin representatives, but the bus had to return to Marin about an hour before the final vote was taken.

A number of Marin residents spoke during the public comment portion of the meeting. Opponents of the plan, many of whom complained that it smacks of socialism, vied with proponents, many of whom said the plan should be even more ambitious in its effort to cut greenhouse gases and promote the creation of affordable housing.

Marybelle Nzegwu, a staff attorney with Public Advocates in San Francisco, said she supports Plan Bay Area but added that it doesn't allocate enough money for mass transit. She called for everyone supporting the plan to join her at the lectern, and a crowd of over 100 people responded.

When Susan Kirsch of Mill Valley, a co-founder of Citizen Marin, spoke a few minutes later she followed suit, calling all the opponents in the hall to join her at the lectern and what appeared to be a slightly larger group responded.

"This plan has been wrong from the beginning," Kirsch said. "You don't represent us. What we demand is the right to vote."

The opposing coalition, which booed and issued catcalls throughout the evening, erupted then in a chant of "let us vote."

Vic Canby, a former president of the Marin United Taxpayers Association, said, "We don't need a regional approach to anything."

Angelina Randolph of San Rafael said, "Please do not vote for this communistic plan."

Speaking to the elected officials, Sausalito's Pfeifer said, "You've awakened a sleeping giant." She urged the crowd to demand accountability from public officials.

Responding to a drumbeat of criticism from Citizen Marin and other opponents, county supervisors last week voted unanimously to withdraw Marinwood and Tamalpais Valley from consideration as "priority development areas." Opponents of Marinwood's participation in Plan Bay Area have launched an effort to recall Supervisor Susan Adams.

A few Marin residents, including David Schonbrunn of Sausalito and Marin Grassroots Leadership

Network Associate Director Ericka Erickson, spoke in favor of the plan, but said the plan needs to be more ambitious.

Many of the people who spoke in support of Plan Bay Area Thursday were young adults and college students, who said their generation drives less and wants more mass transit options.

Michael Dittmer of Milpitas, a student at the University of California, Berkeley, said he believes The John Birch Society and other far-right groups have been active behind the scenes soughing doubts about Plan Bay Area. He asked opponents of the plan, "What is the alternative?"

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Jul 31, 2013, 12:46pm PDT Updated: Jul 31, 2013, 1:29pm PDT

Plan Bay Area could spark housing development boom. Or not

Blanca Torres
Reporter- *San Francisco Business Times*
Email | Twitter | Google+ | LinkedIn

With much-debated, frequently derided Plan Bay Area now approved, our region is officially on notice that it needs close to 200,000 new housing units over the next few decades. Next question: Who's going to build it all?

Planning for new housing is great and all, but only time will tell if developers bite and actually build the housing the way the plan advises — high-density and near transit.

Plan Bay Area sets out growth and development guidelines to accommodate a 30 percent population increase, 2.1 million new residents, and 33 percent more or 1.1 million job increase in the Bay Area through 2040. The plan's goals involve steering away from sprawl, building housing for all income levels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"Theoretically, (Plan Bay Area) is a good idea," said Paul Menzies, founder of Laconia Development, a multi-family developer. "The issue with the plan is that bureaucrats are imposing rules on the rest of us who are trying to be creative and trying to make money."

Plan Bay Area could be a boon for development, Menzies said, if the policies make it easier and less expensive to develop projects either by streamlining the entitlement process or providing some financing tools.

The plan's main backers, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments, along with congestion management agencies have about $28 million to fund local planning efforts such as creating specific plans that guide development for a neighborhood or environmental impact reports. In some cases, cities establish plans and zoning to comply up front with California Environmental Quality Act regulations.

Many cities already have what are called Priority Development Areas, which are designated zones where local officials want to encourage development such as a transit village near a BART station.

Plan Bay Area also comes with $320 million worth of One Bay Area grants set aside to pay for infrastructure such as roads, street improvements and transit connections.

"It is a long term plan, so it's not expected that the day after the plan passes, the change is going to happen," said Ezra Rapport, executive director of ABAG. "No. 1, the goal is to establish that there's political will to build housing within in those areas. No. 2, the idea that we can focus some resources to make it a lot easier to get a permit in those areas if we spend the extra effort in planning for CEQA."

Beyond that, regional officials are looking at other ways to facilitate development, said Ken Kirkey, planning director for MTC. Methods include expanding the Bay Area Transit Oriented Affordable Fund, a $50 million loan program for new affordable projects, and down the road creating a mechanism for tax-increment financing such as borrowing against the future tax increases after a property is developed.

The plan has drawn much criticism from residents who fear that cities are being forced to allow for housing and population growth they don't want or can't accommodate and that regional authorities shouldn't be able to mandate development at the local level.

The general comeback to that argument is that population growth is coming whether we like it or not, so it's best to plan for that growth in a way that is fair, sustainable and efficient across the entire region.

Ultimately, the development community will play a huge role in meeting the swelling demand from population growth.

"There's no question that Plan Bay Area will definitely provide new development opportunities within our existing cities and towns to create vibrant, walkable communities," said Stephanie Reyes, senior program director for the Greenbelt Alliance, an advocacy group.

Blanca Torres covers East Bay real estate for the San Francisco Business Times.

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Plan Bay Area: An Open Season Discussion

Raucous Caucus, posted by Tom Cushing, a resident of Danville, on Jul 31, 2013 at 7:03 pm

Plan Bay Area (PBA) was approved in July. By its terms, it seeks to coordinate efforts among Bay Area jurisdictions to plan for a year 2040, when an estimated 2 million more souls will be added to the 7 million who currently inhabit these environs. Promulgated over several years in response to CA state law, an organizing goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by designating various transit-friendly Priority Development Zones, and promoting relatively dense growth in those places, including Danville and San Ramon.

I tried to lure out the objections to this document http://onebayarea.org/pdf/Draft_Plan_Bay_Area_3-22-13.pdf in earlier columns on Sustainability, but got not-one-bite in response. So here's an attempt to take the issues head-on. I've tried to identify various arguments against PBA I've seen expressed hereabouts and elsewhere, given my take on them and I invite your specific responses. Also, please add your own arguments for objections that I've missed.

One request: kindly do not resort to shooting this messenger – we can stipulate that I'm a pinko, libtard, boring, ancient, arrogant, naïve, elitist, radical socialist, and a criminal waste of good carbon, so those kinds of charges won't add anything. I also have it on pretty good authority that they'll be deleted if/as/when they appear – please just focus on content, okay? And actual evidence is much preferred over unsupported conclusions, but that's really two requests, and a lot to expect. So, let's get started.

1 – As Plan Bay Area is aimed at reducing greenhouse gases, it is mis-directed because climate change is: a—not occurring, or b – not human-caused.

Congratulations on this position, which is shared by nearly one-percent of the scientific community, (although it's actually somewhat less, if you factor-out those who are paid by folks who profit from barely-plausible-deniability). There are also a faithful few who believe that if we do nothing, somehow the lord will provide an escape. I'm inclined more toward the 99% consensus on the science, and recall the old story about man drowning in a rising flood, who had refused evacuation by car, boat and helicopter – all the while blaming the deity for not delivering him from his peril. The phrase "The lord helps those who help themselves" was never more applicable.

2 – Plan Bay Area is anti-small-d-democratic, as the product of unelected bureaucrats.

As I understand it, PBA is in response to a state law, duly enacted by our elected officials, with the fingerprints of both political parties on that law: so-called SB 375 (2008). Further, it was commissioned by the Association of Bay Area Governments, an organization of over 100 local governments, with staff. http://www.abag.ca.gov/index.html . It is probably true that the ABAG staff wrote most of the words, but that's the case with any government document, and certainly true as regards bills that get voted-on.

Further, the process was remarkably public, with multiple drafts and numerous exhaustive hearings, forums, message boards and other opportunities to be heard on the subject. It was finally voted-on in public, as well, by elected officials. It seems to me that the process was proper; anyone with an interest was apparently able to express opinions.

3 – But it was "rigged."

I don't know what to make of this, except that some folks seem to confuse their precious and oft-exercised right-to-be-heard with an illusory right to be in-charge. Apparently, some changes were made and others were amply presented and found to be unpersuasive. That would seem to me to be in the nature of democracy. And who rigged it? If you believe that there was a dark, behind-the-scenes conspiracy, please present your evidence – otherwise, you just lost – it happens all the time.

4 – PBA is really the demon-spawn of the United Nations' Agenda 21, an attempt to impose an anti-American world governance on this country, and supersede our Constitution and other stuff.

Agenda 21 http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf , is a product of the UN Environment Programme, first drafted in conjunction with the Rio environmental summit in 1992, and later updated several times. It arose out of a recognition that environmental problems do not respect map lines – that air pollution generated in China, for example, even lands as far away as here. It purports to promote sustainable development among its signatory nations by means of directional, non-binding, voluntary actions. It goes to great lengths to indicate that it is advisory and subject to implementation-or-not by each member nation. Nonetheless, it has provoked controversy among those who believe it somehow erodes American national sovereignty.

Agenda 21 has also been characterized as anti-private property, but it's hard to find good evidence for that proposition. That claim seems to derive from a different UN document, written in 1976, for a different reason. Do I doubt that there

are philosophies represented in that world body that diverge from America's world view? Not for a minute, but the same could be said for any representative body, and it does not represent the policy of the organization.

It might also be noted that ABAG has been around longer than many of us (1961), and its first long term regional plan dates from that era – several years before there was even an EPA, much less an Agenda 21.

If you fear the effects of Agenda 21, which effects and why?

5 – Nonetheless, ABAG and PBA usurp "local control" over property decisions.

ABAG is, itself, entirely voluntary, and utterly without authority to do anything, anywhere. It is a coordinating mechanism. PBA, its product, is also completely voluntary. In carrots-and-sticks terms, there are no sticks. Danville and San Ramon have their own planning processes, and development plans, which are not required to hew to any content of the PBA.

Now, there ARE carrots in the form of transportation-related grants (OBAGs) available to compliant localities. Of roughly $300 Billion of transportation-related spending, most of it going to maintenance of existing systems (80%), 5%, or $15B, is available for grants to localities that comply with regional housing needs assignments. That's a small fraction, but a large number. Is that the source of concern about jack-booted planning geeks tromping roughshod over local prerogatives? If so, how much does Danville or San Ramon stand to gain or lose, depending on their compliance status?

6 – Specifically, PBA calls for high-density "stack-and-pack" housing near transit options. Property values will be hurt.

I have looked in all the wrong places for information on this issue and its impacts on the Danville and San Ramon Priority Development Areas. Can somebody help us out, here?

7 – PBA, if implemented, will forever change the character of Danville and San Ramon.

I am assuming, because I wasn't there, that local Miwoks were the first to utter the phrase: "there goes the neighborhood." Danville and San Ramon both have detailed General Plans, zoning ordinances and approval processes, vetted by professional staff and commissions appointed by elected officials.

The 2030 Danville General Plan was recently ratified, for example, after extensive citizen input, and it calls for carrying forward "the vision set forth in 1987, as part of Danville's first General Plan, preserving and reinforcing our unique small town character, preserving the history and scenic beauty, and protecting the quality of life for our residents."

It seems to me that any changes encouraged by PBA will be marginal tweaks to ongoing processes. Of course our communities continue to grow and will change, but doesn't that argue for conscious choices made to promote the attractiveness of this vicinity? Who's not in favor of that?

8 – "Collaboration? We don' need no steenkin' collaboration!"

Despite the imaginary lines that delineate our various jurisdictions, we Bay Areans share the same water, breathe the same air and travel on common roads. Like it or not, we're all connected in a web of existence. A crash in the Caldecott snarls traffic for miles, and I recall ash from the Oakland Hills conflagration raining down on a 49ers game across the Bay. I would return to that parable of The Commons, wherein when everyone in a community, who depend on each other to some degree, independently pursue their own individual self-interests, it inevitably leads to community calamity.

Without past collaborations, the freeways, bridges and BART would not exist (okay, maybe BART's not the best example this week). The Market is a good arbitrator of many things, but not of everything. Plans are imperfect by their nature, but they are better than nothing in an interdependent world. In addition, this particular PBA document is not a one-off, cataclysmic event, but a flow from past planning on to the future.

If you don't believe in collaboration, with what would you replace it? If your answer is "nothing," how's life going in your own private biosphere?

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News | Government

Plan Bay Area: What Lamorinda Elected Officials Have To Say

Controversial plan has supporters and detractors among Lamorinda elected officials.

Posted by Jim Caroompas (Editor) , July 31, 2013 at 11:07 PM

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Plan Bay Area requires Lamorinda and other areas to make way for low and moderate income housing.

1 0 4

Plan Bay Area, an attempt to manage the expected growth in the Bay Area through 2040, was developed by two regional agencies—the Association for Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA). The plan was approved on July 19 after a raucous and rambunctious group of 160 opponents urged its demise.

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The approved plan calls for new housing around transit centers like BART in the nine Bay Area counties. In Contra Costa, the plan calls for cities to change zoning laws that make way for apartments and condominium projects around BART stations. The new units would be a mix of low-, moderate-, and high income homes.

By locating new housing around transportation centers, the thinking goes, it will also reduce the level of greenhouse gases such growth is expected to generate.

The plan has its supporters in Lamorinda, but it has also generated a hothouse of opposition from those who feel their small-town, upscale way of life is under attack from unelected bodies engaged in social engineering.

The Plan Bay Area website, and Lamorinda elected officials all point out that, while the increased housing numbers are required to be adopted by each city's housing plan, each city retains the right to approve or reject individual projects based on environmental and other factors. However, zoning particular parcels of land for multi-family housing can make it more difficult for cities to reject projects without facing lawsuits from developers.

And, while cities can choose to ignore the Plan Bay Area housing numbers, they face the loss of local, state and federal transportation money if they do.

There has been vehement opposition in Lamorinda to the plan. Among the opponents are Orinda Watch, which organized a petition drive against the plan, and SaveOrinda. Another group, Orindavision, supports new growth in downtown Orinda.

Lamorinda Patch has asked local officials to weigh in on their views of Plan Bay Area. Here is what they have to say:

Lafayette:

The Lafayette City Council has written several letters to the agencies in charge of Plan Bay Area, asking for a reduction in the number of housing units assigned to the downtown area. Though the city did receive a new designation from Transit Town Center to Transit Neighborhood, it did not receive a commensurate reduction in the number of units the plan calls for downtown. The plan calls for 990 units downtown by 2040, while the city's general plan calls for 815. The additional housing could cause unmanageable traffic, parking, and other problems, according to a letter from Mayor Mike Anderson.

City Councilwoman Terri Reilly:

"I'm concerned that the housing and jobs numbers are still pretty high. We got the numbers adjusted somewhat, but not at a place that makes sense for our community. We already have a traffic and congestion problem. Some of the numbers assigned to us

probably won't work. We're trying to work within the confines of the process, but we haven't gotten relief yet.

"The most recent letter got our designation changed from transit to neighborhood vs. transit village, which is higher numbers. We did not get the numbers that should go with that changed. On one hand, we have a better designation, but so far through the process, they're holding firm on the numbers assigned for next four years. When the next round comes around, hopefully there will some adjustments.

"We're all learning as we go. It's all sort of a work in progress. I'm not sure how this will play out. We're trying very hard to advocate for our community, and make numbers that are realistic for our community. We don't have the ability to just grow."

Vice Mayor Don Tatzin:

"Plan Bay Area is generally consistent with Lafayette's general and specific plans, so I do not think there will be much impact. By commenting on drafts of the plan frequently, Lafayette successfully achieved modifications in the Final Plan. We must continue to be diligent in ensuring that local communities retain the ability to review applications and approve projects that are consistent with local plans.

Orinda:

Amy Worth (Orinda Mayor, MTC Chair)

- This is a locally oriented plan that pivots off transportation and land use priorities identified at the city council and county board of supervisors level. Cities continue to have control over their local land use decisions.
- The land use strategies are linked to each jurisdiction's local input and priorities, the transportation strategies reflect priorities advanced by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority and by the city councils in Contra Costa and elsewhere.
- Here in Lamorinda and throughout Contra Costa, the countywide "Shaping Our Future" effort will have far more to do with how we grow than anything in Plan Bay Area.
- Focusing growth in locally selected areas will make it easier for us to retain the unique character of single-family neighborhoods.
- The plan respects the Bay Area's diversity; it emphasizes different kinds of investments and development for different parts of the region. Big cities like San Jose, San Francisco and Oakland are expected to get bigger. Smaller towns like Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda retain their small town qualities.
- In terms of transportation, Plan Bay Area prioritizes taking care of the streets, roads, highways and transit systems we already have. It also includes funding to maintain local streets and roads, and for the operation and maintenance of systems like BART and County Connection — though the needs exceed available funds. Because Orinda residents commute from home to jobs throughout the Bay Area, having a robust transportation network, including both transit and highways is especially important
- Plan Bay Area will be updated every four years to reflect new priorities. As with this plan, much of the future implementation will be at the local level, and it will reflect local values and vision for the future. Our next plan can be guided and improved by that work and vision.

- I think Plan Bay Area is an important next step for our region. We live in one of the most wonderful places on earth. Planning now will ensure that we take the steps needed to keep our towns and our region wonderful for the next generation.

City Councilman Steven Glazer:

"I support local control of land use planning. To the extent that the One Bay Area plan does not infringe on the ability of Orinda to determine our destiny, I don't have a problem with it."

Janet Keeter, City Manager:

"Plan Bay Area does not mandate any changes to the land use policies of the City of Orinda.

"All development proposals in Orinda are subject to a rigorous public review process that provides an opportunity for concerned residents to be heard and that ensures development adheres to local design criteria and land use values. Plan Bay Area has no effect on Orinda's ability to continue to review and approve or deny development proposals in our community."

Patch requested comments from all five Moraga Town Council members, but as of deadline no response has been received.

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Richard S. Colman August 01, 2013 at 10:25 AM
What is the point of building high-rise, high-density housing ("stack and pack" housing) near transit hubs like BART if there is no mass transit? BART went on strike from July 1, 2013, to July 5, 2013, and may go on strike again in a few days. Amy Worth was elected directly by voters to the Orinda City Council. She was not elected directly by voters to her position of Chairperson of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Ms. Worth has a conflict of interest. As MTC chairperson, is she representing Orinda or some other constituency? Ms. Worth should resign immediately from the MTC. The current height limit for buildings in Orinda is 35 feet. In 2012, the Orinda City Council voted unanimously to support a housing project for low-income senior citizens. The project is being constructed at 2 Irwin Way in the heart of downtown Orinda (across the street from the Safeway). The project is worthwhile but should have been built elsewhere -- away from downtown, where parking and traffic are miserable. The Irwin Way project will violate Orinda's 35-foot height limit. By voting to exceed Orinda's existing height limit, the current Orinda City Council cannot be trusted to preserve Orinda's semi-rural, village-like environment. Richard Colman, Orinda, California

6 Recommend

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Forrest August 01, 2013 at 10:40 AM
A excerpt from an overview of Agenda 21...Read it...Sound familiar Lafayette? "No matter where you live, I'll bet that there have been hundreds of condos built in the center of your town recently. Over the last ten years there has been a 'planning revolution' across the US. Your commercial, industrial,

and multi-residential land was rezoned to 'mixed use.' Nearly everything that got approvals for development was designed the same way: ground floor retail with two stories of residential above. Mixed use. Very hard to finance for construction, and very hard to manage since it has to have a high density of people in order to justify the retail. A lot of it is empty and most of the ground floor retail is empty too. High bankruptcy rate....."

6 Recommend

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Jason Schmidt August 01, 2013 at 11:00 AM

Nice to hear the politicians speak of their love for central planning. Why, after we have seen the historic disasters that central planning have caused, is this suddenly the way for the Bay Area to proceed? We keep hearing "we have to have a plan" but, amazingly enough, the Bay Area has become the wonderful place it has over the last 200 years without any central planning. Market forces, supply and demand, and people caring about their towns and cities are what works. Instead, we have a small group of ideologues, who refused to consider even allowing a general vote on Plan Bay Area, trying to force their "new urbanism" vision on us. Meanwhile, eager developers sit in the background, excited that they will be able to build high-reward, high-density apartment buildings without having to spend on things like parking or environmental review. Just keep telling everyone we will be "pedestrian-friendly" and you can get rich, while the surrounding town is clogged with traffic, parking problems, strains on schools and services, etc.

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MountainView VOICE

Planning director: 'Plan Bay Area' aligns with Mountain View's vision

A coalition of Bay Area leaders late Thursday night approved a controversial plan designed to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

The final vote on "Plan Bay Area" came during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) at the Oakland Marriott.

The two groups are made up of 21 Bay Area county supervisors, mayors and other local leaders.

Years in the making, the plan has caused anxieties in cities throughout the region where officials have long maintained that the housing and job forecasts in the document are far too high.

The housing forecast used for the plan predicts the need for an additional 660,000 households in the Bay Area between 2010 and 2040, an average of 22,000 a year. It focuses much of the housing growth at cities with a high number of jobs, including San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland.

The plan would provide funds to cities that direct housing development along transit corridors in efforts to reduce sprawl and encourage environmentally sustainable development. Groups like the Committee for Green Foothills lauded the plan's approval.

Mountain View planning director Randy Tsuda said he didn't anticipate any impacts to the city's existing plans for development through 2030, a vision developed during years of community meetings to create a new general plan - a blueprint for the future development in the city.

"For the most part, its objectives aligned with objectives in our general plan," Tsuda said. "I don't anticipate any major impact or change to the city of Mountain View."

The South Bay is projected to see a major growth in both jobs and housing. Forecasts in the plan say Mountain View will see 15,640 news jobs (33 percent growth) and 9,400 new homes (28 percent growth) between 2010 and 2040.

On Wednesday, several hundred people packed a Marriott ballroom to protest the plan, voicing concerns that it will bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development. Many arrived on buses from Marin and Santa Clara counties.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted "Let us vote!" or "MTC, don't speak for me!

That sentiment was shared in an 80-person protest in Mountain View the Monday before the meeting at the Rose Market, where organizers said the 200-unit apartment development proposed to displace a slew of beloved businesses at the corner of Castro Street and El Camino Real was an example of what Plan Bay Area would require.

A resolution approved by ABAG on July 18 says "the plan is not intended to dictate local land use policy or development approvals" and would "increase housing choices by providing incentives for qualifying development projects."

At the meeting, several dozen others from Oakland-based public transit advocacy group TransForm carried yellow signs expressing support for alternatives to the plan under the slogan "Equity Environment and Jobs" or EEJ.

According to the MTC, the plan is a "work in progress" that continues earlier efforts to "develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way."

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region's nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The

plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

The federal government requires the agencies to update the plan every four years to keep up with shifting demographics and new data, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said.

"There are no easy solutions in this plan but ... this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly," said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing.

"It's clearly a social engineering experiment," Fairfax resident Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options - amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

"I'm really glad to see the region take this pioneering step," said Adina Levin of Menlo Park.

The Bay Area is among the state's 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night's vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

==I Bay City News Service and Mountain View Voice staff==

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Planning for displacement: Short takes

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05.28.13 - 5:00 pm | Tim Redmond (/category/author/tim-redmond) | (3)

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Regional planning hits Chinatown

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That would turn Broadway into a much-busier thoroughfare — and have a huge impact on Chinatown, where there's heavy pedestrian traffic. That, Cindy Wu says, is one of the problems with regional planning — it doesn't always consider the impacts on existing, fully developed neighborhoods.

Wu is a planner with the Chinatown Community Development Center and a member of San Francisco's Planning Commission. She's concerned that Plan Bay Area, with its macro focus, ignores the micro — the people who already live in communities that will feel the pressure.

"Chinatown is performing amazingly," she told me recently. There's low car use, high density ... all the things ABAG seems to want. And yet, it's in the Priority Development Area, where new construction could lead to displacement. "It doesn't get to the neighborhood scale, where people will be forced to control the impacts of growth."

Gen Fujioka, policy director at CCDC, noted that the plans says people displaced from a San Francisco community like Chinatown can be accommodated elsewhere in the region. "Like that's an acceptable alternative," he said.

A (somewhat) better approach

The Draft Environmental Impact Report on Plan Bay Area looked at several alternatives, including doing nothing at all, which everyone pretty much agrees is a bad idea. But interestingly, a proposal put together by community groups, including Public Advocates, Urban Habitat, and TransForm, turned out to do a better job of reaching ABAG's environmental goals.

In the DEIR models, "Alternative Five," as it's described, leads to slightly lower levels of displacement and less car travel. It does that in large part through the imposition of a Vehicle Miles Travelled Tax — a one-cent levy on every mile driven by a private car or light truck in the region.

That, it turns out, does indeed discourage car use. It would also raise more than $600 million a year, most of which would go to public transit and affordable housing. Over 25 years, that's a lot of cash.

But ABAG planners rejected that proposal, preferring their own alternative.

ABAG and the UN plan for world domination

One of the biggest problems with opposing, or even questioning, ABAG's Plan Bay Area is that some of the loudest voices against it are, in a word, loony.

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Planning for displacement: Short takes

By *caitlin*
Created *05/28/2013 - 5:00pm*

Tidbits on planning from around the Bay you need to know

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ABAG and the UN plan for world domination

One of the biggest problems with opposing, or even questioning, ABAG's Plan Bay Area is that some of the loudest voices against it are, in a word, loony.

Around the Bay Area suburbs, people packing hearings on the plan are talking about the secret United Nations plan to confiscate all private property, burn down suburban homes, and force everyone into tiny cells in teeming cities where our personal freedoms will be systematically destroyed.

You haven't heard of that? It's called Agenda 21, and the John Birch Society is convinced that it's a global plot to destroy America.

Actually, Agenda 21 is a weak, unenforceable document that came out of the UN's environmental conference in 1992. It suggests — as does SB375, as does just about every sane thinker in civilization — that the world's growth ought to be planned, sustainable, and energy efficient.

But it's getting dragged up as grounds to scuttle Plan Bay Area. The black helicopter folks, the Obama Wants To Take My House folks, and a few NIMBYs who just don't want density in the suburbs, have been wailing about this massive conspiracy in the past few months.

It's unlikely that the Tea Party types will make common cause with San Francisco progressives on this issue. But there's a real danger here: If the nut cases get the attention, serious questions about the feasibility of this plan could get lumped in with the ravings of conspiracy kooks.

And as far as the UN taking over California? Hey, at least we'll get universal health care.

News Volume 47, Issue 35 Tim Redmond

Source URL: http://www.sfbg.com/2013/05/28/planning-displacement-short-takes

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[1] http://www.sfbg.com/2013/05/28/planning-displacement

July 24, 2013

'Stalin's Plan'

BY LEILANI CLARK

Despite their best efforts, including accusations of totalitarianism and property-rights infringement, opponents of Plan Bay Area failed to sway a nearly unanimous passing vote on July 18 by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Jake Mackenzie, a Rohnert Park council member, sits on the MTC and is a member of ABAG's general assembly. He was at the seven-hour-long meeting where the deciding vote in favor of Plan Bay Area was cast. More than four hours of that meeting were taken up by public comment.

"We were being compared to Hitler, Stalin and totalitarian regimes," says Mackenzie. "Nothing could be further from the truth."

A group calling itself Citizen Marin chartered a 48-seat shuttle to bring opponents to the meeting at the Oakland Marriott, according to the Marin Independent Journal. Protesters outnumbered those testifying in favor of the plan ("They had made a very deliberate effort by busing people in to have a large number testifying for their point of view," says Mackenzie), which provides incentives for the building of affordable and high-density housing—along with increased use of public transportation—in 160 priority development areas as a way of meeting greenhouse-gas-reduction goals for the coming century.

Plan Bay Area consists of a series of four-year plans that will be under continuous review, says Mackenzie. "It's going to be a dynamic situation, and

it's not going to be cast in concrete," he explains. "It's not like tablets coming down from some mountain or something like that."

Local control over land-use decisions will still rest with the city and the county, according to Mackenzie. "The opponents claim that we are forcing people to live in high-density housing, high rises and taking away their cars," he adds. "These are blatant untruths."

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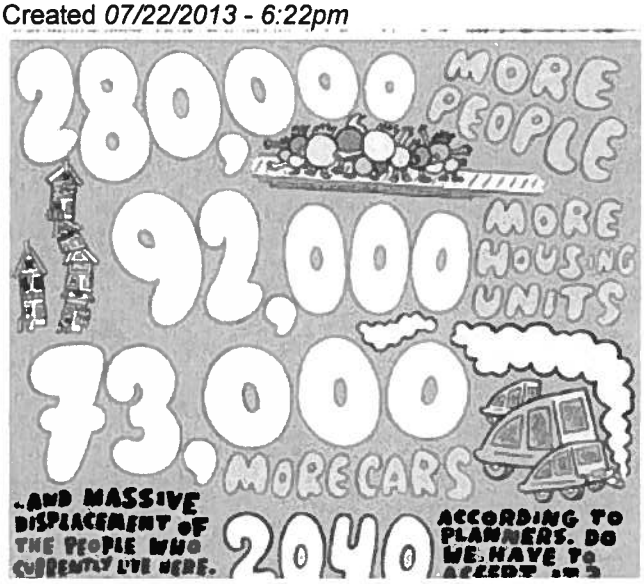
Street Fight: Plan Bay Area falls short of a worthy goal

By *steven*
Created *07/22/2013 - 6:22pm*



Plan Bay Area was the subject of a Guardian cover story on May 28 and public forum on June 12.

Last week's adoption of Plan Bay Area [1] by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission was a watershed moment in regional planning. The plan links regional planning to state policies mandating reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and aims to limit future sprawl by accommodating 2.1 million people, 1 million jobs, and 660,000 housing units largely within the existing built-up areas of the nine-county region.

Newly designated priority development areas (PDAs) will enable modest-density, walkable development in city and suburb alike, while preserving both existing single-family neighborhoods and open space. In a time of urgent need to address global warming, the Bay Area has once again proved a leader by enabling compact housing around transit, and its supporting studies expect the per capita greenhouse gas emissions from driving to decline by 15 percent in 2040.

This will not save the world and it's not without some challenging byproducts — such as preventing displacement of low-income residents [2] from San Francisco and other urban centers — but it is a start. And in a nation hell-bent on denying the urgency of global

warming, it is refreshing and inspiring that someone, somewhere, is trying to do something.

Yet the transportation component – the lynchpin and impetus of Plan Bay Area, according to many local leaders –is mediocre, uninspiring, and inadequate. Despite land use policies enabling compact development, 80 percent of all travel in the Bay Area will still be in cars in 2040, not much different from today, and far short of the real change that is needed in this time of urgency. With 2 million more people, this is a recipe for gridlock, inequity, and ecological disaster – not sound public policy.

It should be no surprise that a big part of the problem is funding. The MTC, charged with assessing future regional transit potential, identifies just $289 billion between now and 2040 for roads, bridges, and transit — far short of what's needed. At $10.3 billion a year that may seem like a lot, but upwards of 87 percent of this is already committed to maintenance of existing roads and transit– not transit capacity expansion. New homes and jobs might be focused around BART and Caltrain stations, but because there's no real capacity expansion, the current iteration of Plan Bay Area can't even reach its own modest goal of 74 percent of trips by car in 2040.

With 2 million more people, cumulative emissions from driving will actually increase by 18 percent because so few new residents will be able to squeeze onto our already crowded transit systems. Today BART is breaking ridership records but it is crowded. Extensions to far flung suburbs might be worthwhile but they don't expand capacity in the system's core. What we need is a second BART line and/or Amtrak service between San Francisco and Oakland, but this is absent from the plan. Meanwhile, most mainline Muni buses and railcars are currently jam-packed, yet San Francisco is somehow expected to absorb 92,000 housing units in Plan Bay Area.

Supervisors David Campos and Scott Weiner, representing San Francisco in the Plan Bay Area process, are to be commended for drawing attention to the transit problem and for asking MTC staff to show how to meet future funding gaps. By broaching the subject, they show that San Francisco might be poised to lead on this critical issue. But Campos and Weiner, working within the "fiscally constrained envelope" as framed by MTC planners, were only seeking to cover deficits for existing service – not visionary expanded service. In the end, there was no real vision for adequate transit capacity expansion.

This foretells a troubling transit future – and one that will likely be more and more private. While many San Franciscans decry the proliferation of Google buses and other private corporate shuttles hogging Muni stops, these buses do lay bare the transit conundrum in the Bay Area. Without well-funded, visionary capacity expansion of public transit, those with the means (and high wage jobs) will shift to private buses while everyone else is left to duke it out on crowded highways, buses, and trains.

This conundrum demands that progressives in the Bay Area ramp up their transit politics to lead locally and nationally. The debate about transit finance needs to be redirected – away from regressive local sales tax measures (which often include more roads) back towards more progressive measures, such as transit assessment districts – which could require developers who profit from Plan Bay Area's growth incentives to adequately finance transit expansion.

The debate needs to move away from demonizing public transit employees to a discussion of the role and responsibility of corporate health care, banks, and the real estate industry in causing economic instability (which has harmed public transit finance more in the last decade than a bus driver expecting a living wage and healthcare). The debate needs to move away from creating new roadway capacity, such as exclusive toll lanes, and focus on how to convert existing highway lanes into transit-only lanes with fast, frequent, reliable regional bus service open to all.

Plan Bay Area is a living document, a work in progress. Within the next four-five years it will need to be revised and can be improved. The current version of the plan, weak on transit funding, has been dominated by a loud, irrational mob of Tea Party cranks bent on sabotaging anything that hints of progressive ideas. They were successful in diluting Plan Bay Area. While a smattering of progressive transit activists showed up and attempted to shape the plan, next time the plan needs a broader progressive movement — including housing, social justice, and environmental activists — to demand a truly visionary transportation plan.

Jason Henderson is a geography professor at San Francisco State University and the author of Street Fight: The Politics of Mobility in San Francisco. *We'll be sharing his perspective regularly in the Bay Guardian.*

Development Plan Bay Area Transportation Jason Henderson

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Upfront: The meaning of Marin

by Peter Seidman | Posted: Thursday, July 25, 2013 9:00 am

Existential: of, relating to, or affirming existence —Merriam-Webster

The fierce emotions that regularly rip through meetings whenever Plan Bay Area and affordable housing are the topics of debate are understandable, if disturbing, when put in context: The county has come to a juncture where the true values of its residents, their existential boundaries, are visible, unedited and raw.

When members of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) approved Plan Bay Area late last week, the vote marked the end of a long public process. But even now opponents of the regional planning effort show little impetus to drop their criticisms, some justified, some not.

When members of ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) voted to pass Plan Bay Area and its environmental impact report, Marin representatives on both agencies voted with the majorities—except for Pat Eklund. The Novato city councilwoman abstained from both votes. Eklund, who represents Marin cities at ABAG reportedly abstained because, she said, most cities object to Plan Bay Area. Marin Supervisor Katie Rice, who serves as a Marin representative at ABAG, voted in the affirmative for the plan and its environmental report, as did Supervisor Steve Kinsey, who serves at MTC.

The process that led to the vote was marred by an often-vitriolic atmosphere at public meetings marked by yelling and screaming from Plan Bay Area opponents. The tactic is reminiscent of the strategy—or lack of it—that emerged in the Tea Party Summer, when right-wing opponents to the Affordable Care Act attempted to yell people into submission at public meetings. And even after it passed into law, opponents continue to argue their case as if it never had passed. In Marin, the fierce opposition to Plan Bay Area in particular and a general resistance to accept a greater role for the county and its cities to provide affordable housing clouded facts that could have enhanced a rational debate about what Marinites want to see in their county—and who they want to see living in it.

Carla Condon, who serves on the Corte Madera Town Council, is a longtime critic of Plan Bay Area and ABAG. "The whole plan is flawed," she says. "I wish Marin had been

more resistant." Condon, like other Plan Bay Area critics, thinks the strategy to tie land use and transportation planning is ineffective, even counterproductive. The Corte Madera Town Council last year voted to withdraw from ABAG. Councilmembers based their decision on what they said was ABAG's undue outside influence on the town's planning life. They also objected to housing-need numbers that came bubbling out of the regional agency as part of a routine needs assessment and as part of Plan Bay Area.

The process to withdraw from ABAG takes a full year from the time an entity notifies the agency. That timeline came to a conclusion this month, on July 1. "We are automatically out of ABAG," says Condon. "There are no longer 101 cities in ABAG, there are now 100." Condon says the county and Marin cities should form a separate council of governments to handle housing-need chores—anything ABAG can do, a Marin council of governments can do better. Withdrawing from ABAG negates the foundation of the agency's goal of regional planning. But it's regional planning that has generated some of the most intense heat during the Plan Bay Area meetings in Marin.

"We are part of a ... Bay Area community where Marin is considered to be so vigilant about being green," says Condon, "and yet we're thrown into the same basket as say, for example, San Jose. Marin is special."

Supporters of Plan Bay Area say it asks Marin to create a relatively small number of housing units compared to the more urbanized Bay Area counties, and that reflects the Plan Bay Area acknowledgement that Marin is about 80 percent open space.

Plan Bay Area seeks to encourage counties to provide their "fair share" of new housing to accommodate new residents to the Bay Area who will work at new jobs. Opponents have long said the methodology that ABAG used to arrive at the projected number of new jobs and the increase in population is faulty.

Critics who say ABAG has been unresponsive to Marin's request to take another look at the numbers discount the reductions ABAG made in what is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation for Marin. That's the number of new housing units ABAG projects Marin will need in the coming years. Across the board, ABAG reduced the number of housing units as the process proceeded. The 1999-2006 housing-need numbers for Corte Madera totaled 179 units. In the 2007-20 planning cycle the numbers bumped the total to 244, but the final 2014-22 numbers come in at 72, a reduction of 172 units, or 30 percent. For the entire county, the 1999-2016 projection totaled 6,515 housing units. The 2007-20 numbers total 4,882, a reduction of 1,633, or 75 percent. And the final 2014-22 numbers

total 2,298 units, a reduction of 2,584, or 47 percent. When the housing-need numbers first came out of ABAG, officials at the agency said the numbers would get revised. Critics scoffed. But they did get revised. Those totals include affordable units as well as market-rate units. The affordable component has created an underlying negative buzz in Marin.

The housing need debate focuses the debate on what kind of values Marin residents hold in the highest regard. For some it's the encouragement of a vibrant and diverse populationin skin color, background and socioeconomic statusliving in walkable communities along the urbanized Highway 101 corridor. For others, the paramount value lies in the single-family-home lifestyle and an amorphous "small-town character." Still others maintain that change of almost any kind that involves adding lower-income residents is the enemy. The attitudes lie on a long scale. Somewhere in the middle is a section of compromise. But the vitriolic name-calling and intimidation at public meetings has tended to drown out the moderates.

That kind of visceral objection to the regional planning paradigm of Plan Bay Area came to the fore in Marinwood, which has been a little ground zero for an affordable housing debate. The nonprofit Bridge Housing Corp. has proposed a development that includes 72 affordable units and 10 market-rate units. Opponents of the development say it will destroy the neighborhood. The project has been the focus of planning and public meetings for about eight years, notes Supervisor Susan Adams, who represents Marinwood. Her support for affordable housing has played a major role in a recall effort mounted by residents who say she's unresponsive to her constituents, a charge she vigorously denies.

So much misinformation has swirled around the proposed Marinwood development it's difficult to sort facts from fabrication. And that bending of truth has carried over to the Plan Bay Area opposition, says Adams. The Marinwood project was part of an ABAG plan to concentrate development along the Highway 101 urban corridor, a goal envisioned virtually from the start of Marin countywide plans. ABAG opponents said the agency was pressuring the county to include the Marinwood development in what the agency calls a "priority development area (PDA)." That designation, say opponents, greases the skids for the county to build a high-density development like the one Bridge proposes.

But Adams says ABAG never led the county to the land of high-density development. Quite the opposite. First, says Adams, Marinwood was a potential PDA, not a full-

fledged PDA. And even with that tentative designation, the area received $850,000 for a Lucas Valley pathway project. That's the Plan Bay Area deal. By acceding to the need to tie land use and transportation in a regional planning package, communities can receive a transportation-funding advantage.

"We submitted the Marin site, with a cap of 100 units, to ABAG," says Adams. "ABAG called for cities and counties to self-identify where those areas were that would fit the criteria of being on transit corridors (a key in the planning process that stems from SB 375 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions). It was the county, not ABAG, that put the Marinwood project in the potential PDA. No outside influence."

But the seeds of confusion had been sown, leading Adams to ask county supervisors to withdraw the Marinwood project from the PDA designation. Supervisor Kate Sears did the same, successfully, with a PDA designation in Tam Valley.

"Being in a PDA was cosmetic," says Sears, "because being in a PDA didn't change the zoning." That's the key. The Marinwood development and the PDA in Sears' district are part of the county's Housing Element, the update of which currently is under construction. It's expected to go before supervisors for approval late this summer or early fall, in time to submit to the state for certification before the end of January. Missing that date could mean a loss of state funding, according to Leelee Thomas, a principal planner with the county.

"A lot of people were concerned because I think they have a notion that [the PDA] in Marinwood and Tam Valley changes the zoning," says Sears. "Really it doesn't." The zoning is included in the county's Housing Element. But the confusion sown was enough for Adams and Sears to request withdrawal of the two PDAs.

"Because of all the confusion, the spin that a few individuals put on this that make it sound really scary that it is ABAG telling us what to do rather than the other way 'round," says Adams, "I think it's the most prudent option to ask ABAG to take [the Marinwood development] off and remove us from the opportunities to receive extra transportation-related funding." The same will happen with the former PDA in Sears' district.

Adams says she has been holding small meetings of 12 to 20 people to explain the county Housing Element process, PDAs and the submission of the Marinwood development to ABAG. During the meetings, lights of understanding turn on, she says. It's that kind of rational, moderate-tone discussion that raucous opponents drowned out in larger public venues.

Condon still objects to ABAG and the housing densities in the Plan Bay Area concept. She says the county can satisfy state housing-need numbers without what she calls high-density developments (like the one in Marinwood). But affordable housing proponents say developers need projects with enough housing units to make a project financially feasible, and not enough infill opportunities exist in the county to meet demand.

Condon disagrees. She says there are plenty of locations that can accommodate affordable housing interspersed in neighborhoods, negating the need for larger developments. She's not opposed to affordable housing, she says. "That's why I get so upset when people construe this as a NIMBY attitude." But Condon and other Plan Bay Area opponents aren't shy about voicing their not-in-my-neighborhood opposition to developments that cluster 30 units of housing on a property.

The core idea behind Plan Bay Area is to reduce reliance on the single-occupant vehicle and concentrate development along transportation corridors, a nascent one in Marin with the coming of SMART. And Plan Bay Area proponents say the climate change crisis is critical enough to take whatever steps are possible on whatever level is possible. And leaving climate implications aside, transit-oriented development yields fewer and shorter routine vehicle trips, they maintain.

There's no doubt, however, that the pushback behind that kind of behavioral shift in Marin has gained legs. In San Rafael, opponents of a PDA in the Civic Center Area are putting pressure on the city to rethink the concept.

Plan Bay Area opponents scoff at the greenhouse gas reduction possibilities of transit-oriented development in Marin. But for those who want to live near shops and transportation and perhaps try to forego the single-passenger vehicle, transit-oriented development looks like a good deal—for the environment and for their lifestyle.

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What Does Approval of Plan Bay Area Mean for Region?

San Francisco Public Press
— Jul 22 2013 - 3:14pm

The controversial Plan Bay Area was given the green light by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission on Friday. The regional transportation and housing plan is meant to cut greenhouse gas emissions while allowing for more housing growth. San Francisco Public Press reporter Angela Hart appeared on KQED's Forum to discuss the plan.

The controversial Plan Bay Area was given the green light by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission on Friday.

The regional transportation and housing plan is meant to cut greenhouse gas emissions while allowing for more housing growth.

San Francisco Public Press reporter Angela Hart appeared this morning on KQED's Forum program to discuss the plan along with other experts.

In her recent story in the summer [2] print edition of the San Francisco Public Press, Hart found that Plan Bay Area projections will actually result in a 9.1 percent increase in total carbon emissions from vehicles. Publicly, planning officials had used a 15 percent reduction figure, but that was on a per-capita basis.

Read her story here [3].

You can listen to the Forum program here [4].

The San Francisco Public Press produced a special report on Smart Growth, including Plan Bay Area in the Summer 2012 print edition. Those stories can be found here. [5]

- See more at: http://sfpublicpress.org/print/news/2013-07/what-does-approval-of-plan-bay-area-mean-for-region#sthash.3N2ovIi0.dpuf

San Francisco Chronicle

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Whichever way you go, it's chocolate

By Leah Garchik

Back and forth, forth and back. In describing a reversed reel during a screening of "The Last Edition," I wrote that it was of no importance whether chase scene participants are going from right to left or left to right.

Correspondent **Greg Chapnick**, who studied filmmaking at the University of Maryland in Baltimore County, begs to differ. He was taught "that going from left to right is perceived - at least to those of us who read from left to right - as positive or advancing, but movement from right to left is perceived as negative or retreating."

Chapnick supposes that people who read from right to left might interpret this movement in the opposite way, "unless Western 'film sense' has conquered the world. If you read from top to bottom, I imagine that the directionality of movement is either immaterial or causes dizziness."

Your assignment, readers: Watch closely all chase scenes you encounter in the next few days, and let me know what direction they're taking.

I tried to analyze the chase scenes in "The Zigzag Kid," which opened the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival on Thursday, but the movie, made mostly in Holland by Belgian filmmakers, was so engrossing that it was hard to pay attention to anything but the story.

I was particularly taken (drooling qualifies as taken, doesn't it?) by a love scene in a vat of melted chocolate. Apparently this captured the attention of others, too, and during the post-showing Q&A, someone asked director **Vincent Bal** if it was real.

Yes, he said, the factory was in Bruges, and it had been a major task to find such a place that would permit filming on location. "They didn't want us to fall into real chocolate," he said, and "we couldn't bring anything that was non-edible into the factory."

So they ordered up 12,000 liters (about 3,200 gallons) of "a sort of chocolate pudding," which was about 2 degrees Celsius (35 degrees Fahrenheit) when it was delivered. "We tried to heat it up," said Bal, but by the next morning - although the actors wore special "surf suits" under the surface - it was still like "the cold bath in the sauna." The scene was shot in two takes, then "we had to take the actress out of there and put her in a warm shower because she was talking gibberish."

As to chasing after chocolate, the big post-showing chase was over to the Swedish American Hall for the opening-night party, where I lapped up a cup of Mitchell's Oreo Cookie ice cream. Viewed looking north from the Castro, the route from delicious film to delicious dessert was left to right.

Gazing into the future:

-- Just not into global warming as an issue? Worry instead about a press release from two holistic dentists from New York speculating that "bulldog-face" is "the next modern epidemic" brought upon by evolution. According to the docs, "Our faces are becoming more like a bulldog, with smaller mouths, bigger tongues, misaligned teeth and bigger necks." This will be disastrous for the lipstick industry.

-- A Chronicle news story by **Michael Cabanatuan** focused on a recent seven-hour-long Oakland gathering of public transportation and environmental advocates for discussion of Plan

Bay Area, a proposed "region-wide development strategy" encompassing "transportation, housing and land-use policy" for 30 years.

But it was a California magazine blog entry by **Ben Christopher** that shed light on the meeting's all-important ambience. The first speaker charged delegates - from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments - with "treason, sedition and money laundering"; another speaker claimed to be **Ayn Rand**'s hero, **John Galt**; and libertarian singer **Celeste Paradise**, who carried a sign saying, "Who needs sex when ABAG and MTC are screwing us?," sang a song - to the tune of "America the Beautiful" - complaining about faceless bureaucrats.

In the Castro last week, **Jonathan Goldman** came across someone who said she was a location scout for a long-running MTV reality TV show. Is "The Real World" coming back to San Francisco?

Public Eavesdropping

"Bruce Willis is Bruce Willis, and he's a great actor, and I apologize."

Man of the streets to man of the streets, overheard on Fifth Street by The Chronicle's Pete Kiehart

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Sonoma Press Democrat

Will Plan Bay Area projects actually happen?

Thursday, July 25, 2013 at 6:09 by Road.Warrior

On Tuesday, we ran a LIST of Sonoma and Napa County road projects that have been included in the new Plan Bay Area, and the questions rolled in. What does it mean to be on the list? Are theses projects done deals? What kind of work will be done?

The plan, prepared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments, is a comprehensive guide to growth and transportation planning through 2040, covering all nine of the Bay Area counties.

Janet Spellman of the Sonoma County Transportation Authority reminds us that it is a long-term planning document, not a funding mechanism, so being included doesn't guarantee the work will get done anytime soon. The exercise is just a way to prioritize projects that link transportation with land use goals in an effort to reduce greenhouse cases.

"We're obligated to update it every four years," Spellman said. "Projects can fall out of the plan if they're not fully funded or if priorities change. Every four years we submit a list of projects, but how do you know what you'll need in 25 years?"

Tom O'Kane, deputy director of Sonoma County's Transportation and Public Works Department, urged residents not to expect anything big until the Highway 101 corridor is finished in five years. Even then, he warns, rural communities will come out behind. By definition, Plan Bay Area focuses on large population centers rather than rural communities, even though "people travel in rural areas, too," he said.

Most transportation money goes through Caltrans, SCTA, MTC and ABAG before it even reaches Sonoma County, he added, "and by the time it's funneled down to us, the amount of money we get is tiny."

In the immediate future, Sonoma County's biggest project will focus on the Old Redwood Highway between Petaluma and Penngrove, the roadway most in need of repair, he said. Starting in late August or early September, crews will start paving there and along some portions of Petaluma Hill Road.

Marin Voice: A social-equity 'emergency?'

Posted: marinij.com

DID YOU KNOW you are living in fear? It's true.

According to Marin Grassroots, "the majority of Marin residents are increasingly in fear of participating in local government decisions ..."

So, evidently, if you are not in that majority, feeling actual fear, there is something wrong with you. In fact, you might be a racist.

This is the simplistic rhetoric of a dogmatic group that tolerates no dissent. Anyone who disagrees with them is a racist. The parallels to McCarthyism are unmistakable.

Marin Grassroots' press conference took Marin residents to task for daring to differ with the view that Marin needs to be urbanized (i.e. high density city-style housing).

Indeed, they are welcome to their view. But they engage in projection, seeing their own intolerance only in the other side.

By example, if you are among those who want to maintain Marin as the wonderful place it is, you are a "lynch mob." It is a powerful phrase used by Grassroots' director, John Young.

What an outrage to use such a heinous phrase, comparing political opponents to murderers.

And in no shortage of irony, this group does this to condemn what they feel is a lack of civility in debate.

Marin Grassroots' statement cites "implicit racial threats," yet inexplicably fails to specify any threat allegedly made.

You see, Mr. Young says he wrote to Gov. Jerry Brown, asking him to literally declare a state of emergency for Marin.

(If you don't see the emergency, perhaps you forgot that a majority of us are living in fear.)

Mr. Young claims this is not a political stunt. Presumably he understands that a state of emergency is a funding measure for counties stricken by devastation.

Mr. Young should tell us how much money he seeks and who gets it.

It is understandable that so many of our neighbors here in Marin are very upset about a regional government insisting we start converting from suburb to mini city.

The outrage comes when plans are made with little or no publicity.

Most San Rafael residents, even today, don't know that the Civic Center Station Area Plan creates a virtual Northgate City, authorizing five stories at Northgate Mall and Northgate III, putting apartment houses on top of stores.

Other locations go to five stories, too.

Supervisor Susan Adams held a meeting to hear constituents' concerns, but used half of the allotted time to lecture the audience — instead of listening.

Naturally, people got angry.

In contrast, San Rafael Mayor Gary Phillips held a meeting, made brief welcoming remarks and then stopped talking, saying he wanted to hear from us.

While there were occasional outbursts in reaction to claims that SMART had passed in Marin County (in Marin, SMART was voted down, failing to win a two-thirds majority), it was mostly a proper meeting.

Some speakers were angry, but their presentations were orderly.

Formerly an ACLU regional board member, I thought I was a liberal Democrat. But after I opposed Plan Bay Area, a Marin Grassroots hitman published a photo of me, captioned to associate me with the Tea Party.

Marin Grassroots is hypocrisy of the highest order, but great political theater. Its "glass house" is a wall of mirrors.

Randy Warren is a San Rafael lawyer. He is running for City Council on November's ballot.

ABAG, MTC sued

Richard Colman

Plans to make drastic changes in the make up of the Bay Area's local communities have been met with a lawsuit. On Tuesday, August 6, a group called Bay Area Citizens sued the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

ABAG and MTC are regional governmental bodies involved in land-use planning and transportation planning.

Bay Area Citizens, a nonprofit group, filed suit in Superior Court in Alameda County, where ABAG and MTC currently have their headquarters.

Peter Singleton, a lawyer who helped found Bay Area Citizens, said in a telephone interview on Sunday, August 11 that the goal of the suit is to "shine a light" on the activities of ABAG and MTC.

According to Singleton, "Our suit accepts, for the sake of argument, that ABAG and MTC have the lawful authority to do what they are doing. Given that," he asked, "have they followed the law? We conclude that they have not."

Singleton said that ABAG and MTC used "flawed data" in their arguments for changing the nature of Bay Area communities.

Singleton said that the suit means that ABAG and MTC are now "proceeding at their own risk" instead of going ahead on an unimpeded basis.

ABAG and MTC, citing California law, want to reduce air pollutants that, according to some people, result in climate change.

On the evening of July 18-19, ABAG and MTC voted to support what is called Plan Bay Area, a plan to accommodate projected population growth in the Bay Area.

Plan Bay Area involves the construction of high-rise, high-density housing (so-called stack-and-pack housing) near transit hubs like BART stations. One of Plan Bay Area's goals is to get Bay Area residents to stop using their cars.

Plan Bay Area calls for changing the demographics of local communities. California housing law requires that cities like Orinda and Lafayette zone for large numbers of new housing units. These new units must be built predominantly for very low and low income residents.

In higher income communities (like Orinda and Lafayette), the housing must be constructed in a way that such cities (like Orinda and Lafayette) will become more demographically level.

Singleton said that Plan Bay Area's own models show that the plan's requirements for high-density housing and additional mass transit "will lead to no significant greenhouse-gas reductions."

"Plan Bay Area, he said, "succeeds in imposing massive new costs on Bay Area residents and communities while the plan sharply limits how and where Bay Area residents can live and how they can travel."

The plan, Singleton said, "Dramatically impairs residents' ability to make decisions in their own communities."

According to some people, greenhouse gases, which come from the combustion of fossil fuels like gasoline, accumulate in the earth's upper atmosphere, preventing heat from escaping the planet. Carbon dioxide, a product of fuel combustion, is considered a greenhouse gas.

The directors of ABAG and MTC are not elected publicly by voters. For example, Amy Worth, who is the chairperson of MTC, was not elected by the public to her MTC position. Worth, in 2010, was elected by voters in Orinda to the Orinda City Council. The job of mayor of Orinda rotates among city-council members, and this year Worth is Orinda's mayor.

Singleton said that there is a "huge question of political legitimacy" regarding ABAG and MTC.

Singleton believes that court arguments concerning the lawsuit will take place in January or February 2014.

(Disclosure: Richard Colman is a member of two groups that have the goal of preserving Orinda's environment.)

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Bay Area Citizens sues Plan Bay Area

Neal J. Riley
Updated 4:48 pm, Tuesday, August 6, 2013

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Critics of a regional plan to encourage development and growth in areas with easy access to mass transit filed a lawsuit in Alameda County Superior Court on Tuesday.

Plan Bay Area was approved last month by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments after a contentious three-year process involving dozens of public hearings. Its goal is to satisfy state legislation that requires plans to accommodate the more than 2 million people who are expected to move into the Bay Area between now and 2040, while at the same time lowering overall greenhouse gas emissions.

The petitioner, a group called Bay Area Citizens that says the plan will hurt their property values, is being represented in court by the Pacific Legal Foundation, a Sacramento conservative organization.

"We've been trying to raise substantive concerns about the plan, the restrictions it places on how individuals can live, how we can travel," said Peter Singleton, a co-founder of Bay Area Citizens. "It restricts people's ability to make their own choices."

The lawsuit alleges that Plan Bay Area violates the California Environmental Quality Act by omitting alternatives to its plan to steer 77 percent of future growth near "priority development areas," including places like Mission Bay in San Francisco, Oakland's Jack London Square and downtown San Rafael, Walnut Creek and Fairfield.

"That's great for people who want to live in crowded city centers," Singleton said. "Most people don't."

The plan is not binding, but that doesn't mean it's inconsequential. When doling out state and federal funds, the MTC would have to give preference to plan-related improvements.

"Do we really need to sacrifice significantly how we live and work to achieve these greenhouse goals?" said Damien Schiff, a Pacific Legal Foundation attorney. "The reality is no, those goals can be achieved without all the pain that Plan Bay Area entails."

MTC spokesman Randy Rentschler said he could not comment on the lawsuit, but noted that regional planning has been routine for decades. But Plan Bay Area has attracted a "whole different cast of characters" this time around, he said.

"I don't think the differences between our plan now and the plan last time are that different, but I think the atmospherics are significantly different," he said, referring to the new focus on reducing greenhouse gases. "Whenever you introduce climate change into a discussion, you tend to amp it up, and that's certainly happened here."

Neal J. Riley is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: nriley@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @realdealneal

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dartanyan1972 5:11 PM on August 6, 2013

Plan Bay Area Is a mildly veiled attempt at Social Engineering done under the guise of Affordable Housing. Just follow the $$$$. PBA is supported by Developers who would build cheap housing with government subsidies and not have to pay local taxes for up to 30 years. Its a con job that is attractive to Liberals who typically are well intended but seldom think about the consequences of acting out their guilt feelings !

REPLY (12) (4) POPULARITY: 8 | | [Report Abuse]

rokeachpasquene 3:57 PM on August 6, 2013

Plan too liberal? When it goes into affect, there sure won't be the projected 2 million population increase and a net loss will result.

REPLY (8) (1) POPULARITY: 7 | | [Report Abuse]

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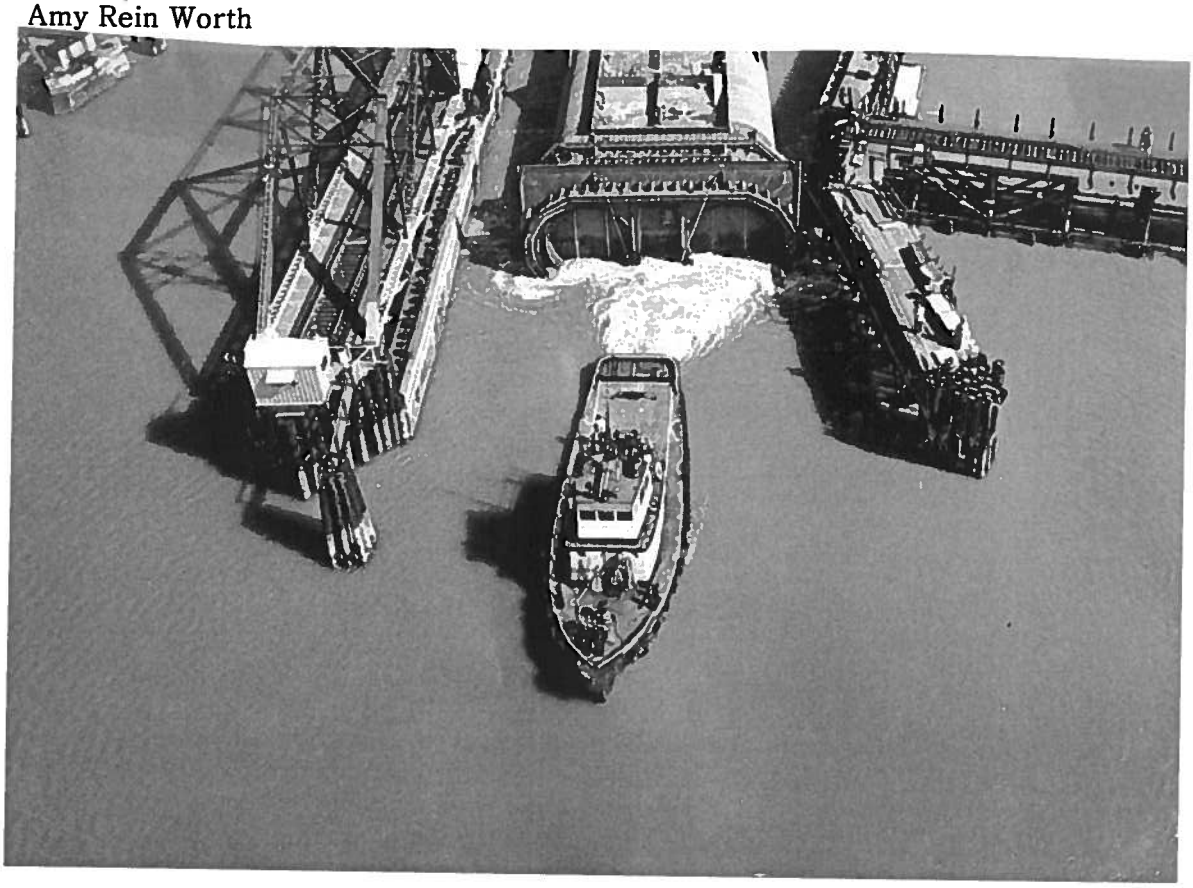
San Francisco Chronicle

Bay Area needs transit investments to keep moving

Amy Rein Worth



Courtesy Kaiser Graphic Arts

A section of BART's Transbay Tube is towed down the Napa River after being fitted with a seismic protection joint at Kaiser Steel's Napa plant in 1968.

History shows the best way for the Bay Area to grow and remain economically strong is to invest in infrastructure – and especially transportation. The evidence hides in plain sight all around us. Regional prosperity built in the era of thriving ports and train travel accelerated with

post-war highways, bridges and airports and then climbed into higher gear as the Bay Area found a new way forward by building BART under the bay and re-establishing a broad and capable public transit network. The result is a transportation network that has become the key to our famous quality of life - and some of the highest personal income of any place on Earth.

The challenge now is to better maintain the roads, highways, buses and rail lines we already have, while also selecting those strategic new investments that will strengthen the Bay Area's economic competitiveness in the years ahead.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission achieved this balancing act in its just-approved Plan Bay Area, the region's long-term transportation and land-use blueprint. The plan dedicates nearly 90 percent of available funding to the upkeep and operation of existing streets, roads, sidewalks, highways and transit systems.

At the same time, Plan Bay Area commits to the strategic expansion of our transportation network, funding such noteworthy projects as BART-to-San Jose and the completion of a regional carpool lane network. Yet despite this prudent approach, the plan reveals a $45 billion shortfall in the funding needed to sustain the Bay Area's transportation infrastructure.

Almost half of this gap - around $20 billion - involves local streets and roads. The Bay Area's potholed roadways give a jolting daily reminder to drivers that postponing investment in repairs does not pay. And ignoring the problem will lead to even costlier rehabilitation down the road.

The public transit needs attention as well. BART and San Francisco Muni have long-term capital shortfalls of $6 billion and $5 billion, respectively.

These systems, which together carry 70 percent of the Bay Area's transit riders, will have less than two-thirds of the funding they need to operate in a state of good repair through 2040. A solution needs to be found. If recent experience is any indication, we can't look to Congress for help.

Washington is paralyzed by partisanship, and lawmakers there have been unable for many years to pass a simple transportation appropriations bill, let alone muster the courage to lead our country on a path of renewed investment at a level befitting a great nation.

In Sacramento, at least, the budget gridlock of the past finally has given way, and Bay Area residents can be hopeful that state leaders will focus on California's neglected infrastructure and the resulting drag on our state's economy. Perhaps the biggest step the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown can take toward preserving and expanding our transportation network would be to lower the voter approval threshold for local and regional transportation tax measures.

Local revenues are by far the biggest source of funds for transportation in the Bay Area. And their importance will only grow in the future. Yet, because of the two-thirds supermajority requirement for tax measures, a basic unfairness can prevail. The most recent example of this occurred in Alameda County, where a 2012 ballot measure to extend and increase the countywide transportation sales tax was defeated, despite winning 66.53 percent of the vote - an "only in California" outcome that is frustrating at best.

The commission strongly supports efforts to lower the vote threshold for local and regional transportation tax measures to 55 percent - the same level that local school bond measures need for approval. Several measures have been introduced in the Legislature that would give voters the chance to vote on a lower approval threshold, perhaps in 2014.

The impact of lowering the threshold requirement for California school bonds has been striking - more than half of those passed in 2012 would

have failed under the two-thirds requirement. After World War II, Californians stepped up to build a network of highways, parklands and schools that were the envy of the world. Here in the Bay Area, their foresight has given us much more than a system of highways and public transit; it made possible the region's phenomenal economic growth and prosperity.

It's time for our generation to do its part to keep the Bay Area moving by taking steps - some of which will be difficult - to make sure that we invest what funds we do have wisely and to make clear to skeptics that additional money will be needed if we hope to keep the Bay Area livable for future generations.

Amy Rein Worth is the mayor of Orinda and serves as chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area's transportation planning and financing agency. To comment, go to **www.sfgate.com/chronicle/submissions/**#1.

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From the Silicon Valley Business Journal
:http://www.bizjournals.com/sanjose/news/2013/08/19/bia-sues-over-plan-bay-area.html

Aug 19, 2013, 2:56pm PDT Updated: Aug 19, 2013, 4:41pm PDT

BIA sues over Plan Bay Area, the region's sweeping land use plan

Nathan Donato-Weinstein
Real Estate Reporter- *Silicon Valley Business Journal*
Email | Twitter

Plan Bay Area just can't catch a break.

The region's top homebuilding trade group and an environmental group are separately taking aim at Plan Bay Area, the just-approved land-use plan that proposes building most new housing units in high-density, transit-oriented developments.

Building Industry Association Bay Area says in a suit filed Friday in Alameda County Superior Court that the plan does not accommodate the Bay Area's future housing needs and fails "to provide a realistic development pattern to accomodate residential growth."

And the Sierra Club, in partnership with Earthjustice and Communities for a Better Environment, said in a suit filed Monday that the plan doesn't do enough to support transportation infrastructure or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The plan's sponsors, Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, are named as defendants in both the challenges.

Those entities last month approved the sweeping plan, which spells out how much housing Bay Area cities need to provide in the coming years to keep up with population growth. Regions are required by a state law, called SB 375, to come up with the plans.

Plan Bay Area anticipates the region's population will grow from 7 million today to roughly 9 million by 2040. It calls for roughly 660,000 new housing units to be built in the region, 80 percent of which would be in high-density, multifamily, transit-oriented development projects.

In its suit, BIA Bay Area says the plan fails in two ways: It does not meet the requirements of SB 375 because it does not include enough new housing units. And the group charges Plan Bay Area's approval process violated provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act. The plan violates CEQA because the sponsors did not adequately describe the project or analyze alternatives adequately, among other reasons, according to a copy of the lawsuit.

"Plan Bay Area is a cop out. It neither plans for enough housing nor provides a reasonable path for developing it and therefore looks a lot more like a pulling up of the draw bridge than a sustainable communities strategy," said Bob Glover, executive officer of BIA Bay Area, in a news release.

In an interview, Glover told me that the group supports high-density, transit-oriented development, but that more realistic options are needed beyond the product type promoted by the plan.

The suit states: "...all of the available evidence shows that it is patently unrealistic to project -- as the proposed project does -- that 80 percent of all future housing growth in the region (528,000 units) will be developed at an average density of 80 units/acre. Or that almost 50 percent of all new housing units will be concentrated in just three cities: San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose."

In its lawsuit, the environmental groups claim that the plan's spending is weighted too heavily toward highways and not public transportation. That, according to the groups, will spur longer commutes, contributing greenhouse gas emissions. The suit also challenges the plan's environmental clearance under CEQA.

"Climate disruption is a threat to Bay Area families, yet our planning agencies have failed to reduce reliance on cars and trucks, the number one source of climate-disrupting air pollution in California," said Matt Williams of the Sierra Club San Francisco Bay Chapter. "We need a Plan Bay Area that expands public transportation and creates more affordable housing near these transit systems. Bay Area planners should make getting around town easier, cleaner, and more affordable."

This makes three lawsuits targeting the plan. Earlier this month, a libertarian group sued over the plan as well.

ABAG declined to comment on Monday.

Nathan Donato-Weinstein covers commercial real estate and transportation for the Silicon Valley Business Journal.

Dick Spotswood: Both sides need to keep housing debate civil

Posted: marinij.com

THINGS are getting a bit out of hand over the discussion centering around Plan Bay Area and high-density housing.

The recent North San Rafael meeting over the Marinwood housing proposal was a rowdy example of the wrong way to address an important issue. While the vast majority of people in attendance were respectful, a few yahoos tried to humiliate Supervisor Susan Adams by making catcalls and grabbing the microphone.

It seems angry homeowners have learned the lessons of old-time radicals like Saul Alinsky. This in-your-face approach was long a preferred maneuver by the radical left and militant labor organizers.

Simultaneously, today's far left adopts the good ole boys' habit of inciting hatred for their opponents. None of this bridges any gaps or solves problems.

This isn't to deny that the housing discussion shouldn't occur and that it may occasionally get heated. There are major cleavages in America's civic affairs and they should be addressed ... but, at least in Marin, this should be accomplished in a manner consistent with our local tradition of civil discourse.

It doesn't matter if this type of organized chaos comes from the left, right or center. Adams didn't merit that behavior and it needs to stop. Don't agree with her? She is up for reelection next year. Vote for one of her challengers.

The neighborhood activists' mirror image are housing activists, often on the payroll of nonprofits and allied groups on the political left. Their habit is to characterize those with whom they disagree as "racist," or other terms designed to instill hate. By definition this is hate speech and should be condemned.

While there's a strain of racism among every subset of Americans, the word is debased when it's used against those who clearly are not racists. It's a tactic that's designed to intimidate liberal politicians, like those on Marin's Board of Supervisors, who are terrorized by this epitaph. Those who pursue this tired routine trivialize their own cause.

That's coupled with an only-in-Marin tactic. Housing activists label their opponents "Republicans" or Tea Partyites. There are a few of the far-right latching themselves to the movement critical of Plan Bay Area. They are the exception and should be marginalized by rational opponents of the plan.

When an audience at a public forum starts to get out of hand, the elected official or community leader most closely associated with the political position of the angry few needs to speaks up. He or she must remind attendees the audience is supposedly composed of educated, sophisticated citizens and that type of rude behavior is unacceptable. If that

reproach fails, troublemakers are then reminded that their approach is harming their own cause.

Community leaders like Mill Valley's Susan Kirsch or supervisorial candidates Toni Shroyer and Carol Brandt are respected by neighborhood activists. They can and should play this vital role by standing up and exhibiting thoughtful leadership.

Those few who find joy in hurling hate words can also be tamed. Many are associated with nonprofit organizations wholly dependent on quasi-public funding.

While it's inappropriate that Adams was the target of some angry residents, the three-term supervisor was silent when it comes to her allies on the left hurling invectives.

If Adams, Steve Kinsey, the Marin Community Foundation and bureaucrats at the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development put out the word that if the hate-inducing speech doesn't end, the funding spigot will be turned off, the old "racist" stunt will end in "a New York minute."

Columnist Dick Spotswood of Mill Valley now shares his views on local politics twice weekly in the IJ. His email address is spotswood@comcast.net.

Courthouse News Service

Thursday, August 08, 2013 Last Update: 9:28 AM PT

Citizens Fight Bay Area 'Smart Growth' Plan

By WILLIAM DOTINGA

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OAKLAND, Calif. (CN) - Citing environmental concerns, a Bay Area citizens' group asked a state judge to set aside a regional urban plan which advocates high-density growth rather than suburban sprawl.

Bay Area Citizens, a nonprofit represented by self-described conservative legal watchdog Pacific Legal Foundation, filed for writ of mandate in Alameda County Court.

It sued the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, claiming the agencies' plan to comply with state greenhouse gas emissions law violates the California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA.

State law requires that local agencies produce a sustainable-communities strategy to reduce passenger vehicle CO_2 emissions by 7 percent by 2020, and by 15 percent by 2035.

The plaintiff claims the Bay Area agencies plan to do this through "a draconian high-density land use regime that will require nearly 80 percent of new housing and over 60 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area to be located within just 5 percent of the region's surface area."

Broadly speaking, the plaintiff opposes so-called "smart growth," which creates densely populated, walkable, mixed-use commercial and residential centers, to reduce sprawl and traffic congestion. Bay Area Citizens seems to prefer spending public money on road and bridge improvements rather than mass transit, and to oppose zoning-or to prefer "more flexible" zoning.

The plaintiff claims that while the sustainable-communities strategy itself does not regulate land use, it "provides powerful tools to coerce a local government to comply with the strategy's land-use prescriptions, even over the wishes of local residents, taxpayers and their elected representatives."

The lawsuit continues: "Therefore, the strategy has a significant impact on the region's environment, for at least two reasons. First, the strategy is incorporated into the region's transportation plan, which largely dictates which transportation projects will be funded and built. Second, the region's housing need allocation (formulated by the Department of Housing and Community Development in conjunction with the Association of Bay Area Governments pursuant to the planning and zoning law), to which local governments must conform to their general plans, must be consistent with the strategy. Because of these impacts, the promulgation of a strategy triggers CEQA." (Parentheses in complaint.)

Defendants' plan, called Plan Bay Area, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing vehicle miles traveled, through high-density urban planning. Planning agencies have identified 200 "priority development areas" - near transit, jobs, shopping and services - that can be built upward rather than outward.

Plan Bay Area calls for reduced passenger vehicle use by increasing mass transit ridership and through extension and construction of light and heavy rail. Its accompanying environmental impact report acknowledges that increased construction will increase pollution, and the plan itself will disrupt or displace people and businesses, according to the plaintiff.

The group claims the plan is unnecessary, and that the agencies ignored emissions-reduction policies already in place at the state level that will achieve greenhouse gas targets. And it claims that gasoline tax revenue - Plan Bay Area's funding source - is projected to fall, as fuel consumption in the Bay Area will be reduced by 32 percent by 2035.

Furthermore, "the plan's high-density housing mandates and mass transit elements will actually increase greenhouse gas emissions," the complaint states. "The plan's emphasis on low-performing rail will lead to increased greenhouse gases, because rail construction produces significant greenhouse gas emissions that are not recouped over the life of the rail project. If transit has any emission efficiencies over passenger vehicles, it is by encouraging those individuals who own high-polluting vehicles to leave them at home. As the Citizens' expert Tom Rubin explained, 'the only way for transit to make a positive contribution to reductions in energy usage and emissions is for transit to do what it does best - first serve the transit disadvantaged, those whose alternative to transit is a very dirty car.' Yet the plan makes little provision for improving transit service for those poorer communities where jalopy ownership is highest. Thus, the plan will lead to high-polluting vehicles remaining in service. The plan's emphasis on forcing the lion's share of new development into urban priority development areas will increase traffic congestion and consequently emissions. People who work in the Bay Area but do not want to live in high-density developments will move outside the area, thus increasing their commutes and emissions. Further, high-density urban developments are climatological sinks, in that they require more energy to cool and to heat than dispersed single family residences. The increased energy requirements of these developments in turn lead to increased emissions."

The real issue, Bay Area Citizens claims, is what it calls a "wrongheaded emphasis on new low-performing rail construction," rather than putting more money into roads, freeways and bridges.

The group cites the Portland, Ore. transit system in the 35-page lawsuit.

"Portland has the most ambitious mass transit program in the country, because of the more stringent 'smart growth' laws in Oregon, and because the Oregon Legislature has granted the Portland area transit authority extraordinary regulatory power. Notwithstanding its 'advanced' transit program, Portland still has an annual average growth rate of vehicle miles traveled of 2.18 percent, while the [Bay Area] plan inexplicably predicts it will be able to reduce the growth rate of vehicle miles traveled to 0.62 percent.

"The plan's models are not capable of reliably predicting transit use and development decades into the future, as the plan otherwise contends, for several reasons. First, the models are based on the 'false hypothesis that the development of priority development areas with good transit access generates economic development.' Second, they suppose in the no-project alternative that no change in zoning will occur over the multi-decade life of the plan, even while assuming unlimited upzoning for the plan and its alternatives. Third, they assume that technology and human behavior will not change over the plan's several decades. Fourth, indeed, the plan's models have a 1.55 percent error rate in predicting the past, yet the plan makes no account of any error rate - much less a comparable error rate - in predicting the future."

Population and job growth projections also led to the agencies' over-projection of greenhouse gas emissions and an overstated need for the project, the group claims. They claim the environmental report ignores increasing fuel efficiency and improving fuel composition, and the agencies shut out their suggestions on how to meet air quality targets.

"In their comments, the Citizens underscored that environmentally sensitive alternatives

to the plan exist that would achieve the plan's basic objectives of greenhouse gas reduction and housing development without the plan's significant and unavoidable impacts. 'The Bay Area Citizens Transportation and Housing Alternative' recommends that the region's sustainable community strategy:

"(a) Expand and improve the existing transit system;

"(b) Significantly reduce fares to encourage individuals to abandon their high-emission vehicles and thereby support the mobility needs of lower-income residents;

"(c) De-emphasize the expansion of high carbon footprint and low cost effective rail transit and ferry service;

"(d) Study how casual carpooling by real-time matching through portable electronic devices can reduce vehicle miles traveled;

"(e) Encourage flexibility in local zoning to facilitate achievement of regional housing needs;

"(f) Advocate for housing type and location consistent with local preferences;

"(g) Encourage expanded use of telecommuting;

"(h) Insist that local communities be informed of the public subsidy costs of affordable housing before the assignment of regional housing needs assessment allocations;

"(i) Insist that local communities be informed of the unfunded mandates involved with the obligation to provide affordable housing before that obligation is accepted;

"(j) Advocate for flexibility in transportation funding;

"(k) Advocate for reform of California housing laws;

"(l) Focus on measurable outputs, such as transit ridership and satisfaction, rather than the cost of inputs."

How it is that significantly reducing transit fares will help pay the bills of existing transit systems is unclear from the group's petition. According to the Bay Area Rapid Transit's financial report from 2010 - the most recent year available - the system known locally as BART makes only 49 percent of its operating funds from passenger fares, despite more than 101 million passenger trips that year.

According to the report, BART made just 23.9 cents per passenger mile in 2010, while its operating costs exceeded 35 cents per passenger mile. BART is heavily subsidized: the system gleaned 37 percent of its operating income from local taxes and financial assistance, while 100 percent of its capital funding came from local, district, state and federal tax dollars.

The plaintiff offered no examples in its lawsuit on how it would tackle affordable housing laws either, most of which are mandated by California and federal laws. According to the state Department of Housing and Community Development website, "the California Legislature and courts have repeatedly indicated in statute and case law that housing is an issue of statewide concern."

Plan Bay Area's supporters touted the plan as necessary after its passage on July 18, noting that the area's population is expected to grow from 7 million to 9 million by 2040.

Napa County Supervisor Mark Luce, the Association of Bay Area Government's president and a member of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, said the plan creates "a more sustainable Bay Area for future generations."

And Orinda Mayor and Transportation Commission Chairwoman Amy Rein Worth described the plan as evolutionary rather than evolutionary.

"For decades, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has been charged by state and federal law to produce a long term regional transportation plan, while the association has been responsible for assessing regional housing needs. Plan Bay Area puts these elements together in a way that makes sense," Worth said, according to the commission's website.

Bay Area Citizens' spokesman Peter Singleton said in a statement that the group "passed the hat among ourselves to commission independent research" backing their claims. The group accuses the agencies of failing to identify the plan's basic objectives, to adequately assess a "no project" alternative, to include reasonable and feasible alternatives, and a lack of

response to public comments - all requirements under CEQA.

The group seeks an order for a new environmental report that complies with CEQA.

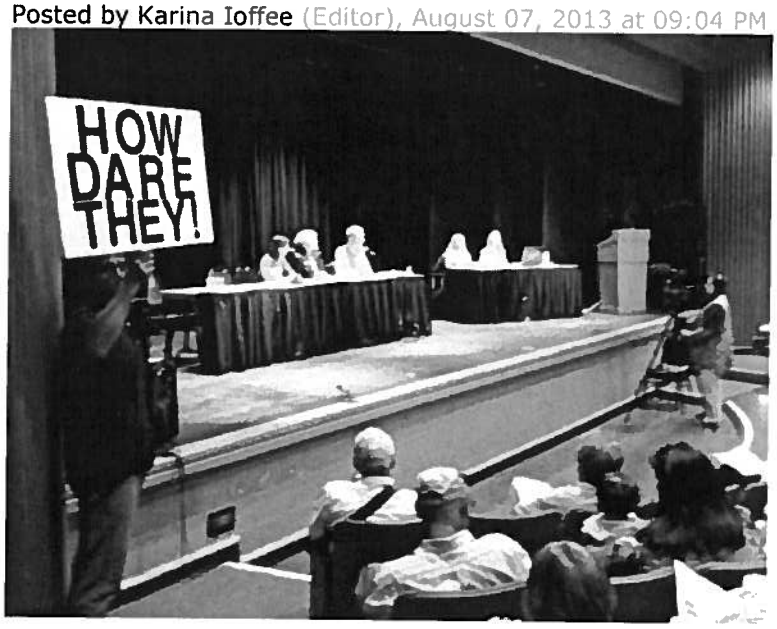
They are represented by Damien Schiff with the Pacific Legal Foundation.

Novato Patch

Conservative Group Sues to Stop Plan Bay Area

Says vital information was ignored by transportation officials and a full environmental review not conducted

Posted by Karina Ioffee (Editor), August 07, 2013 at 09:04 PM



By Chris Rooney

Plan Bay Area, a controversial regional transportation plan that incorporates high-density construction, is being challenged in court by a group of residents.
Bay Area Citizens, or BAC, says that the plan violates the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and must, therefore, be struck down.

The plaintiffs are a coalition of residents from throughout the region who have actively monitored the plan's development, offering critiques and proposing alternatives.

The coalition is represented by attorneys with Pacific Legal Foundation, a conservative organization that advocates for limited government and individual rights.

Damien Schiff, an attorney with the Pacific Legal Foundation, told the Marin Independent Journal that the law required the regional agencies proposing Plan Bay Area to consider alternatives that would achieve the same results but with reduced effect on the environment.

"Here we think the plan fundamentally failed," Schiff told the Marin IJ.

He said that whenever "a proposed government action carries major development implications, CEQA requires that the public be made fully aware of environmental consequences — the consequences both of proceeding and of not going ahead. This didn't happen with Plan Bay Area"

Instead, Schiff said, the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission ignored facts that were not convenient to them in order to pack more housing into affluent neighborhoods.

Bay Area Citizens was founded in March by Marin County residents, although the lawsuit was filed in Alameda County Superior Court.

Plan Bay Area creates housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which mandates that all of the state's 18 metropolitan areas reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles by 7 percent per capita by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035.

Plan Bay Area, according to the Marin IJ, "aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets by requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 priority development areas. These are areas typically accessible to mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money."

Schiff told the Marin IJ that the Plan Bay Area approval process was flawed because it didn't include an evaluation of an alternative approach suggested by Bay Area Citizens, which suggested expanded bus service and reduced transit fares.

As Development Surges, Construction Worker 'Living Wage'

Epoch Times

By Catherine Yang (http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/author/catherine-yang/), Epoch Times (http://www.theepochtimes.
August 1, 2013
Last Updated: July 31, 2013 9:34 pm

CITY, Calif.—The huge wave of development all over the Bay Area has been no surprise given the upward trend the real estate industry has seen in the past half year, but communities are worried that these developers are only taking without giving back. According to the Association of Bay Area Governments, this trend of development is only going to continue.

Over 350 people rallied in Redwood City Tuesday in front of BRE Properties' 264-unit apartment complex under construction, to protest for "wage equality."

"They're not hiring our local contractors and therefore not hiring our local workers," says Bruce Word, president and business manager of the union Sheet Metal Workers Local 104 (SMW 104). "It's driving down wages, and [developers] aren't paying a livable wage in the area."

Currently, many of the construction workers in Redwood City commute an hour to an hour and a half to their construction jobs in Redwood City, and the local union workers are doing the same, taking long commutes to look for jobs in other cities.

To date, BRE president Connie Moore has not responded to the unions' requests and inquiries. Recently, 77 county supervisors and Redwood City Council Members signed a letter to Moore expressing concerns that the construction workers are not receiving benefits or a living wage.

"We can't compete with their low wages because our whole package is about $200 per hour. These guys here are getting paid $12," says Kyle Richey, a member of SMW 104.

According to community leaders, elected officials have played a large part in the effort to communicate with developers, and legislation will follow.

"It's vitally important that us, as policy makers, regardless of city, realize that we have an important responsibility to help give birth to these community benefits programs," said County Supervisor Warren Slocum. "Development should contribute amenities to further greater the communities, development should offer a diversity of housing stock, and not just be for the wealthy."

State Senator Jerry Hill spoke at the rally as well, promising to address the issue in the State Senate if necessary.

"We need to provide for those who live here at all levels," Hill said. "How can you expect people to pay the price of these properties and not be able to earn a living to pay for that? You can't expect that, it can't be done, and it's not right."

The legislation that provided the opportunities for these infill housing developments was SB 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 put forth by the California Air Resources Board, says Hill. According to Hill, the target is to reduce greenhouses gases, but if the people who work in Redwood City don't live there and the people who live there can't work there, changes need to be implemented.

"That's the incentive, that's why we want this to come together—but it's not, as long as we don't provide for the working men and women of this community, and we're not doing that today," Hill said.

Rallies in other cities around the Bay Area are to be scheduled and have already been held in Sunnyvale and San Francisco.

Dick Spotswood: Corte Madera development a test for housing theory

Posted: marinij.com

NOW that the fractious debate over Plan Bay Area is over, Marinites might want to see what true high-density housing looks like.

All they need to do is drive to Corte Madera. Two minutes off Highway 101, at the corner of Tamal Vista Boulevard and Wornum Drive, the curious can see for themselves.

Once completed in early 2014, the 180-unit four-story apartment complex at 195 Tamal Vista presents a fine opportunity to learn if high-density, supposedly transit-oriented development delivers the environmental and social benefits promised by its advocates.

This San Jose-style massive apartment block on the site of the old WinCup plant has both good and bad aspects.

Built by big-time developer MacFarlane Partners, the looming structure consists of 162 market-rate apartments and only 18 units for lower-income residents. MacFarlane's business plan calls for "high-density, urban-style living."

Plan Bay Area is all about construction of high-density housing near transit corridors. This project, approved before the plan was adopted, provides an example of what's encouraged.

Tamal Vista is immediately adjacent to a transit corridor, Highway 101 and the north-south bikeway.

There's no question that it's high density at 40 units per acre.

Corte Madera, a town inaccurately criticized for dragging its feet when it comes to building housing, delivers big time.

Further, it's in a mostly commercial area where massive construction doesn't degrade single-family home neighborhoods. It replaces a factory that employed a hundred workers who often commuted from out of the county.

The project is privately owned, so it pays property taxes for schools, police and fire.

What's wrong, other than a massive design wholly inappropriate for Central Marin?

The connection to transit is illusory. The seven-minute walk to the scruffy freeway bus pad is useful if potential residents work in San Francisco's Financial District, Golden Gate Transit's destination.

The reality is that the old Financial District isn't the job magnet it was 25 years ago.

It's a 20-minute walk from Tamal Vista to Larkspur's Ferry Terminal. Few daily commuters will make that trek. They could drive, except the ferry's parking lot is jammed.

The 10-minute walk to the Town Center shopping mall hardly makes this "urban style" living. Most

residents will drive to Safeway, not walk.

That 195 Tamal Vista has only 18 affordable apartments makes a mockery of what high-density new urbanism is supposedly about. There's little need in Marin for more market-rate housing.

What's wanted are homes for working folks whose jobs are already in Marin.

This project does little to deliver them.

Once finished, 195 Tamal Vista will produce more traffic at an intersection that's already near capacity. Wornum Drive is where the Transportation Authority of Marin plans to locate a new freeway off-ramp, making an already bad situation worse.

Corte Madera had little choice but to approve the high-density project. The town was under pressure from the Association of Bay Area Governments and activists to build more housing.

This was one of the few sites where it made sense to build big.

This construction now makes an ideal test ground for the concept of high-density housing. Corte Madera should monitor what happens once 195 Tamal Vista opens.

Find out where the new residents work. Are their jobs located nearby or far away? How many apartment dwellers either use transit or instead drive to work, shop and play?

What's the project's real-world impact on local streets?

The results should disclose whether suburban high-density urban-style housing provides the environmental benefits that supporters claim or if it's just marketing hype from real estate developers.

Columnist Dick Spotswood of Mill Valley now shares his views on local politics twice weekly in the IJ. His email address is spotswood@comcast.net.

Select FILE --> PRINT to print this topic.

Environment is top priority for Californias

Tim Hunt, posted by Tim Hunt, a resident of the Castlewood neighborhood, on Aug 8, 2013 at 8:24 am

The Public Policy Institute of California's 13th annual poll on the environment contained a few surprises, but demonstrated that California is an increasingly blue state with a tight focus on the environment without regard to its potential effects on the economy.

The survey found a sharp 9 percent year-over-year increase in the number of respondents who believe the state needs to take action now to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Two similar questions showed that the 2,100 respondents wanted immediate action now.

Notably, well under half of the respondents knew about the state's cap-and-trade program to reduce emissions—the proceeds this year are propping up the general fund and should go to more targeted uses next year. The results: huge majorities (76-80 percent) favor requiring automakers, energy companies, manufacturers and power plants to reduce emissions—no thought of the costs to the consumers.

The vast majority also supported land use regulations such as those established in Plan Bay Area. They also favored using money to support public transit and repave roads. Notably two-thirds of respondents were solo drivers to work—Perhaps, do as I say not as I do, was in play here.

One intriguing split: a bare 51 percent favored the Keystone XL pipeline that would carry oil extracted from Canadian oil sands to refineries on the Gulf Coast. By contrast, the same narrow majority opposed increased fracking to extract more carbon-based energy in California. Fracking is driving the dramatic economic expansion in North Dakota where the unemployment rate is tiny and there has been an influx of people finding well-paid jobs. The biggest challenge there is finding housing.

It's likely that the Democrat-dominated Legislature will apply additional regulations to fracking, which has been going on for decades in California without mishap. States that have turned energy companies loose to pursue the advanced technologies are seeing lots of jobs and potential for significant additional investment from manufacturing companies that require lots of power. Natural gas prices have dropped significantly as the supply has soared.

So, California, like New York, is prepared to throttle if not stifle a proven technology because of environmental bogey men. Governor Brown already has required that one-third of the electrical power in California come from renewable sources and that regulation excludes the clean hydroelectric power from the dams around the state. As President Obama said during his campaign—electrical rates would have to soar—They have and will continue to. Californians, thanks to the woefully executed deregulation and the ensuing panic from then-governor Gray Davis, pay very high rates for both electricity and natural gas (how much has your gas bill gone down with a supply glut?).

The tradeoff: allowing energy companies to aggressively pursue fracking on the Monterey shale formation could result in 500,000 new jobs—well paying jobs. So, if they miss by a factor of five, 100,000 jobs in a growth industry that could lower energy costs is something that should be embraced.

It will involve legislators and the governor taking off their green-shaded glasses.

Comments

KQED

BAY AREA

Environmentalist Coalition Files Lawsuit Against Plan Bay Area Agencies

by KQED News Staff and Wires | August 19, 2013 — 5:33 PM

Knight Foundation/Wikimedia Commons

A Plan Bay Area pamphlet at a meeting held in Mountain View, CA in April 2011.

On Monday, a coalition of environmentalists filed a lawsuit against the agencies behind Plan Bay Area, a long-term transportation and land-use strategy adopted last month.

The groups accuse the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments of focusing too much on building new highways and not enough on public transportation.

Earthjustice, Communities for a Better Environment and the Sierra Club were the groups who filed the suit in Alameda County Superior Court. What are they hoping to gain from the litigation?

Reporter Stephanie Martin spoke with Irene Gutierrez, an attorney with Earthjustice.

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Chris Treadway: From Carquinez Drive to Richmond shoreline, Bay Trail makes progress

By Chris Treadway Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

These is lots of Bay Trail news in West County to report -- and for once not all of it is in Richmond.

A 1.7-mile stretch of the former county road between Crockett and Martinez known as Carquinez Scenic Drive was fenced off this week to start a two-year project to make it safe for public use.

The road was closed to motor traffic in the 1980s because of landslide damage. The East Bay Regional Park District acquired it from the county in December 2012 after extended negotiations.

The $5.6 million construction project "will include stabilization of embankments and cut slopes with retaining walls and debris walls; installation of new and repair of existing drainage systems; and rehabilitation and construction of the old roadway to a multiuse, Class I bicycle/pedestrian trail," the district announced.

In the meantime, the scenic drive is closed to the public because of safety concerns, even during a scheduled halt of construction from October 2013 to April 2014.

"When completed, it will be one of the most scenic trails in the region, with sweeping views of the Carquinez Strait, and a way to access parkland in the Martinez, Briones, Crockett and Rodeo areas," said park district General Manager Robert E. Doyle.

Learn more about the project at www.ebparks.org/parks/carquinez.

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Not surprisingly, there is also Bay Trail news from Richmond, already home to more stretches of the trail than any other city.

Just over a week ago the City Council approved a $384,500 construction contract to close two gaps in the Ferry Point Loop trail in Point Richmond and create additional public shoreline access." "When completed this fall, the result will be a continuous Class I hiking and biking trail between Shipyard 3 Trail and Ferry Point," noted the Trails for Richmond Action Committee.

Another $18,000 was approved by the council to help the regional park district with a requested redesign of the planned Atlas Road bridge that will be the second entrance to Point Pinole Regional Shoreline. The redesign, recommended by the city'd design review board, calls for narrowing the vehicle lanes there in order to widen the Bay Trail by two feet. Work on the project is expected to be done by late 2014.

Richmond also accepted a $45,000 grant from the Association of Bay Area Governments and applying the funds to close a trail gap by the Richmond Plunge between Cutting Boulevard and the tunnel to Ferry Point.

Learn more about the projects and events on existing portions of the trail at www.pointrichmond.com/baytrail/.

WEST COUNTY NOTES: The next concert in the free Point Richmond Music summer series starts at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 9 with a set by energetic acoustic quartet Rusty String Express on the outdoor stage at Park Place and Washington Avenue. They will be followed to the stage at 6:45 p.m. by singer/songwriter Jenny Kerr.

In addition to the danceable music there will also be a raffle, no-host bar, face-painting

for children and dining at restaurants in the historic district.

Details: www.pointrichmondmusic.com.

- Biotech Partners, a nonprofit organization established in 1993 by the city of Berkeley and Bayer HealthCare, is hosting "Bravo! A Celebration of Biotech Partners' Graduates and Interns" this week at Berkeley High School, 1980 Allston Way.

The annual event acknowledges the accomplishments of the Career Technical Education program "that introduces low income and minority high school students to the bioscience industry."

This year the program (www.biotechpartners.org) gave 42 interns from Berkeley High and Oakland Tech experience from June through August at the facilities of 16 partners, including Aemtek Laboratories in Fremont, the Alameda County Sherriff's Office Crime Lab in San Leandro, Bayer HealthCare in Berkeley and San Francisco-Mission Bay, Berkeley Dog & Cat Hospital, Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute in Oakland, Highland Hospital in Oakland, Joint BioEnergy Institute (JBEI) in Emeryville, Kaiser Oakland Medical Center, Libby Laboratories in Berkeley, Mango Materials in Albany, Xoma in Berkeley and four UC Berkeley Labs.

- Chevron USA is inviting qualified organizations to apply for grants from its Economic Self-Sufficiency program or its STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Education program.

The company will give as many as five grants for each program and has earmarked a total of $1 million for the awards.

An informational meeting on the two grant programs will be held from 1 to 2 p.m. Aug. 13 at the Marina Bay Yacht Harbor, 1340 Marina Way South, Richmond. To RSVP email Andrea Bailey at andreabailey@chevron.com.

Contact Chris Treadway at 510-262-2784 or ctreadway@bayareanewsgroup.com. Follow him at Twitter.com/christreadway. Stay up-to-date on West Contra Costa news at IBABuzz.com/westcounty.

ST. HELENA STAR

Guest commentary: Pope Street project is not sustainable for St. Helena

22 HOURS AGO • KATHY COLDIRON

The development between McCorkle and Pope that a small local group, Our Town St. Helena, is promoting goes against all principles, recommendations and well-researched planning that the Association of Bay Area Governments, or ABAG, made when allocating the 31 affordable housing units that St. Helena is required to plan for during the next cycle, from 2014 through 2022.

ABAG formulates the number of affordable housing units by working with state, county and local community leaders including planners, city councils and supervisors from nine counties and 101 cities. The process takes more than two years and involves a variety of public meetings. Research is completed by professionals in the fields of planning, environmental protection, population and economic growth before the numbers are agreed upon for each city in the Bay Area.

ABAG, the state and our regional counties agree that our most recent development pattern has been auto-dependent on housing developments that are at the outer edges of the Bay Area and too far from major employment centers. This has contributed to the Bay Area's loss of open space and agricultural lands and it has created traffic congestion and higher greenhouse gas emissions.

Agricultural and natural resources are a well-known industry sector in the Bay Area, particularly in wine country, which includes Napa and Sonoma counties. However, these industries are projected to see only 5 percent growth in the next 25 years, and what job growth there is will be in travel and tourism, which suggests that protecting our agricultural land and open space will become even more important.

The California Housing Element Law actually requires regional housing needs to meet several housing objectives, including the protection of the environment and agricultural resources as well as public health and safety.

Higher housing number allocations have been given to cities that have infrastructure that can handle more growth, that are near transportation hubs and that are closer to where the most jobs are. Cities in the hinterlands, farther from the higher job growth areas, have been allocated lower housing unit numbers, such as 27 for Calistoga, 31 for St. Helena and 17 for Yountville. Our smaller towns don't have the adequate roads, water, growth or other infrastructure to support larger developments. So, American Canyon and Napa have been given much higher allocations for housing units: 392 units for American Canyon and 835 for Napa. This is for years 2014 to 2022.

The Napa Pipe Project also has recently been approved. This new housing project is commuting distance to larger job growth areas, and Napa has more infrastructure as well as water for a substantial population increase. However, this should be a warning to St.

Helena: Now, how likely will it be that Napa will be able to supply us with needed water during a drought?

St. Helena does NOT have the infrastructure to support more than 120 additional cars coming on to Pope Street each day from the Our Town project, nor does it protect our town's agricultural land. Instead it sets a precedent that encourages more road extensions and further potential open space being destroyed for building.

I believe our City Council has followed the state's new approach to planning by supporting small clusters of affordable housing units spread out around our town in the upcoming housing cycle. The Our Town project is well more than 31 units. We already have approximately 18 affordable units from the Magnolia Oaks project and eight more units planned for Pope Street, and a few more could easily be added with second units to reach our 31 units. The Our Town group is pushing a project that derails all the goals and policies set forth by the state and our local agencies. They are mandating a project that doesn't serve the best interests of our entire community, nor does it fit with what the majority of people in this town want. Additionally, what scientific research have they done to support that their project is a more efficient way to plan for growth than what the state, ABAG and local agencies believe?

Why should we even consider this plan? We don't have the water, the proper roads, forecasted jobs or population growth to support this development. The quality of life that the residents of this entire town have enjoyed for years is also at risk. Will we become an urbanized suburb of Napa, or will we retain the small-town character that most of us enjoy?

The former mayor of San Jose who was the president of ABAG said, "We have the opportunity to create a legacy that advances the quality of life in our region. The homes that we plan for and the development patterns we establish today will last for generations — we can choose local land use decisions that will create a more sustainable region."

The Our Town project is NOT sustainable in our town.

Factual information provided by California Department of Housing and Community Development and Association of Bay Area Governments, which has served Bay Area counties for 50 years.

(Kathy Coldiron is a St. Helena resident.)

“Where’s the Beef” for new job creation in California?

Richard Eber

Reviewing the projections of the *Stack and Pack Environmentalists* who authored the **One Bay Area Plan**, we see that they always like to speak about job creation associated with the projects they are pushing in their urban planning models. While this optimistic outlook looks good on paper, we have to ask the rhetorical question *Where’s the Beef?*

How will **Project Development Areas (PDA’s)** sites paying prevailing wages, partially subsidized by public financing, translate into employment? While it is true those in trade unions, government, and public transit are handsomely rewarded, what about the people who will populate what is left behind?

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the **Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)** predicts their building boom will bring high paying jobs to those who reside in their public palaces. Unfortunately, there is little economic reality to support this contention.

What businesses are going to be in a position to pay *“living wages”* in performing jobs that utilize expensive public transit to and from work? While this formula works for the high tech sector, the majority who will be employed in service capacities will surely struggle.

In trying to predict job growth it is best to take a geologic “The key to the future is the past” approach to see what previously has worked for success in expanding business opportunities and reducing unemployment. According to a recent survey in **Forbes Magazine** the most important considerations for achieving these goals are:

1. Education and training of the available job force
2. Affordable housing and cost of living
3. Reasonable energy costs primarily for manufacturing.
4. Low rates for personal and corporate income taxes.
5. A favorable business environment created by local and state governments.

Looking at this criteria, it does not appear the State of California meets many of these qualities for encouraging business opportunities in the next couple years. It is no coincidence Forbes predicted that Texas led by Austin, has provided seven of the top ten cities where employment is expected to expand during this time period Only Santa Cruz, because of its nitch in high tech, was able to find itself providing similar job growth to Texas for cities located in California

It is no wonder that much maligned Texas Governor Rick Perry, was able a few months ago to successfully make a recruiting trip to California to lure businesses to relocate in the Lone Star State. This strategy proved to be successful as *Waste Connections, EBay, Electronic Arts, AT&T* and Time Warner, all have recently done major expansions in Longhorn land.

In addition, it is no coincidence that Texas under Perry’s reign, is a right to work state where private enterprise is not perceived to be a close associate of Darth Vader. Along with this business friendly environment, companies are not subject to the number of government permits and costly regulations that boggs down private enterprise in California.

Back on the ranch in Sacramento, the social engineers who control government in California continue to be obcessed with green house gasses, global warming, energy off sets, and how they can build new communities

to match their socialistic views of how society should be configured. In doing this they have failed to take into account the human element which ultimately determines where population growth occurs or declines.

The future will determine if families would prefer to reside in stack and pack PDA's or would they rather settle in suburban communities that more fit the traditional American Dream model? Viewing recent trends, it would appear current residents of California are heading East to greener pastures.

For proof of what people desire for their families we need to look no further than high unemployment rates in California especially among African Americans and Hispanics. Faced with high taxes, high energy costs, high cost of living and higher everything many people who migrated to the land of opportunity a couple generations ago, are now fleeing California in record numbers.

As there is no indication that this trend will change, it is difficult to understand why urban planners forecast the need for several million additional housing units to be constructed in the next quarter century. Where do these projections come from and what are they based upon?

Are the wealthy business owners who left California because of high personal and corporate taxes going to come back some day with the jobs they took with them? Will families who have found affordable housing in single family homes throughout the nation want to sell these dwellings for the promise of reducing the carbon footprint by relocating in PDA's in the Bay Area? Can people be counted on to voluntarily abandon their cars in order take public transportation and ride bikes as a lifestyle choice?

Unfortunately, the answer to these questions is a resounding "no". The State of California whose political process is dominated by ultra liberal ideologues, is totally out of touch with what is going on in the rest of the country and what might happen in the future.

Ironically, these same people are asking private enterprise to step up to the plate and hire workers at living wages and pay taxes to support government entitlement programs. While this strategy can work for banks, utilities, medical care, and in general for businesses who have limited competition, small entrepreneurs just don't have the resources to compete in this environment.

Meanwhile in Sacramento, share the wealth advocates are insisting through their budget priorities of creating an entitlement society where tax payers pick up the tab for their social engineering schemes. Along with this, we now have the prospect of SB-1 to put the icing on the cake. This State Senate bill aims to institutionalize the One Bay Area Plan to dictate all urban planning decisions on a local level will be determined by the State

It would appear by the time these programs will have proven to fail, it will be difficult to recruit back those who left the Golden State for more lucrative opportunities. By that time the question of *"Where's the Beef"* will be well known; In Austin Texas. *Hook em Horns!*

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ICF International Inc : ICF International Reports Second Quarter 2013 Results

08/01/2013 | 04:10pm US/Eastern • Recommend: 0

- **Total Revenue of $242 Million; Diluted Earnings Per Share of $0.52**
- **Commercial Revenues Growing; Energy Efficiency Program Revenues Up 21 Percent**
- **Federal Revenues Remain Stable**
- **Contract Sales of $236 Million, Up 16 Percent**
- **First-Half Cash Flow From Operations Was $30.3 Million, Up 7 Percent**
- **Raises Full Year 2013 Guidance Midpoints for Revenues and Diluted EPS**
- **Completed Acquisition of E-commerce Technology Services Firm on July 31**

ICF International, Inc. (NASDAQ:ICFI), a leading provider of consulting services and technology solutions to government and commercial clients, reported results for the second quarter ended June 30, 2013.

Second Quarter 2013 Results and Highlights

"Second quarter results were similar to those of the first quarter, reflecting the continued growth of our commercial business, which was driven by a 21.3 percent increase in energy efficiency revenues, and the improved traction of our non-U.S. government business. At the same time, U.S. Federal Government revenues remained stable compared to last year, which we consider to be solid performance in light of current market conditions. Earnings per diluted share were the same as the prior year's second quarter, inclusive of acquisition expenses, although operating income was lower due primarily to higher subcontractor activity on government contracts," said ICF Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Sudhakar Kesavan.

For the second quarter, total revenue was $241.6 million, a 0.8 percent increase over the $239.6 million reported for the 2012 second quarter. Service revenue, total revenue less subcontractor and other direct costs, was $179.5 million, a 1.1 percent decline from second quarter 2012 levels. Operating income was $17.3 million, down from the $18.3 million reported in last year's second quarter; operating margin was 7.2 percent compared to 7.6 percent a year ago. EBITDA was $22.4 million and EBITDA margin was 9.3 percent, compared to $24.4 million and 10.2 percent, respectively, in last year's second quarter. Net income for the 2013 second quarter was $10.3 million or $0.52 per diluted share, equivalent to last year's net income of $10.3 million and diluted earnings per share of $0.52. Acquisition charges amounted to $0.3 million in this year's second quarter.

For the 2013 first half, total revenue was $475.5 million, up 1.8 percent over the $467.3 million reported in the 2012 first half. Operating income was $34.9 million, up 0.9 percent; net income was up 6.0 percent to $20.4 million, and earnings per diluted share were $1.02 compared to $0.96.

"The pace of contract sales increased in the second quarter, resulting in a solid book-to-bill ratio of nearly 1.0 for the period, compared to 0.85 in the prior year," Mr. Kesavan said. "Ongoing investments to expand our business development capabilities have enabled ICF to respond to a greater number of government and commercial requests for proposals. We have continued to see solid demand for our domain expertise and IT services across key markets and expect sales in the second half of 2013

to be significantly ahead of the $462 million booked in the first half of the year, which we believe will position us for continued growth in 2014."

"Additionally, on July 31 we completed the acquisition of an e-commerce technology services firm (Ecommerce Accelerator LLC, or ECA), with approximately $10 million in annual revenue, that will enhance ICF's multi-channel, end-to-end e-commerce solutions. We have a robust acquisition pipeline and continue to evaluate acquisition opportunities that enhance our subject matter knowledge, broaden our service offerings, and/or provide scale in specific geographies," Mr. Kesavan said.

Backlog and New Business Awards

Backlog was $1.5 billion at the end of the 2013 second quarter. Funded backlog was $647 million, or 44 percent of the total.

The total value of contracts awarded was $236 million in the second quarter of 2013 and $462 million for the 2013 first half, up 16.3 percent and 6.0 percent, respectively, from last year's second quarter and first half.

Commercial Client Second Quarter/First Half 2013 Highlights

Revenues from commercial clients increased 3.3 percent in the 2013 second quarter to $66.9 million and were up 8.2 percent in the first half to $133.6 million. Excluding a large commercial infrastructure project that is currently in a slower phase of construction, commercial revenues would have increased 7.4 percent in the second quarter and 10.4 percent for the first half.

Revenues from commercial energy efficiency programs increased 21.3 percent and 15.6 percent in the second quarter and first half of 2013, respectively, and accounted for 37.5 percent and 36.6 percent, respectively, of commercial revenues.

Commercial sales awards were $36.8 million for the 2013 second quarter and $159.0 million for the first half, representing 34 percent of total sales for the first six months of 2013.

ICF was awarded more than 450 commercial projects globally in the second quarter. Primary areas of awards included energy efficiency program support, airline and airport management consulting, environmental program management, interactive data applications, strategic communications support for non-profits, commercial health consulting for payers, and energy market and portfolio assessment for utilities.

Key Government Sales Highlights for the Second Quarter 2013

ICF was awarded nearly 100 new U.S. Federal Government contract and task order awards and hundreds of additional awards from other domestic (state and local) and non-U.S. governments. The largest awards included:

- **Health Informatics:** A $72 million contract with the National Institutes of Health to continue to support the Electronic Research Administration grants management program across a range of health informatics and systems engineering activities.
- **Program and IT Management:** A $34 million contract with the United States Postal Service to provide support for the Mailing Information Systems and Domestic Products divisions.
- **Disaster Recovery Support:** An award estimated to exceed $10 million to assist one of the states affected by Superstorm Sandy with analytical and program support for disaster recovery programs.
- **European Employment Programs:** An $8.9 million contract with the European Commission to provide employment program support.
- **Health Survey Research:** A $7.8 million contract with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supporting the 2013-2014 Tobacco Survey.

Additional individual government sales awards in excess of $2 million included providing program and organizational management support for the U.S. Department of the Navy, energy efficiency program support for the Association of Bay Area Governments (California) and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, environmental and engineering support services for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, survey research support for the National Science Foundation, and monitoring and evaluation support for the World Health Organization.

League of Women Voters in Marin work to dispel affordable housing myths

Posted: marinij.com

The League of Women Voters of Marin County is out with a report designed to reality test the controversy in Marin swirling around Plan Bay Area and proposals for affordable housing.

The report titled, "Dispelling the Myths Surrounding Affordable Housing," was distributed to elected officials and other Marin decision makers. A copy is posted on the League's website.

"We recognized that the arguments that were circulating had become more and more of a quality that was confusing — or maybe even misleading — voters," said Judy Binsacca, head of the League's committee on transportation, land use and housing and the principal author of the report. "We decided it was time that we got involved and tried to provide factual information relating to some of the key issues," she said.

Responding to the League's report, Marin County Supervisor Katie Rice, who together with Novato City Councilwoman Pat Eklund represents Marin on the Association of Bay Area Governments, said, "I just thought it was very fair and balanced and aimed at presenting facts. I appreciate their effort, and I hope people read it with open minds and recognize it for what it is: objective analysis and an attempt to address some of the fears and myths that are running rampant through our community."

But Richard Hall of San Rafael, a vocal opponent of Plan Bay Area, said the report's findings are suspect because Binsacca heads the board of directors of the Ecumenical Association for Housing.

"She clearly has a business interest in affordable housing being chairman of the board of a major affordable housing, not-for-profit business," Hall said.

Susan Dutton, a spokeswoman for the Ecumenical Association for Housing, said Binsacca receives no pay for her work on the association's board.

"This is a voluntary position," Dutton said.

The report begins by providing information on the state law that requires city and counties to foster the creation of a certain amount of housing, both affordable and market rate, at regular intervals by enacting appropriate zoning laws. And it provides background on the genesis of Plan Bay Area, explaining that it was created as the result of two state laws: AB 32, which aimed at controlling greenhouse gases to fight climate change; and SB 375, which required the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse emissions from cars and light trucks.

The report notes that the amount of housing that cities and counties must zone for is determined by projections for job and population growth. And it points out that Plan Bay Area projects lower growth rates for Marin than for any of the other nine Bay Area counties: "9 percent household growth is projected from 2010-2014 and 17 percent for jobs over that period, as compared to 27 percent household growth and 33 percent job growth for the Bay Area in that time period."

According to the U.S. Census, between 1980 and 2010, Marin's households increased 16 percent and the county's jobs increased by 42 percent.

The League's report addresses what it characterizes as "mayor myths" having to do with local control, housing density, property values, traffic, crime and schools.

Plan Bay Area would attempt to channel new housing growth into "priority development areas," located close to transportation and jobs to prevent urban sprawl. But the report says, "It needs to be emphasized that local jurisdictions are not required to have PDAs and that they, not the Association of Bay Area Governments, set the PDA boundaries."

The League's report states that SB 375 mandates that local governments will retain their control over long-range planning and review of proposed developments, and it points out that Plan Bay Area's commitment to local control was explicitly restated by its creators in July.

However, Doreen Gluckin, a resident of Strawberry who opposes her neighborhood's designation as a potential PDA, said she feels as if she lacks local control because she lives in an unincorporated area represented by a single county supervisor.

Regarding higher housing density, the League notes that the Plan Bay Area approach is in keeping with the Marin Countywide Plan, which protected 83 percent of the county's open space and agriculture by focusing development along the Highway 101 corridor.

The report states, "The importance of controlled density in Marin is that it preserves our open spaces and farmland by preventing sprawl."

As for the other myths it addresses:

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Property values — "Studies conducted over the last two decades demonstrate that affordable housing has no negative impact on surrounding property values."

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Traffic — "It cannot be stated too often that, by building affordable housing near public transit and near where people work, traffic congestion will be reduced, compared with new development not located near services, transit and employment."

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Crime — "There are no studies or evidence that show an increase in crime or the presence of criminals when nonprofit-owned and managed housing developments are introduced into a neighborhood."

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Schools — While they do not pay property tax, "affordable housing developments are subject to one-time impact fees, including school impact fees," and in most cases "are subject to special assessments and parcel taxes that are in place to fund schools, libraries, paramedics, parks, public safety, water supply, hazardous waste and other community services."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

To learn more

The League of Women Voters' report "Dispelling the Myths Surrounding Affordable Housing," is available on the League's website at http://bit.ly/1f8cc6D.

halfwaytoconcord.com http://www.halfwaytoconcord.com/legal-suit-challenges-plan-bay-area-for-ceqa-violations/

Legal Suit challenges Plan Bay Area for CEQA violations

BGR

A lawsuit was filed today by the Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF) and Bay Area Citizens that challenges "Plan Bay Area" for violating CEQA. The suit contents that the MTC and ABAG scheme for high-density development is based on cherry-picked facts and an illegal refusal to evaluate a less restrictive alternative. The bottom line: Stack and pack development mandates aren't needed in order to meet the Bay Area's regional air quality targets!

Plan Bay Area — a regional transportation plan that would squeeze future residential and commercial development into crowded, high-density zones — must be struck down because it was developed in violation of a key state statute, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

So argues a lawsuit filed today by Bay Area Citizens (BAC), a coalition of concerned residents from throughout the region who have actively monitored the plan's development, offering critiques and proposing alternatives. The coalition is represented, free of charge, by attorneys with Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF), a watchdog organization that litigates for limited government, individual rights, and a balanced approach to environmental regulations.

Statements: Why the Bay Area Citizens organization, and Pacific Legal Foundation, are suing

"Plan Bay Area would foist a one-size-fits-all vision of 'transit oriented development' on the region," said PLF Principal Attorney Damien Schiff. "In this planner's dream environment, everyone would complacently agree to a regimented lifestyle, living in multi-family housing, and walking, bike-riding, or taking public transit to work. The drafting agencies have come up with an ambitious strategy to micro-manage people's lifestyle choices. All that's missing is the legally required justification for doing so. Instead, they've studiously ignored data that contradict their agenda. They've cherry picked facts to create a false need for their draconian development prescriptions."

"Members of Bay Area Citizens have been trying for years to open up the process for developing the regional transportation plan," said BAC spokesperson Peter Singleton. "Our group of average citizens passed the hat among ourselves to commission independent research. We also wrote reports of our own, produced data-based studies evaluating the Plan and its analysis, and offered counter-proposals.

"But the drafting agencies have shown no interest in listening to the public. The insiders have simply been talking to each other. Not only is this a bad way to make policy, we contend it's illegal because officials ignored environmental facts that didn't fit their agenda, and refused to even consider a credible alternative strategy. Unfortunately, the agencies' don't-confuse-us-with-the-facts approach has made it necessary to take them to court."

Lawsuit: The Plan devised by ABAG and MTC flouts CEQA

Federal and state law require the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to produce a combined regional transportation plan and sustainable communities strategy for the Bay Area. Among other things, the strategy must meet the Bay Area's

greenhouse gas reduction targets (a seven percent per capita reduction by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035), as well as state-assigned housing needs.

However, the lawsuit filed today says that ABAG and MTC violated CEQA by failing to justify Plan Bay Area's high-density development scheme, and refusing to consider the feasibility of a less restrictive alternative.

Plan Bay Area: a "sardine strategy" for people, housing, and jobs

Plan Bay Area aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets through "stack and pack" development, requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 "priority development areas," small urban and suburban areas designated by Bay Area local governments. Collectively, these zones constitute just five percent of the region's surface area. The environmental impacts would be significant, with critics predicting increased traffic congestion and concentrated pockets of air pollution. The plan's own environmental impact report concedes at least 39 negative effects on the environment, including pollution caused by construction work, and the disruption of established communities and living patterns.

ABAG and MTC have illegally ignored facts showing that
Plan Bay Area's draconian development restrictions aren't necessary

When a proposed government action carries major development implications, CEQA requires that the public be made fully aware of environmental consequences — the consequences both of proceeding and of not going ahead. This didn't happen with Plan Bay Area, as Schiff notes: "The agencies closed their eyes to facts that were inconvenient for their goal to squeeze people into enclaves where elbow room and breathing room are at premium."

The Plan contends that forcing people to live in dense urban concentration will cut greenhouse emissions by reducing automobile trips. "But the Plan's CEQA analysis ignores the air quality improvements that will result from existing clean-air initiatives at the state level," Schiff said. "In fact, the region's greenhouse gas targets are projected to be met naturally, largely because of mandated fuel efficiencies that are on track to be imposed. Plan Bay Area's sardine strategy for development — its scheme to squeeze and stack people into high-density dwellings and business complexes — simply isn't needed to reach government air quality goals."

ABAG and MTC illegally ignored credible alternative strategies

Even if state regulations weren't doing the job on their own, Bay Area Citizens presented a credible alternative strategy for improving air quality. But ABAG and MTC refused to consider it — again violating their CEQA duty.

"CEQA is explicit in requiring that legitimate alternatives to a proposed government project be evaluated," said Schiff. "ABAG and MTC violated this legal duty to be open-minded rather than biased and agenda-driven."

Peter Singleton said: "Bay Area Citizens presented a feasible plan for greenhouse gas reduction that focuses, in part, on expanded bus service and reducing transit fares. This alternative would achieve air quality targets and serve the needs of lower income transit-reliant residents without curtailing people's freedom to live in detached homes in suburban and rural areas with lawns and gardens. Yet ABAG and MTC wouldn't consider this alternative."

The agencies contend the alternative was offered too late in the process — during the period for public comment. However, "Nothing in state law sets this arbitrary time limit on reviewing proposals," Schiff pointed out.

Filed in Alameda County Superior Court, the case is Bay Area Citizens v. ABAG and MTC. The petition for writ of mandate, a video and a podcast, may be viewed at: www.pacificlegal.org.

About Pacific Legal Foundation
Donor-supported PLF (www.pacificlegal.org) is a watchdog organization that litigates for limited government, property rights, and a balanced approach to environmental regulations, in courts nationwide. PLF is a nonprofit public interest organization that never charges clients for attorneys fees.

This year marks PLF's 40th anniversary. PLF recently won its seventh direct-representation victory at the U.S. Supreme Court for liberty and limited government, in the precedent setting property rights case of Koontz v. St. Johns River Water Management District.

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Eric Young
Reporter- *San Francisco Business Times*
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A sweeping land use plan that promotes high-density housing near public transit must be blocked because it violates California's environmental review law, a legal group said in a lawsuit Tuesday.

Plan Bay Area, which spells out how much new housing each of the Bay Area's cities must accommodate in coming years, violates the California Environmental Quality Act by failing to "justify the plan's high-density development scheme, and refusing to consider the feasibility of a less restrictive alternative," according to a press release from the Pacific Legal Foundation, a libertarian organization in Sacramento that filed the lawsuit.

Plan Bay Area was approved last month by the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Overall it calls for adding almost 188,000 housing units by 2022. ABAG and MTC drew up the plan in response to a state law that requires every region in California to devise building and transportation plans to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

"Plan Bay Area would foist a one-size-fits-all vision of 'transit oriented development' on the region," said Damien Schiff, a lawyer for Pacific Legal Foundation. "The drafting agencies have come up with an ambitious strategy to micro-manage people's lifestyle choices... They've cherry picked facts to create a false need for their draconian development prescriptions."

Supporters say Plan Bay Area provides enough housing to accommodate the growing region and helps promote economic vitality.

"Plan Bay Area is an historic and important step forward for our region," Mark Luce, a Napa County Supervisor who is president of the ABAG executive board, said at the time of the plan's approval. "It's the product of more than three years of collaboration between cities and counties to do our part to create a more sustainable Bay Area for current and future generations."

An MTC spokesman said the group had no comment on the lawsuit. An ABAG representative was not immediately available to address the lawsuit, which was filed in Alameda County Superior Court in Oakland.

The lawsuit can be downloaded here.

"Plan Bay Area aims to cut greenhouse gas production through 'stack and pack' development, requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs

in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 'priority development areas,' small urban and suburban areas designated by Bay Area local governments," the plaintiff's press release reads. "Collectively, these zones constitute just 5 percent of the region's surface area. The environmental impacts would be significant, with critics predicting increased traffic congestion and concentrated pockets of air pollution."

Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.

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What's this?

Marin Voice: Silencing the voice of the people

Posted: marinij.com

IN THE DISCUSSION over the problems and promises of Plan Bay Area, one aspect of the debate was overlooked. The vote to approve Plan Bay Area was taken by a JPA — the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).

JPA is an acronym that can refer to a Joint Powers Agreement, Joint Powers Agency or Joint Powers Authority. A JPA is formed when two or more public authorities (governments, utilities, transport districts, etc.) agree to operate collectively.

The first JPA was formed in the 1920s when San Francisco and Alameda collaborated to combat tuberculosis.

Over the years, hundreds of JPAs have been formed, especially in California. The Marin Energy Authority and the Marin County Open Space District are examples.

The good news about a JPA is it encourages cooperation, can leverage funding, incur debt and sell bonds.

The bad news is JPAs are not approved by the vote of the people, but are formed when public officials negotiate a formal agreement among themselves.

JPAs operate with their own board of directors, selected from among the participating agencies, not by a public vote. The back-room power that is accumulating in groups like ABAG undermines local control.

With ABAG we get a group of city and county elected officials attending public-private meetings alongside agencies that have alliances with corporations, developers, non-governmental organizations and government agencies.

ABAG and its partners have effectively created a layer of regional government that controls information, manipulates public discussion, and uses a carrot/stick approach to gain compliance.

Let's look at how the ABAG-JPA worked in Marin on July 18, when Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Katie Rice, and Pat Eklund voted on Plan Bay Area. The Board of Supervisors appointed Kinsey as its representative to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, a separate entity. The supervisors appointed Rice as their representative to ABAG. And the Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers selected Novato Mayor Eklund to represent them.

Who represented you and me? For the majority of us, the answer is "no one!"

Typical of JPAs, this failure to have directly elected representatives make decisions undermines local control in four significant ways.

In the case of Plan Bay Area:

• Neither Kinsey, Rice nor Eklund represented a constituency, other than their own small board and the Council of Mayors.

• Not directly representing a constituency, they have no accountability for the outcomes of their decision.

• The plan and the vote were tightly controlled by unelected ABAG staff.

The vote on Plan Bay Area is behind us. However, the next challenge is emerging.

Senators Darryl Steinberg, D-Sacramento, and Mark DeSaulnier, D-Walnut Creek, have introduced SB1, the Sustainable Communities Investment Program, which creates a Sustainable Communities Investment Authority. The SCIA, a JPA, will be a mechanism to implement Plan Bay Area.

SB1 authorizes the establishment of Investment Areas and Investment Plans. Cities and counties that form SCIAs will operate with appointed, not elected members. Its boards will draft policy, issue bonds, borrow money, and use tax increment financing provisions.

All of this will be outside the public eye.

Among many concerns, one is that this new JPA's first audit occurs five years into operations, with no provision to make the findings public.

JPAs like ABAG and SCIA cloud — no, close the window of government transparency. The public is left uninformed, and awareness and commitment to the common good is eroded.

Another JPA will nudge the needle a little closer to "One Bay Area government, diminishing the pesky voice of the people who care about the quality of life in their community and want a vote in determining its future.

Susan Kirsch, a longtime resident of Mill Valley, is one of the founders of Citizen Marin, an organization that raised objections to Plan Bay Area's impact on Marin land-use planning and loss of local control.

Marin Voice: Time for Marin to get out of ABAG

Posted: marinij.com

ASSOCIATION of Bay Area Government chief Ezra Rapport's Marin Voice last Sunday states the Plan Bay Area is not "one size fits all."

On the contrary, Plan Bay Area's "top down" method of projecting growth and allocating housing mandates is the epitome of a one-size-fits-all approach.

ABAG projections for population for Marin for 2010 to 2040 are absurd and deeply flawed. ABAG is projecting population growth of 33,000 as of 2040.

This is radically different than the projections by the state in the 2013 Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit report.

How did Marin get assigned 33,000 in population growth?

ABAG's top-down planning arbitrarily assigned 1 percent of the overestimated Bay Area population growth to Marin.

The state report is designated as the single offical source of demographic data for state planning and budgeting.

The department of finance projects the total population for Marin from 2010 to 2020 will decline by 1,370 people, with a projection of a growth of 6,818 or 2.7 percent from 2010 to 2040. This is a projection based on the specific study of the demographics of Marin County.

ABAG says the state's numbers are incorrect. Really?

The ABAG population projection for Marin, used to decide Regional Housing Need quotas is 484 percent higher than the Department of Finance population projection for Marin.

How does ABAG explain this outrageous variance? The difference, ABAG says, per is projected jobs of 18,400, that of course don't exist and in no way reflect past job growth inMarin.

How did Marin get the projected 18,400 jobs?

The issue is this "top down" planning starts with a job forecast of 1.1 million jobs for 2010 to 2040 for the entire Bay Area. The actual percentage based on 18,390 is 1.6 percent, but in the ABAG report rounds it off to 2 percent. This "top down" planning has no local input of substance.

The proper way to project job growth would be for each jurisdiction to provide its estimated job growth for 2010 to 2040 based on its General Plans, which would provide meaningful context and support for projected growth, which could then be linked to a projected population growth.

The Plan Bay Area for Marin is then adopted by the California Department of Housing and Community Development. That department immortalizes this farfetched number into the amount of housing that needs to be built in Marin.

Since there is no statutory way to correct the state's housing quotas, land must be rezoned by the local jurisdictions to comply.

Checkmate.

The developers, builders and institutional investors win, all in the name of New Urbanism.

Cities can be sued by developers for not zoning per ABAG's goals, which usurps local control.

This is the definition of flawed "top-down, one-size-fits-all planning" and does not take into consideration critical issues such as local general plans, fiscal conditions, funding for services, water, sewer, schools or any other local issues.

If ABAG does not revisit these skewed projections and properly address Marin as an anomaly and outlier, I believe it is time for our county, and Novato, to exit ABAG and its flawed formulas and projections based on "top-down, one-size-fits-all planning", and take control of our own local and county needs.

Marin needs its own Council Of Governments.

Al Dugan of Novato is an activist involved in opposition to Plan Bay Area and regional pressure to build high-density affordable housing.

Marin cities and towns struggle to meet state housing mandate as $2.3 million hangs in the balance

Posted: marinij.com

The county of Marin and three Marin municipalities are attempting to meet a state housing mandate by the end of January in order to collect $2.3 million in state grant money.

Even though they've had nearly seven years to do so, the county of Marin, Mill Valley, Novato, and Fairfax have all so far failed to get the housing elements of their general plans approved by the state for the 2007 through 2014 planning cycle.

California requires that regional planning agencies, such as the Association of Bay Area Governments, periodically determine the projected housing need for an area and assign each local government a share in meeting that need. And jurisdictions are required to adjust their zoning laws to help make the creation of this housing possible.

In the past, some Marin towns and cities have failed to comply with the state housing law. The only penalty for jurisdictions that flaunt the law is that they become ineligible for some state housing and infrastructure grants. This year, however, is different.

Jurisdictions must get their housing elements approved if they want to share in the One Bay Area grant program. One Bay Area is a precursor to Plan Bay Area, which integrates the region's federal transportation program with California's climate law. If all four jurisdictions were to fail to win approval by the end of January, they would lose a total of $2.3 million in state transportation grants.

"OBAG money is related to implementation of Plan Bay Area," said Linda Jackson, manager of planning at the Transportation Authority of Marin. "The intent of OBAG money is to provide transportation funding that promotes the walkability and livability of our communities consistent with the goals and vision in the Plan Bay Area."

Despite fears that Plan Bay Area would result in the creation of overly dense housing developments in Marin, the total number of housing units that the county of Marin and its 11 municipalities have been assigned for the 2014-2022 planning cycle is 2,298 — less than half the 4,882 mandated for 2007-2014. The number of units that must be affordable to individuals with low and very low income dropped to 988 for 2014-2022 from 1,849 for 2007-2014.

The county has the most to lose if it fails to get its housing element approved in time, about $1.25 million in state grant money. Tom Lai, assistant director of the Marin Community Development Agency, said that on Sept. 10 the Marin County Board of Supervisors will consider OKing a housing element that has received tentative approval from the state.

"The original housing element was rejected by the state," Lai said.

The state determined then that the county had fallen 231 units short of creating the 320 affordable units it had been assigned. To comply with the law, the county is considering rezoning several properties to allow up to 30 units per acre. These include: 3.5 acres at the St. Vincent's-Silveira Ranch lands in San Rafael, 2

acres at the Golden Gate Baptist Seminary in Strawberry, and a half-acre at Oak Hill School on Drake Avenue in Marin City.

The city of Novato also has plenty to gain by securing the state's approval: $859,000 in grants. Novato had to revise its housing element after the state decided it needs to increase its density limits to promote the development of additional affordable housing. Novato senior planner Hans Grunt said his town's Planning Commission is scheduled to consider a revised version of the housing plan on Sept. 16. This version identifies five sites where 20 to 23 dwelling units per acre will be permitted, with no conditional use permit requirement.

If Fairfax fails to get its housing element approved before the end of January, it could lose a $300,000 state grant to make improvements in its downtown Parkade.

All the jurisdictions say they expect to get their housing elements approved before the deadline, but Fairfax failed to get its housing element approved during the previous planning cycle, 1999-2006. As a result, Fairfax must not only adjust its zoning to accommodate the 108 units for the 2007-2014 period; the town must also account for the 64 units it was assigned for the previous cycle.

Fairfax Planning Director Jim Moore said one of the changes that will help his town win the state's approval involves changing zoning so that the owners of the property at either end of the town along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard may build second-story apartments without seeking a special-use permit. Moore said the town also hired a consultant versed in state housing law who discovered the town hadn't taken advantage of some of the avenues open to it.

"We were able to take credit for all of the units the town had approved during the last two cycles," Moore said, "and also we had not taken advantage of any properties that were currently zoned for housing that had not been built on yet.

"With those two magic tricks," he said, "we actually were able to get everything under control."

Moore said the town was even able to overcome the fact that the state drastically reduced the number of illegal second units that the town wanted to count, assuming that the units could be made legal through an amnesty program. Fairfax proposed counting 27 of the illegal units; the state allowed only three in this planning cycle, since a short time remains for them to be legalized.

The city of Mill Valley has the least to lose, just $37,500 in state grant money.

"That's not a big issue for us," said Mill Valley Planning Director Mike Moore.

He expects the Mill Valley City Council to approve the housing element by the end of September; then it will be sent to the state for final ratification.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Marin Readers' Forum for Aug. 5

Posted: marinij.com

Shortchanging transit

With all the talk about Plan Bay Area and affordable housing, I have to ask where the same advocates are when it comes to transit?

With another BART strike coming, it will no doubt lead to massive fare increases. Bridge tolls are raised every other year. Ferry prices have almost tripled since I used it in the late 90s and now there is talk of charging $5 for parking.

Our own Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit train project has reportedly suffered massive cost overruns. Every transit agency in the Bay Area complains year after year about budget shortfalls, having to raise fares and/or cut back services. In some cases the reasons are blatantly obvious.

So I have to ask, isn't one of the primary pillars of Plan Bay Area that in building all this "stack and pack" housing (30 units per acre) right next to the highway, residents of this housing will have affordable and effective public transportation (since, according to Supervisor Steve Kinsey, they won't need cars.)?

And if so, why aren't there any "affordable transit" advocates out there demanding that the agencies start lining up and freezing their fares and preparing for the future?

I can see it now — in another 10 years we'll have all this "smart growth" housing next to "transit centers," but a BART ride will cost you $12 each way. The ferry, $15. Parking at BART and ferry lots will be $10. Bridge tolls will be $15. SMART will have had at least one strike (over pensions no doubt) that will result in a $15 fare.

So if you're going to scream for affordable housing and Plan Bay Area, you had better start hoping like heck for some affordable transit, too.

I find it ironic that all this time, money and effort is being spent marketing smart growth, but where is the same effort and attention being paid to the massive bloated salaries, pensions and cost overruns from transit agencies that will soon make any public transit unaffordable?

Paul Brunell, San Rafael

Overstatements on oysters

It is quite disconcerting to read what Joe Mueller (Marin Voice, Aug. 1) presented as ecological science.

As a matter of fact, it casts into doubt his credential as a marine biologist and is discouraging to Marin taxpayers when they see themselves supporting such polemicists that falsely prejudice the minds of our youth.

It is preposterous to claim that the nutrients in a small part of the sea are depleted by minor human activity when there is an infinite abundance in the adjoining vast ocean.

The column then commits the gross nonsequitur of tying that argument to the need to "protect" the Drakes Estero from the "extraction of 700,000 pounds of oysters per year from an ecosystem that was slated for wilderness 40 years ago."

Indeed, who had the right to decide that this area, which had been duly adapted to human use, was to be returned to wilderness in the first place? How is this different than the port of Los Angeles or the Oakland estuary? Why is no one proposing to turn them into wilderness?

As humanity has steadily increased, unoccupied areas had to be utilized. There certainly have been unnecessary and unacceptable abuses which need to be prevented. But in general, the practice has come to be accepted and the use of the estero is an excellent example.

The oyster farming has come into harmonious coexistence with the marine ecology and the surrounding ranching agriculture.

It is egregious that zealots like Mueller use pseudo science to try to arouse the citizens of Marin into supporting the destruction of a perfectly harmless enterprise that provides jobs for long time residents and delicious organic food for Californians.

Charles Herbert, San Rafael

Mill Valley to unveil new electric vehicles, open first EV charging station

Posted: marinij.com

Mill Valley

The city of Mill Valley will unveil its four new all-electric Mitsubishi i-MiEVs and will cut the ribbon on its first electric vehicle charging station at 1 p.m. Sept. 4 at the Hauke Park parking lot on Hamilton Drive.

Mill Valley Mayor Andrew Berman, City Manager Jim McCann, and Public Works Director Jill Barnes will speak.

The electric cars replace inefficient former police vehicles the city has been using for employee carpools and for general city purposes. The cars will help the town to meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, according to Linn Walsh, assistant to the city manager.

Mill Valley joined with the cities of San Jose, Los Gatos and Campbell on a deal that includes "highly favorable" lease terms on 50 EVs, with 38 going to San Jose. Mill Valley won't have to pay the lease on its four EVs until the third year of the program. In total, the 50 EVs are expected to cut fuel costs by a combined $110,000 over three years and will reduce CO2 emissions by 400,000 pounds, according to the Bay Area Climate Collaborative.

The charging station was established by the city council as a one-year pilot program to evaluate its popularity, ease of use and other operational issues. There will be no fee charged to users during the pilot period.

The project was funded by a $28,000 grant from the Transportation Authority of Marin, California Energy Commission, Association of Bay Area Governments and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

Send us your news: We want more news items from Marin's cities and towns. Email them to our City Desk at localnews@marinij.com, mail them to City Desk, Marin Independent Journal, 4000 Civic Center Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903, or fax them to 415-382-7209. For more information about towns in Marin, visit the IJ's website at marinij.com.

Novato 56°

News | Government

New Study Seeks to Dispel Myths About Plan Bay Area

Seeks to redefine what affordable housing means and why denser housing is a good way to reduce green house gas emissions

Posted by Karina Ioffee (Editor) , August 27, 2013 at 08:13 AM

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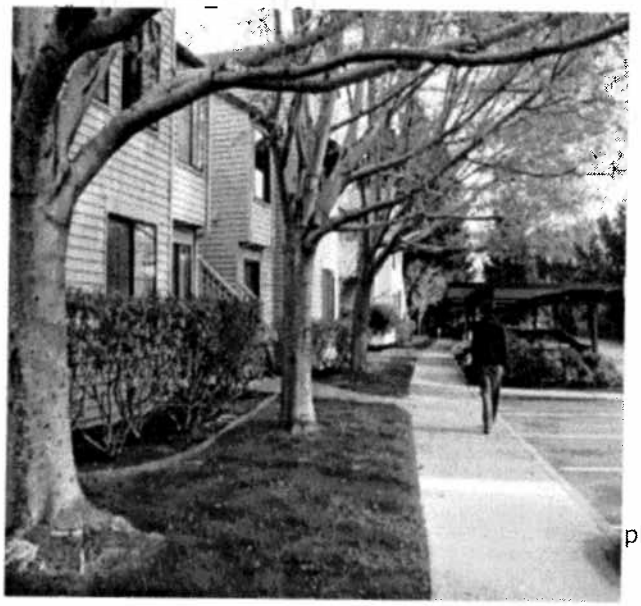

plex, in Mill Valley.

The League of Women Voters of Marin County has released a new study aimed at dispelling what it describes as myths surrounding affordable housing and Plan Bay Area.
The long-term planning document for nine Bay Area municipalities seeks to concentrate new development near transportation hubs, while protecting open space from new housing and was approved in July.

The study, released last week, seeks to recalibrate the term "affordable housing," pointing out that a family with an annual median income of $75,000 is considered low-income by Marin standards, where the average median income is $103,000. That means people who work as teachers, bank tellers, EMTs and paramedics, not say anything about those in service-sector jobs, all can't afford to live in Marin.

When it comes to housing, the median-priced home in the county (as of this June) cost nearly $800,000 with a down payment of $80,000, while the median-priced condo cost $330,000, with a $33,000 down payment.

"These figures prevent many workers in Marin's major employment sectors from buying in Marin, including those middle class families who could buy a home elsewhere, but not in Marin where they work," write the authors. "When families 'drive 'til they qualify,' they add considerable transportation costs to their family budgets, not to speak of impacts to family life, the economy, freeway congestion and the environment."

Read the full study here

Another frequent "myth" the report seeks to dispel is that Plan Bay Area forces cities to give up control. But the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments have no direct say over land use decisions and will still have the final say when it comes to approving new projects, according to the study.

All new projects would continue to be reviewed for design, traffic and environmental impacts while zoning will remain "the province of local municipalities."

On the subject of density, the authors say the public often imagines high-density urban public housing projects built after World War II that were a magnet for crime. Instead, Marin would continue to have some of the lowest density in the Bay Area, between 20 to 30 housing units per acre, built in a way that correspondents with the surroundings.

"The important of controlled density in Marin is that it preserves our open spaces and farmland by preventing sprawl," the authors write.

Critics of affordable housing have often said that it draws more crime. In Novato, they pointed to Bay Vista, a housing complex in Hamilton that had some criminal activity. But that may have had more to do with lack of screening of tenants than a true reflection of everyone who lives in affordable housing, the study found.

"Novato is a good example of the incidence of crime not being correlated with a project's density or its tenants' income levels, but is related to how well a property is managed and how thoroughly the tenants are screened. It also depends very heavily on the rules governing the tenants and how strictly they are enforced."

What do you think about some of the points made in the study? Is it important to build more housing for middle class Marin residents? Sound off in the comments below.

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Orinda affordable housing plan disputed

By Jennifer Modenessi Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times
Posted:

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ORINDA -- City leaders are moving forward with fine-tuning a fiercely debated housing plan amid calls from some residents to start the whole process anew and get more community input.

Council members took no action this week to adopt the draft "housing element," a state-required plan that shows how the city can accommodate future housing for residents at all income levels. However, they received a status update from city staffers, who reviewed the process some residents and community groups argue is tainted by a lack of transparency and with issues with the draft's submittal to the state.

Officials also heard more than two hours of public comment on the draft before agreeing on revisions -- including some suggested by community group Orinda Watch who say the draft contains "commitments" not required to comply with state law -- about references to a general plan update and rent-controlled second units. The draft needs to be finalized, reviewed for environmental compliance and adopted by the city council before a January deadline. It will then head to the California Department of Housing and Community Development for certification.

Since 1969, state law has required all local governments have an updated "housing element" in their general plan to accommodate future housing needs. Orinda's draft element outlines how the city is planning for the 218 very low-, low-, moderate- and above moderate income housing units it is required to zone for in the 2007-14 housing plan to meet the "regional housing needs allocation," managed by the Association of Bay Area Governments.

The city must also show the state how it will accommodate an additional 64 very-low and low income units -- including some carried over from the previous planning cycle. HCD is requiring Orinda to zone those units to receive what would be the first housing element certification in the city's history. Staffers have suggested the low-income units could be accommodated on a 3.2-acre site near Santa Maria Church zoned for residential multifamily development at a density of 10 units per acre. The city -- which has proposed increasing the density to 20 units per acre -- now says up to 25 units per acre are needed at the Diocese of Oakland-owned site to fulfill state requirements.

On Tuesday, the church's administrator said that while there are no plans to sell, develop or change the Santa Maria site, the diocese supports social services.

"I myself and the diocese have worked together with various organizations to provide senior low-income housing in both Alameda and Contra Costa counties," said Father Robert Herbst. "We do not object to meeting the needs of affordable housing in the entire Bay Area, but I do ask that it's done in a very open and collaborative manner."

Residents questioned the density change and other issues, including the city's process for submitting the draft element to the state. Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu attempted to detail that process in a timeline he presented to the council.

Opponents argue Ursu and city consultant Barry Miller submitted an "official" draft element for state review

without council authorization and public input. Some opponents have been urging the consultant's removal and want an independent investigation.

Ursu says the state received in June a revised "working draft" that incorporated council direction given at earlier public meetings -- some dating back two years -- in response to HCD comments on the draft element submitted December 2010 that did not meet certification requirements.

"HCD did not receive a draft housing element before public comment and council direction was provided," Ursu said in an e-mail.

The planning director also told the council Miller has completed his work and is too busy to continue consulting for the city.

As they have at previous meetings, Orinda Watch members and other residents repeated appeals that the city withdraw the housing element plan and assemble an ad hoc committee of residents and community group members to develop a new draft. A spokesman also denied claims that the group is preparing to sue the city over the housing element.

"We find ourselves in a process that's all screwed up, that's not credible," said resident Chris Kniel. "The only way forward to fix this thing is to have a citizen's commission of qualified people." Council members did not address the request.

HCD spokesman Eric Johnson said that agency has a tentative Aug. 27 date to meet with Orinda Watch to hear the group's concerns. Johnson said the department makes decisions in concert with local governments, and does review the public participation component if necessary.

The council will meet again Sept. 17 to discuss the draft. The city still needs to conduct an environmental review of the housing element and approve the Santa Maria housing density change before the element can be adopted.

halfwaytoconcord.com
http://www.halfwaytoconcord.com/orinda-urges-residents-to-build-low-incoming-housing-in-their-backyards/

Orinda urges residents to build low-incoming housing in their backyards

Richard Colman

We hope your good neighbor fence is sturdy. A law concerning the mandatory movement of low-income Californians into wealthier areas is cited in a report recently released in Orinda. On June 18, 2013, top Orinda officials released the report which describes plans to place low-income people in all parts of Orinda. The report states that so-called "second units" (like guest homes) could be utilized for low-income housing in Orinda.

The Orinda report was released as a "City Council Staff Report." Signing the report were Janet Keeter, Orinda's city manager, and Emmanuel Ursu, the city's director of planning.

According to the report, California law "requires every county and city in the state" to have a plan to house low-income individuals. The report does not limit low-income housing to Orinda's downtown area.

The report notes that between 2007 and 2014, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), a regional government body, has assigned Orinda the task of creating 118 units for low-income people. Of these 118 units, 35 are for "extremely low" income individuals, another 35 are for "very low" income people, and 48 units for "low" income persons.

The report states that Orinda "could accommodate . . . the construction of 530 additional single family dwelling units . . . "

The report says that newly built second units on existing residential Orinda property "would be affordable to very low, low, and moderate income households." The report adds that [t]here are numerous homes in the City that have existing floor space with the potential for conversion to a legal second unit."

The report recommends that "the City explore a program to permit second units on lots where they are not currently allowed today . . . "

The report lists the Orinda city manager's office and the city's planning department as the "Responsible Parties" for the following statement: "The City recognizes second units as an essential part of Orinda's affordable housing supply . . . "

According to the report, "Second units are an important part of the City's affordable housing supply and are often rented at rates that are affordable to low and very low income households." The report adds: "To make such a program [low-income housing] viable for the homeowner, there must be an incentive to maintaining below market rents and limiting occupancy to qualifying households."

The report does not cover how putting more low-income people in Orinda might affect property values or schools in the city.

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Plan Bay Area critics find fault with government grant to Marin Grassroots

8/17/13

Posted:

marinij.com

Opponents of Plan Bay Area are upset after learning that the Association of Bay Area Governments this summer awarded a $56,750 grant to Marin Grassroots, a San Rafael nonprofit that works to boost the voice of underrepresented communities.

Randy Warren, who was motivated to run for San Rafael City Council due to his opposition to Plan Bay Area, has been circulating ABAG memos that discuss the grant. Warren says it was wrong for Marin Grassroots to receive a grant because it is advocating for the plan.

"The issue is that taxpayers have a right to know when their money is being used by the government to have third parties speak up in support of the government's own policies," Warren said.

John Young, executive director of Marin Grassroots, said his organization has not taken an official position on Plan Bay Area and added that the grant money, which came from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, was not to advocate for Plan Bay Area.

"We were not paid to support Plan Bay Area," Young said. "Our work is around minority participation in government and civic engagement. In Marin, there is a lack of minority representation on a lot of boards and commissions and other elected offices, and that is what we're funded to do, support getting people prepared to be involved on boards and commissions."

Miriam Chion, dirtector of planning and research at the Association of Bay Area Governments, said the decision to give the grant to Marin Grassroots was made by a committee that included a number of elected officials, as well as members of the business community.

"The intent of this grant is to support community stability and appropriate housing for the community," Chion said.

A collaboration of four regional government agencies, Plan Bay Area sets out housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which requires each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks — 7 percent per capita by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035.

Plan Bay Area aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets by requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be situated within some 200 "priority development areas."

Young and others held a press conference last month to assert that hostile behavior by opponents at public meetings to discuss Plan Bay Area was having a chilling effect on public debate.

He issued a statement that cited "ongoing disruptions and implicit racial threats of a growing mob of angry homeowners." A strongly worded press release said a "'lynch mob' opposed to fair housing" was paralyzing civil participation threatening to create "a civil rights state of emergency."

At the press conference, Marin County Planning Commissioner Ericka Erickson, who serves as associate

director of Marin Grassroots, said she felt intimidated by some interactions with housing foes. Erickson has spoken in support of Plan Bay Area at several public meetings, but she has also criticized the plan for not doing more to promote affordable housing.

Susan Kirsch, co-founder of Citizen Marin, a coalition of Marin neighborhood associations opposing Plan Bay Area, said, "It's a misguided use of funds to have more people who don't have means, and aren't living in a world of social justice, to get training to be rabble-rousers and make protest signs and create headlines that are inflammatory, rather than find a way to engage in the conversation."

Kirsch said she wasn't sure how much money Citizen Marin has raised to date. Peter Singleton of Larkspur, who co-founded Bay Area Citizens in March to oppose Plan Bay Area, said his organization has raised about $30,000, all from individuals.

"We don't disclose individual donors," Singleton said.

"By contrast," Singleton said, "on the other side there is this extensive ecosystem of nongovernmental organizations that are very well-funded to advocate for high density housing development and additional mass transit subsidies."

Bay Area Citizens is also receiving some valuable in-kind assistance from the Pacific Legal Foundation, based in Sacramento. Earlier this month, Bay Area Citizens filed suit in Alameda County Superior Court seeking to revoke approval of Plan Bay Area, and Pacific Legal Foundation is handling the case free of charge.

Pacific Legal Foundation declined to supply a list of its donors.

Harold Johnson, a spokesman for the foundation, said, "As a donor-supported, nonprofit public interest organization, we follow the practice of many nonprofits by honoring the privacy and confidentiality of our supporters and not releasing their names."

According to the Center for Media and Democracy, a nonprofit investigative reporting group, Pacific Legal Foundation is a right-wing public interest litigation firm in a network of similar organizations funded initially by Pittsburgh billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife to support capitalism and oppose environmental and health activism and government regulation.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Piedmont Patch

Affordable Piedmont? The Housing Element Challenge

The Piedmont City Council this week approved a contract with a planning consultant who will help find solutions.

Posted by Dixie Jordan (Editor), August 06, 2013 at 11:17 PM

How do you provide affordable housing in a town once known as the "City of Millionaires," where the median household income is $199,304 and only 2.5 percent of the residents are at or below the poverty level?

Where home ownership is more than 90 percent, and those homes have a median value over $1 million? Where fewer than 200 of the city's 3,924 housing units are in multi-unit structures? Where there's very little space to build anything new? (All figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2007-2011.)

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How do you do it in a way that's acceptable to the city's residents? And why?

The why is simple — it's state law. Every city is required to have a "General Plan," a sort of roadmap to its future. Part of the General Plan is a "housing element," described by the state as "a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. It sets forth local housing policies and programs to implement those policies."

But cities don't work in isolation on their housing elements. A regional Council of Governments — in the Bay Area it's the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) — decides how many units of housing each city in its area must plan for, and how many of those must be affordable at various income levels.

For Piedmont, for the period of 2007 to 2014, ABAG set that number at 40 units — a figure that started out much higher but was lowered after considerable negotiation between the state Department of Housing and Community Development and the city.

For 2015 through 2022, Piedmont's allocation is 60 affordable housing units: 24 units for "very low income" (50 percent or less of Alameda County's median income); 14 for

"low income (51 to 80 percent); 15 for :moderate income" (81 to 120 percent); and 7 for "above moderate income" (above 120 percent).

To update its housing element for the next eight-year period, and to show how Piedmont can accommodate 60 units of affordable housing, the city has hired an outside consultant, Barry J. Miller. The Piedmont City Council approved a $34,780 contract with Miller at its Aug. 5 meeting.

Miller also prepared Piedmont's last two housing elements and its 2009 General Plan, according to City Planner Kate Black.

To date, Piedmont has planned for affordable housing mainly through policies that allow adding second units — in-law apartments, even converted pool houses — to single-family homes throughout the city.

An ordinance approved last year provides incentives for home owners to rent second units at various income levels, ranging from "extremely low income" to "moderate," for several years. The incentives include less restrictive parking regulations for some income categories.

Miller, the planning consultant, told city council members Monday that some of the "incentive periods" for low to moderate income units will expire during the period from 2015 to 2022. Those second units could then be rented at market rates to tenants at any income level.

That means the city may need to plan for more than just 20 additional units of affordable housing, Miller said.

The city will hold at least one public workshop plus study sessions as work on the new housing element progresses, Black said.

She said regular updates will be posted to the City of Piedmont website.

For more information on the region's current housing plan, see ABAG's "San Francisco Bay Area Housing Needs Plan 2007-2014," a lavishly illustrated document that even includes a photo of the "Old Woman's Shoe" at the entrance to Children's Fairyland in Oakland.

Walnut Creek Patch

Bay Area Growth Plan Full of Hot Air, Lawsuit Contends

Plan Bay Area fails to consider "less restrictive" housing requirements, the lawsuit charges.

Posted by Jim Caroompas (Editor), August 07, 2013 at 07:29 AM

The Bay Area Plan is the subject of a lawsuit filed Tuesday.

The plan to reduce greenhouse gas in California by building high-density housing near BART stations in Walnut Creek and Lamorinda--approved last month by two regional agencies—violates state environmental law, according to a lawsuit filed Tuesday .

A conservative group called Pacific Legal Foundation argues that Plan Bay Area violates the California Environmental Quality Act because it fails to consider "less restrictive" housing requirements.

"Plan Bay Area's sardine strategy for development — its scheme to squeeze and stack people into high-density dwellings and business complexes — simply isn't needed to reach government air quality goals," said Damien Schiff, an attorney for the foundation.

Proponents of the plan, developed over three years by the Association for Bay Area Government and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, say that the anticipated growth in the Bay Area should be accommodated through the development of pedestrian-friendly areas that combine multi-story housing and retail near public transit. Such a plan, they say, will reduce the need for single-car commuting and the sprawl of single-family housing that encourages it.

But groups like Orinda Watch and Bay Area Citizens say the plan is nothing more than social engineering, dictating a kind of urban-based lifestyle that is inappropriate for quiet, upscale communities.

Local elected officials are not unanimous in their support for the plan.
"It is too early to say how beneficial, if at all, this will be for Walnut Creek or the Bay Area, but, in Walnut Creek, we have already seen a benefit from the establishment of Priority Development Areas," said councilman Bob Simmons, referring to the West Downtown Specific Plan now underway. That plan envisions "transit-oriented housing" near Walnut Creek BART.

Councilman Justin Wedel says the plan takes away a city's right to determine its own fate and imposes a regional agenda from unelected government agencies.

"The plan's one-size-fits all approach by definition removes our individuality and our ability to set our own direction, based on local control and our community needs," Wedel told Walnut Creek Patch.

Plan Bay Area is a regional response to a state law that requires communities to plan for growth in California through 2040, while reducing the level of greenhouse gases. The plan calls for multi-family housing to be constructed in "priority development areas," which in Lamorinda means mostly areas downtown near BART stations. In Orinda, there is also a move to increase the number of so-called in-law units in single family homes to accommodate the required mix of housing for moderate, low, and very low income residents.

8/20/13

Marin Voice: Plan Bay Area is a product of one-party rule

Posted: marinij.com

FROM MARINWOOD to Mill Valley and points in between, residents of Marin County continue to vocalize their opposition to Plan Bay Area, the regional government approach to transportation and land planning.

Initially conceived with the noble goals of reducing emissions and housing costs, the plan morphed into an experiment in social engineering that is administered by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in consultation with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC).

This alphabet soup of overseeing agencies has effectively muzzled the voice of the voters in the nine counties by allowing bureaucracy to become the final arbiter on land planning.

Much has been written about the shortcomings of the plan itself. Doing an Internet search yields a plethora of pages and articles debunking the plan on any number of fronts.

The opposition in our county is particularly intense, yet no one has addressed the root cause of the plan and the problems it is causing in Marin.

It's not the California Global Warming Solutions Act, commonly referred to as AB 32. Nor is it Senate Bill 375, which spawned the plan itself.

Rather, it's Marin's long march toward a one-party system that has manifested the challenges we face today.

Representing Marin on MTC is Steve Kinsey, the Democratic supervisor from District 4. His fellow supervisor from District 1, Democrat Susan Adams, served on ABAG for 9 years.

Surely the supervisors from Districts 2, 3 and 5 could provide some balanced dialogue on this plan that is plaguing us.

They could, if they weren't playing for the same team as Kinsey and Adams.

In fact, over 80 percent of ABAG's leadership is Democratic and, while that shows a problem that is more widespread than Marin, Marin can and should start doing something about it.

With Plan Bay Area demonstrating the dangers of a one-party state right in our own backyard, Marin needs a strong opposition party.

The Marin Republican Party has the potential to be a viable alternative at the ballot box; however, the Marin GOP can't remain idle and just simply expect voters to start turning the tide.

This is a two-way street.

The Republicans in Marin need to revitalize and demonstrate to the voters that they represent the shared

values of our county and our communities.

As a first step in their renaissance and in recognition that Plan Bay Area affects everyone in Marin regardless of party affiliation, the Marin GOP is actively engaged in the opposition to the plan.

By contrast, the Marin Democratic Party remained silent, complicit in the actions of their fellow party members that are enabling this social engineering scheme to threaten our way of life.

Without a resurgence of the Republican Party in Marin, residents can expect to see more Plan Bay Area-esque attempts to disenfranchise their rights.

While it may seem to be an extreme comparison to Marin, one-party states like Cuba and North Korea give little hope to their citizens with no say in the matter.

In Marin, though, the voters have a choice.

Come November, I urge you to remember this fact. Until then, the Marin GOP will continue to revitalize and demonstrate they represent the shared values of Marin residents while supporting everyone's rights by opposing Plan Bay Area.

Kevin Krick of Fairfax is the chair of the Marin Republican Party and a member of the board of directors of the California Republican Party.

From the San Francisco Business Times
:http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2013/08/20/plan-bay-area-sued-by-sierra-club.html

Aug 20, 2013, 10:42am PDT

Plan Bay Area sued by Sierra Club, other environmental groups

Eric Young
Reporter- *San Francisco Business Times*
Email | Twitter | Google+ | LinkedIn

A new plan that promotes high-density housing near public transit in the Bay Area faces yet another lawsuit.

The Sierra Club, Earthjustice and Communities for a Better Environment have sued to stop Plan Bay Area, which spells out how much new housing each of the Bay Area's cities must accommodate in coming years.

The lawsuit alleges that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments — the two agencies that passed the plan last July — did not do an adequate environmental review of Plan Bay Area.

"The Plan does not spend enough on public transportation, and instead invests in building new highways. The current Plan will result in more time on the roads and increased greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan also fails to protect West Oakland and other vulnerable communities from the health effects of cars, trucks, ships and rail that pass through their communities. The Plan will also displace low-income and residents of color from their communities," the groups said in a press release.

Representatives from ABAG and MTC said they do not comment on litigation.

This lawsuit is the third such suit against Plan Bay Area since it was approved last July. A libertarian group, the Pacific Legal Foundation, sued claiming the plan violates the California Environmental Quality Act by failing to "justify the plan's high-density development scheme, and refusing to consider the feasibility of a less-restrictive alternative."

The Building Industry Association Bay Area sued alleging that Plan Bay Area violates state law by failing to provide for enough housing to accommodate the Bay Area's projected

population and by failing to provide a realistic development pattern to accommodate residential growth.

Plan Bay Area, the result of three years of work, calls for adding almost 188,000 housing units by 2022. ABAG and MTC drew up the plan in response to a state law that requires every region in California to devise building and transportation plans to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.

Residents react to mayor's opt-out

By Paul Mamalakis | Posted: Wednesday, August 7, 2013 3:11 pm

A reaction to Novato Mayor Pat Eklund's decision to abstain from voting on the controversial Plan Bay Area was fast and furious.

Out of the many phone calls received, some opined she's playing it safe to be reelected in November. Others argued Eklund didn't want to hurt her chances of challenging Marin's District 5 Supervisor Judy Arnold in 2014. Most complained she's just another "spineless" politician.

Plan Bay Area is a state-mandated, integrated long-range transportation, land-use and housing plan that proposes to provide more housing and transportation choices and reduce transportation-related pollution.

In Jan. 2012, Eklund was elected by the mayors and council members of Marin's 11 cities to be their representative on the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board. During her reports at council meetings, Eklund routinely portrayed herself as the only member of the ABAG executive board to consistently expose the myriad flaws in the proposal. And yet, she joined other Novato council members in supporting the scheme.

As recently reported by Advance Editor Nicole Baptista, Eklund explained, "Novato's council voted in favor because in doing so, Novato's high-density housing allocation dramatically decreased. Silicon Valley is really driving the economy of the San Francisco Bay Area," she said. "It's where the majority of growth is anticipated. When we voted for Plan Bay Area, our housing allocation went down to 417 for 2014-2022. That is a third of the previous allocation."

Generally speaking, Eklund hasn't been known to run from a fight. Asked why she abstained, the veteran councilwoman referred me to her op-ed piece in another Bay Area newspaper. She wrote, "Since I represent the Marin cities on ABAG, I reached out to my colleagues and encouraged them to have public meetings to garner community feedback. I held several meetings with ABAG delegates on the city councils to ascertain how Marin cities should cast our one vote (mine) on the ABAG board.

"Of the 11 cities, three (Novato, Sausalito, Mill Valley) indicated their support for Plan Bay Area, one (Corte Madera) voted for the 'No Project Alternative' and seven (Belvedere, Tiburon, Larkspur, Ross, San Anselmo, Fairfax and San Rafael) took 'No Position.' 'No Position' is just that — they chose not to take a position for or against any of the alternatives. Given the majority took 'No Position,' it was my duty on July 18, to cast an abstention vote for or against the Plan." When the final votes were tallied, Eklund was the only member to abstain.

Red-faced, she subsequently apologized publicly for having misrepresented that Mill Valley's council had taken a position on the plan.

Eklund told me she's satisfied local control will not be preempted. That's because of a last-minute amendment to the plan that reads, "Adoption of Plan Bay Area does not mandate any changes to local zoning, general plans, or project review. The region's cities, towns, and counties will maintain control of all decisions to adopt plans and permit or deny development projects."

Our mayor often bragged — as Marin's representative to ABAG's executive board — she had the sole decision-making authority. However, Eklund copped out, threw the decisive cities under the bus, and allowed weak-kneed politicians to rule the day.

Paul Mamalakis is a political columnist for Marinscope Community Newspapers. He can be reached at 892-7361.

halfwaytoconcord.com
http://www.halfwaytoconcord.com/sb-1-threatens-local-control-of-urban-planning-process-in-concord/

SB-1 threatens local control of urban planning process in Concord

Richard Eber

One of the first things I learned as an intern-trainee of American Democracy is the truth to the saying *"Politics makes strange bed fellows."* This reality finally filtered down to me as I have tried to figure out winners and losers in the recent battles concerning the urban planning process in Contra Costa and on the State level.

My conclusion is that the victors all have enjoyed support from a coalition of (A) Liberal Democrats (B) Public Employee and Construction Trades Labor Unions (C) Environmentalist Groups.

Breaking this down on particular issues we first have passage of the **One Plan Bay Area** by the Executive Boards of the **Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)** and **the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).** The cornerstone of their program is the construction of publicly financed **Project Development Areas (PDA's)** with accompanying transportation projects primarily on the 101 corridor between San Francisco and San Jose.

Looking at the trail of money that is planned to be spent we see project labor is stipulated thus construction unions will get all of the work. Additional government employees will be needed for administration and filling transit jobs. Environmental groups will be placated by meeting their stated goals of reducing greenhouse gasses and carbon foot prints by building stack and pack housing near mass transit. Lastly, the Democratic Party benefits by having a loyal entitlement oriented political base residing in the communities they create.

Despite a triumph of epic proportions, this apparently is not enough. Legislation is being crafted in Sacramento that would force these policies on local communities. **SB-1** co-authored by Senators Darrel Steinberg (D-Sacramento) and Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord) brings back the redevelopment program done away with by Governor Brown for budgetary reasons in 2111. The bill features increased decision-making powers for the State that includes:

1. This legislation would authorize for creation of **Sustainable Communities Investment Areas (SCIA)** presided over by an appointed board (no direct election) by cities and counties with power of taxation and issuing bonds for developments in these special zones.

2. After receiving one million dollars to fund their operations, these agencies would be required to follow guidelines similar to **Project Development Areas (PDA's)** in the One Bay Area Plan relating to design, planning, construction and operation of areas under their jurisdiction

3. The State department of Industrial Relations would ensure project union labor would be used for construction and living wages be in place for those workers who would be employed once projects are completed. Hiring preferences would be given to military veterans, the disadvantaged, single parent families, and those with a history with the criminal justice system.

4. Provides that the SCIA can secure property from owners without a finding of "blight" which will give them more leeway to appropriate land as they see fit.

5. Sustainable parking standards ordinance would be in place which restricts parking in project areas to encourage public transportation and discouraging driving.

6. Provides that for all tax revenues that SCIA's collect, they must dedicate no less than 25% of net revenues for affordable housing purposes.

Were this legislation passed, we can expect more governmental regulations, higher taxes, and fewer jobs in the private sector, with less decision making authority under local control. At the same time the Democratic Party, labor unions and environmental groups would be able to consolidate their power on all levels.

The strength of this coalition first realized by Congressman George Miller (D-Martinez) has expanded to the State legislature in recent years epitomized by local representatives Mark DeSaulnier, and backbenchers Susan Bonilla and Joan Buchanan. Now with the probable passage of SB-1, these powerful forces will likely diminish the power of City Council's to control their own destinies.

Historically local government have tended to be more non-partisan and conservative than the legislature because these elected officials have needed to be more accountable to their constituents. This has frustrated the ultra-liberal *Super Majority* in Sacramento who wish to exert more control in every aspect of government. A product of this thinking is SB-1 which virtually eliminates any dissent on what course is taken in the local urban planning process

A good example of this are the discussions going on with Concord's Ad Hoc Steering Committee which is addressing how the downtown region will develop in the next thirty years. While the members of the committee, all of whom work or live in Concord concern themselves with improving the quality of life for future residents, others who have been addressing the group tend to be more fixated with meeting the guidelines of ABAG, the MTC, SB=375 and ultimately SB-1.

One such organization is **The Greenbelt Alliance** and the closely affiliated **Coalition for a Sustainable Concord (CFASC).** Both through their spokesman environmental activist Matt Vander Sluis of Berkeley, have advocated an aggressive plan to build a high concentration of low and moderate income housing in the area between the BART Station and Todos Santos Square. They believe "*Affordable Housing will bring more residents and economic investment downtown and strengthen the community fabric.*"

To accomplish this goal, the CFASC feels this activity "*should be primarily developed by non-profit housing projects development organizations*" With this scenario, the private sector is less qualified to handle such tasks. Such a conclusion appears to be in stark contrast with the views of many Ad Hoc Committee members whose experience as been in capitalistic enterprises.

With pressure mounting from outside forces including the CFASC and the recommendations made by the consultants Perkins & Will (whose services are paid by ABAG and the MTC) the Downtown Ad Hoc Steering Committee ponders their vision of what is to transpire in Concord in the years to come.

Unfortunately, it might not matter what they think if the legislature through SB-1 determines where, in what concentration, and the demographics of what people are to reside in SCIA areas. Furthermore, the State controls six parcels of empty property in the downtown area to further consolidate its power in the urban renewal process.

The big question is will higher taxes and tighter governmental regulations allow the private sector to produce enough high paying jobs to make these grandiose plans work? Good questions for the Demo-Labor-Environmentalist Coalition to ponder should their stranglehold on political power continue unabated.

~ The author is a member of the Concord Downtown Ad Hoc Steering Committee. The views expressed are his own and do not represent the views of the City of Concord.

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From the San Francisco Business Times :http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2013/08/19/second-group-sues-to-stop-plan-bay-area.html

Aug 19, 2013, 2:39pm PDT

Second group sues to stop Plan Bay Area

Eric Young
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Email | Twitter | Google+ | LinkedIn

A trade group representing home builders has sued to stop a sweeping land use plan that promotes high-density housing near public transit.

The Building Industry Association Bay Area alleges that Plan Bay Area — which was approved last July — violates state law by failing to provide for enough housing to accommodate the Bay Area's projected population and by failing to provide a realistic development pattern to accommodate residential growth.

The plan is "bad for Bay Area working families, bad for Bay Area employers and environmentally counterproductive," said Bob Glover, executive officer of BIA Bay Area, which represents urban and suburban home builders.

Plan Bay Area, which spells out how much new housing each of the Bay Area's cities must accommodate in coming years, was approved by the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Overall it calls for adding almost 188,000 housing units by 2022. ABAG and MTC drew up the plan in response to a state law that requires every region in California devise building and transportation plans to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

A representative for ABAG declined comment. A representative for MTC was not immediately available for comment.

A different group has already sued to stop Plan Bay Area.

The Pacific Legal Foundation, a libertarian organization in Sacramento, filed suit earlier this month claiming that the plan violates the California Environmental Quality Act by failing to "justify the plan's high-density development scheme, and refusing to consider the feasibility of a less restrictive alternative."

Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.

Suit filed to block Plan Bay Area

By Richard Halstead, Marin Independent Journal San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

Bay Area Citizens, a nonprofit co-founded by a Larkspur lawyer, filed suit in Alameda Superior Court on Tuesday seeking to revoke approval of Plan Bay Area.

Bay Area Citizens is being represented free of charge by the Pacific Legal Foundation, a nonprofit legal organization based in Sacramento that litigates nationwide to protect property rights.

The suit asserts that Plan Bay Area -- a Bay Area-wide plan that seeks to promote the development of new, more affordable housing along transportation corridors and near mass transit to reduce greenhouse gas production -- violates the California Environmental Quality Act.

Damien Schiff, the Pacific Legal Foundation lawyer handling the case, said the law required the regional agencies proposing Plan Bay Area to consider alternatives that would achieve the same results but with reduced effect on the environment.

"Here we think the plan fundamentally failed," Schiff said.

John Goodwin, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, one of the regional agencies that helped create Plan Bay Area, declined to comment on the suit.

Peter Singleton of Larkspur said he co-founded Bay Area Citizens in March.

"It is to basically to protect and represent Californians' interests in areas like local community control, the environment, land use and property rights," Singleton said. "It is a complementary effort to the other citizens groups in Marin and throughout the Bay Area."

Susan Kirsch, one of the co-founders of Citizen Marin, a coalition of neighborhood associations opposing Plan Bay Area, said she was familiar with Bay Area Citizens; but added, "We're completely separate."

Singleton said Bay Area Citizens has about 100 members, a number of whom live in Marin, including Sausalito Councilwoman Linda Pfeifer. Nevertheless, Singleton said Bay Area Citizens chose to file its suit in Alameda County because many of its members also live there.

A collaboration of four regional government agencies, Plan Bay Area sets out housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which requires each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks -- 7 percent per capita by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035.

Plan Bay Area aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets by requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 "priority development areas." These are areas typically accessible to mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money.

The plan was designed to cut greenhouse emissions by reducing automobile trips.

Schiff said, "But the plan's CEQA analysis ignores the air quality improvements that will result from existing clean-air initiatives at the state level. In fact, the region's greenhouse gas targets are projected to be met naturally, largely because of mandated fuel efficiencies that are on track to be imposed."

Schiff said the Plan Bay Area approval process also was flawed because it failed to include an evaluation of an alternative approach suggested by Bay Area Citizens. The alternative called for expanded bus service and reducing transit fares.

Schiff said the regional agencies overseeing Plan Bay Area contend the alternative was offered too late in the process -- during the period for public comment on Plan Bay Area.

But Schiff said, "Nothing in state law sets this arbitrary time limit on reviewing proposals."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Sunnyvale officials seek public input on housing element

By Alia Wilson, Sunnyvale Sun awilson@community-newspapers.com San Jose Mercury News
Posted: MercuryNews.com

Affordable housing is at the forefront of discussions for Bay Area cities updating their housing elements for 2014-2022.

With the average price of a single-family home in Santa Clara County now at a whopping $1 million, local cities must tackle several challenges in updating their plan--particularly maintaining and creating affordable housing--while meeting regional housing needs allocations.

The Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission identify areas to accommodate the eight-year projection of a region's housing needs.

These allocation numbers for Sunnyvale require the city to plan for nearly 5,470 dwelling units between 2014 and 2022, or an average of 680 units a year. During the past 15 years, the city has built about 300 housing units a year on average, with some variations.

"There is a lot of heartburn over the RHNA numbers," community development director Hanson Hom said. "In our case, I don't believe it will be a challenge to do. We have sufficient zoning to accommodate."

The state requires cities to update their housing elements every eight years, typically with an eye toward increasing the housing supply and improving the mix of housing types and affordability; promoting efficient development patterns; and promoting an improved intra-regional relationship between jobs and housing.

Cities can use several tools to monitor this, including a jobs/housing balance ratio and a balanced growth profile, which looks at community indicators to see how growth is affecting the city overall.

"We constantly track to see how well we're in balance," said Hom. "For every 1.4 to 1.8 jobs produced, you should have plans for one additional housing unit. A lot of cities are exceeding 2.0 ratios.

"Historically, a lot of cities plan for more employment uses rather than more housing. I think we're doing pretty well. It's all market driven, too."

The city is proactively asking for public input with the hope of having a draft element available for public review in late spring in 2014, before going through the council adoption process in the summer. The deadline to submit the updated housing element to the state is the end of 2014.

Residents can participate in a survey online at surveymonkey.com/s/T86BV6C or attend a housing element public outreach meeting on Aug. 28 at 6:30 p.m. at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, 550 E. Remington Drive.

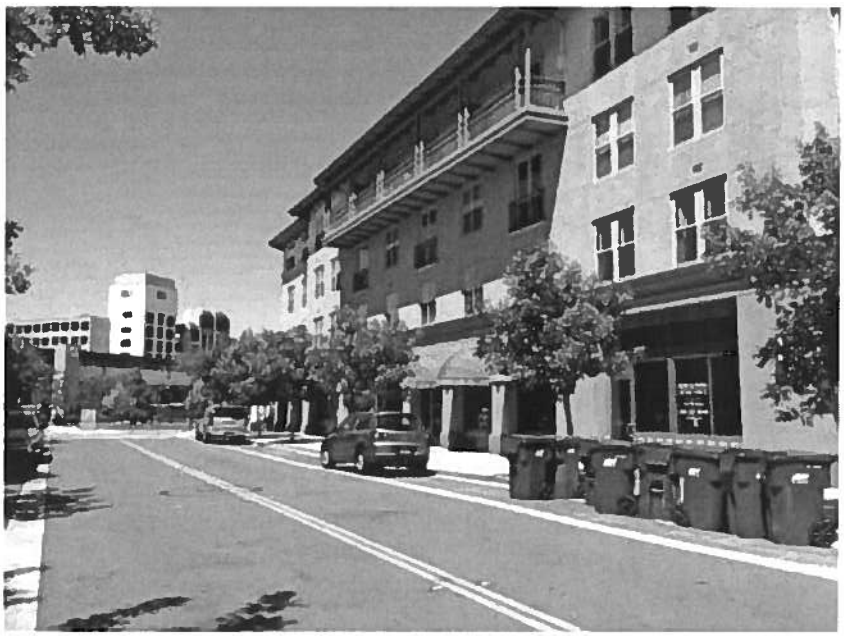
For more information, visit housingelement.insunnyvale.com.

TRANSPORTATION

Transit-oriented developments are taking the Bay Area back to the future

By Isabel Angell (/people/isabel-angell)

1 of 2



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The Bay Area is one of the most congested places in the whole country – behind Los Angeles and Honolulu. Over the next 30 years, another two million people are expected to move here. So, how are we are all going to fit?

The regional planning groups Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) recently passed Plan Bay Area – a master plan that will guide growth in the area for the next thirty years – when the population is expected to swell to nine million. The Plan predicts that most of those two million new people will live and work in transit-oriented developments.

Transit-oriented developments (TODs) are planned areas with housing, office, and retail centered around a public transit hub, like BART or light rail.

The point is to make cars optional for residents and workers. TODs are modeled after dense, urban, walkable neighborhoods. Robert Cervero, an urban planning professor at UC Berkeley, compared TODs to old cities like New York or Paris.

"Before the automobile, you had very compact development roughly within a half a mile perimeter of a transit stop. It was mixed-use, very pedestrian-friendly," he explains. "So in many ways transit-oriented development takes pre-automobile streetcar cities of 100 years ago and tries to modernize it, really tried to adapt it to 21st century."

In other words, these developments are taking us back...to the future. The architects behind Plan Bay Area think TODs are a good idea, but they've gotten a lot of backlash from suburban communities. Patty Denny of Morgan Hill spoke during the public comment period before the plan was passed, and compared Plan Bay Area to Cold War-era communist policies.

"I would like to challenge all of you to get on an airplane and fly to Russia, China, and Siberia. I've been to all three, and if you don't understand what your housing is going to look like, go and look at it," she said.

Do these planned communities – or "stack-and-packs", as opponents refer to them – really work? Well, transit-oriented developments already exist across the Bay Area, mostly along BART lines.

Fruitvale Village

Back in the 1990s, BART wanted to build a big parking garage at its Fruitvale station in East Oakland. But the garage would have cut the station off from the rest of this mostly immigrant, low-income neighborhood. The community resisted, and the Unity Council, a non-profit advocacy group for the neighborhood, brought up the idea of building a transit-oriented development instead of a parking structure. So BART and the Unity Council made a deal.

Jeff Pace, the chief operations officer for the Unity Council, said he likes to characterize the deal like this:

"BART said if you, the Unity Council, if you design something, get community backing for it, and their input, if you finance it, build it, own it, operate it, then we'll let you do that. So, we said, okay, that's a good deal, we'll do that."

So the Council built Fruitvale Village—a collection of apartments, offices, and retail space centered around the BART station. And, as part of the deal, they also built BART a parking structure. But they stuck it off to the side, where it wouldn't interfere with the neighborhood.

Fruitvale Village packs a lot into three blocks, and it's not just apartments and businesses. There's a large health clinic, a pre-school, and a counseling center for foster kids. There's even a charter high school, ARISE, right next to a senior center.

Pace said that, at first, Fruitvale Village, which was completed in 2004, had a hard time filling up its retail spaces. But now, he said he can call it a big success.

"We like to say we're 100-100-100," he said. "We've got 100 percent occupancy in all of our main uses, the residential, the commercial, community service, and the retail."

Fruitvale Village has also made some headway on the main goal of transit-oriented development: getting people out of cars. A 2006 survey – which Pace admits is a long time ago – showed that over thirty percent of residents take BART to work. That's four times the average for the rest of Oakland.

"If you put people really close to mass transit, they use it," Pace said.

Contra Costa Centre

Twenty-two miles inland from Fruitvale Village on the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART line is the Contra Costa Centre. It's right next to downtown Walnut Creek, at the Pleasant Hill BART station. The neighborhood is quiet and spread out, about a half square mile of office parks, condos and retail space. It's a big contrast from Fruitvale Village.

The Centre, which was organized in 1985, attracts residents and businesses by offering a suburban setting that's walkable and close to public transit. It also offers perks to workers who don't drive. Property owners chip in to a general fund that pays for things like reduced price BART tickets and cash for people who carpool. In all, thirty percent of people work at the Centre don't drive there alone. The county's average is twenty percent.

The Centre's executive director Lynn Busby explains part of the Centre's program to get employees out of cars involves...giving them access to cars.

"If you take BART or bus to work, or walk or ride your bike, we have a carsharing program that's free of charge to anyone," she said." "The building owners pay for that."

Busby said the cars let people drive to lunch and run errands, which helps them leave their own cars at home. The Centre has also added a fleet of bikes and Segways people can check out for free. But even after almost two decades, Busby pointed the Contra Costa Centre isn't finished yet.

There's a vacant lot that's entitled for an office building, and another that advertises a future apartment building. There's also some empty retail along the bottom floor of a pair of apartment buildings that were built in 2010. Busby says the retail space is slowly filling up, and she hopes a plan for a restaurant will go through. But overall, the Centre is mostly filled in.

Busby says the Contra Costa Centre is doing its job as a transit-oriented development.

"The whole point is you live here, you work here, you can take the train to work," she said. "It's amazing to watch in the morning, people that are walking to the BART station here. It's quite phenomenal."

And this is exactly what the architects of Plan Bay Area want the future to look like. The Plan estimates that over two-thirds of region's new housing will be built on five percent of the land—mostly in TODs very similar to Fruitvale Village or the Contra Costa Centre.

But not everyone sees the future the same way—it's up to individual Bay Area cities to decide how they want to grow.

Two new lawsuits filed to challenge Plan Bay Area

By Richard Halstead, Marin Independent Journal San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

Two more lawsuits have been filed challenging the legitimacy of Plan Bay Area.

On Friday, the Building Industry Association of the Bay Area sued, asserting that Plan Bay Area violates SB 375 -- the landmark 2008 statute requiring integrated regional housing and transportation plans -- by failing to provide for enough housing to accommodate the Bay Area's projected population and by failing to provide a realistic development pattern to accommodate residential growth.

Then on Monday, Earthjustice, Communities for a Better Environment, and the Sierra Club jointly filed suit asserting that the environmental impact report prepared for Plan Bay Area was inadequate.

Earlier this month, Bay Area Citizens, a nonprofit co-founded by a Larkspur lawyer, filed suit seeking to revoke approval of Plan Bay Area, on the basis that the plan violated the California Environmental Quality Act by failing to consider alternatives that would achieve the same results but with reduced effect on the environment.

All three suits have been filed in Alameda Superior Court and attorneys for the plaintiffs say they expect them to be consolidated and overseen by one judge.

A collaboration of four regional government agencies, Plan Bay Area sets out housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which requires each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks -- 7 percent per capita by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035.

Plan Bay Area aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets by requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 "priority development areas." These are areas typically accessible to mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money.

The plan was designed to cut greenhouse emissions by reducing automobile trips.

The Building Industry Association of the Bay Area favored an alternative studied in the environmental impact report for Plan Bay Area. That alternative forecast larger population and job growth over the 40 years covered by the plan, and would have allowed more of that growth to occur in suburban areas of the Bay Area.

Bob Glover, executive officer of the Building Industry Association of the Bay Area, said, "Plan Bay Area is a cop out. It neither plans for enough housing nor provides a reasonable

path for developing it and therefore looks a lot more like a pulling up of the draw bridge than a sustainable communities strategy."

Glover said that by planning for the creation of more housing units in the nine-county Bay Area, this alternative would prevent urban sprawl across a broader region.

Critics of Plan Bay Area, such as suburban residents who oppose urbanization of their neighborhoods, have argued, however, that Plan Bay Area's growth projections were already unrealistically high. They pointed to lower projections issued by the state Department of Finance in January.

Glover said the projected need for new housing units started out at 902,000 and was ratcheted down to 660,000 due to political pressure.

"Throughout the process there has been push back from local jurisdictions," Glover said. "We believe as a result of that the growth projections have continued to drop."

The environmental groups who filed suit Monday say Plan Bay Area would spend too little on public transportation and invest instead in building new highways, resulting in more traffic congestion and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Their suit asserts that the environmental impact report prepared for Plan Bay Area was inadequate because it fails to protect the health of vulnerable communities located near transportation corridors, which will see an increase in the volume of goods movement. The suit also asserts that Plan Bay Area does too little to ensure access to affordable housing, and creates the risk that low-income residents will be displaced to areas with poor access to public transit.

Nile Malloy, a regional program director for Communities for a Better Environment, said, "By failing to plan for the inevitable boom of freight movement in our area, the plan creates a nightmare of toxic air quality for the communities closest to our highways, ports and shipping hubs. We can't accept this."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Walnut Creek Patch

Bay Area Growth Plan Full of Hot Air, Lawsuit Contends

Plan Bay Area fails to consider "less restrictive" housing requirements, the lawsuit charges.

Posted by Jim Caroompas (Editor), August 07, 2013 at 07:29 AM

The Bay Area Plan is the subject of a lawsuit filed Tuesday.

The plan to reduce greenhouse gas in California by building high-density housing near BART stations in Walnut Creek and Lamorinda--approved last month by two regional agencies—violates state environmental law, according to a lawsuit filed Tuesday .

A conservative group called Pacific Legal Foundation argues that Plan Bay Area violates the California Environmental Quality Act because it fails to consider "less restrictive" housing requirements.

"Plan Bay Area's sardine strategy for development — its scheme to squeeze and stack people into high-density dwellings and business complexes — simply isn't needed to reach government air quality goals," said Damien Schiff, an attorney for the foundation.

Proponents of the plan, developed over three years by the Association for Bay Area Government and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, say that the anticipated growth in the Bay Area should be accommodated through the development of pedestrian-friendly areas that combine multi-story housing and retail near public transit. Such a plan, they say, will reduce the need for single-car commuting and the sprawl of single-family housing that encourages it.

But groups like Orinda Watch and Bay Area Citizens say the plan is nothing more than social engineering, dictating a kind of urban-based lifestyle that is inappropriate for quiet, upscale communities.

Local elected officials are not unanimous in their support for the plan.
"It is too early to say how beneficial, if at all, this will be for Walnut Creek or the Bay Area, but, in Walnut Creek, we have already seen a benefit from the establishment of Priority Development Areas," said councilman Bob Simmons, referring to the West Downtown Specific Plan now underway. That plan envisions "transit-oriented housing" near Walnut Creek BART.

Councilman Justin Wedel says the plan takes away a city's right to determine its own fate and imposes a regional agenda from unelected government agencies.

"The plan's one-size-fits all approach by definition removes our individuality and our ability to set our own direction, based on local control and our community needs," Wedel told Walnut Creek Patch.

Plan Bay Area is a regional response to a state law that requires communities to plan for growth in California through 2040, while reducing the level of greenhouse gases. The plan calls for multi-family housing to be constructed in "priority development areas," which in Lamorinda means mostly areas downtown near BART stations. In Orinda, there is also a move to increase the number of so-called in-law units in single family homes to accommodate the required mix of housing for moderate, low, and very low income residents.

Barnidge: A liberal, conservative, bleeding-heart redneck looks at Plan Bay Area

By Tom Barnidge Contra Costa Times Columnist Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

I once wrote a column about immigration reform that stirred angry emails from both sides of the debate. Because I sympathized with some concerns expressed by illegal immigrants, conservatives branded me a bleeding heart. Because I didn't embrace all of those concerns, liberals labeled me a redneck.

Some will tell you it takes a special skill to alienate both ends of the political spectrum within the constraints of 600 words. (Actually, it's not that hard.) But I'm not sure I deserve all the credit.

Maybe the anger at perceived ideological bias has as much to do with the beholder as the one expressing the view. When published opinions contradict your own, it's far easier to accuse writers of prejudice than to concede they might be on to something.

People hang labels on opposing views all the time, as I was reminded recently after commenting on two hot-button issues.

When I challenged BART workers' rationale for striking -- $60,000 to $70,000 salaries for a 37½-hour work week that almost guarantees overtime in a job with great benefits doesn't seem so bad -- I was called a right-wing, union-busting conservative.

A few days later, when I chided opponents of the regional land-use-and-transportation vision known as Plan Bay Area -- coordinating residential growth with transportation options makes some sense -- many readers saw me as a Big Brother advocate who'd drunk the socialist Kool-Aid and sworn allegiance to collectivism.

This is a far-fetched idea, I know, but it's conceivable that I sized up each argument independently, weighed the pros and cons, and offered an unbiased opinion as I understood the positions. That's how I make decisions at the ballot box. I don't vote straight party tickets.

I bristle when people talk about media bias, as if all journalists sign a secret pledge and participate in daily conference calls to determine what agenda we'll foist on the public. I don't even like conference calls.

My general support of Plan Bay Area, which aims to preserve the atmosphere and open space, begins with the premise that it's better to plan for growth than to build houses on every chunk of land where you can pour a foundation.

Moreover, the plan doesn't demand that automobile owners abandon their vehicles; it encourages construction near public transit alternatives. It doesn't require communities to build mixed-income residences; it encourages them to do so with financial incentives.

The easiest way to fight an idea you are determined not to like is to demonize it. So opponents' recurring assertion is that they will be denied property rights and forced from single-family homes. But if anyone bothered to listen at the July 18 plan approval meeting, ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapaport bluntly refuted that.

"The Bay Area currently contains about 2.1 million single-family homes," he said. "Under this plan, by 2040 there will be about 2.3 million single-family homes."

So, about those homes we're being forced out of: The plan anticipates 200,000 more of them.

Government agencies do many things poorly -- not that we have space today to talk about the Bay Bridge -- but there's nothing frightening I can find about Plan Bay Area.

I don't expect to change opponents' minds, of course. I'm part of the media, and we're biased -- either liberally or conservatively, depending on who's reading.

Contact Tom Barnidge at tbarnidge@bayareanewsgroup.com.

Barnidge: Plan Bay Area marches on, despite torrent of criticism

By Tom Barnidge Contra Costa Times Columnist Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

It will be years before anyone knows if the vision laid down by Plan Bay Area produces its desired results -- smarter development, more affordable housing, less traffic congestion, reduced greenhouse gases -- but no waiting is required for its opponents' assessment.

The land-use-and-transportation plan approved Thursday by the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission was pilloried in public comment as a social engineering experiment, an attack on property rights, an exercise in collectivism and an assault on the Constitution.

American freedom hasn't been this threatened since General Zod tore the roof off the White House in "Superman II."

If that portrayal seems at odds with the intentions of elected officials -- city council members and county supervisors -- who comprise the MTC and ABAG boards, it is. Their goal, they say, is to plan for population growth by urging communities to zone for mixed-income housing near public transit.

If urban sprawl is curtailed, open spaces can be preserved. If vehicular traffic is reduced, greenhouse gases will be, too. If employees have housing and easy access to work, more businesses will be attracted. There's some logic to it all.

"If you look at California's history for the last 50 years," said Orinda Mayor and MTC Commissioner Amy Worth, "so much of it has been development first, followed by transportation. This combines transportation with land-use planning."

It goes beyond that, say critics, who see a plan to accommodate the masses and envision tenements sprouting like weeds; who hear talk of enhanced public transit and see an attack on automobiles. From their howls of protest, you'd swear they were being dragged from their homes and locked up in dormitories.

ABAG and MTC officials were on various occasions likened to Karl Marx, Nikita Khrushchev, Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler. (Everyone forgets Mao Zedong.) If you are a fan of overstatement, this was a chance to see a hyperbole competition.

"Comrades and commissars of the Bay Area regional Politburo," said one contestant, "I'd like to thank you for providing me with the illusion of public input, which you intend to totally ignore."

One woman sang her bitterness, to the tune of "America the Beautiful":

"Oh, dutiful, great bureaucrat, he claims to speak for me.

"A lowly serf, hardly of worth, he knows what's best, you see."

Across 3¿1/2 hours, 161 speakers took turns at the microphone -- time goes faster if you count them -- and the vast majority came armed with biting attacks on officials' integrity, courage and patriotism.

Worth, who led the meeting, dutifully thanked each speaker for his or her comments, as if they'd complimented her on her appearance.

"On the one hand, it's tough," she said of the withering attacks. "On the other, I recognize this is part of the process. People get engaged because they care."

One voice of support came from Stephanie Reyes of Greenbelt Alliance, a nonprofit land-conservation advocate: "All parts of the plan revolve around public health, a beautiful place to live, housing choices and affordability. They get better under the plan, and without it, they get worse. I don't want to live in a place that gets dirtier in 25 years."

The plan does, indeed, look ahead that far, but it's revisited at regular intervals. So keep those hyperboles handy, folks. We'll be doing this again in four years.

Contact Tom Barnidge at tbarnidge@bayareanewsgroup.com.

SEVEN DAYS THE EAST BAY NEWS BLOG

FRIDAY, JULY 19, 2013

Bay Area Agencies Boost Support for Affordable Housing and Local Transit

TRANSPORTATION Jean Tepperman — Fri, Jul 19, 2013 at 6:00 PM

6

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Before adopting a sweeping thirty-year plan for Bay Area housing and transportation just after midnight Friday morning, the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) added significant provisions to boost support for affordable housing and local transit operations.

As **we previously reported**, a coalition of environmental and social justice organizations called "6 Wins for Social Equity" had been pushing for those priorities throughout the planning process, and claimed these last-minute amendments as victories.

Plan Bay Area aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by designing communities to require less driving, as required by a 2008 state law. The 6 Wins coalition developed a proposal that also emphasized social equity; the MTC/ABAG staff analysis labeled the 6 Wins proposal as environmentally superior to five others, including the one they themselves had developed.

One of the amendments adopted before the final vote commits the MTC to develop a "comprehensive strategy" for supporting local transit operations. Another requires local governments to adopt a plan for creating affordable housing as a condition of receiving grants from the One Bay Area Grants program, which provides funding for transportation infrastructure.

The third amendment concerned an estimated $3.1 billion the region is due to receive from the state's new "cap and trade" system, through which companies must buy permits to release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The final plan calls for an inclusive public process to set priorities for spending this money, focusing on the needs of disadvantaged communities

Spokespeople for the 6 Wins coalition said these victories were only a "first step" and vowed to continue advocating for the interests of low-income families and communities as the planning process continues.

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Bay Area Citizens sues Plan Bay Area

Neal J. Riley
Updated 4:48 pm, Tuesday, August 6, 2013

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Critics of a regional plan to encourage development and growth in areas with easy access to mass transit filed a lawsuit in Alameda County Superior Court on Tuesday.

Plan Bay Area was approved last month by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments after a contentious three-year process involving dozens of public hearings. Its goal is to satisfy state legislation that requires plans to accommodate the more than 2 million people who are expected to move into the Bay Area between now and 2040, while at the same time lowering overall greenhouse gas emissions.

The petitioner, a group called Bay Area Citizens that says the plan will hurt their property values, is being represented in court by the Pacific Legal Foundation, a Sacramento conservative organization.

"We've been trying to raise substantive concerns about the plan, the restrictions it places on how individuals can live, how we can travel," said Peter Singleton, a co-founder of Bay Area Citizens. "It restricts people's ability to make their own choices."

The lawsuit alleges that Plan Bay Area violates the California Environmental Quality Act by omitting alternatives to its plan to steer 77 percent of future growth near "priority development areas," including places like Mission Bay in San Francisco, Oakland's Jack London Square and downtown San Rafael, Walnut Creek and Fairfield.

"That's great for people who want to live in crowded city centers," Singleton said. "Most people don't."

The plan is not binding, but that doesn't mean it's inconsequential. When doling out state and federal funds, the MTC would have to give preference to plan-related improvements.

"Do we really need to sacrifice significantly how we live and work to achieve these greenhouse goals?" said Damien Schiff, a Pacific Legal Foundation attorney. "The reality is no, those goals can be achieved without all the pain that Plan Bay Area entails."

MTC spokesman Randy Rentschler said he could not comment on the lawsuit, but noted that regional planning has been routine for decades. But Plan Bay Area has attracted a "whole different cast of characters" this time around, he said.

"I don't think the differences between our plan now and the plan last time are that different, but I think the atmospherics are significantly different," he said, referring to the new focus on reducing greenhouse gases. "Whenever you introduce climate change into a discussion, you tend to amp it up, and that's certainly happened here."

Neal J. Riley is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: nriley@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @realdealneal

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CabDriverJulie 5:27 PM on August 6, 2013

appointed officials telling us how and where to live. NO thank you.

REPLY (10) (2) POPULARITY: 8 | | [Report Abuse]

dartanyan1972 5:11 PM on August 6, 2013

Plan Bay Area Is a mildly veiled attempt at Social Engineering done under the guise of Affordable Housing. Just follow the $$$$. PBA is supported by Developers who would build cheap housing with government subsidies and not have to pay local taxes for up to 30 years. Its a con job that is attractive to Liberals who typically are well intended but seldom think about the consequences of acting out their guilt feelings !

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rokeachpasquene 3:57 PM on August 6, 2013

Plan too liberal? When it goes into affect, there sure won't be the projected 2 million population increase and a net loss will result.

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BAY AREA LEADERS APPROVE LONG-TERM POPULATION GROWTH PLAN AFTER CONTENTIOUS MEETING

ABAG BAAQMD MTC PLAN BAY AREA by Bay City News | July 19, 2013 2:51 am |

A coalition of Bay Area leaders late Thursday night approved a long-term regional plan meant to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

The final vote on Plan Bay Area came during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) at the Oakland Marriott.

The two groups are made up of 21 Bay Area county supervisors, mayors and other local leaders.

Several hundred people, many who boarded buses from Marin and Santa Clara counties, packed a Marriott ballroom to protest the plan, voicing concerns that it will bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted “Let us vote!” or “MTC, don’t speak for me!”

Several dozen others from Oakland-based public transit advocacy group TransForm carried yellow signs expressing support for alternatives to the plan under the slogan “Equity Environment and Jobs” or EEJ.

According to the MTC, the plan is a “work in progress “ that continues earlier efforts to “develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way.”

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region’s nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

The federal government requires the agencies to update the plan every four years to keep up with shifting demographics and new data, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said.

“There are no easy solutions in this plan but…this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly,” said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing.

“It’s clearly a social engineering experiment,” Fairfax resident Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options – amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

“I’m really glad to see the region take this pioneering step,” said Adina Levin of Menlo Park.

The Bay Area is among the state’s 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night’s vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

Laura Dixon, Bay City News

Bay Area Plan Approved, Eklund Abstains From Vote

Opposition group Citizen Marin chartered a 48-person bus to the meeting, and several Marin residents seized on the opportunity to speak out against the plan.

Posted by Karina Ioffee (Editor), July 19, 2013 at 06:00 pm

Bay City News

A coalition of Bay Area leaders, including Marin County Supervisor Katie Rice, approved a long-term regional plan meant to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

Plan Bay Area was approved during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments Thursday.

Marin County supervisors Steve Kinsey and Katie Rice voted yes on both the plan and its environmental impact report, while Novato City Councilwoman Pat Eklund abstained from voting on both, according to the *Marin Independent Journal*.

Eklund is running for reelection this November. A message left for her Friday morning was not immediately returned.

The plan has been controversial from the get-go and Thursday night's packed meeting at the Oakland Marriott was no different. Several hundred people packed the hotel in protest, voicing concerns that the plan bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development.

Opposition group Citizen Marin chartered a 48-person bus to the meeting, according to the *Marin Independent Journal*, and several Marin residents seized on the opportunity to speak out against the plan.

"It's clearly a social engineering experiment," Fairfax resident and Marin Republican Party leader Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

"This plan has been wrong from the beginning," said Mill Valley resident Susan Kirsch, one of the co-founders of Citizen Marin. "You don't represent us. What we demand is the right to vote."

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted "Let us vote!" or "MTC, don't speak for me!"

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Thursday night's vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

Bay Area Plan to Accommodate Population Growth, Cut Pollution Approved

Some opponents of the plan said it would bring overcrowding to cities. Others wanted the plan to be put to a vote.

Posted by Stacie Chan (Editor), July 19, 2013 at 10:21 am

Credit: Plan Bay Area
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Written by Bay City News

A coalition of Bay Area leaders late Thursday night approved a long-term regional plan meant to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

The final vote on Plan Bay Area came during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) at the Oakland Marriott.
The two groups are made up of 21 Bay Area county supervisors, mayors and other local leaders.

Several hundred people, many who boarded buses from Marin and Santa Clara counties, packed a Marriott ballroom to protest the plan, voicing concerns that it will

bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted "Let us vote!" or "MTC, don't speak for me!"

Several dozen others from Oakland-based public transit advocacy group TransForm carried yellow signs expressing support for alternatives to the plan under the slogan "Equity Environment and Jobs" or EEJ.

According to the MTC, the plan is a "work in progress " that continues earlier efforts to "develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way."

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region's nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

The federal government requires the agencies to update the plan every four years to keep up with shifting demographics and new data, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said.

"There are no easy solutions in this plan but...this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly," said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing. "It's clearly a social engineering experiment," Fairfax resident Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options - amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

"I'm really glad to see the region take this pioneering step," said Adina Levin of Menlo Park. The Bay Area is among the state's 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night's vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

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Bay Area growth: Why not spread out into rural land instead of building in cities?

By Wendell Cox Special to the Mercury News San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

The last two centuries have brought unprecedented urbanization around the world. Large cities have become the norm by meeting the aspirations of new residents. Cities are primarily economic organisms and are justified only by improving the lives of their residents, by facilitating higher discretionary incomes and reducing poverty.

However, in recent years, those more concerned with what the city looks like and how residents travel have dominated urban policy. Regional plans had been adopted with virtually no attention to the economic impacts of their strategies. Urban expansion (which detractors call by the ill defined term "sprawl") has become the bugaboo, despite the fact that 97 percent of the nation's land is rural. The result has been to price people out of the housing market, severely restrict affordable housing for low-income households and increase traffic congestion, with its attendant costs.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the San Francisco Bay Area, under the Association of Bay Area governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission "Plan Bay Area."

Plan Bay Area seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing automobile use and by forcing people to live in smaller houses at much higher densities. Between now and 2040, more than three quarters of the new houses would be built in high-density, transit-oriented developments, called "priority development areas." It further suggests that fewer detached houses will be needed, despite a larger population. Priority development areas would also accommodate nearly two-thirds of all business expansion.

Little or no new development would be allowed on or beyond the urban fringe, where cities have grown organically since the beginning of time. Less draconian constraints on fringe development have been employed for 40 years in the Bay Area. This has led to a more than doubling of house prices relative to incomes, making a formerly affordable metropolitan area one of the most expensive in the world. This is not unexpected, since rationing of any demanded good or service, including land for houses, increases its price, other things being equal. At least partly because the first principle of livability is affordability, a net one-half million people have moved from the Bay Area to other parts of the country since 2000.

Yet, even after seeking to play musical chairs with the lives of 7 million current residents and a million additional residents who could move there by 2040, Plan Bay Area predicts that people will drive cars just about as much as they do now. But much of this traffic would be concentrated around the priority areas, which would intensify traffic congestion. The effect would be to radically alter the character of communities from Larkspur to Orinda to Morgan Hill, by crowding them with higher population densities and making traffic congestion and local air pollution even worse.

None of this is necessary. The United States Department of Energy forecasts that automobile fuel efficiency will improve materially by 2040. This would reduce Bay Area per capita emissions 49 percent by 2040. Plan Bay Area's policies are not necessary to reach the state's emissions reduction target.

The Bay Area has an opportunity to reject the policy overreach that has made housing so expensive and traffic congestion so bad. Plan Bay Area should be withdrawn. Officials should instead focus on facilitating the aspirations of present and future residents.

Wendell Cox, principal of Wendell Cox Consultancy (Demographia), an international public policy firm, is a PRI fellow and a visiting professor at a French national university. He wrote this for this newspaper.

From the San Francisco Business Times :http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2013/07/19/bay-area-officials-approve.html

Jul 19, 2013, 11:41am PDT

Bay Area officials approve controversial land use plan

Eric Young
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Bay Area officials approved a sweeping land use plan that has stirred opposition from a wide spectrum of groups.

The proposal, called Plan Bay Area, puts a premium on placing new, high-density housing near public transit and job centers in the nine-county region.

Plan Bay Area spells out how much new housing each of the Bay Area's 101 cities must accommodate in coming years. Overall it calls for adding almost 188,000 housing units by 2022 in response to a state law requiring every region in California to draw up building and transportation plans to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

Two local agencies — the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission — voted Thursday on the final plan, which took about three years to develop.

Supporters say Plan Bay Area provides enough housing to accommodate the growing region and helps promote economic vitality.

"Plan Bay Area is an historic and important step forward for our region," said Mark Luce, a Napa County Supervisor who also is president of the ABAG executive board. "It's the product of more than three years of collaboration between cities and counties to do our part to create a more sustainable Bay Area for current and future generations."

Opponents have attacked the plan for several reasons.

Many conservatives said they fear the plan will strip local governments of control over land use planning decisions. Others said that it was merely a poorly designed scheme to promote high-density housing.

"This plan will not reduce greenhouse gases," Kevin Krick, a member of the Marin Republican Party, was quoted as saying in the *Marin Independent Journal*. "It is clearly a social engineering experiment."

Some liberals had concerns with Plan Bay Area as well. Some said they feared that it could be used as political cover to push projects through the planning process without thorough environmental review. The state law behind Plan Bay Area allows cities to streamline the California Environmental Quality Act for housing plans.

About 80 percent of the new housing called for in Plan Bay Area would take place in so-called priority development areas, zones that have been identified by cities for their job-growth potential or proximity to public transit.

Cities that fail to meet housing goals outlined in the plan likely won't qualify for additional transit funding that MTC doles out to cities. Approximately $7.3 billion is at risk by 2040.

The plan is designed to be reviewed every four years for updating.

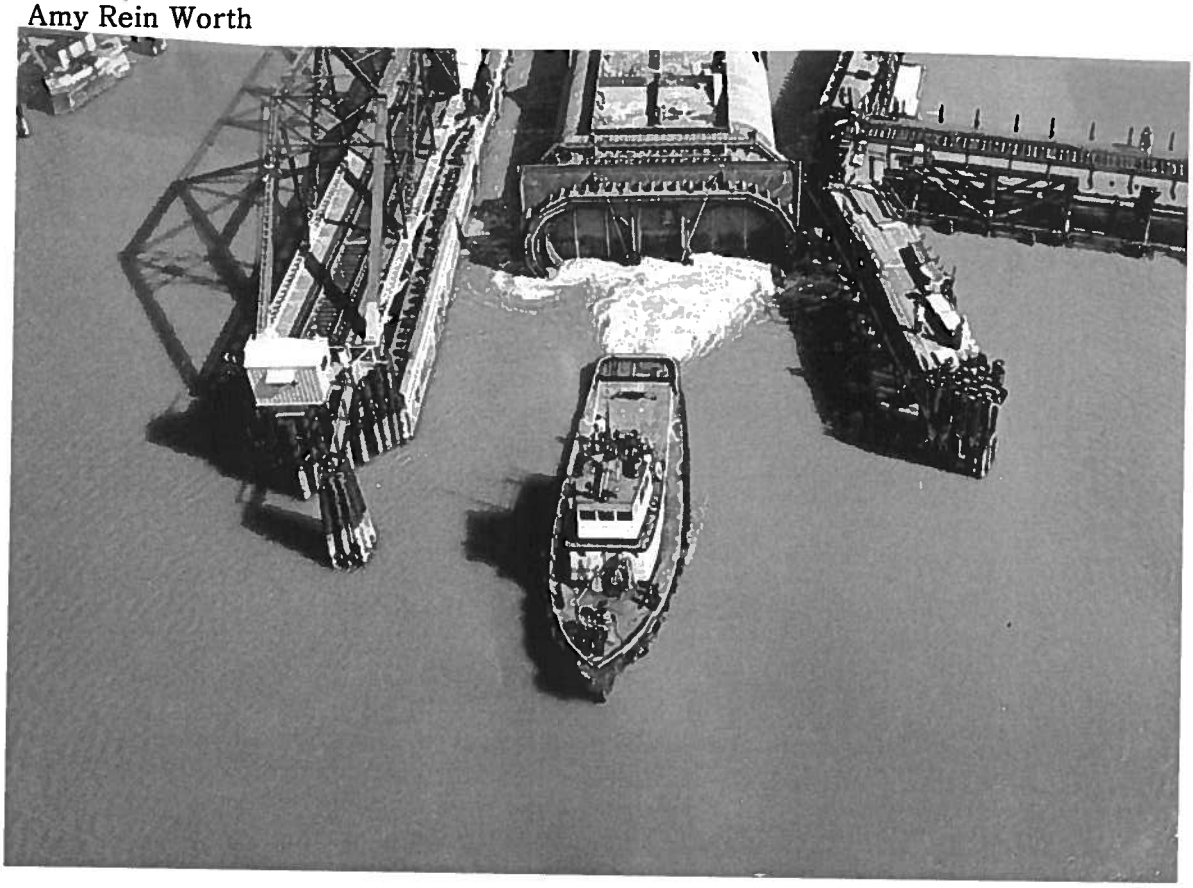
Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.

Opinion

San Francisco Chronicle

Bay Area needs transit investments to keep moving

Amy Rein Worth



Courtesy Kaiser Graphic Arts

A section of BART's Transbay Tube is towed down the Napa River after being fitted with a seismic protection joint at Kaiser Steel's Napa plant in 1968.

History shows the best way for the Bay Area to grow and remain economically strong is to invest in infrastructure – and especially transportation. The evidence hides in plain sight all around us. Regional prosperity built in the era of thriving ports and train travel accelerated with

post-war highways, bridges and airports and then climbed into higher gear as the Bay Area found a new way forward by building BART under the bay and re-establishing a broad and capable public transit network. The result is a transportation network that has become the key to our famous quality of life - and some of the highest personal income of any place on Earth.

The challenge now is to better maintain the roads, highways, buses and rail lines we already have, while also selecting those strategic new investments that will strengthen the Bay Area's economic competitiveness in the years ahead.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission achieved this balancing act in its just-approved Plan Bay Area, the region's long-term transportation and land-use blueprint. The plan dedicates nearly 90 percent of available funding to the upkeep and operation of existing streets, roads, sidewalks, highways and transit systems.

At the same time, Plan Bay Area commits to the strategic expansion of our transportation network, funding such noteworthy projects as BART-to-San Jose and the completion of a regional carpool lane network. Yet despite this prudent approach, the plan reveals a $45 billion shortfall in the funding needed to sustain the Bay Area's transportation infrastructure.

Almost half of this gap - around $20 billion - involves local streets and roads. The Bay Area's potholed roadways give a jolting daily reminder to drivers that postponing investment in repairs does not pay. And ignoring the problem will lead to even costlier rehabilitation down the road.

The public transit needs attention as well. BART and San Francisco Muni have long-term capital shortfalls of $6 billion and $5 billion, respectively.

These systems, which together carry 70 percent of the Bay Area's transit riders, will have less than two-thirds of the funding they need to operate in a state of good repair through 2040. A solution needs to be found. If recent experience is any indication, we can't look to Congress for help.

Washington is paralyzed by partisanship, and lawmakers there have been unable for many years to pass a simple transportation appropriations bill, let alone muster the courage to lead our country on a path of renewed investment at a level befitting a great nation.

In Sacramento, at least, the budget gridlock of the past finally has given way, and Bay Area residents can be hopeful that state leaders will focus on California's neglected infrastructure and the resulting drag on our state's economy. Perhaps the biggest step the Legislature and Gov. Jerry Brown can take toward preserving and expanding our transportation network would be to lower the voter approval threshold for local and regional transportation tax measures.

Local revenues are by far the biggest source of funds for transportation in the Bay Area. And their importance will only grow in the future. Yet, because of the two-thirds supermajority requirement for tax measures, a basic unfairness can prevail. The most recent example of this occurred in Alameda County, where a 2012 ballot measure to extend and increase the countywide transportation sales tax was defeated, despite winning 66.53 percent of the vote - an "only in California" outcome that is frustrating at best.

The commission strongly supports efforts to lower the vote threshold for local and regional transportation tax measures to 55 percent - the same level that local school bond measures need for approval. Several measures have been introduced in the Legislature that would give voters the chance to vote on a lower approval threshold, perhaps in 2014.

The impact of lowering the threshold requirement for California school bonds has been striking - more than half of those passed in 2012 would

have failed under the two-thirds requirement. After World War II, Californians stepped up to build a network of highways, parklands and schools that were the envy of the world. Here in the Bay Area, their foresight has given us much more than a system of highways and public transit; it made possible the region's phenomenal economic growth and prosperity.

It's time for our generation to do its part to keep the Bay Area moving by taking steps - some of which will be difficult - to make sure that we invest what funds we do have wisely and to make clear to skeptics that additional money will be needed if we hope to keep the Bay Area livable for future generations.

Amy Rein Worth is the mayor of Orinda and serves as chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Bay Area's transportation planning and financing agency. To comment, go to **www.sfgate.com/chronicle/submissions/**#1.

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From the Silicon Valley Business Journal
:http://www.bizjournals.com/sanjose/news/2013/08/19/bia-sues-over-plan-bay-area.html

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BIA sues over Plan Bay Area, the region's sweeping land use plan

Nathan Donato-Weinstein
Real Estate Reporter- *Silicon Valley Business Journal*
Email | Twitter

Plan Bay Area just can't catch a break.

The region's top homebuilding trade group and an environmental group are separately taking aim at Plan Bay Area, the just-approved land-use plan that proposes building most new housing units in high-density, transit-oriented developments.

Building Industry Association Bay Area says in a suit filed Friday in Alameda County Superior Court that the plan does not accommodate the Bay Area's future housing needs and fails "to provide a realistic development pattern to accomodate residential growth."

And the Sierra Club, in partnership with Earthjustice and Communities for a Better Environment, said in a suit filed Monday that the plan doesn't do enough to support transportation infrastructure or reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The plan's sponsors, Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, are named as defendants in both the challenges.

Those entities last month approved the sweeping plan, which spells out how much housing Bay Area cities need to provide in the coming years to keep up with population growth. Regions are required by a state law, called SB 375, to come up with the plans.

Plan Bay Area anticipates the region's population will grow from 7 million today to roughly 9 million by 2040. It calls for roughly 660,000 new housing units to be built in the region, 80 percent of which would be in high-density, multifamily, transit-oriented development projects.

In its suit, BIA Bay Area says the plan fails in two ways: It does not meet the requirements of SB 375 because it does not include enough new housing units. And the group charges Plan Bay Area's approval process violated provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act. The plan violates CEQA because the sponsors did not adequately describe the project or analyze alternatives adequately, among other reasons, according to a copy of the lawsuit.

"Plan Bay Area is a cop out. It neither plans for enough housing nor provides a reasonable path for developing it and therefore looks a lot more like a pulling up of the draw bridge than a sustainable communities strategy," said Bob Glover, executive officer of BIA Bay Area, in a news release.

In an interview, Glover told me that the group supports high-density, transit-oriented development, but that more realistic options are needed beyond the product type promoted by the plan.

The suit states: "...all of the available evidence shows that it is patently unrealistic to project -- as the proposed project does -- that 80 percent of all future housing growth in the region (528,000 units) will be developed at an average density of 80 units/acre. Or that almost 50 percent of all new housing units will be concentrated in just three cities: San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose."

In its lawsuit, the environmental groups claim that the plan's spending is weighted too heavily toward highways and not public transportation. That, according to the groups, will spur longer commutes, contributing greenhouse gas emissions. The suit also challenges the plan's environmental clearance under CEQA.

"Climate disruption is a threat to Bay Area families, yet our planning agencies have failed to reduce reliance on cars and trucks, the number one source of climate-disrupting air pollution in California," said Matt Williams of the Sierra Club San Francisco Bay Chapter. "We need a Plan Bay Area that expands public transportation and creates more affordable housing near these transit systems. Bay Area planners should make getting around town easier, cleaner, and more affordable."

This makes three lawsuits targeting the plan. Earlier this month, a libertarian group sued over the plan as well.

ABAG declined to comment on Monday.

Nathan Donato-Weinstein covers commercial real estate and transportation for the Silicon Valley Business Journal.

Sweeping Plan Would Limit Sprawl in Bay Area Communities

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UPDATE: *Plan Bay Area was approved just after midnight Friday morning by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments.*

Regional planners are voting on a new land use plan for the Bay Area on Thursday evening. Plan Bay Area, as it's known, is designed to cut greenhouse gas emissions 15 percent per capita over the next 20 years by focusing development in zones close to downtown areas and transit hubs.

The plan has faced

The plan aims to cut down on traffic by improving options for taking transit or walking. (Deborah Svoboda/KQED)

opposition from several regional community groups, who object to some of the proposed growth zones, called "Priority Development Areas."

"Most people still want a single family home," says Susan Kirsch of Citizen Marin, a Marin County group. "Many

of us believe we don't need to go to the four, five and six story building with the level of density that they're proposing."

County and city governments would retain control over land use decisions, but jurisdictions that adopt the plan's goals would receive prioritized funding through the One Bay Area grant program. It provides $14 billion over the next several decades for transportation projects.

"It really sets a broad tone for where do we want our region to head," says Stephanie Reyes of the Greenbelt Alliance. "Plan Bay Area makes a very bold statement that the Bay Area is done with sprawl."

Priority Development Areas under Plan Bay Area:

The plan is the result of SB 375, a bill passed in 2008 requiring regional agencies to help meet California's climate change goals through land use and transit planning. The Bay Area is expected to grow by 2 million people by 2040 and even under the plan, greenhouse gas emissions are expected to rise.

The Metropolitan Transpiration Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments will vote on the plan Thursday night at 6:30pm.

Tags: climate, greenhouse gas, land use, sb375, subfeature1, subfeature3, traffic, transportation

Category: Environment, News

Dick Spotswood: Both sides need to keep housing debate civil

Posted: marinij.com

THINGS are getting a bit out of hand over the discussion centering around Plan Bay Area and high-density housing.

The recent North San Rafael meeting over the Marinwood housing proposal was a rowdy example of the wrong way to address an important issue. While the vast majority of people in attendance were respectful, a few yahoos tried to humiliate Supervisor Susan Adams by making catcalls and grabbing the microphone.

It seems angry homeowners have learned the lessons of old-time radicals like Saul Alinsky. This in-your-face approach was long a preferred maneuver by the radical left and militant labor organizers.

Simultaneously, today's far left adopts the good ole boys' habit of inciting hatred for their opponents. None of this bridges any gaps or solves problems.

This isn't to deny that the housing discussion shouldn't occur and that it may occasionally get heated. There are major cleavages in America's civic affairs and they should be addressed ... but, at least in Marin, this should be accomplished in a manner consistent with our local tradition of civil discourse.

It doesn't matter if this type of organized chaos comes from the left, right or center. Adams didn't merit that behavior and it needs to stop. Don't agree with her? She is up for reelection next year. Vote for one of her challengers.

The neighborhood activists' mirror image are housing activists, often on the payroll of nonprofits and allied groups on the political left. Their habit is to characterize those with whom they disagree as "racist," or other terms designed to instill hate. By definition this is hate speech and should be condemned.

While there's a strain of racism among every subset of Americans, the word is debased when it's used against those who clearly are not racists. It's a tactic that's designed to intimidate liberal politicians, like those on Marin's Board of Supervisors, who are terrorized by this epitaph. Those who pursue this tired routine trivialize their own cause.

That's coupled with an only-in-Marin tactic. Housing activists label their opponents "Republicans" or Tea Partyites. There are a few of the far-right latching themselves to the movement critical of Plan Bay Area. They are the exception and should be marginalized by rational opponents of the plan.

When an audience at a public forum starts to get out of hand, the elected official or community leader most closely associated with the political position of the angry few needs to speaks up. He or she must remind attendees the audience is supposedly composed of educated, sophisticated citizens and that type of rude behavior is unacceptable. If that

reproach fails, troublemakers are then reminded that their approach is harming their own cause.

Community leaders like Mill Valley's Susan Kirsch or supervisorial candidates Toni Shroyer and Carol Brandt are respected by neighborhood activists. They can and should play this vital role by standing up and exhibiting thoughtful leadership.

Those few who find joy in hurling hate words can also be tamed. Many are associated with nonprofit organizations wholly dependent on quasi-public funding.

While it's inappropriate that Adams was the target of some angry residents, the three-term supervisor was silent when it comes to her allies on the left hurling invectives.

If Adams, Steve Kinsey, the Marin Community Foundation and bureaucrats at the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development put out the word that if the hate-inducing speech doesn't end, the funding spigot will be turned off, the old "racist" stunt will end in "a New York minute."

Columnist Dick Spotswood of Mill Valley now shares his views on local politics twice weekly in the IJ. His email address is spotswood@comcast.net.

Campbell council adjusts budget for Dell Avenue plan consulting fees

San Jose Mercury News
Posted:
MercuryNews.com

The Campbell City Council approved a budget adjustment of $325,000 for consultant services for the Dell Avenue Area Plan at its July 16 meeting.

The vote provided an additional $250,000 for the basic study without an environmental impact report plus an extra $75,000 if an EIR is required. It's part of the city's development plan to keep and attract growing startups and new businesses to the Campbell area zoned for controlled manufacturing.

The city is using the Planning Center, a consulting firm out of Berkeley, says city manager Mark Linder. The firm was chosen because of its broad experience. It was not the lowest bid, but the lowest-bidding firm had much less experience, Linder said in an interview.

With the significant interest the project has garnered, the city wants to combine the district with a light rail station at Hacienda Avenue and Winchester Boulevard, on a vacant plot of land next to Netflix. Light rail would lessen city traffic and provide an alternate means of transportation for workers, according to Linder.

The Dell Avenue zone offers about 82 acres with roughly 65 parcels or approximately 1.4 million square feet of building area. It houses outdated one- and two-story buildings that aren't practical for current users. In developing the plan, city staff prepared a request for proposals for planning the property's development.

Last October, before staff prepared the RFP, the city held a study session to clearly describe the plan's vision. The first step was to determine what is working in other communities. Council members decided they were looking for dense business-to-business companies and wanted to establish nonconforming payback provisions.

They hope to reduce unnecessary permit processing barriers and establish square footage to attract target businesses. They also would like to see industry diversification. The plan does not include any residential development.

Council members also hope to see improvements in land uses supporting businesses, street improvements, on-street parking and pedestrian connections throughout the development area and to the adjacent creek park.

Staff plans to look into regional grant opportunities addressing employment incentive areas through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments. ABAG has developed a new concept looking to strengthen job growth.

Campbell's council members initially required consultants to gauge the work and present a realistic project proposal. The proposal includes several methods of retaining established businesses and attracting new ones to the area. One would be to change the zoning to planned development. It would include exact standards allowing for greater floor areas or land use.

Another method would maintain the existing zoning and uses the area plan as a guideline. Current zoning permits allow increases beyond the maximum floor area ratios and could serve as a guide to explain how

companies could take advantage of those allowances.

Three community meetings were held during May and June,and another meeting is scheduled for Sept. 16. The draft plan for Dell Avenue will be complete Aug. 12. The city will follow that with joint study sessions on Aug. 26 and Oct. 15. The final planning commission recommendation will be presented Nov. 12 with the council decision scheduled for Jan. 7.

Cities express frustration with state's housing element

San Jose Mercury News
Posted:
MercuryNews.com

Many cities in California are wrestling with the state's housing element requirement, a tool used by the state in anticipation of future housing needs resulting from a projected huge increase in population.

Each local government is required to adopt a housing element as part of its General Plan to show how it plans to meet existing and projected housing needs of people at all income levels.

At a Silicon Valley Association of Realtors meeting, a panel of local officials expressed frustration with the housing element law.

Los Gatos Vice Mayor Steve Leonardis noted it is a constant challenge to meet the requirement, since Los Gatos is a built-out community.

The Regional Housing Need Allocation is the state-mandated process used to identify the total number of housing units each community must accommodate in its housing element. The state Department of Housing and Community Development has identified the total housing need for the San Francisco Bay Area for an eight-year period, currently from 2014 to 2022. The Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Committee are then charged with the task of developing a methodology of allocating this need to local governments.

Each city must show it can accommodate a certain number of very low-, low-, moderate- and market-rate housing units. Los Gatos, for example, must zone for a total of 619 new units, 313 of them being low and very low income. Saratoga is looking at 439 new units, 242 of those being low and very low income units.

Saratoga City Councilman Chuck Page said the current allocation does not make sense, since ABAG upped requirements for cities like Saratoga, Los Gatos and Monte Sereno, yet reduced the number for cities that have better access to transit.

Page said the only way Saratoga can comply with its housing requirement is by increasing height limits in commercial areas and providing first story retail and second story housing downtown.

Some cities are taking different approaches. Larger cities like Mountain View and Palo Alto are focusing on finding areas to create higher density zoning. Cities with smaller populations, such as Woodside, are looking at secondary units to meet their allocation. Monte Sereno is experimenting with an amnesty program for illegal secondary units.

Campbell Mayor Evan Low told the agents it is a constant battle with opposing views about housing in a community, especially in Campbell, where about half of residents are renters. According to the RHNA allocation numbers, Campbell must zone for 933 new units, of which 391 must be low and very low income.

If its housing element complies with state law, a city may qualify for some state funds, including transportation and park funding. Failure to meet RHNA numbers opens up a city to potential litigation from housing advocates.

In 2011, Pleasanton settled a lawsuit over its failure to meet its required RHNA numbers, costing the city more than $3.9 million. Last year Menlo Park settled a similar lawsuit. That settlement also required the city to adopt a housing element plan, as well as rezone sites around downtown to develop some affordable housing and provide funding to nonprofit housing developers.

Low emphasized the challenge before cities is not just that of meeting the housing requirement, but "doing it in a smart way that is meaningful to residents."

Information is presented by the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors at silvar.org. Contact rmeily@silvar.org.

Courthouse News Service

Thursday, August 08, 2013 Last Update: 9:28 AM PT

Citizens Fight Bay Area 'Smart Growth' Plan

By WILLIAM DOTINGA

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OAKLAND, Calif. (CN) - Citing environmental concerns, a Bay Area citizens' group asked a state judge to set aside a regional urban plan which advocates high-density growth rather than suburban sprawl.

Bay Area Citizens, a nonprofit represented by self-described conservative legal watchdog Pacific Legal Foundation, filed for writ of mandate in Alameda County Court.

It sued the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, claiming the agencies' plan to comply with state greenhouse gas emissions law violates the California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA.

State law requires that local agencies produce a sustainable-communities strategy to reduce passenger vehicle CO_2 emissions by 7 percent by 2020, and by 15 percent by 2035.

The plaintiff claims the Bay Area agencies plan to do this through "a draconian high-density land use regime that will require nearly 80 percent of new housing and over 60 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area to be located within just 5 percent of the region's surface area."

Broadly speaking, the plaintiff opposes so-called "smart growth," which creates densely populated, walkable, mixed-use commercial and residential centers, to reduce sprawl and traffic congestion. Bay Area Citizens seems to prefer spending public money on road and bridge improvements rather than mass transit, and to oppose zoning-or to prefer "more flexible" zoning.

The plaintiff claims that while the sustainable-communities strategy itself does not regulate land use, it "provides powerful tools to coerce a local government to comply with the strategy's land-use prescriptions, even over the wishes of local residents, taxpayers and their elected representatives."

The lawsuit continues: "Therefore, the strategy has a significant impact on the region's environment, for at least two reasons. First, the strategy is incorporated into the region's transportation plan, which largely dictates which transportation projects will be funded and built. Second, the region's housing need allocation (formulated by the Department of Housing and Community Development in conjunction with the Association of Bay Area Governments pursuant to the planning and zoning law), to which local governments must conform to their general plans, must be consistent with the strategy. Because of these impacts, the promulgation of a strategy triggers CEQA." (Parentheses in complaint.)

Defendants' plan, called Plan Bay Area, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing vehicle miles traveled, through high-density urban planning. Planning agencies have identified 200 "priority development areas" - near transit, jobs, shopping and services - that can be built upward rather than outward.

Plan Bay Area calls for reduced passenger vehicle use by increasing mass transit ridership and through extension and construction of light and heavy rail. Its accompanying environmental impact report acknowledges that increased construction will increase pollution, and the plan itself will disrupt or displace people and businesses, according to the plaintiff.

The group claims the plan is unnecessary, and that the agencies ignored emissions-reduction policies already in place at the state level that will achieve greenhouse gas targets. And it claims that gasoline tax revenue - Plan Bay Area's funding source - is projected to fall, as fuel consumption in the Bay Area will be reduced by 32 percent by 2035.

Furthermore, "the plan's high-density housing mandates and mass transit elements will actually increase greenhouse gas emissions," the complaint states. "The plan's emphasis on low-performing rail will lead to increased greenhouse gases, because rail construction produces significant greenhouse gas emissions that are not recouped over the life of the rail project. If transit has any emission efficiencies over passenger vehicles, it is by encouraging those individuals who own high-polluting vehicles to leave them at home. As the Citizens' expert Tom Rubin explained, 'the only way for transit to make a positive contribution to reductions in energy usage and emissions is for transit to do what it does best - first serve the transit disadvantaged, those whose alternative to transit is a very dirty car.' Yet the plan makes little provision for improving transit service for those poorer communities where jalopy ownership is highest. Thus, the plan will lead to high-polluting vehicles remaining in service. The plan's emphasis on forcing the lion's share of new development into urban priority development areas will increase traffic congestion and consequently emissions. People who work in the Bay Area but do not want to live in high-density developments will move outside the area, thus increasing their commutes and emissions. Further, high-density urban developments are climatological sinks, in that they require more energy to cool and to heat than dispersed single family residences. The increased energy requirements of these developments in turn lead to increased emissions."

The real issue, Bay Area Citizens claims, is what it calls a "wrongheaded emphasis on new low-performing rail construction," rather than putting more money into roads, freeways and bridges.

The group cites the Portland, Ore. transit system in the 35-page lawsuit.

"Portland has the most ambitious mass transit program in the country, because of the more stringent 'smart growth' laws in Oregon, and because the Oregon Legislature has granted the Portland area transit authority extraordinary regulatory power. Notwithstanding its 'advanced' transit program, Portland still has an annual average growth rate of vehicle miles traveled of 2.18 percent, while the [Bay Area] plan inexplicably predicts it will be able to reduce the growth rate of vehicle miles traveled to 0.62 percent.

"The plan's models are not capable of reliably predicting transit use and development decades into the future, as the plan otherwise contends, for several reasons. First, the models are based on the 'false hypothesis that the development of priority development areas with good transit access generates economic development.' Second, they suppose in the no-project alternative that no change in zoning will occur over the multi-decade life of the plan, even while assuming unlimited upzoning for the plan and its alternatives. Third, they assume that technology and human behavior will not change over the plan's several decades. Fourth, indeed, the plan's models have a 1.55 percent error rate in predicting the past, yet the plan makes no account of any error rate - much less a comparable error rate - in predicting the future."

Population and job growth projections also led to the agencies' over-projection of greenhouse gas emissions and an overstated need for the project, the group claims. They claim the environmental report ignores increasing fuel efficiency and improving fuel composition, and the agencies shut out their suggestions on how to meet air quality targets.

"In their comments, the Citizens underscored that environmentally sensitive alternatives

to the plan exist that would achieve the plan's basic objectives of greenhouse gas reduction and housing development without the plan's significant and unavoidable impacts. 'The Bay Area Citizens Transportation and Housing Alternative' recommends that the region's sustainable community strategy:

"(a) Expand and improve the existing transit system;

"(b) Significantly reduce fares to encourage individuals to abandon their high-emission vehicles and thereby support the mobility needs of lower-income residents;

"(c) De-emphasize the expansion of high carbon footprint and low cost effective rail transit and ferry service;

"(d) Study how casual carpooling by real-time matching through portable electronic devices can reduce vehicle miles traveled;

"(e) Encourage flexibility in local zoning to facilitate achievement of regional housing needs;

"(f) Advocate for housing type and location consistent with local preferences;

"(g) Encourage expanded use of telecommuting;

"(h) Insist that local communities be informed of the public subsidy costs of affordable housing before the assignment of regional housing needs assessment allocations;

"(i) Insist that local communities be informed of the unfunded mandates involved with the obligation to provide affordable housing before that obligation is accepted;

"(j) Advocate for flexibility in transportation funding;

"(k) Advocate for reform of California housing laws;

"(l) Focus on measurable outputs, such as transit ridership and satisfaction, rather than the cost of inputs."

How it is that significantly reducing transit fares will help pay the bills of existing transit systems is unclear from the group's petition. According to the Bay Area Rapid Transit's financial report from 2010 - the most recent year available - the system known locally as BART makes only 49 percent of its operating funds from passenger fares, despite more than 101 million passenger trips that year.

According to the report, BART made just 23.9 cents per passenger mile in 2010, while its operating costs exceeded 35 cents per passenger mile. BART is heavily subsidized: the system gleaned 37 percent of its operating income from local taxes and financial assistance, while 100 percent of its capital funding came from local, district, state and federal tax dollars.

The plaintiff offered no examples in its lawsuit on how it would tackle affordable housing laws either, most of which are mandated by California and federal laws. According to the state Department of Housing and Community Development website, "the California Legislature and courts have repeatedly indicated in statute and case law that housing is an issue of statewide concern."

Plan Bay Area's supporters touted the plan as necessary after its passage on July 18, noting that the area's population is expected to grow from 7 million to 9 million by 2040.

Napa County Supervisor Mark Luce, the Association of Bay Area Government's president and a member of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, said the plan creates "a more sustainable Bay Area for future generations."

And Orinda Mayor and Transportation Commission Chairwoman Amy Rein Worth described the plan as evolutionary rather than evolutionary.

"For decades, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has been charged by state and federal law to produce a long term regional transportation plan, while the association has been responsible for assessing regional housing needs. Plan Bay Area puts these elements together in a way that makes sense," Worth said, according to the commission's website.

Bay Area Citizens' spokesman Peter Singleton said in a statement that the group "passed the hat among ourselves to commission independent research" backing their claims. The group accuses the agencies of failing to identify the plan's basic objectives, to adequately assess a "no project" alternative, to include reasonable and feasible alternatives, and a lack of

response to public comments - all requirements under CEQA.

The group seeks an order for a new environmental report that complies with CEQA.

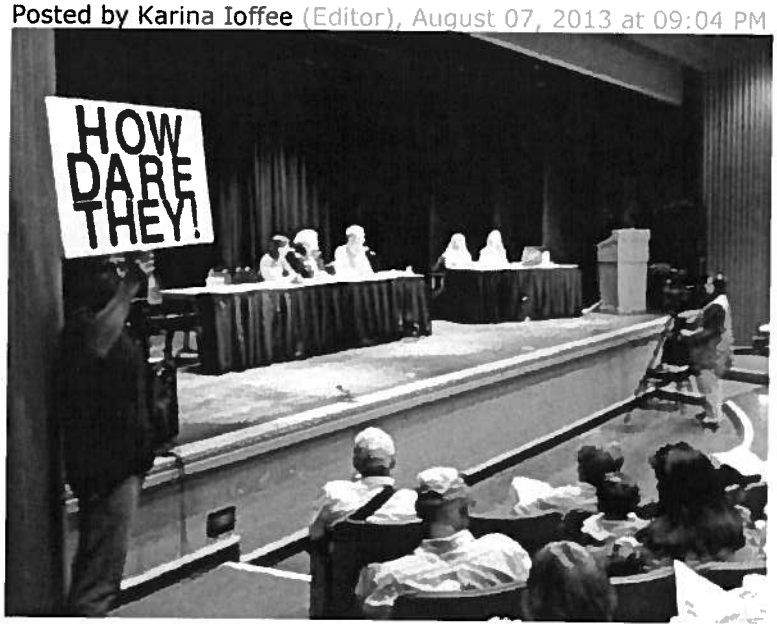
They are represented by Damien Schiff with the Pacific Legal Foundation.

Novato Patch

Conservative Group Sues to Stop Plan Bay Area

Says vital information was ignored by transportation officials and a full environmental review not conducted

Posted by Karina Ioffee (Editor), August 07, 2013 at 09:04 PM



By Chris Rooney

Plan Bay Area, a controversial regional transportation plan that incorporates high-density construction, is being challenged in court by a group of residents.
Bay Area Citizens, or BAC, says that the plan violates the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and must, therefore, be struck down.

The plaintiffs are a coalition of residents from throughout the region who have actively monitored the plan's development, offering critiques and proposing alternatives.

The coalition is represented by attorneys with Pacific Legal Foundation, a conservative organization that advocates for limited government and individual rights.

Damien Schiff, an attorney with the Pacific Legal Foundation, told the Marin Independent Journal that the law required the regional agencies proposing Plan Bay Area to consider alternatives that would achieve the same results but with reduced effect on the environment.

"Here we think the plan fundamentally failed," Schiff told the Marin IJ.

He said that whenever "a proposed government action carries major development implications, CEQA requires that the public be made fully aware of environmental consequences — the consequences both of proceeding and of not going ahead. This didn't happen with Plan Bay Area"

Instead, Schiff said, the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission ignored facts that were not convenient to them in order to pack more housing into affluent neighborhoods.

Bay Area Citizens was founded in March by Marin County residents, although the lawsuit was filed in Alameda County Superior Court.

Plan Bay Area creates housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which mandates that all of the state's 18 metropolitan areas reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles by 7 percent per capita by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035.

Plan Bay Area, according to the Marin IJ, "aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets by requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 priority development areas. These are areas typically accessible to mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money."

Schiff told the Marin IJ that the Plan Bay Area approval process was flawed because it didn't include an evaluation of an alternative approach suggested by Bay Area Citizens, which suggested expanded bus service and reduced transit fares.

Napa Valley Register.com

County housing requirement will benefit from Napa Pipe

State certification for Housing Element will be sought by 2015

15 HOURS AGO • PETER JENSEN

As Napa County looks to update its housing plans for the next eight years, it's trying to avoid the legal troubles still plaguing its most recent plan, which was adopted in 2009.

With only 180 units to plan for in the next update — compared to 651 in the latest, which lasts until 2014 — the work should be easier, Planning Director Hillary Gitelman told the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

As the planned home of 700 to 945 housing units, the Napa Pipe site will also make for an accommodating location for the 180-unit allocation, which the county received from the Association of Bay Area Governments and runs from 2014 to 2022, Gitelman said.

"There's no question that the Napa Pipe site will be our most important site when it comes to capacity," Gitelman said.

But after the county's experience with its last update to its housing plans, which spans 2007-2014, easy would be a welcome change for county government officials.

The plans are called a Housing Element and are part of the county's General Plan. They spell out suitable locations in the unincorporated area that could be the site for the housing allocation, which includes moderate, above moderate, low and very low income units.

The Board of Supervisors adopted the Housing Element update in 2009, with 569 units spread out across the unincorporated area. Roughly 300 units were put at Napa Pipe, while the city of Napa agreed to take 82 units.

The remaining units were put at Moskowite Corners and Spanish Flat near Lake Berryessa and the Angwin community in the hills east of St. Helena. The state Department of Housing and Community Development refused to certify that plan, calling the Angwin and other east county locations too far away from urban centers to be affordable for low-income households.

An affordable housing advocacy group, Latinos Unidos Del Valle de Napa y Solano, challenged the Housing Element by suing the county shortly afterward. The county won the case in Napa County Superior Court, and before the California 1st District Court of Appeals.

Latinos Unidos is seeking California Supreme Court review of the appellate court decision.

But that also means HCD hasn't certified the current plan, although Gitelman told the Board of Supervisors that the county is close to attaining it.

"We're this close to having a letter from HCD saying we're conforming with the law," Gitelman told the board.

Gitelman said the county will begin updating its Housing Element regardless, with Deputy Planning Director John McDowell managing the project. The county will also hire Howard Siegel, the former director of community and intergovernmental affairs for the county, to assist in the project, Gitelman said.

Siegel retired in 2008 but has done consulting work with the county over the last several years, including work on the planned recycled water pipeline to the Coombsville area.

The county is contracting with a consultant, Bay Area Economics, to do public outreach, analysis and document preparation, Gitelman said. She didn't have the costs of the contracts for Siegel and Bay Area Economics available Tuesday, but they will be sent to the Board of Supervisors for approval next week.

Gitelman said the goal is to do the public outreach effort in October and November, and then have the Housing Element ready for HCD by mid-2014. The county has a statutory deadline for completing the update by January 2015.

The county has agreements with the cities of Napa and American Canyon, as well as the town of Yountville, to transfer units from its allocation if HCD doesn't agree with the choice of locations in the Housing Element.

Those agreements expire in January 2015, giving the county added incentive to get the update done well before then, she said.

"It's going to be important to invoke those agreements if we have trouble finding sites to accommodate housing," Gitelman said.

As Development Surges, Construction Worker 'Living Wage'

Epoch Times

By Catherine Yang (http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/author/catherine-yang/), Epoch Times (http://www.theepochtimes.
August 1, 2013
Last Updated: July 31, 2013 9:34 pm

CITY, Calif.—The huge wave of development all over the Bay Area has been no surprise given the upward trend the real estate industry has seen in the past half year, but communities are worried that these developers are only taking without giving back. According to the Association of Bay Area Governments, this trend of development is only going to continue.

Over 350 people rallied in Redwood City Tuesday in front of BRE Properties' 264-unit apartment complex under construction, to protest for "wage equality."

"They're not hiring our local contractors and therefore not hiring our local workers," says Bruce Word, president and business manager of the union Sheet Metal Workers Local 104 (SMW 104). "It's driving down wages, and [developers] aren't paying a livable wage in the area."

Currently, many of the construction workers in Redwood City commute an hour to an hour and a half to their construction jobs in Redwood City, and the local union workers are doing the same, taking long commutes to look for jobs in other cities.

To date, BRE president Connie Moore has not responded to the unions' requests and inquiries. Recently, 77 county supervisors and Redwood City Council Members signed a letter to Moore expressing concerns that the construction workers are not receiving benefits or a living wage.

"We can't compete with their low wages because our whole package is about $200 per hour. These guys here are getting paid $12," says Kyle Richey, a member of SMW 104.

According to community leaders, elected officials have played a large part in the effort to communicate with developers, and legislation will follow.

"It's vitally important that us, as policy makers, regardless of city, realize that we have an important responsibility to help give birth to these community benefits programs," said County Supervisor Warren Slocum. "Development should contribute amenities to further greater the communities, development should offer a diversity of housing stock, and not just be for the wealthy."

State Senator Jerry Hill spoke at the rally as well, promising to address the issue in the State Senate if necessary.

"We need to provide for those who live here at all levels," Hill said. "How can you expect people to pay the price of these properties and not be able to earn a living to pay for that? You can't expect that, it can't be done, and it's not right."

The legislation that provided the opportunities for these infill housing developments was SB 375, the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 put forth by the California Air Resources Board, says Hill. According to Hill, the target is to reduce greenhouses gases, but if the people who work in Redwood City don't live there and the people who live there can't work there, changes need to be implemented.

"That's the incentive, that's why we want this to come together—but it's not, as long as we don't provide for the working men and women of this community, and we're not doing that today," Hill said.

Rallies in other cities around the Bay Area are to be scheduled and have already been held in Sunnyvale and San Francisco.

Dick Spotswood: New Bay Bridge looks great, but its cost was a fiasco

Posted: marinij.com

ONE OF THE DEFECTS associated with regional governments is that no one takes responsibility when plans go wrong. The latest example is the new east segment of the Bay Bridge.

The project arose after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, when the span's seismic deficiencies became evident.

Start-to-finish, the process consumed 24 years. When initially envisioned in Gov. George Deukmejian's administration, its estimated cost was $1.6 billion. The current price tag of the problem-plagued project is $6.4 billion, a 400 percent increase.

While the bridge looks beautiful, the process was a fiasco.

Twenty-four years isn't impressive when you consider that without the use of wheels or iron tools, the Great Pyramid of Giza took 10 years to build. Of course, they did it without consultants.

Thirteen years passed from the time the United States took control of the Panama Canal until its completion.

A more apt comparison to the Bay Bridge is Boston's "Big Dig," one of America's greatest public construction debacles. Taking 17 years, that underground freeway's costs morphed from $2.6 billion to $14 billion, plus interest.

The U.S. has lost its ability to efficiently build big things. That's why there's doubt about the otherwise worthy project to build the Golden State's high-speed train.

It's too easy to blame Steve Heminger, the publicity-shy executive director of the Bay Bridge's Oversight Committee, for failing to prevent the bridge's well-publicized construction defects. Greater responsibility lies with members of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. They are Heminger's ultimate boss and were consistently asleep at the switch.

Fault also lies with leaderless Caltrans, San Francisco's Willie Brown, Oakland's then-mayor Jerry Brown plus governors of both parties who foolishly let regional government manage a task far beyond their competency.

Willie Brown forced design changes to benefit his still uncompleted pet plan to convert Treasure Island into housing. Mid-project, Jerry Brown demanded an entirely new and much more expensive bridge design solely to provide Oakland an inspiring gateway.

While the completed bridge is quite a sight, it comes at a high price. The billions of toll funds wasted on fancy designs should have been allocated for more pressing problems including expanding capacity on jammed highways and for BART, the now-at-capacity rail system.

For 24 years, the Bay Bridge saga was always someone else's problem. No one city or county was in charge while the state essentially looked away. That's always why MTC, the Association of Bay Area Governments and the other alphabet agencies get off easily when their overly grandiose schemes go awry.

Now we're told to forget about past troubles and marvel at the span's innovative design. We are remiss if we don't simultaneously ponder the project's waste and delays. If we don't, Bay Area residents are doomed to repeat this farce.

III

KUDOS to the city of Mill Valley for demonstrating the proper method to conduct public "outreach." The county of Marin and regional agencies should take note.

This summer Mill Valley faced a major dislocation to a key artery: East Blithedale Avenue.

The street needed to be closed to through traffic due to rebuilding sewage lines and associated repaving. Encouraged by the City Council and honchoed by Lynn Walsh, the top-notch assistant to City Manager Jim McCann, the city reached out to community residents, businesses, delivery companies and even the Postal Service.

Thanks to multimedia efforts that included direct mail, newspapers, social media, street banners and posters, everyone in town knew what was happening.

Routes to avoid delays were posted enabling motorists to minimize inconvenience. The result was a project completed on time and on budget with few complaints.

Columnist Dick Spotswood of Mill Valley now shares his views on local politics twice weekly in the IJ. His email address is spotswood@comcast.net.

Dick Spotswood: Another regional tax measure is headed for the ballot

Posted: marinij.com

CALIFORNIA LAW permits the many Bay Area multi-county agencies to place "regional measures" on the ballot of all nine counties including Marin. In the past, these ballot issues have attracted little attention. It's difficult to focus on something that has little specific impact in one place but can be a big deal when examined from a regional perspective.

The San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority, an off-shoot of the Association of Bay Area Governments, is planning a 2014 ballot measure that will tax every property owner in the nine-county region. The tax will be $25 per residential and commercial parcel.

Tax receipts would be used for "Restoration, enhancement, protection, and enjoyment of wetlands and wildlife habitat in the San Francisco Bay and along its shoreline."

It's a worthy cause. But among the needs that the Bay Area faces, is wetlands restoration the best use of taxpayers' money at this time?

It would be helpful if the authority would go out to the public to ask for opinions before things are locked in concrete.

The agency has established a 34-member advisory committee. Only three members could be considered true representatives of the public. The others are all "stakeholders." That's the bureaucratic term for other agencies' staff members, consultants, labor unions and affinity groups that have a financial or ideological stake in the outcome.

How much better if the real stakeholders, Bay Area property owners and residents, played a larger role? It's not too late. The final decision hasn't been made, nor is the tax's term established.

ABAG's trait is to consult only with those who will agree with its staff's preconceived notions.

The Restoration Authority has much to gain and little to lose by talking to real-life people about such a seemingly popular and benign issue.

lll

LOOKING for a well-located site for a press conference or public announcement? The patio adjacent to the Civic Center's cafeteria, complete with bubbling fountain and splendid bay views, is available to all.

It came about because county government granted Marin Grassroots permission to hold a press conference on the cafeteria's patio. The group, which advocates for high-density housing, utilized the venue to call for a "civil rights state of emergency."

Neighborhood and slow-growth advocates immediately realized that California law dictates that if supervisors grant the right to use the patio to one group, they must grant it to all.

That means the cafeteria's patio just became a convenient venue for anyone wanting free publicity. When

the county granted permission to a favored group, it ignored the ever-present phenomenon of unintended consequences.

Blindsided county officials had no alternative but to open up the space for any advocacy group or individual citizen regardless of their messages' content.

III

HERE'S another potential candidate for the North Bay/North Coast state Senate seat. Santa Rosa freshman Councilwoman Erin Carlstrom, 30, could be a strong contender for the post now held by the soon-to-retire Sen. Noreen Evans, D-Santa Rosa.

An attorney and recently elected vice president of the national Young Democrats, Carlstrom is considering the race. She's one of the few on the Rose City's council not affiliated with one of its warring factions. Amazingly, she was supported by both Sonoma environmentalists and the Chamber of Commerce.

Not to be ignored: Santa Rosa is the largest population center in the district.

Now that Marin Supervisor Susan Adams indicates that she will pass on the Senate race and instead run for re-election, Carlstrom could be the only woman in the contest.

A Sonoma woman Democrat who's a Sacramento outsider could find herself in the North Bay campaign's sweet spot.

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Dick Spotswood: Corte Madera development a test for housing theory

Posted: marinij.com

NOW that the fractious debate over Plan Bay Area is over, Marinites might want to see what true high-density housing looks like.

All they need to do is drive to Corte Madera. Two minutes off Highway 101, at the corner of Tamal Vista Boulevard and Wornum Drive, the curious can see for themselves.

Once completed in early 2014, the 180-unit four-story apartment complex at 195 Tamal Vista presents a fine opportunity to learn if high-density, supposedly transit-oriented development delivers the environmental and social benefits promised by its advocates.

This San Jose-style massive apartment block on the site of the old WinCup plant has both good and bad aspects.

Built by big-time developer MacFarlane Partners, the looming structure consists of 162 market-rate apartments and only 18 units for lower-income residents. MacFarlane's business plan calls for "high-density, urban-style living."

Plan Bay Area is all about construction of high-density housing near transit corridors. This project, approved before the plan was adopted, provides an example of what's encouraged.

Tamal Vista is immediately adjacent to a transit corridor, Highway 101 and the north-south bikeway.

There's no question that it's high density at 40 units per acre.

Corte Madera, a town inaccurately criticized for dragging its feet when it comes to building housing, delivers big time.

Further, it's in a mostly commercial area where massive construction doesn't degrade single-family home neighborhoods. It replaces a factory that employed a hundred workers who often commuted from out of the county.

The project is privately owned, so it pays property taxes for schools, police and fire.

What's wrong, other than a massive design wholly inappropriate for Central Marin?

The connection to transit is illusory. The seven-minute walk to the scruffy freeway bus pad is useful if potential residents work in San Francisco's Financial District, Golden Gate Transit's destination.

The reality is that the old Financial District isn't the job magnet it was 25 years ago.

It's a 20-minute walk from Tamal Vista to Larkspur's Ferry Terminal. Few daily commuters will make that trek. They could drive, except the ferry's parking lot is jammed.

The 10-minute walk to the Town Center shopping mall hardly makes this "urban style" living. Most

residents will drive to Safeway, not walk.

That 195 Tamal Vista has only 18 affordable apartments makes a mockery of what high-density new urbanism is supposedly about. There's little need in Marin for more market-rate housing.

What's wanted are homes for working folks whose jobs are already in Marin.

This project does little to deliver them.

Once finished, 195 Tamal Vista will produce more traffic at an intersection that's already near capacity. Wornum Drive is where the Transportation Authority of Marin plans to locate a new freeway off-ramp, making an already bad situation worse.

Corte Madera had little choice but to approve the high-density project. The town was under pressure from the Association of Bay Area Governments and activists to build more housing.

This was one of the few sites where it made sense to build big.

This construction now makes an ideal test ground for the concept of high-density housing. Corte Madera should monitor what happens once 195 Tamal Vista opens.

Find out where the new residents work. Are their jobs located nearby or far away? How many apartment dwellers either use transit or instead drive to work, shop and play?

What's the project's real-world impact on local streets?

The results should disclose whether suburban high-density urban-style housing provides the environmental benefits that supporters claim or if it's just marketing hype from real estate developers.

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Dick Spotswood: Marin GOP's same-sex marriage endorsement a bold move

Posted: marinij.com

MARIN'S REPUBLICAN PARTY just made a bold move making it unique in America. The local GOP became the first Republican county central committee in the country to support legalizing same-sex marriage.

It's an example of the Marin Republicans' effort to broaden their constituency consistent with the libertarianism that's asserting itself within party ranks.

According to central committee chair Kevin Krick of Fairfax, "A core tenet of Republican philosophy is that personal freedom is a right of every citizen and that includes the right to choose whom to marry, regardless of gender."

If Marin Republicans return to political relevancy they'll be a power when the electorate is already divided.

Think of the 2014 contest for two seats on the Board of Supervisors or the potential Susan Adams recall. Delivering almost 20 percent of the vote is always relevant.

lll

THE Ross Valley Sanitary District was in chaos after the resignation of its former general manager, Brett Richards, who is in jail facing charges of embezzlement and money laundering. From the day he was appointed to the district's board, past Fairfax mayor Frank Egger was a Richards critic.

Just when the agency's former GM fled to the Philippines and the agency teetered on bankruptcy, Egger was made board president. Given his years in local government, it was no wonder that Egger would do a first-rate job. He was key in putting the district on an even keel.

Adhering to the old adage, "no good deed goes unpunished," last Wednesday Egger was deposed as president after only one term by his supposed ally, director Mary Sylla.

Traditionally, district directors serve two sequential one-year terms as president. The vote was 3-2. Sylla joined old Richards supporters Pat Guasco and Peter Sullivan in dumping Egger and giving her the gavel. It's a victory for the district's old guard and a sign that change comes slowly to the troubled sewage agency.

lll

AT the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board/Metropolitan Transportation Commission joint meeting that overwhelmingly approved the controversial Plan Bay Area, Marin's three-person delegation was split.

Novato Mayor Pat Eklund, representing the cities of Marin, abstained while Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Katie Rice voted yes.

Kinsey was an enthusiastic supporter. Rice favored the plan while expressing reservations.

Eklund says that the abstention was her duty. That's true given that her bosses, the council members from Marin's cities and towns, were themselves either undecided or reluctant to take a public position on the highly contentious issue.

Of Marin's 11 municipalities, two, Novato and Sausalito, publicly voted to support Plan Bay Area and its goal to promote transit-centered high-density housing. Of the other nine, one, Corte Madera, voted "no project alternative." That's effectively a "no" vote. The other eight cities took a duck by officially voting "no position."

III

AT the last meeting of the "working group" making recommendations on the proposed Highway 101-Greenbrae-Corte Madera freeway project, a surprising revelation was made by Transportation Authority of Marin's executive director, Dianne Steinhauser.

She indicated that Supervisor Steve Kinsey, a former TAM chairman and longtime MTC commissioner, if asked, would request that the MTC extend the process of finalizing alternatives for the $143 million scheme for "two or three years."

Given the divisions over both the overall merits and the specifics of the Caltrans-led effort, more time to devise a rational blueprint makes sense. It's big news, since until then, the impression was that the freeway plan had to be finalized by Sept. 30.

Given his close relationship with powerful MTC executive director Steve Heminger, if Kinsey wants an extension, it will happen. TAM commissioners should now promptly ask Kinsey to secure the continuance.

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Dick Spotswood: Marin's pushback helped reshape bay plan

Posted: marinij.com

AT THE VERY END of the contentious Association of Bay Area Governments' Executive Board meeting, dominated by Plan Bay Area, something big went unnoticed.

ABAG adopted the hugely important Regional Housing Needs Allocation for 2014-22.

Despite widespread fears, the housing mandate assigned to Marin's unincorporated areas and its 11 municipalities for the coming eight-year cycle is reasonable, doable and makes sense.

Marin will end up building a fair amount of needed affordable housing while facilitating social diversity.

Now, if they choose, local planners should be able to build that housing in a non-disruptive manner.

That's good news for Marinites desiring to retain the county's "small-town ambience." It's a blow to housing activists determined to urbanize Marin.

Marin's final total allocation is 2,298 new housing units over eight years. That's only 176 units per year. Of those, 618 units are reserved for those with very low incomes, 367 for low-income families and 423 units for moderate-income households.

The balance of 890 units is for market-rate homes.

They are of secondary concern because the private sector will easily produce those in conjunction with new developments providing "inclusionary" affordable rental apartments.

Income definitions are based on statistics showing the average Marin County household with a family of four earns an annual gross income of $103,000.

Typical is Mill Valley. Over the next eight years, it must zone for 41 very low-income units, 24 low-income apartments, 26 moderate-income households and 38 market-rate units, for a total of 129 or 16 units per year.

That's in contrast to the 292 units Mill Valley was allocated under ABAG's preliminary numbers.

In Marin's unincorporated areas, where opposition to the Board of Supervisors' fixation on large-scale development is most keen, only 185 units of all categories are required over the 2014-22 horizon.

These allocations can be provided by second units, residential-over-retail construction and a limited number of higher-density developments.

Blockbuster housing projects that many feared are not mandated unless local jurisdictions decide to approve them.

The decision instantly shifts pressure from ABAG to boards of supervisors and city councils. That's precisely where it belongs since it puts voters back in control.

The defect in ABAG's approach is that environmental review for new housing is limited. We short-change new residents if we don't make certain there is adequate water, schools and transit without further worsening traffic.

ABAG's new restraint is due to planners' realization that most "Priority Development Areas" created pursuant to the now-adopted Plan Bay Area will be built in the South Bay, the San Francisco-San Jose region's prime job generator.

That took pressure off the North Bay. Marin's total housing allocation is 2,298 units.

Napa's is 1,482 and Sonoma must build 8,449 new homes. Contrast that to mandates for 44,036 units in Alameda County and 58,836 in Santa Clara County.

Few will publicly admit it, but Marin's popular resistance to the high-density housing threat helped move the focus to counties where political constituencies want more growth.

That shift certainly wasn't due to Marin's supervisors, who never understood how to address the public's outrage over the county's infatuation with high-density housing schemes.

Does ABAG's Final Regional Housing Needs Allocation eliminate Plan Bay Area's promotion of high-density subsidized housing?

Not necessarily.

There are financial incentives for cities and counties to pursue the fast-growth strategy. That means that if Priority Development Areas with 30-units-per-acre zoning are approved, the spotlight will properly be on Marin elected officials and planning commissioners.

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Novato/San Rafael Patch

Eklund: Abstaining on Plan Bay Area Reflects Marin Majority

Novato mayor explains her decision to abstain from last week's vote to approve controversial roadmap for region's transit, housing

Posted by Karina Ioffee (Editor), July 23, 2013 at 08:21 am

Novato Mayor and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) board member Pat Eklund is defending her decision to abstain from Thursday's vote on Plan Bay Area, saying the move reflects the same position most Marin cities have taken on the controversial regional transportation strategy to marry projected jobs growth with new housing development.

Plan Bay Area aims to curb greenhouse gas emissions and prevent further sprawl by mandating that counties and local governments meet allocations for new residential development near existing commercial centers and public transportation. Despite being approved by ABAG's board last Thursday, the plan remains deeply unpopular among some Marin residents, many of who say it strips cities of control over land use decisions and puts undue strain on traffic and water.

In Marin, only Novato, San Rafael and Sausalito specifically voted in favor for the plan, while seven cities abstained from taking a position, according to Eklund. Local jurisdictions were not required to vote for or against the plan, but must have a Housing Element, part of a city's General Plan, or constitution, certified by the California Department of Housing & Community Development.

"Because a majority of the cities in Marin took no position and because we had no time to work out the many concerns we have about this plan, I felt it my duty to abstain for voting," Eklund told Patch Monday. "I serve at the pleasure of all 11 cities and since the majority of the cities took a 'no' position, I felt it was only appropriate that I do the same."

Eklund, who has been mayor of Novato five times and is running for re-election this fall, denied that not taking a position on the controversial vote was a political move.

"It (Plan Bay Area) does not affect local control at all, but I have many other concerns," she said. "The projections for job growth and population need to be reevaluated. Also, locating housing near transit has not been proven to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Eklund added that she was also worried about the lack of outreach to residents and what she described as a "top-down approach" to decision-making.

"People haven't had an opportunity to be engaged in the alternatives, the impacts and the mitigation measures," she said.

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Environment is top priority for Californias

Tim Hunt, posted by Tim Hunt, a resident of the Castlewood neighborhood, on Aug 8, 2013 at 8:24 am

The Public Policy Institute of California's 13th annual poll on the environment contained a few surprises, but demonstrated that California is an increasingly blue state with a tight focus on the environment without regard to its potential effects on the economy.

The survey found a sharp 9 percent year-over-year increase in the number of respondents who believe the state needs to take action now to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Two similar questions showed that the 2,100 respondents wanted immediate action now.

Notably, well under half of the respondents knew about the state's cap-and-trade program to reduce emissions—the proceeds this year are propping up the general fund and should go to more targeted uses next year. The results: huge majorities (76-80 percent) favor requiring automakers, energy companies, manufacturers and power plants to reduce emissions—no thought of the costs to the consumers.

The vast majority also supported land use regulations such as those established in Plan Bay Area. They also favored using money to support public transit and repave roads. Notably two-thirds of respondents were solo drivers to work—Perhaps, do as I say not as I do, was in play here.

One intriguing split: a bare 51 percent favored the Keystone XL pipeline that would carry oil extracted from Canadian oil sands to refineries on the Gulf Coast. By contrast, the same narrow majority opposed increased fracking to extract more carbon-based energy in California. Fracking is driving the dramatic economic expansion in North Dakota where the unemployment rate is tiny and there has been an influx of people finding well-paid jobs. The biggest challenge there is finding housing.

It's likely that the Democrat-dominated Legislature will apply additional regulations to fracking, which has been going on for decades in California without mishap. States that have turned energy companies loose to pursue the advanced technologies are seeing lots of jobs and potential for significant additional investment from manufacturing companies that require lots of power. Natural gas prices have dropped significantly as the supply has soared.

So, California, like New York, is prepared to throttle if not stifle a proven technology because of environmental bogey men. Governor Brown already has required that one-third of the electrical power in California come from renewable sources and that regulation excludes the clean hydroelectric power from the dams around the state. As President Obama said during his campaign—electrical rates would have to soar—They have and will continue to. Californians, thanks to the woefully executed deregulation and the ensuing panic from then-governor Gray Davis, pay very high rates for both electricity and natural gas (how much has your gas bill gone down with a supply glut?).

The tradeoff: allowing energy companies to aggressively pursue fracking on the Monterey shale formation could result in 500,000 new jobs—well paying jobs. So, if they miss by a factor of five, 100,000 jobs in a growth industry that could lower energy costs is something that should be embraced.

It will involve legislators and the governor taking off their green-shaded glasses.

Comments

KQED

BAY AREA

Environmentalist Coalition Files Lawsuit Against Plan Bay Area Agencies

by KQED News Staff and Wires | August 19, 2013 — 5:33 PM

Knight Foundation/Wikimedia Commons

A Plan Bay Area pamphlet at a meeting held in Mountain View, CA in April 2011.

On Monday, a coalition of environmentalists filed a lawsuit against the agencies behind Plan Bay Area, a long-term transportation and land-use strategy adopted last month.

The groups accuse the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments of focusing too much on building new highways and not enough on public transportation.

Earthjustice, Communities for a Better Environment and the Sierra Club were the groups who filed the suit in Alameda County Superior Court. What are they hoping to gain from the litigation?

Reporter Stephanie Martin spoke with Irene Gutierrez, an attorney with Earthjustice.

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Chris Treadway: From Carquinez Drive to Richmond shoreline, Bay Trail makes progress

By Chris Treadway Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

These is lots of Bay Trail news in West County to report -- and for once not all of it is in Richmond.

A 1.7-mile stretch of the former county road between Crockett and Martinez known as Carquinez Scenic Drive was fenced off this week to start a two-year project to make it safe for public use.

The road was closed to motor traffic in the 1980s because of landslide damage. The East Bay Regional Park District acquired it from the county in December 2012 after extended negotiations.

The $5.6 million construction project "will include stabilization of embankments and cut slopes with retaining walls and debris walls; installation of new and repair of existing drainage systems; and rehabilitation and construction of the old roadway to a multiuse, Class I bicycle/pedestrian trail," the district announced.

In the meantime, the scenic drive is closed to the public because of safety concerns, even during a scheduled halt of construction from October 2013 to April 2014.

"When completed, it will be one of the most scenic trails in the region, with sweeping views of the Carquinez Strait, and a way to access parkland in the Martinez, Briones, Crockett and Rodeo areas," said park district General Manager Robert E. Doyle.

Learn more about the project at www.ebparks.org/parks/carquinez.

•

Not surprisingly, there is also Bay Trail news from Richmond, already home to more stretches of the trail than any other city.

Just over a week ago the City Council approved a $384,500 construction contract to close two gaps in the Ferry Point Loop trail in Point Richmond and create additional public shoreline access." "When completed this fall, the result will be a continuous Class I hiking and biking trail between Shipyard 3 Trail and Ferry Point," noted the Trails for Richmond Action Committee.

Another $18,000 was approved by the council to help the regional park district with a requested redesign of the planned Atlas Road bridge that will be the second entrance to Point Pinole Regional Shoreline. The redesign, recommended by the city'd design review board, calls for narrowing the vehicle lanes there in order to widen the Bay Trail by two feet. Work on the project is expected to be done by late 2014.

Richmond also accepted a $45,000 grant from the Association of Bay Area Governments and applying the funds to close a trail gap by the Richmond Plunge between Cutting Boulevard and the tunnel to Ferry Point.

Learn more about the projects and events on existing portions of the trail at www.pointrichmond.com/baytrail/.

WEST COUNTY NOTES: The next concert in the free Point Richmond Music summer series starts at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 9 with a set by energetic acoustic quartet Rusty String Express on the outdoor stage at Park Place and Washington Avenue. They will be followed to the stage at 6:45 p.m. by singer/songwriter Jenny Kerr.

In addition to the danceable music there will also be a raffle, no-host bar, face-painting

for children and dining at restaurants in the historic district.

Details: www.pointrichmondmusic.com.

- Biotech Partners, a nonprofit organization established in 1993 by the city of Berkeley and Bayer HealthCare, is hosting "Bravo! A Celebration of Biotech Partners' Graduates and Interns" this week at Berkeley High School, 1980 Allston Way.

The annual event acknowledges the accomplishments of the Career Technical Education program "that introduces low income and minority high school students to the bioscience industry."

This year the program (www.biotechpartners.org) gave 42 interns from Berkeley High and Oakland Tech experience from June through August at the facilities of 16 partners, including Aemtek Laboratories in Fremont, the Alameda County Sherriff's Office Crime Lab in San Leandro, Bayer HealthCare in Berkeley and San Francisco-Mission Bay, Berkeley Dog & Cat Hospital, Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute in Oakland, Highland Hospital in Oakland, Joint BioEnergy Institute (JBEI) in Emeryville, Kaiser Oakland Medical Center, Libby Laboratories in Berkeley, Mango Materials in Albany, Xoma in Berkeley and four UC Berkeley Labs.

- Chevron USA is inviting qualified organizations to apply for grants from its Economic Self-Sufficiency program or its STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Education program.

The company will give as many as five grants for each program and has earmarked a total of $1 million for the awards.

An informational meeting on the two grant programs will be held from 1 to 2 p.m. Aug. 13 at the Marina Bay Yacht Harbor, 1340 Marina Way South, Richmond. To RSVP email Andrea Bailey at andreabailey@chevron.com.

Contact Chris Treadway at 510-262-2784 or ctreadway@bayareanewsgroup.com. Follow him at Twitter.com/christreadway. Stay up-to-date on West Contra Costa news at IBABuzz.com/westcounty.

ST. HELENA STAR

Guest commentary: Pope Street project is not sustainable for St. Helena

22 HOURS AGO • KATHY COLDIRON

The development between McCorkle and Pope that a small local group, Our Town St. Helena, is promoting goes against all principles, recommendations and well-researched planning that the Association of Bay Area Governments, or ABAG, made when allocating the 31 affordable housing units that St. Helena is required to plan for during the next cycle, from 2014 through 2022.

ABAG formulates the number of affordable housing units by working with state, county and local community leaders including planners, city councils and supervisors from nine counties and 101 cities. The process takes more than two years and involves a variety of public meetings. Research is completed by professionals in the fields of planning, environmental protection, population and economic growth before the numbers are agreed upon for each city in the Bay Area.

ABAG, the state and our regional counties agree that our most recent development pattern has been auto-dependent on housing developments that are at the outer edges of the Bay Area and too far from major employment centers. This has contributed to the Bay Area's loss of open space and agricultural lands and it has created traffic congestion and higher greenhouse gas emissions.

Agricultural and natural resources are a well-known industry sector in the Bay Area, particularly in wine country, which includes Napa and Sonoma counties. However, these industries are projected to see only 5 percent growth in the next 25 years, and what job growth there is will be in travel and tourism, which suggests that protecting our agricultural land and open space will become even more important.

The California Housing Element Law actually requires regional housing needs to meet several housing objectives, including the protection of the environment and agricultural resources as well as public health and safety.

Higher housing number allocations have been given to cities that have infrastructure that can handle more growth, that are near transportation hubs and that are closer to where the most jobs are. Cities in the hinterlands, farther from the higher job growth areas, have been allocated lower housing unit numbers, such as 27 for Calistoga, 31 for St. Helena and 17 for Yountville. Our smaller towns don't have the adequate roads, water, growth or other infrastructure to support larger developments. So, American Canyon and Napa have been given much higher allocations for housing units: 392 units for American Canyon and 835 for Napa. This is for years 2014 to 2022.

The Napa Pipe Project also has recently been approved. This new housing project is commuting distance to larger job growth areas, and Napa has more infrastructure as well as water for a substantial population increase. However, this should be a warning to St.

Helena: Now, how likely will it be that Napa will be able to supply us with needed water during a drought?

St. Helena does NOT have the infrastructure to support more than 120 additional cars coming on to Pope Street each day from the Our Town project, nor does it protect our town's agricultural land. Instead it sets a precedent that encourages more road extensions and further potential open space being destroyed for building.

I believe our City Council has followed the state's new approach to planning by supporting small clusters of affordable housing units spread out around our town in the upcoming housing cycle. The Our Town project is well more than 31 units. We already have approximately 18 affordable units from the Magnolia Oaks project and eight more units planned for Pope Street, and a few more could easily be added with second units to reach our 31 units. The Our Town group is pushing a project that derails all the goals and policies set forth by the state and our local agencies. They are mandating a project that doesn't serve the best interests of our entire community, nor does it fit with what the majority of people in this town want. Additionally, what scientific research have they done to support that their project is a more efficient way to plan for growth than what the state, ABAG and local agencies believe?

Why should we even consider this plan? We don't have the water, the proper roads, forecasted jobs or population growth to support this development. The quality of life that the residents of this entire town have enjoyed for years is also at risk. Will we become an urbanized suburb of Napa, or will we retain the small-town character that most of us enjoy?

The former mayor of San Jose who was the president of ABAG said, "We have the opportunity to create a legacy that advances the quality of life in our region. The homes that we plan for and the development patterns we establish today will last for generations — we can choose local land use decisions that will create a more sustainable region."

The Our Town project is NOT sustainable in our town.

Factual information provided by California Department of Housing and Community Development and Association of Bay Area Governments, which has served Bay Area counties for 50 years.

(Kathy Coldiron is a St. Helena resident.)

Low-income housing OK'd for all of Orinda, not just downtown

Richard Colman

A law concerning the mandatory movement of low-income Californians into wealthier areas is cited in a report recently released in Orinda. On June 18, 2013, top Orinda officials released the report which describes mandated plans to create 118 low-income units in all parts of Orinda, not just in the downtown. As many as 538 new units could be created.

According to the report, California law "requires every county and city in the state" to have a plan to house low-income individuals.

The report states that so-called "second units" (like guest homes) could be utilized for low-income housing in Orinda.

The Orinda report was released as a "City Council Staff Report." Signing the report were Janet Keeter, Orinda's city manager, and Emmanuel Ursu, the city's director of planning.

The report notes that between 2007 and 2014, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), a regional government body, has assigned Orinda the task of creating 118 units for low-income people. Of these 118 units, 35 are for "extremely low" income individuals, another 35 are for "very low" income people, and 48 units for "low" income persons.

The report states that Orinda "could accommodate . . . the construction of 530 additional single family dwelling units . . . "

The report says that newly built second units on existing residential Orinda property "would be affordable to very low, low, and moderate income households." The report adds that [t]here are numerous homes in the City that have existing floor space with the potential for conversion to a legal second unit."

The report recommends that "the City explore a program to permit second units on lots where they are not currently allowed today . . . "

The report lists the Orinda city manager's office and the city's planning department as the "Responsible Parties" for the following statement: "The City recognizes second units as an essential part of Orinda's affordable housing supply . . . "

According to the report, "Second units are an important part of the City's affordable housing supply and are often rented at rates that are affordable to low and very low income households." The report adds: "To make such a program [low-income housing] viable for the homeowner, there must be an incentive to maintaining below market rents and limiting occupancy to qualifying households."

The report does not cover how putting more low-income people in Orinda might affect property values or schools in the city.

Related Posts:

- State mandated Housing Element forces Orinda to build…
- City Council votes for Low-Income Housing plan for downtown…
- Angry residents confront Orinda Mayor and MTC chairperson,…

- Large crowd protests Orinda Stack and Pack Housing Plan
- Low-Income housing in Orinda: government run amok

“Where’s the Beef” for new job creation in California?

Richard Eber

Reviewing the projections of the *Stack and Pack Environmentalists* who authored the **One Bay Area Plan**, we see that they always like to speak about job creation associated with the projects they are pushing in their urban planning models. While this optimistic outlook looks good on paper, we have to ask the rhetorical question *Where’s the Beef?*

How will **Project Development Areas (PDA’s)** sites paying prevailing wages, partially subsidized by public financing, translate into employment? While it is true those in trade unions, government, and public transit are handsomely rewarded, what about the people who will populate what is left behind?

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the **Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC)** predicts their building boom will bring high paying jobs to those who reside in their public palaces. Unfortunately, there is little economic reality to support this contention.

What businesses are going to be in a position to pay *“living wages”* in performing jobs that utilize expensive public transit to and from work? While this formula works for the high tech sector, the majority who will be employed in service capacities will surely struggle.

In trying to predict job growth it is best to take a geologic “The key to the future is the past” approach to see what previously has worked for success in expanding business opportunities and reducing unemployment. According to a recent survey in **Forbes Magazine** the most important considerations for achieving these goals are:

1. Education and training of the available job force
2. Affordable housing and cost of living
3. Reasonable energy costs primarily for manufacturing.
4. Low rates for personal and corporate income taxes.
5. A favorable business environment created by local and state governments.

Looking at this criteria, it does not appear the State of California meets many of these qualities for encouraging business opportunities in the next couple years. It is no coincidence Forbes predicted that Texas led by Austin, has provided seven of the top ten cities where employment is expected to expand during this time period Only Santa Cruz, because of its nitch in high tech, was able to find itself providing similar job growth to Texas for cities located in California

It is no wonder that much maligned Texas Governor Rick Perry, was able a few months ago to successfully make a recruiting trip to California to lure businesses to relocate in the Lone Star State. This strategy proved to be successful as *Waste Connections, EBay, Electronic Arts, AT&T* and Time Warner, all have recently done major expansions in Longhorn land.

In addition, it is no coincidence that Texas under Perry’s reign, is a right to work state where private enterprise is not perceived to be a close associate of Darth Vader. Along with this business friendly environment, companies are not subject to the number of government permits and costly regulations that boggs down private enterprise in California.

Back on the ranch in Sacramento, the social engineers who control government in California continue to be obcessed with green house gasses, global warming, energy off sets, and how they can build new communities

to match their socialistic views of how society should be configured. In doing this they have failed to take into account the human element which ultimately determines where population growth occurs or declines.

The future will determine if families would prefer to reside in stack and pack PDA's or would they rather settle in suburban communities that more fit the traditional American Dream model? Viewing recent trends, it would appear current residents of California are heading East to greener pastures.

For proof of what people desire for their families we need to look no further than high unemployment rates in California especially among African Americans and Hispanics. Faced with high taxes, high energy costs, high cost of living and higher everything many people who migrated to the land of opportunity a couple generations ago, are now fleeing California in record numbers.

As there is no indication that this trend will change, it is difficult to understand why urban planners forecast the need for several million additional housing units to be constructed in the next quarter century. Where do these projections come from and what are they based upon?

Are the wealthy business owners who left California because of high personal and corporate taxes going to come back some day with the jobs they took with them? Will families who have found affordable housing in single family homes throughout the nation want to sell these dwellings for the promise of reducing the carbon footprint by relocating in PDA's in the Bay Area? Can people be counted on to voluntarily abandon their cars in order take public transportation and ride bikes as a lifestyle choice?

Unfortunately, the answer to these questions is a resounding "no". The State of California whose political process is dominated by ultra liberal ideologues, is totally out of touch with what is going on in the rest of the country and what might happen in the future.

Ironically, these same people are asking private enterprise to step up to the plate and hire workers at living wages and pay taxes to support government entitlement programs. While this strategy can work for banks, utilities, medical care, and in general for businesses who have limited competition, small entrepreneurs just don't have the resources to compete in this environment.

Meanwhile in Sacramento, share the wealth advocates are insisting through their budget priorities of creating an entitlement society where tax payers pick up the tab for their social engineering schemes. Along with this, we now have the prospect of SB-1 to put the icing on the cake. This State Senate bill aims to institutionalize the One Bay Area Plan to dictate all urban planning decisions on a local level will be determined by the State

It would appear by the time these programs will have proven to fail, it will be difficult to recruit back those who left the Golden State for more lucrative opportunities. By that time the question of *"Where's the Beef"* will be well known; In Austin Texas. *Hook em Horns!*

July 19, 2013

THE BERKELEY DAILY PLANET

Editorials

Harmony, Not Perfect But Intriguing

By Becky O'Malley
Friday July 19, 2013 - 04:23:00 PM

Trying to reconnect with civic concerns after a month devoted to family matters, I resolved to attend last night's meeting on Plan Bay Area, a topic which has generated considerable heat and some light on this site and elsewhere in the past few months. It was a joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments, which, the words of last week's press release from both bodies, is "an integrated transportation and land-use strategy through 2040 that marks the nine-county region's first long-range plan to meet the requirements of California's landmark 2008 Senate Bill 375, which calls on each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy to accommodate future population growth and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks."

What's not to like about that?

Well, I'd gotten other press releases from other organizations which indicated dissatisfaction with how the proposal on the agenda dealt with important considerations like the provision of affordable housing near job sites, displacement of residents from already affordable urban neighborhoods and inadequate provision for public mass transit. Berkeleyans who have a respectable record of civic involvement were skeptical. Journalists whom I respect had raised questions about the plan. Back in October, Tim Redmond in the San Francisco Bay Guardian had done an exhaustive analysis of potential problems, but I wanted to see for myself what all the excitement was about.

Kind of. But as the 6:30 start time for the meeting approached, intellectual torpor set in. I couldn't help remembering that my first assignment for the San Francisco Bay Guardian 40 years ago (surely not!) was covering the nascent ABAG, then housed in the basement of the Claremont Hotel, and I went to many, many meetings where nothing that happened proved to have future effect. This promised to be another one of those.

I did anticipate some interesting fireworks from some opponents. Zelda Bronstein on this site more than a year ago had identified a constituency of anti-Plan people who could loosely be described as Tea Party types, and they were expected to turn out in force.

When I check the MTC website for the agenda, I discovered an audio stream for the meeting, and lassitude won out. I chose to listen online while attending to household chores, and it's a good thing that I did. Zelda, who actually went to part of the meeting, reported a crowded room with impossible sightlines and uncomfortable chairs, while I in the comfort of home could hear the whole thing, including the mind-boggling public comment period.

If you have six hours to spare, you really ought to listen yourself.

I'm going to hope that one of our local policy wonks will be moved to do a news analysis on the actual or potential consequences of last night's meeting. What fascinated and bemused me was the tenor and passion of public comments, which stretched over a couple of hours at least, and the surprisingly harmonic convergence of left and right in many aspects of their analysis.

Bass notes were provided on what might be called the left, for lack of a more precise term. These were groups like the law firms Public Advocates and Earth Justice. The discourse of the evening centered on the proper role of government, and these commenters had no quarrel with the prerogative and even the duty of government to provide for the common good. They just wanted it done the right way.

If you want to mandate housing near transit, they said, it must be housing for all and real, funded transit, not just pricey urban condos and wishful thinking. And, they said, let's keep the beat steady by using CEQA to make sure what you're doing doesn't harm instead of help the environment.

By and large, at the end of the evening they seem to have gotten what they wanted this time.

On the treble end of the scale, including many of those who might be called right wing, you heard a great variety of the fantastical imaginings of citizens who desperately fear abuse of government power. This included some who could be called Tea Partyish, people who worry most about government spending and don't want to be told what they can do on their private property. You wonder how they can cope with local zoning laws.

But there were also themes emanating from very different spheres. I heard an unusually high percentage of Slavic accents among the commenters, people who described themselves as former residents of Eastern Europe, who feared that a communist or fascist coup was imminent. At least one person, a Berkeley resident, supplied an obligato by describing herself as an old leftist and a hippy, citing traditional counter-cultural worries about government spying on us.

All this seems like an echo of the current remarkably harmonious national uproar coming from both "left" and "right" about the federal government's role, as revealed by Edward Snowden, in acquiring records of what private citizens do with communication technologies. And then there's this week's revelation that along with "Tea Party" the IRS looked for the words "progressive" and "Occupy" on their BOLO (Be On the Look Out) lists used to check on those who sought 501c4 tax exemption status for non-profits which dabble in politics.

All in all, those who are wary of what government can and can’t do seem to have more in common than they might think.

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Published July 31st, 2013

Housing Controversy Forces Regular City Business into Back Seat

By Laurie Snyder

Orindans expecting to have their key policy concerns heard by the Orinda City Council at its July 16 meeting grew increasingly frustrated as 20 people from inside and outside of Orinda rose once again to express their opinions of Plan Bay Area and the impact it may or may not have on the community.

Although housing was not on the City Council's agenda, speakers opposed to Plan Bay Area lined up for the public comment portion of the meeting. Residents who came that evening for the scheduled public hearing on a proposed hike in city fees, a discussion with residents and business leaders regarding potential ways to resolve the downtown's increasingly challenging parking situation while maintaining public safety, and other city business, waited over an hour for their turn at the podium.

Following commentary by residents of the Crossroads neighborhood, the parking matter was continued over to an as yet unscheduled meeting for further discussion. The fee hike hearing proceeded smoothly (see the accompanying article).

So, what happened during the public forum?

The majority of the public forum presenters were members or supporters of the citizens' group Orinda Watch. Many have spoken during public forum sessions in previous council meetings, including Rusty Snow, Richard Colman, Chet Martine, and Chris Kniel, a former member of Orinda's Planning Commission. A fair number reiterated their belief that city leaders and staff have been working outside the full view of the public to update Orinda's General Plan in a concerted effort to bring high-density, low income housing to the downtown area - possibly even going so far as to rezone the area in a way that will double its density.

"The draft Housing Element update, discussed at multiple public meetings, includes the rezoning of a single site in the Residential Medium-Density (RM) district," according to city manager Janet Keeter. "This particular parcel is located behind the Santa Maria Church and is currently zoned for 10 units per acre. The proposed change would allow at least 20 units per acre. This change is an approach to meet the state law. No change to zoning of the other sites zoned RM is proposed."

Keeter also emphatically described reports that the city has already authorized 20-unit per acre zoning for the entire downtown as "false."

Speakers also voiced concerns and confusion regarding the height limits of Orinda buildings. Many had heard - through school email distribution lists and other e-messaging tools - that the council plans to raise Orinda's downtown building height limit to 55 feet. "No such proposal is before the council," said Keeter, who added that "there are no plans to revise the Orinda Municipal Code to make such a change."

Despite these responses by the city, Orinda Watch members continued to press council members on July 16 to withdraw Orinda's draft housing element. According to Orinda Watch's website, "The City Planning Director told a group of Orinda Watch members during a meeting on May 6, 2013 that the City did not need to update its General Plan to comply with state housing laws or to meet the City's needs at this time, and thus had no plans to do so."

City leaders disagree with this statement. The city cannot opt out; it is required by state law to have a housing element as part of its general plan - and to update it every five to eight years. Failure to adopt a compliant housing element in time for Jan. 31 certification by the Department of Housing and Community Development could have resulted in the loss of local land use authority, as well as the transportation funding which helps to repair and maintain Orinda's roads and drains.

HCD ruled June 12 that Orinda's draft housing element is compliant - the first time the city's

housing element has been in compliance with state law since Orinda incorporated in 1986. And on July 18 at a joint meeting of the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Commission, Plan Bay Area was approved.

Send your comment to: info@lamorindaweekly.com
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- **Commercial Revenues Growing; Energy Efficiency Program Revenues Up 21 Percent**
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- **Completed Acquisition of E-commerce Technology Services Firm on July 31**

ICF International, Inc. (NASDAQ:ICFI), a leading provider of consulting services and technology solutions to government and commercial clients, reported results for the second quarter ended June 30, 2013.

Second Quarter 2013 Results and Highlights

"Second quarter results were similar to those of the first quarter, reflecting the continued growth of our commercial business, which was driven by a 21.3 percent increase in energy efficiency revenues, and the improved traction of our non-U.S. government business. At the same time, U.S. Federal Government revenues remained stable compared to last year, which we consider to be solid performance in light of current market conditions. Earnings per diluted share were the same as the prior year's second quarter, inclusive of acquisition expenses, although operating income was lower due primarily to higher subcontractor activity on government contracts," said ICF Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Sudhakar Kesavan.

For the second quarter, total revenue was $241.6 million, a 0.8 percent increase over the $239.6 million reported for the 2012 second quarter. Service revenue, total revenue less subcontractor and other direct costs, was $179.5 million, a 1.1 percent decline from second quarter 2012 levels. Operating income was $17.3 million, down from the $18.3 million reported in last year's second quarter; operating margin was 7.2 percent compared to 7.6 percent a year ago. EBITDA was $22.4 million and EBITDA margin was 9.3 percent, compared to $24.4 million and 10.2 percent, respectively, in last year's second quarter. Net income for the 2013 second quarter was $10.3 million or $0.52 per diluted share, equivalent to last year's net income of $10.3 million and diluted earnings per share of $0.52. Acquisition charges amounted to $0.3 million in this year's second quarter.

For the 2013 first half, total revenue was $475.5 million, up 1.8 percent over the $467.3 million reported in the 2012 first half. Operating income was $34.9 million, up 0.9 percent; net income was up 6.0 percent to $20.4 million, and earnings per diluted share were $1.02 compared to $0.96.

"The pace of contract sales increased in the second quarter, resulting in a solid book-to-bill ratio of nearly 1.0 for the period, compared to 0.85 in the prior year," Mr. Kesavan said. "Ongoing investments to expand our business development capabilities have enabled ICF to respond to a greater number of government and commercial requests for proposals. We have continued to see solid demand for our domain expertise and IT services across key markets and expect sales in the second half of 2013

to be significantly ahead of the $462 million booked in the first half of the year, which we believe will position us for continued growth in 2014."

"Additionally, on July 31 we completed the acquisition of an e-commerce technology services firm (Ecommerce Accelerator LLC, or ECA), with approximately $10 million in annual revenue, that will enhance ICF's multi-channel, end-to-end e-commerce solutions. We have a robust acquisition pipeline and continue to evaluate acquisition opportunities that enhance our subject matter knowledge, broaden our service offerings, and/or provide scale in specific geographies," Mr. Kesavan said.

Backlog and New Business Awards

Backlog was $1.5 billion at the end of the 2013 second quarter. Funded backlog was $647 million, or 44 percent of the total.

The total value of contracts awarded was $236 million in the second quarter of 2013 and $462 million for the 2013 first half, up 16.3 percent and 6.0 percent, respectively, from last year's second quarter and first half.

Commercial Client Second Quarter/First Half 2013 Highlights

Revenues from commercial clients increased 3.3 percent in the 2013 second quarter to $66.9 million and were up 8.2 percent in the first half to $133.6 million. Excluding a large commercial infrastructure project that is currently in a slower phase of construction, commercial revenues would have increased 7.4 percent in the second quarter and 10.4 percent for the first half.

Revenues from commercial energy efficiency programs increased 21.3 percent and 15.6 percent in the second quarter and first half of 2013, respectively, and accounted for 37.5 percent and 36.6 percent, respectively, of commercial revenues.

Commercial sales awards were $36.8 million for the 2013 second quarter and $159.0 million for the first half, representing 34 percent of total sales for the first six months of 2013.

ICF was awarded more than 450 commercial projects globally in the second quarter. Primary areas of awards included energy efficiency program support, airline and airport management consulting, environmental program management, interactive data applications, strategic communications support for non-profits, commercial health consulting for payers, and energy market and portfolio assessment for utilities.

Key Government Sales Highlights for the Second Quarter 2013

ICF was awarded nearly 100 new U.S. Federal Government contract and task order awards and hundreds of additional awards from other domestic (state and local) and non-U.S. governments. The largest awards included:

- **Health Informatics:** A $72 million contract with the National Institutes of Health to continue to support the Electronic Research Administration grants management program across a range of health informatics and systems engineering activities.
- **Program and IT Management:** A $34 million contract with the United States Postal Service to provide support for the Mailing Information Systems and Domestic Products divisions.
- **Disaster Recovery Support:** An award estimated to exceed $10 million to assist one of the states affected by Superstorm Sandy with analytical and program support for disaster recovery programs.
- **European Employment Programs:** An $8.9 million contract with the European Commission to provide employment program support.
- **Health Survey Research:** A $7.8 million contract with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention supporting the 2013-2014 Tobacco Survey.

Additional individual government sales awards in excess of $2 million included providing program and organizational management support for the U.S. Department of the Navy, energy efficiency program support for the Association of Bay Area Governments (California) and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, environmental and engineering support services for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, survey research support for the National Science Foundation, and monitoring and evaluation support for the World Health Organization.

In Marin, affordable housing opposition stronger than ever despite Marin Community Foundation efforts

Posted: 07/27/2013 02:00:00 PM PDT

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James Bitter of Mill Valley addresses the Marin Planning Commission on Monday, July 8, 2013,...

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A prominent voice missing from the recent debate over Plan Bay Area was the Marin Community Foundation, which in 2007 announced that it was mounting a major effort to change Marin's "Not In My Back Yard" mindset.

In 2007, the foundation invited nonprofit advocates and developers of affordable housing to submit grant proposals for winning hearts and minds. And it proceeded to spend an estimated $400,000 on the initiative, over the next several years.

This year, however, the foundation was silent over months of heated debate around Plan Bay Area, a regional plan that seeks to promote the development of new, affordable housing along transportation corridors and near mass transit to reduce greenhouse gas production.

Given the furor that erupted around Plan Bay Area — much of it focused on the prospect for more higher density, affordable housing in Marin — was the foundation's effort a flop?

Thomas Peters, the Marin Community Foundation's president, said, "I'm very happy with the work that we did. It was intended to be a couple-year initiative and that's what we did. We never labeled it as a kind of anti-NIMBY campaign. We wanted to be sure that at least the facts were out there about affordable housing being a contributing factor to a healthy community, and not as some folks claim, a detriment."

Susan Kirsch, one of the founders of Citizen Marin, a coalition of neighborhood associations formed to oppose Plan Bay Area, said, "Marin Community Foundation is not the only community foundation that has taken this strong stance, to support building no matter what."

Much of the money spent went to the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California, an affordable housing advocacy group, and Greenbelt Alliance, an environmental advocacy group, to produce two reports.

Published in 2011, the first report, titled "Miles from Home," detailed the role that affordable housing can play in taking cars off the road and protecting against climate change. It noted that 60 percent of Marin's workforce commutes from outside county lines, where housing is cheaper.

The second report, published the same year, titled "Driving Home Economic Recovery," explained how additional workforce housing would create jobs and boost spending in Marin.

The Non-Profit Housing Association and Greenbelt Alliance also passed along $75,000 of foundation grant money to Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, a Novato-based affordable housing advocacy group formed in 2011.

Dianne Spaulding, executive director of the Non-Profit Housing Association, said, "I think part of why Marin has become a hot spot of concern for those opposed to affordable housing is because the initiative did what it was supposed to do. I think we have moved the needle on affordable housing in Marin; but it is a needle that moves slowly."

In addition to working with Greenbelt Alliance on the reports, Spaulding said her association scrutinized the housing elements of all 11 of Marin's municipalities. State law requires counties and municipalities to create housing elements in their general plans that foster the creation of a specified amount of affordable housing by identifying appropriate building sites and removing red tape that might block construction. The association came up with 33 sites suitable for the creation of affordable housing in Marin, ranked according to feasibility.

Spaulding said her association also developed a leadership program for current Marin residents of affordable housing to teach the residents how to tell their stories and took local elected representatives on tours of local affordable housing projects.

And Spaulding said her association has taken the initial steps to form a Marin Affordable Housing Coalition that would consist of such organizations as the Marin Organizing Committee, Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, Sustainable Novato, Sustainable Marin, Marin Grassroots, Marin Workforce Housing Trust and the League of Women Voters.

Jeremy Madsen, executive director of Greenbelt Alliance, said, "The biggest role that we played was to make it clear that affordable housing is an environmental issue. The more that we are able to accommodate homes for people who are part of our workforce in the cities and towns of Marin the less pressure we're putting on the natural environment, the open spaces of our region. This effort was a good start in a long-term process."

Annan Paterson, a former Novato city councilwoman and one of the founders of Stand Up For Neighborly Novato, said Stand Up has won the endorsement of 1,200 local residents and trained more than 50 people who live in or need affordable housing in Novato to be spokesmen.

"Our ability to do that has really helped to inform the debate," Paterson said. She said some members of the organization receive a stipend, but most are volunteers.

Lynn Wasley, another of Stand Up for Neighborly Novato's co-founders, said despite the foundation's efforts, the intense opposition to affordable housing that she once associated mainly with Novato seems to have spread throughout Marin.

Wasley said the Marin Community Foundation's absence from the Plan Bay Area debate gives at least the appearance that the foundation may have retreated some on the affordable housing issue.

"It's hard not to assume that the attacks on the Marin Community Foundation for what and who they were supporting, including Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, didn't impact them," Wasley said.

Peters, however, said the main reason the foundation chose not to participate in the Plan Bay Area debate was that it was too abstract.

"An awful lot of the debate is about pure hypotheticals," Peters said. "It has gone so far off the rails of what is actually going to be built that it is not an effective use of the foundation's focus or frankly my time."

Peters said, rather than engage in idle speculation, "We stay working with the people who want to have this happen: an owner who has a parcel that is appropriate to develop, a nonprofit housing developer, and somebody who has the consummate skill to put together a financing package for building."

Over the past 10 years, the foundation has contributed to the creation of more than 400 units of affordable housing in Marin through grants and loans.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In search of common ground in Marin

Thank you for the front page story "Nastier tone hits mellow Marin," July 21. I was ashamed and saddened by the heckling at the June community meeting. I was the only person in the room who stood up to support Susan Adams' work on behalf of our community. I think others in attendance who agree with me did not want to risk derision and bullying.

Along with many other Marinwood residents, I participated in an eight-year collaborative process to guide the derelict shopping center's redevelopment. The current Bridge Housing proposal now before Marin County came out of numerous community meetings, input from hundreds of people, and multiple development ideas, as well the economic realities for redevelopment. It's a solid start to a well-designed addition to our neighborhood, a vibrant center for grocery shopping, coffee-drinking, and local errands by foot and bike. I welcome residents of the new apartments and feel confident that they will love Marinwood as much as we do.

It's critical that Marinwood, and all communities, work together for the common good as opposed to individual preconceptions and self-serving interests. If we can't find respectful common ground, the future of our children looks bleak indeed.

Kathleen Gaines, San Rafael

Michael Macor / The Chronicle

Marin County Supervisor Susan Adams has drawn the ire of her constituents.

The Press Democrat

Is your road on Plan Bay Area list?

Tuesday, July 23, 2013 at 5:03 by Road.Warrior

The new Plan Bay Area was adopted last week, outlining transportation and land-use projects to be funded through 2040 within Sonoma, Napa and the other seven Bay Area counties. It's dependent on receiving an anticipated 292 billion in federal, state and local money, but includes the following road projects.

Is your pet project among them?

Metropolitan Transportation Commission spokesman John Goodwin breaks out the expenditures, saying, "Nearly 88 percent (or $253 billion) of the transportation funds will be used to maintain and operate the highways, transit systems, local streets and roads, and bridges we already have. Another way of looking at the distribution of the revenues — which include fuel taxes, transit fares, bridge tolls, property taxes and dedicated sales taxes — is by mode of transportation.

"Maintenance and operation of the Bay Area's existing transit systems will receive about 55 percent ($159 billion) of the revenues. The remainder includes 33 percent for street, road, highway and bridge maintenance; 7 percent for transit expansion; and 5 percent for roadway and bridge expansion."

Here's a list of road projects that made the list. (Figures are in millions and represent cost, committed funding and discretionary funding.)

SONOMA

Realign **Route 116 (Stage Gulch Road)** along Champlin Creek to improve safety, adding shoulders to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists $ 12 $ 12 $ -

Widen **U.S. 101** for HOV lanes from Pepper Road to Rohnert Park Expressway (Central Phase A) $ 109 $ 109 $ -

Improve channelization and traffic signalization at **Route 116/Route 121** intersection (includes Arnold Drive improvements) $ 15 $ 5 $ 10

US 101 North Project – Phase B- **Airport Boulevard interchange** improvements and Airport Boulevard $ 43 $ 43 $ -

Improve **U.S. 101/Old Redwood Highway** interchange (includes modifying/replacing existing 2-lane interchange to at least a 5-lane interchange and improving ramps) $ 43 $ 43 $ -

Improve local circulation at various locations in **Town of Penngrove** (includes improvements to Main Street, Petaluma Hill Road, Adobe Road, Old Redwood Highway and U.S. 101/Railroad Avenue) $ 40 $ 20 $ 20

Widen **Fulton Road** from 2-lanes to 4-lanes from Guerneville Road and Piner Road $ 4 $ 1 $ 3

Extend Farmers Lane from Bellevue Avenue to Bennett Valley Road as a 3-lane or 4-lane arterial (includes a bicycle lane and sidewalk) $ 58 $ 29 $ 29

Improve **Bodega Highway** west of Sebastopol (includes straightening curves near Occidental and adding turn pockets) $ 2 $ 1 $ 1

Convert bridges in Sonoma County from 1-lane to 2-lane $ 19 $ 1 $ 18

Widen **U.S. 101 for** HOV lanes (one in each direction) from Rohnert Park Expressway to Santa Rosa Avenue (includes interchange improvements and ramp metering) $ 69 $ 69 $ -

Improve **U.S. 101/East Washington Street** interchange (includes new northbound on-ramp and improvements to southbound on-ramp) $ 22 $ 22 $ -

Install traffic signal system on **Route 121** and improve channelization at 8th Street $ 3 $ 0 $ 3

Implement **Marin Sonoma Narrows Phase 2** (Sonoma County) $ 220 $ 14 $ 206

Implement landscaping along the HOV lanes on **U.S. 101 between Steele Lane and Windsor River Road** $ 2 $ 2 $ -

Improve channelization and traffic signalization on **Mirabel Road and Route 116** $ 5 $ 5 $ -

Construct Suburban Center intersection improvements at **Route 12 (Farmers Lane) and 4th Street** $ 7 $ – $ 7

Local streets and roads operations and maintenance $ 2,303 $ 2,199 $ 104

Widen **Rohnert Park Expressway** from 2-lanes to 4-lanes between Snyder Lane and Petaluma Hill Road (includes new bike lanes in both directions, curb and gutter, sidewalk, landscaped median, and traffic signal devices/improvements at Petaluma Hill Road) $ 9 $ 9 $ -

Widen **Snyder Lane** from 2-lanes to 4-lanes between southside of “G” section and Southwest Boulevard $ 5 $ 4 $ 1

Widen of **Golf Course Drive West** (formerly Wilfred Avenue) from 2-lanes to 4-lanes between the 1999 City Limits west of Redwood Drive to the Urban Growth Boundary (includes four travel lanes, a bike lane on both sides, sidewalks, landscaping, and traffic signals at Redwood Drive, Labath Avenue, and Dowdell Avenue) $ 5 $ 5 $ -

Construct an interchange with bicycle and pedestrian enhancements at **Route 12/Fulton Road** $ 70 $ 27 $ 43

Improve interchange at **Hearn Avenue/U.S. 101** $ 46 $ 5 $ 42

Construct bicycle and pedestrian crossing at **U.S. 101 and Copeland Creek** $ 6 $ – $ 6

Implement Sonoma County's **Safe Routes to School** program $ 20 $ – $ 20

Enhance **bus service** frequencies in Sonoma County $ 104 $ – $ 104

Implement **bicycle and pedestrian improvements** countywide $ 118 $ 14 $ 104

Implement **Windsor River Road/Windsor Road/NWPRR Intersection** improvements. Re-configure intersection and improve railroad, vehicle, pedestrian interface. $ 9 $ 9

Widen **Airport Boulevard** from 2-lanes to 5-lanes between Ordiance Road and Aviation Boulevard $ 36 $ 13 $ 23

Implement **Marin Sonoma Narrows Phase 1** (Sonoma County) $ 123 $ 123 $ -

Implement Sonoma County's **Climate Initiatives** program $ 21 $ – $ 21

Conduct environmental studies and preliminary design for the proposed **SMART commuter rail extension from Windsor to Cloverdale** (Phase III) $ 15 $ – $ 15

NAPA

Implement Napa County's **Safe Routes to School** program $ 6 $ – $ 6

Improve **traffic signalization** countywide $ 3 $ – $ 3

Construct round-abouts between **California Blvd and Freeway Drive on First Street** $ 15 $ – $ 15

Construct new southbound **Route 221 to southbound Route 29 flyover**, including auxiliary lane to Route 12/Route 29 $ 5 $ – $ 5

Construct interchange at intersection of **Route 12/Route 29/Airport Road** $ 6 $ 2 $ 4

Construct curb cuts and accessiblity improvements in **St. Helena** $ 2 $ – $ 2

Improve signalization along **Main Street from Sulpher Springs to Mills Lane** in St. Helena $ 1 $ – $ 1

Extend Devlin Road from **Airport Boulevard to Green Island Road** $ 12 $ – $ 12

Construct corridor improvements in **Yountville** $ 1 $ – $ 1

Construct **Madison Ave. bypass to Route 29** in Yountville $ 1 $ – $ 1

Improve intersection at **Petrified Forest Road/Route 128** $ 3 $ – $ 3

Local streets and roads operations and maintenance $ 1,252 $ 1,142 $ 110

Construct corridor improvements along **Route 29** $ 26 $ – $ 26

Reconfigure northbound **Route 29 off-ramp at Lincoln Avenue** $ 3 $ – $ 3

Construct a **bicycle and pedestrian undercrossing** along Napa Creek $ 1 $ – $ 1

Construct intersection improvements at **Silverado Trail/Third Street/Coombsville Road/East Avenue** $ 5 $ – $ 5

Rehabilitate **Green Island Road** $ 5 $ – $ 5

Widen intersection at **Napa Junction Road/Route 29** $ 4 $ – $ 4

Implement l**ighted crosswalks** at five intersections in St. Helena $ 0 $ – $ 0

Build out countywide primary **bicycle network** $ 20 $ – $ 20

Create new road and transit configuration on **Route 29 through American Canyon** with connectivity to the Vallejo Ferry, including BRT, potential HOV, and other roadway innovations $ 12 $ – $ 12

Widen R**oute 12 (Jameson Canyon)** from 2 lanes to 4 lanes from I-80 in Solano County to Route 29 in Napa County (Phase 1) $ 140, $ 140, $ -

KALW People

July 24, 2013

Controversial Plan Bay Area adopted by regional planners

By Isabel Angell

Credit Isabel Angell
James Bennett of Sonoma county shows his opposition to Plan Bay Area

Last week, two regional government groups voted to adopt Plan Bay Area. An estimated two million people are moving the Bay Area by 2040 – that's a 30 percent increase. Plan Bay Area creates sweeping transportation, housing, and environmental recommendations for cities to handle that growth.

ABAG (the Association of Bay Area Governments) and the MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) adopted the plan early Friday morning, after a six-hour public meeting that began Thursday evening.

At its centerpiece, Plan Bay Area says 80 percent of growth should be contained in Priority Development Areas, or PDAs. These PDAs are places like downtown San Jose and Oakland's Jack London Square, areas that are close to public transit and can handle higher-density housing. The idea is to prevent more sprawl by building up existing land, and creating walkable, transit-oriented communities.

The plan also lays out requirements for cities to plan for affordable housing, more transportation infrastructure, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Local governments won't be forced to comply with Plan Bay Area, but adopting it would give them more access to grant money if they choose to redevelop.

Last week's meeting included a lengthy public comment section, with well over 150 people signed up to talk. The crowd was mostly opponents of the plan who brought large signs and were prone to chanting. During their comments, opponents repeatedly called on ABAG and the MTC to let the public vote on Plan Bay Area. Chiefly from Marin and suburban Alameda and Sonoma counties, they complained that decisions made by the regional bodies violate the local governments' independence. Liz Manning of Mill Valley summed up the beliefs of many opponents.

"To all the political bureaucrats sitting here, if you're so hot on this plan, please lead the way, get out of your cars, and move into the stack-and-packs yourselves," she said. "For those of you who still have your integrity intact, please find the courage to vote against this unconstitutional atrocity."

Many said the plan's intention to create the higher-density PDA'S threatened their suburban lifestyle and accused ABAG and the MTC of trying to artificially change the way people live. Some even invoked comparisons to the Soviet Union and China.

Supporters showed up in large numbers as well, cheering whenever someone spoke in favor of the plan. Many of the supporting speakers were young, and talked about how they and their peers are giving up cars. They said they want a Bay Area that's full of opportunities to bike, walk, and take public transit.

In some places, growth is already trending toward creating transit-oriented development. Oakland has Fruitvale Village, and Walnut Creek has the Contra Costa Centre. And just north of San Jose, the city of Milpitas has plans for a community that will center on its new BART station.

League of Women Voters in Marin work to dispel affordable housing myths

Posted: marinij.com

The League of Women Voters of Marin County is out with a report designed to reality test the controversy in Marin swirling around Plan Bay Area and proposals for affordable housing.

The report titled, "Dispelling the Myths Surrounding Affordable Housing," was distributed to elected officials and other Marin decision makers. A copy is posted on the League's website.

"We recognized that the arguments that were circulating had become more and more of a quality that was confusing — or maybe even misleading — voters," said Judy Binsacca, head of the League's committee on transportation, land use and housing and the principal author of the report. "We decided it was time that we got involved and tried to provide factual information relating to some of the key issues," she said.

Responding to the League's report, Marin County Supervisor Katie Rice, who together with Novato City Councilwoman Pat Eklund represents Marin on the Association of Bay Area Governments, said, "I just thought it was very fair and balanced and aimed at presenting facts. I appreciate their effort, and I hope people read it with open minds and recognize it for what it is: objective analysis and an attempt to address some of the fears and myths that are running rampant through our community."

But Richard Hall of San Rafael, a vocal opponent of Plan Bay Area, said the report's findings are suspect because Binsacca heads the board of directors of the Ecumenical Association for Housing.

"She clearly has a business interest in affordable housing being chairman of the board of a major affordable housing, not-for-profit business," Hall said.

Susan Dutton, a spokeswoman for the Ecumenical Association for Housing, said Binsacca receives no pay for her work on the association's board.

"This is a voluntary position," Dutton said.

The report begins by providing information on the state law that requires city and counties to foster the creation of a certain amount of housing, both affordable and market rate, at regular intervals by enacting appropriate zoning laws. And it provides background on the genesis of Plan Bay Area, explaining that it was created as the result of two state laws: AB 32, which aimed at controlling greenhouse gases to fight climate change; and SB 375, which required the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse emissions from cars and light trucks.

The report notes that the amount of housing that cities and counties must zone for is determined by projections for job and population growth. And it points out that Plan Bay Area projects lower growth rates for Marin than for any of the other nine Bay Area counties: "9 percent household growth is projected from 2010-2014 and 17 percent for jobs over that period, as compared to 27 percent household growth and 33 percent job growth for the Bay Area in that time period."

According to the U.S. Census, between 1980 and 2010, Marin's households increased 16 percent and the county's jobs increased by 42 percent.

The League's report addresses what it characterizes as "mayor myths" having to do with local control, housing density, property values, traffic, crime and schools.

Plan Bay Area would attempt to channel new housing growth into "priority development areas," located close to transportation and jobs to prevent urban sprawl. But the report says, "It needs to be emphasized that local jurisdictions are not required to have PDAs and that they, not the Association of Bay Area Governments, set the PDA boundaries."

The League's report states that SB 375 mandates that local governments will retain their control over long-range planning and review of proposed developments, and it points out that Plan Bay Area's commitment to local control was explicitly restated by its creators in July.

However, Doreen Gluckin, a resident of Strawberry who opposes her neighborhood's designation as a potential PDA, said she feels as if she lacks local control because she lives in an unincorporated area represented by a single county supervisor.

Regarding higher housing density, the League notes that the Plan Bay Area approach is in keeping with the Marin Countywide Plan, which protected 83 percent of the county's open space and agriculture by focusing development along the Highway 101 corridor.

The report states, "The importance of controlled density in Marin is that it preserves our open spaces and farmland by preventing sprawl."

As for the other myths it addresses:

•

Property values — "Studies conducted over the last two decades demonstrate that affordable housing has no negative impact on surrounding property values."

•

Traffic — "It cannot be stated too often that, by building affordable housing near public transit and near where people work, traffic congestion will be reduced, compared with new development not located near services, transit and employment."

•

Crime — "There are no studies or evidence that show an increase in crime or the presence of criminals when nonprofit-owned and managed housing developments are introduced into a neighborhood."

•

Schools — While they do not pay property tax, "affordable housing developments are subject to one-time impact fees, including school impact fees," and in most cases "are subject to special assessments and parcel taxes that are in place to fund schools, libraries, paramedics, parks, public safety, water supply, hazardous waste and other community services."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

To learn more

The League of Women Voters' report "Dispelling the Myths Surrounding Affordable Housing," is available on the League's website at http://bit.ly/1f8cc6D.

halfwaytoconcord.com http://www.halfwaytoconcord.com/legal-suit-challenges-plan-bay-area-for-ceqa-violations/

Legal Suit challenges Plan Bay Area for CEQA violations

BGR

A lawsuit was filed today by the Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF) and Bay Area Citizens that challenges "Plan Bay Area" for violating CEQA. The suit contents that the MTC and ABAG scheme for high-density development is based on cherry-picked facts and an illegal refusal to evaluate a less restrictive alternative. The bottom line: Stack and pack development mandates aren't needed in order to meet the Bay Area's regional air quality targets!

Plan Bay Area — a regional transportation plan that would squeeze future residential and commercial development into crowded, high-density zones — must be struck down because it was developed in violation of a key state statute, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

So argues a lawsuit filed today by Bay Area Citizens (BAC), a coalition of concerned residents from throughout the region who have actively monitored the plan's development, offering critiques and proposing alternatives. The coalition is represented, free of charge, by attorneys with Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF), a watchdog organization that litigates for limited government, individual rights, and a balanced approach to environmental regulations.

Statements: Why the Bay Area Citizens organization, and Pacific Legal Foundation, are suing

"Plan Bay Area would foist a one-size-fits-all vision of 'transit oriented development' on the region," said PLF Principal Attorney Damien Schiff. "In this planner's dream environment, everyone would complacently agree to a regimented lifestyle, living in multi-family housing, and walking, bike-riding, or taking public transit to work. The drafting agencies have come up with an ambitious strategy to micro-manage people's lifestyle choices. All that's missing is the legally required justification for doing so. Instead, they've studiously ignored data that contradict their agenda. They've cherry picked facts to create a false need for their draconian development prescriptions."

"Members of Bay Area Citizens have been trying for years to open up the process for developing the regional transportation plan," said BAC spokesperson Peter Singleton. "Our group of average citizens passed the hat among ourselves to commission independent research. We also wrote reports of our own, produced data-based studies evaluating the Plan and its analysis, and offered counter-proposals.

"But the drafting agencies have shown no interest in listening to the public. The insiders have simply been talking to each other. Not only is this a bad way to make policy, we contend it's illegal because officials ignored environmental facts that didn't fit their agenda, and refused to even consider a credible alternative strategy. Unfortunately, the agencies' don't-confuse-us-with-the-facts approach has made it necessary to take them to court."

Lawsuit: The Plan devised by ABAG and MTC flouts CEQA

Federal and state law require the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to produce a combined regional transportation plan and sustainable communities strategy for the Bay Area. Among other things, the strategy must meet the Bay Area's

greenhouse gas reduction targets (a seven percent per capita reduction by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035), as well as state-assigned housing needs.

However, the lawsuit filed today says that ABAG and MTC violated CEQA by failing to justify Plan Bay Area's high-density development scheme, and refusing to consider the feasibility of a less restrictive alternative.

Plan Bay Area: a "sardine strategy" for people, housing, and jobs

Plan Bay Area aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets through "stack and pack" development, requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 "priority development areas," small urban and suburban areas designated by Bay Area local governments. Collectively, these zones constitute just five percent of the region's surface area. The environmental impacts would be significant, with critics predicting increased traffic congestion and concentrated pockets of air pollution. The plan's own environmental impact report concedes at least 39 negative effects on the environment, including pollution caused by construction work, and the disruption of established communities and living patterns.

ABAG and MTC have illegally ignored facts showing that
Plan Bay Area's draconian development restrictions aren't necessary

When a proposed government action carries major development implications, CEQA requires that the public be made fully aware of environmental consequences — the consequences both of proceeding and of not going ahead. This didn't happen with Plan Bay Area, as Schiff notes: "The agencies closed their eyes to facts that were inconvenient for their goal to squeeze people into enclaves where elbow room and breathing room are at premium."

The Plan contends that forcing people to live in dense urban concentration will cut greenhouse emissions by reducing automobile trips. "But the Plan's CEQA analysis ignores the air quality improvements that will result from existing clean-air initiatives at the state level," Schiff said. "In fact, the region's greenhouse gas targets are projected to be met naturally, largely because of mandated fuel efficiencies that are on track to be imposed. Plan Bay Area's sardine strategy for development — its scheme to squeeze and stack people into high-density dwellings and business complexes — simply isn't needed to reach government air quality goals."

ABAG and MTC illegally ignored credible alternative strategies

Even if state regulations weren't doing the job on their own, Bay Area Citizens presented a credible alternative strategy for improving air quality. But ABAG and MTC refused to consider it — again violating their CEQA duty.

"CEQA is explicit in requiring that legitimate alternatives to a proposed government project be evaluated," said Schiff. "ABAG and MTC violated this legal duty to be open-minded rather than biased and agenda-driven."

Peter Singleton said: "Bay Area Citizens presented a feasible plan for greenhouse gas reduction that focuses, in part, on expanded bus service and reducing transit fares. This alternative would achieve air quality targets and serve the needs of lower income transit-reliant residents without curtailing people's freedom to live in detached homes in suburban and rural areas with lawns and gardens. Yet ABAG and MTC wouldn't consider this alternative."

The agencies contend the alternative was offered too late in the process — during the period for public comment. However, "Nothing in state law sets this arbitrary time limit on reviewing proposals," Schiff pointed out.

Filed in Alameda County Superior Court, the case is Bay Area Citizens v. ABAG and MTC. The petition for writ of mandate, a video and a podcast, may be viewed at: www.pacificlegal.org.

About Pacific Legal Foundation
Donor-supported PLF (www.pacificlegal.org) is a watchdog organization that litigates for limited government, property rights, and a balanced approach to environmental regulations, in courts nationwide. PLF is a nonprofit public interest organization that never charges clients for attorneys fees.

This year marks PLF's 40th anniversary. PLF recently won its seventh direct-representation victory at the U.S. Supreme Court for liberty and limited government, in the precedent setting property rights case of Koontz v. St. Johns River Water Management District.

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- Danville Town Hall, Jan 15 on One Bay Area plan that...

Napa Valley Register.com

One Bay Area threatens Napa's way of life

10 HOURS AGO • MARJORIE PRESTON

I think many people don't realize what the One Bay Area program's plan would do to Napa and the way we live.

Local actions that will affect land use, business and individual costs to residents in Napa County are being systematically dictated to the citizens and elected officials of the county and cities by the nonelected officials of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

Reducing carbon emissions sounds academic. Businesses buying carbon credits sounds like something that would affect someone else, so why care?

Well you should care, because the way they would do these things would affect your everyday life. Their sustainable-community strategy would promote mixed-use commercial and residential development that is walkable and bikable and close to mass transit. The translation of that is no more single-family homes with yards and having cars to get around. We would be packed into little boxlike apartments and have to get around on bicycles. (As a person who, due to some health problems, had to resort to using the bus, I can tell you it is a terrible way to get around.) Buying things and getting them home, going to appointments, going anywhere at night is a nightmare. By the way, can you imagine bringing groceries home on a bike? We have a picture of a French peasant on a bike with a loaf of bread. That's about all one can carry on a bike. In fact the entire thing seems to be a plan to make us live like our European ancestors did in the 1930s. They fled Europe to be free of those conditions. Do we want to go back to that?

And they want to dump all of this on us from a nonelected agency (the MTC), which was set up for metropolitan areas like San Francisco. (Editor's note: The MTC is made up of local elected officials that are appointed to the regional commission.)

Furthermore, it is to fix a situation that isn't broken. The increase in CO2 they claim seems very questionable.

Besides, we could do all this terrible destruction of our way of life — comfortable homes with yards, farms to grow food and the grapes that are the lifeblood of our valley and cars and trucks to get things and go to work and live our lives — we could do all that and it would not affect countries like China and India, where the winds would blow the pollution to us.

This climate action plan should be dropped by the Board of Supervisors as one of the worst ideas Sacramento has come up with. Some counties like Contra Costa have voted themselves out of One Bay Area. We should urge our supervisors to vote Napa out of One Bay Area to save our homes and good way of life.

Letters To The Editor
Letters

TODAY'S LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters to the editor, July 23

Marin knows value of planning

I was embarrassed that your editorial on Plan Bay Area ("A solid plan - now follow it," July 20) found it necessary to call out the antiplanning, anti-affordable-housing ideology of a busload of residents from Marin County who attended the plan hearings.

Most people here understand the importance of living near transit to reduce driving and help curb climate change. They also trust their duly elected local officials to balance the interests of the whole community when making planning decisions - a local power in no way diminished by Plan Bay Area. I'm particularly proud that San Rafael has already done its fair share by establishing Priority Development Areas around its two new train stations.

I remain hopeful that reasonable, responsible and civil discourse will prevail in Marin. After all, even the plan opponents saw the practical wisdom of taking a bus to the proceedings.

William Carney, San Rafael

Tyranny of the tenant groups

Joel Engardio ("Addicted to rent control?" Open Forum, July 22) makes valid points, especially noting that rent-controlled tenants are in the same demographics as other San Francisco

dwellers, so why should real estate wealth be shifted, in many cases upward, to people who don't need it? Only because it suits our demagogic politicians who cater to tenant activists and rent-control entrepreneurs. Tenants are the majority, and rent control illustrates how majorities can run riot over minorities, ultimately to the detriment of all.

José Selva, San Francisco

Preventable tragedies

Regarding the "tragic accident" of the fire truck killing the 16-year-old Flight 214 crash victim at San Francisco International Airport: Is it an accident when equipment is not kept up to date, even knowing that the improvements must occur eventually? I predict the liability for the young girl will be higher than the cost of the equipment that was repeatedly recommended and not installed. Other equipment not working was the electronic glide path monitor. I realize there is an older visual system, but when did these pilots train with it? If the old system was so great, why is it superseded?

Christian Gronbeck, San Rafael

Focus on heroes and victims

Was "Rig that hit girl had no sensor" (front page, July 22) the third or fourth or fifth headline about a rescue truck hitting a girl?

We mourn for Ye Meng Yuan and for all who died and were severely injured in the crash. But could we please hear a little more about those rescued? How are they doing? How are the rescuers doing? How are they sleeping at night (if at all)? It's time for the press to stop focusing on every possible thing that went wrong. Please report a little more on everything that went right. Imagine if this crash happened in an area less able to respond.

Dawn Isaacs, San Francisco

Why people are so angry

A July 23 letter writer misses the point when he asks, "Do you think for one minute if George Zimmerman were black that we'd be having these demonstrations?" Of course not, because if Zimmerman were black, he wouldn't have been exonerated. He'd probably be sitting on death

row, as is statistically demonstrated by the disproportionate number of blacks given the death penalty compared with whites convicted of the same crime.

The letter writer may be unaware of the case of Marissa Alexander, an African American woman who was sentenced to 20 years in Florida for firing one shot into the wall during an argument with her abusive husband. She missed him entirely. She used the same defense as Zimmerman, who was exonerated for killing an unarmed teenager.

It's these inequities that are what people of all colors should be demonstrating about.

Angela Zack, Napa

Media coverage

It would help ease the tensions between races if TV anchors and radio hosts would describe the Zimmerman-Martin encounter properly.

It really went down this way: "In the rain and darkness armed neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman followed the hooded teen, Trayvon Martin, who challenged the guard with profane words and quick blows, toppling both to the ground until a shot rang out, leaving the unarmed youth with quick fists dead at the scene." That is how it would have been described by newspapers in former times.

Here, stripped of the racial overtones and prejudice, it is reported chronologically. Martin didn't know Zimmerman came armed, yet challenged his authority. How different the outcome if Martin was courteous, deferential or polite when encountering Zimmerman, like: "How can I help you?" Or "Can you help me find my way around these parts?" You can defuse many situations and rise in society with uncommon courtesy.

Pit O'Maley, Alameda

SEND US A LETTER TO THE EDITOR
SUBMISSIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS

PREVIOUS LETTERS

Letters regarding Trayvon Martin, July 22

Eric Young
Reporter- *San Francisco Business Times*
Email | Twitter | Google+ | LinkedIn

A sweeping land use plan that promotes high-density housing near public transit must be blocked because it violates California's environmental review law, a legal group said in a lawsuit Tuesday.

Plan Bay Area, which spells out how much new housing each of the Bay Area's cities must accommodate in coming years, violates the California Environmental Quality Act by failing to "justify the plan's high-density development scheme, and refusing to consider the feasibility of a less restrictive alternative," according to a press release from the Pacific Legal Foundation, a libertarian organization in Sacramento that filed the lawsuit.

Plan Bay Area was approved last month by the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Overall it calls for adding almost 188,000 housing units by 2022. ABAG and MTC drew up the plan in response to a state law that requires every region in California to devise building and transportation plans to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

"Plan Bay Area would foist a one-size-fits-all vision of 'transit oriented development' on the region," said Damien Schiff, a lawyer for Pacific Legal Foundation. "The drafting agencies have come up with an ambitious strategy to micro-manage people's lifestyle choices... They've cherry picked facts to create a false need for their draconian development prescriptions."

Supporters say Plan Bay Area provides enough housing to accommodate the growing region and helps promote economic vitality.

"Plan Bay Area is an historic and important step forward for our region," Mark Luce, a Napa County Supervisor who is president of the ABAG executive board, said at the time of the plan's approval. "It's the product of more than three years of collaboration between cities and counties to do our part to create a more sustainable Bay Area for current and future generations."

An MTC spokesman said the group had no comment on the lawsuit. An ABAG representative was not immediately available to address the lawsuit, which was filed in Alameda County Superior Court in Oakland.

The lawsuit can be downloaded here.

"Plan Bay Area aims to cut greenhouse gas production through 'stack and pack' development, requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs

in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 'priority development areas,' small urban and suburban areas designated by Bay Area local governments," the plaintiff's press release reads. "Collectively, these zones constitute just 5 percent of the region's surface area. The environmental impacts would be significant, with critics predicting increased traffic congestion and concentrated pockets of air pollution."

Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.

Next Article: S.F. Wholesale Produce Market secures $20 million for expansion

We recommend

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- Boeing wins life-support order for 747-8 from Korean Air
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What's this?

Litter is Worse Than Low Income Housing, Says One Lafayette Resident

Flyers advertising a town hall meeting on Plan Bay Area is the subject of one Lafayette man's annoyance.

Posted by Jim Caroompas (Editor), September 11, 2013 at 04:50 PM

A town hall meeting regarding Plan Bay Area, scheduled for Sept. 17 at the Veteran's Memorial Building in Lafayette, has found at least one critic who wants organizers to stop littering his neighborhood with flyers announcing the meeting.

Apparently, flyers announcing the meeting have been showing up at homes in Lamorinda in various ways, including in at least one Lafayette neighborhood taped to mailboxes.

A letter from M. Erwin of Lafayette to the organizers of the meeting pointed out that it was illegal to tape flyers or any other non-postal service material to mailboxes.

But what really got under his skin was the fact that many of the flyers flew off the mailboxes and onto the street.

"I've been picking them up off my street," he wrote. "If you want to canvass the neighborhood there are better ways to do it. I am less concerned about more affordable /high density housing being built than I am about your littering my neighborhood."

Plan Bay Area, approved by the Association of Bay Area Government and the Metropolitan Transit Agency, attempts to address the issue of future growth throughout the Bay Area by making sure each city identifies land zoned for housing to meet various income levels, including low and very low income housing.

Opponents of the plan say it takes away local control over local zoning and provides developers of so-called "stack and pack" housing with a green light to build low and very low income housing against the wishes of a particular community.

Proponents say that it is merely a planning tool to comply with state law, which requires every community in the state to plan for housing at all income levels. Local control remains in place, they say.

"We have been walking the streets of Lafayette placing flyers on people's front doors," wrote Anouschka Wardy, one of the town hall organizers, in an email. "We have arranged for some very knowledgeable speakers to inform the people of Lafayette on a subject still unknown or barely known to many."

"I do not support NIMBY efforts to keep anyone who isn't of a certain income level out of Lafayette," Erwin wrote. "We need more affordable housing. We're in "jeopardy" of what? Having people live in our communities that don't make $200,000 or more a year? Really?"

He argued that low income or high density housing near BART "isn't going to ruin our excellent quality of life. The "officials" you disdain have been tasked with finding a way to plan for the future and that is what we elected them to do. Would you rather they stuck their heads in the sand and leave it to every other community in the region to deal with it? Because that is not a solution."

He added that he would probably not be able to make the meeting on Sept. 17.

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Livermore Independent

Plan Bay Area

Joanne Hottendorf, Livermore | Posted: Friday, July 19, 2013 12:00 am

I agree with Mayor John Marchand, this issue of Plan Bay Area is not understood by the average citizen of Livermore. More information needs to be disclosed by ABAG to the people of our town. If the truth be told this plan has long range goals of placing as many people next to public transportation as possible in the years to come. Their argument is that pollution control and traffic reduction are necessary which they are, but the answer is not to convince people to stack themselves in roadside apartments next to BART just like Dublin. The area around the Dublin-Pleasanton station is quite the eyesore and it's headed to Livermore if we allow ABAG to plan our future. We have been paying tax money for BART to come to Livermore for a long time and we need it here, but ABAG doesn't have the interests of Livermore at the heart of their plan.

This is all part of the larger solution planned by The United Nations called Agenda 21. I urge all citizens to google, "Agenda 21 Maps." The computer screen will display the larger plan for all of the US by the end of the 21st century. It includes the slow reduction in privately owned land by convincing people over the century that we are polluting the country with private usage of our land and the fact that nature needs to reclaim this nation(and others if you probe further). The first step has already been completed, by setting up these agencies filled with appointed, not elected people all over the country. They go by the acronyms, ABAG, PBA, ICLE and others.

Please educate yourselves before our government completes these plans without our consent. We should be able to vote on these issues and not have all of it planned by unelected officials.

Thank you Mr. Marchand for looking out for the people of Livermore. Lets keep BART on 580 and keep our own plans for the use of our city.

Select FILE --> PRINT to print this topic.

Pleasanton Weekly

Local leaders say No to regional plan

Tim Hunt, posted by Tim Hunt, a resident of the Castlewood neighborhood, 1 hour ago

The Bay Area's regional planning and transportation agencies, despite howls of protests by hundreds if not thousands of residents concerned about local control, passed the new growth plan for the nine counties that is dubbed Plan Bay Area.

It grows out of legislative action that required the regional agencies to develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gases (a consequence of AB 32 signed by one of California's worst governors, Arnold Schwarzenegger who now is back where he belongs making movies) that mandates a response to climate change regardless of the cost.

Building high density housing around transit lines, particularly BART stations, has been transportation policy for years, but residents are worried that higher density housing may be coming to their community or neighborhood. The law driving this is different than law that resulted in Pleasanton losing a law suit over its housing cap and its failure to zone for middle and lower income housing despite the abundance of jobs in the city.

Opponents fear that whatever local control exists will be lost by the big stick of cutting off transportation funds if a community is not in compliance. There certainly is a big government, big brother aspect to it, although there also is a simply logic to surrounding the huge investment in transit lines with housing nearby to encourage its use.

What's notable is when the final votes were cast Pleasanton Mayor Jerry Thorne and Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty were among the five No votes. To be fair, Senator Mark DeSaulnier, who represents the Livermore and San Ramon valleys, authored the legislation that required the plan.

Pleasanton turned loose a gas man on the infestation of ground squirrels on the Bernal property along the Marilyn Kane trail this month. The cute pests breed like rabbits and their burrows create substantial hazards for any person or animal walking or running off the paved path.

Initially, the city controlled the squirrels with poisoned bait, but has shifted to carbon monoxide, thus the four-wheeler that was towing around a gas tank with multiple hoses. The varmints simply go to sleep when burrows fill with the odorless gas. It is a humane solution to controlling pests.

Comments

halfwaytoconcord.com http://www.halfwaytoconcord.com/low-income-housing-okd-for-all-of-orinda-not-just-downtown/

Low-income housing OK'd for all of Orinda, not just downtown

Richard Colman

A law concerning the mandatory movement of low-income Californians into wealthier areas is cited in a report recently released in Orinda. On June 18, 2013, top Orinda officials released the report which describes mandated plans to create 118 low-income units in all parts of Orinda, not just in the downtown. As many as 538 new units could be created.

According to the report, California law "requires every county and city in the state" to have a plan to house low-income individuals.

The report states that so-called "second units" (like guest homes) could be utilized for low-income housing in Orinda.

The Orinda report was released as a "City Council Staff Report." Signing the report were Janet Keeter, Orinda's city manager, and Emmanuel Ursu, the city's director of planning.

The report notes that between 2007 and 2014, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), a regional government body, has assigned Orinda the task of creating 118 units for low-income people. Of these 118 units, 35 are for "extremely low" income individuals, another 35 are for "very low" income people, and 48 units for "low" income persons.

The report states that Orinda "could accommodate . . . the construction of 530 additional single family dwelling units . . . "

The report says that newly built second units on existing residential Orinda property "would be affordable to very low, low, and moderate income households." The report adds that [t]here are numerous homes in the City that have existing floor space with the potential for conversion to a legal second unit."

The report recommends that "the City explore a program to permit second units on lots where they are not currently allowed today . . . "

The report lists the Orinda city manager's office and the city's planning department as the "Responsible Parties" for the following statement: "The City recognizes second units as an essential part of Orinda's affordable housing supply . . . "

According to the report, "Second units are an important part of the City's affordable housing supply and are often rented at rates that are affordable to low and very low income households." The report adds: "To make such a program [low-income housing] viable for the homeowner, there must be an incentive to maintaining below market rents and limiting occupancy to qualifying households."

The report does not cover how putting more low-income people in Orinda might affect property values or schools in the city.

Related Posts:

- State mandated Housing Element forces Orinda to build…
- City Council votes for Low-Income Housing plan for downtown…
- Angry residents confront Orinda Mayor and MTC chairperson,…
- Large crowd protests Orinda Stack and Pack Housing Plan
- Low-Income housing in Orinda: government run amok

Marin Readers' Forum for Aug. 31

Posted: marinij.com

PUBLIC SAFETY

Unfair state fire fee

Mary Alber's comments on the Cal Fire fee (Readers' Forum, Aug. 28) are right on.

Property owners within the cities of San Francisco, San Rafael, Mill Valley, Novato and other incorporated areas are not saddled with this "fee," yet receive the benefits and protection from Cal Fire throughout California.

We, in unincorporated areas, already pay our fire protection service, and now we are carrying the expense of Cal Fire.

Forest and grass throughout California should be protected and Cal Fire is the appropriate party to do this job. However, the expense should be shared by all Californians, not just the few.

The Legislature needs to rethink this inequity, and not just play politics.

Ronald C. Schafer, Mill Valley

Take action, Marin City

Regarding Alan Barnett's Aug. 22 Marin Voice column calling for a civilian police review board, solving Marin City's inexcusable crime rate will only happen when the residents of Marin City finally do what they've failed to do for 40 years — fix the problem by rooting out individual criminals.

Then, turn them in — or throw them out.

The hard, cold fact — having nothing to do with "racism" — is that young African American males there commit crimes far out of proportion to their numbers, leading to logically "disproportionate" arrests, a fact Barnett seems willfully blind to.

A review board will prevent not a single crime, and only shackle the sheriffs already protecting law-abiding Marin City citizens.

Stop scapegoating the sheriff, the county and everyone else.

Years of Marin City candlelight vigils, sermons, counseling, county programs, and diversity celebrations have accomplished nothing, and other Marinites still avoid Marin City.

Reasonable and well-meaning people are sick of the excuses.

Fix the problem, Marin City.

Rex Allen, Novato

environment

Levine's strong leadership

Regarding Ken Jones' Aug. 19 letter titled "Will Levine lead?" on fracking:

The answer is "yes."

Assemblyman Marc Levine has already shown strong leadership by authoring Assembly Bill 288 to prohibit hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas unless it can be proven that it presents no threat to public health and safety. This bill exposes the hypocrisy of the oil industry, which has insisted publicly that fracking is perfectly safe.

Yet the industry opposes Mr. Levine's bill, saying it "would effectively impose a moratorium on this technique and greatly reduce oil and gas production."

The bill also would repeal a provision of California law that declares that it is state policy to increase extraction of fossil fuels. Because of this provision, the oil industry argues that the state has a duty to facilitate extraction of fossil fuels. Deleting this language would ensure that state regulators do not promote drilling for oil and gas.

And contrary to Mr. Jones' assertion, it was the oil companies, not Assembly John Speaker Perez, who killed Assemblyman Levine's AB 288.

I believe that Assemblyman Levine supports Sen. Fran Pavley's SB 4 for the same reasons that Environmental Working Group does — fracking has been going on for decades in California with no state regulation.

This bill would ensure that we will know where and when a well is fracked, where the drillers get their water and how much they use, what chemicals are used and other crucial data needed to make fracking transparent and trackable.

It also calls for the study that can be used to help decision makers decide on whether a moratorium on fracking is needed.

This bill would not preclude a moratorium, and Assemblyman Levine has supported one in the past.

In his first few months in office, Marc Levine has proven himself to be a leader on environmental issues, and it is clear that he is willing to take on one of the most powerful industries in California and the world.

Bill Allayaud, California Director of Government Affairs, Environmental Working Group, sacramento

MIDDLE EAST

What the U.S. might start

This is a thought about what could happen in Syria from the look of things.

The U.S. attacks Syria with cruise missiles because we need to enforce our position that no gas or chemical weapons can be used in warfare. Iran, and probably Syria, attack Israel because they said they would. Israel bombs Iran's nuclear facilities and takes them out.

Is all this a good idea?

Mayme Hubert, San Rafael

HOUSING

'Deaf to constituencies'

Strawberry residents are becoming increasingly frustrated with the county Board of Supervisors, especially our duly elected representative Kate Sears.

Its failure to realize that Strawberry is our community, that we do not want to be a Priority Development Area, and that we are opposed to the rezoning of the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in the Housing Element, scheduled for a vote at the upcoming board meeting on Sept. 10, is ill-considered.

We submitted one petition signed by 623 people and another is circulating; thus far, it has almost 400 signatures.

Furthermore, almost 400 people attended a meeting on Aug. 19 which, strangely, was not covered by the IJ.

Deaf to their constituents, deaf to the drumbeats, the supervisors will have to face to ire of the natives, who grow ever more dissatisfied, come election time.

Doreen Gluckin, M.D., Mill Valley

Regional domination

Now that we are transitioning from One Bay Area to Plan Bay Area, it may be time to look back at who started it all — and what that its author has in store for us next.

Darrell Steinberg, president pro tem of the state Senate, sponsored SB 375 five years ago. It revised land use policies to emphasize high-density, infill and transit-oriented development — and inferentially discouraged local control and single family housing in favor of large regional agencies.

One Bay Area was the first stage. Plan Bay Area is the second stage.

This year, Sen. Steinberg has introduced SB 1. This measure essentially resurrects the redevelopment agencies that Gov. Jerry Brown abolished to give schools more money.

These agencies were created to deal with urban blight. The new versions will be called "Sustainable Community Investment Authorities" and focus, not surprisingly, on high-density, transit-oriented housing, low-income housing and "clean manufacturing," such as solar panels.

All of the above will be done in the name of a worthy goal: combating climate change.

These new agencies will be able to issue bonds, levy taxes and seize land under eminent domain.

The old requirement to define blight in areas earmarked for redevelopment will be eliminated, thus vastly expanding their power and reach.

We will probably have our own Marin Sustainable Community Investment Authorities, which will in turn necessarily be in alignment with the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and larger, state-ordered mandates.

Sen. Steinberg has been remarkably effective in pushing his vision, despite objections and concerns from Marin and many other communities.

Given his policy dominance in this area, if SB 1 succeeds, we are, I think, going to have a lot more to worry about.

Kingston Cole, San Rafael

Dispelling housing myths

Kudos to the League of Women Voters of Marin County for helping to dispel some of the myths around housing.

The San Rafael Chamber Board of Directors recently reaffirmed its support for the need for workforce housing in San Rafael and Marin.

The chamber has a strong history of supporting a diverse housing stock in San Rafael and Marin, including providing a variety of housing options for our county's workforce.

The chamber supports the following:

• The chamber endorses the city of San Rafael's citizen advisory committee processes used to develop visions for area plans.

• The chamber supports the retention of the downtown and Civic Center Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit stations as Priority Development Area designations identified by the above processes.

• The chamber supports the creation of mixed-use commercial space and workforce housing at Marinwood Plaza.

It makes sense for our workforce to have options to live close to where they work. This improved balance of housing will reduce the pressure on infrastructure and help continue to improve our area's diverse economic vitality. The San Rafael Chamber of Commerce believes that a healthy and diverse business community is invaluable to the community as a whole.

Rick Wells, President and CEO, San Rafael Chamber of Commerce

Densities should fit Marin

An Aug. 26 article on the League of Women Voters of Marin County's housing report mentioned that I serve on the Association of Bay Area Governments executive board along with Katie Rice our Marin County supervisor.

Let me set the record straight. The quote in the Marin IJ was strictly from Supervisor Rice.

I have not read and cannot conclude the purpose or accuracy of the league's report entitled, "Dispelling the Myths Surrounding Affordable Housing."

Bottom line, though, is that future affordable housing needs to be compatible with our neighborhoods and small town character. Marin County should not have a requirement for 30 units per acre.

Our density should be no more than 20 units per acre, which is the same as Sonoma and Napa counties.

I have and will continue to work with our state legislators to get this density requirement changed to maintain our county charm and character.

Thanks for the opportunity to set the record straight.

Pat Eklund, mayor, Novato

Challenges for schools

If the Civic Center Station Priority Development Area in San Rafael is developed as envisioned, more than 600 units will be built near the Civic Center in just the first phase.

Most of these units would be in high-density housing projects adjacent to the freeway. A significant portion of the units would be exempt from property taxes.

This development would probably add more than 1,000 new students to the San Rafael School District schools, and most of these students would come in at about the same time.

The Downtown San Rafael PDA would add a similar amount or even more.

How would the district handle these new students? Where would it build the new schools that would be required? How would it pay for the land acquisition, construction, outfitting and operation of these schools?

Marin Readers' Forum for July 31

Posted: marinij.com

GROWTH

More poor planning

Marin Supervisor Steve Kinsey (Marin Voice, "A smarter way to grow," July 25) argues that SB 375 is a departure from past policies on growth in California. This is simply not true.

The pattern of reducing local control of planning has had a long history, but began to accelerate in the 1960s. Efforts to build housing along transit corridors dates back before that as Fair and Williams demonstrate in their 1959 text, "Economics of Transportation."

In fact, historian Kevin Starr shows in his book, "Inventing the Dream" how Collis P. Huntington (one of the Big Four rail robber barons of California history) used his influence to build train cars and rail service in the Los Angeles area. These rail lines were inspired by the idea that they would promote real estate speculation and the building of suburbs which they did.

They were the model for later sprawl.

We can see the recent results of the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Bay Area Council and their relations with Caltrans in our highway and building correspondence. If you note the completion of the Richmond Parkway connector to 880 and 580 allowed for a new exit for the 10s of thousands of sprawled housing developments into the valley along the Richmond-Antioch and Walnut Creek area along 680, that have been built in the past 10 to 15 years. We feel this "planning" each evening during the commute where thousands (approximately 20,000 to 30,000 extra cars) of commuters to the valley bypass paying the Bay Bridge fare by passing through Marin on Highway 101.

Since Marin only has 101 as an emergency exit in a disaster, this is not a very prudent situation.

Tolls on the Golden Gate should either be reversed or made $3 both directions to reduce this massive traffic jam that endangers our citizens.

I think we have to ask why our regional planning has produced so few successful answers to our problems. Why, if the bridge is overwhelmed now, was a completely new bridge added to double the capacity? Why is no second tube for BART in the works? Why are there no plans to double the ferries? In short, why is only building more market-rate housing the only solution, since there are no funding mechanisms for subsidizing low-income housing for people earning less than $40,000 a year?

This situation is only one example of poor planning and Bay Plan Area is filled with others.

Niccolo Caldararo, Fairfax

Money-driven planning

High-density housing is just more evidence that our politicians — national, state and local — govern to the lowest common denominator.

Somebody dangles money in front of these politicians and they act like a bunch of trained seals.

Is there any relationship between highway funds and high-density housing? What about the additional police and fire, where is that money going to come from? What about the schools, are they ready for, or can they handle, an increased student population?

There is more than one layer to this onion, and it needs to be peeled to the core. Like I've said before, these politicians will be long gone when the problems start.

Phil Sherriff, Novato

GAY MARRIAGE

Counting votes

So the Marin Republicans have finally seen the writing on the wall, after reading hundreds of polls and now think they can fool the rest of us to believe that they support gay marriage.

Phooey!

Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, laid his political life on the line nine years ago because he believed in his heart that we (gays) deserved the same respect and opportunities that he and his wife enjoyed.

The civil right for us to love, marry and have families is now part of the platform of the Democratic Party.

But to quote poor misguided Kevin Krick, the Marin Republican chairman, "Over the last couple months, we've been analyzing the data and looking at it from a purely quantitative standpoint. We tried to base our decisions on facts, not feelings, like any company would do. We asked ourselves, 'What is it we can do to improve our product.'"

Marin Republicans must think we voters are morons if they think they will ever convince us that they truly support gay marriage.

Apparently, they will do anything and say anything "to improve our product."

Bill Jones, San Rafael

TRANSPORTATION

Stepping backward

Heart-felt congratulations to the Golden Gate Bridge and Highway District for coming up with a fee for ferry users to park at the Larkspur Ferry Terminal.

Piling the parking fee onto the charge for taking the ferry will surely encourage drivers to choose the ferry's mass transit option instead of driving into the city.

Welcome back to the 20th century.

John Cutler, Mill Valley

novato

More parking needed

Oma Village will be my new neighbor and I am supportive of the project.

I expressed my concern with Homeward Bound on two occasions, only for the lack of parking. Ten parking spaces for 14 units which will house families is a gross lack of vision.

I guess these residents will not be allowed to have friends, family or relatives visit.

Oma Village is not a homeless shelter.

Residents will be allowed to live and prosper. Children will grow up and want cars. Children have friends that drive cars.

It is unbelievable to me that the Novato City Council was so non-chalant about this issue. Is it because Hamilton is not a desirable voting block?

What is going to happen is that Bolling Drive will become a parking lot, and that affects me as a neighbor of Oma Village. No one listened.

Therese Mahoney, Novato

POLITICS

Limited options

All of the children of our presidents go to private schools because of the security needed. The possibility of being kidnapped is great.

I remember the Bush girls saying how they hated to have Secret Service on dates with them.

The people that hate the president will think up anything to criticize him. What a shame.

Helen Vidaurri, Greenbrae

Health

'A freeing document'

Thank you, Dr. Bill Elliott (Plus Health & Fitness, July 29) for your very clear and helpful advice about the need to make a "lifecare plan" in the same way we plan for our economic future.

As a hospital chaplain, I have seen how the failure to have such a document causes needless pain and misunderstanding when no agent has been named to make those difficult decisions in our name.

Do yourself and those you love an enormous favor by making out an Advanced Healthcare Directive, which can be downloaded free online http://ag.ca.gov/consumers/pdf/ProbateCodeAdvancedHealthCareDirectiveForm-fillable.pdf and discussed, as Dr. Elliott suggests, with your own doctor, lawyer or clergyperson.

It is a wonderful, freeing document which will give you and those around you legitimate peace of mind — because you will have made your own choices clear, in advance.

Elisabeth Payne Rosen, San Rafael

Marin Readers' Forum for Sept. 3

Posted: marinij.com

Too much government

Vivien Bronshvag (Readers' Forum, Aug. 30) is talking about government accountability where it relates to the Association of Bay Area Governments.

The problem is that government has layered itself to the point there is no accountability.

It has fashioned itself like the Hydra, you can cut off one head and another grows back and takes its place.

There are some of us out here who still believe the government is there to serve the people. Whereas the government's mindset is that it knows best and we are here to serve and obey what ever it decides.

ABAG is the result of too much government, and too many laws. What's wrong with Marin County managing its own affairs?

If Marin County were to quit ABAG, our own officials would have no cover. And as we all know, cover is the first rule of politics.

Why don't we have a chance to vote on whether we want to belong to ABAG?

Phil Sherriff, Novato

Corte Madera 'squeeze'

Unfortunately, the Aug. 20 appeal hearing by the Corte Madera Town Council on the proposed house at 150 Edison Ave. on Christmas Tree Hill ended in defeat for the appellants.

Neighbors' entreaties on their behalf fell on deaf ears. It seemed council members had closed ranks to stand firmly behind their recused colleague, Bob Ravasio, councilman, Realtor and owner/developer of the lot in question.

Surely, it is the council's duty as an elected body to serve the citizens of the town above all and, in this case, reach a compromise not only acceptable to the proponents of the design but also to those most adversely affected by it — the next door neighbors.

Councilman Ravasio has chosen to squeeze a maximum-size house on to a woodland lot fronted by a three-car parking area at right angles to the neighbors' driveway. Hardly an enhancement of the neighborhood.

With extraordinary ease, he has been permitted to have two stately, heritage redwoods felled on the property. Beyond a few concessions in partial removal of some of the second story, the house's bulk remains.

Its footprint does not decrease and so there is little space for versatility in its placement on the lot.

In short, it remains largely as invasive of 146 Edison as before. Consider the drop in value of their house that the appellants must sustain.

Councilman Ravasio was the real estate agent who sold the appellants their home.

Justice would surely have been better served by ensuring a jointly acceptable compromise.

Sheila Davainis, Corte Madera

Marin Voice: A balanced solution for San Rafael housing plan

Posted: marinij.com

IT BECAME APPARENT during the Sept. 6 marathon session of San Rafael's City Council that there's a three-part compromise that could satisfy most reasonable perspectives on the Civic Center Station Area Plan:

• Adjust the zoning changes that area residents find most objectionable. This would satisfy neighborhood concerns about height and density, while disappointing those of us who think that such concerns can be addressed by good design and that inevitable growth should be accommodated near transit.

• Approve the remainder of the plan, including pedestrian, bike, transit, traffic and other improvements. All agree this would increase the livability of the area.

• Downsize the Priority Development Area to a "transit neighborhood" designation, with the actual number of units determined by the city's current general plan. This would satisfy proponents of a walkable community by aligning the PDA with existing zoning, without forfeiting millions of dollars of state funds for the public improvements that everyone wants.

It would disappoint those who want nothing to do with state or regional goals.

No one would be entirely happy with such a Solomon-like solution, but most could feel that their stated objectives had been advanced.

The council could bridge a boisterous split within our community. And we could model locally the increasingly endangered spirit of compromise upon which our democracy depends.

This common-sense solution was teed up by out-of-the-box thinking from Councilman Andrew McCullough, who suggested the PDA downsizing to match the general plan. Yet, with the exception of Councilwoman Barbara Heller, the rest of the council seems ready to toss out the PDA altogether, and with it the cash needed to create the kind of place they say they want.

The council's equivocation over the region's "intentions," or the amount of transportation funding available is mystifying in light of the evidence now before them.

Downsizing the PDA is in complete accord with the facts and findings that the mayor directed the city's planning director to compile to guide the council.

Chief among these is the confirmation from the Association of Bay Area Governments that local planning takes precedent over regional guidelines — a pledge frequently reiterated by ABAG.

The city report is also clear about the magnitude of money at risk.

If the PDA is abandoned, the Civic Center area would lose its portion of the $10 million to $15 million in transportation funds set aside for Marin PDAs over the next ten years.

Projecting similar funding levels over the three-decade life of the plan yields a pool of at least $30 million dollars available to PDAs.

This is money for traffic and parking improvements, bikeways, walking paths, street landscaping, open space, stream restoration, sea level rise adaptation and much more proposed in the Station Area Plan hammered out by local citizens over two years and 33 public meetings.

At its heart is extending the Northgate pedestrian and bike promenade through the train station and on to the Civic Center itself — a move that will instantly bring new vitality and cohesion to the area.

Livable neighborhoods are essential to the long-held and thoroughly vetted vision of the city's general plan. They are also key to our Climate Change Action Plan because walkable neighborhoods reduce driving, the largest contributor to San Rafael's carbon footprint.

The test now is whether this council will keep that vision alive by providing balanced, fiscally sound, fact-based leadership for the whole community.

William Carney is a landscape architect and president of Sustainable San Rafael.

Marin Voice: Silencing the voice of the people

Posted: marinij.com

IN THE DISCUSSION over the problems and promises of Plan Bay Area, one aspect of the debate was overlooked. The vote to approve Plan Bay Area was taken by a JPA — the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).

JPA is an acronym that can refer to a Joint Powers Agreement, Joint Powers Agency or Joint Powers Authority. A JPA is formed when two or more public authorities (governments, utilities, transport districts, etc.) agree to operate collectively.

The first JPA was formed in the 1920s when San Francisco and Alameda collaborated to combat tuberculosis.

Over the years, hundreds of JPAs have been formed, especially in California. The Marin Energy Authority and the Marin County Open Space District are examples.

The good news about a JPA is it encourages cooperation, can leverage funding, incur debt and sell bonds.

The bad news is JPAs are not approved by the vote of the people, but are formed when public officials negotiate a formal agreement among themselves.

JPAs operate with their own board of directors, selected from among the participating agencies, not by a public vote. The back-room power that is accumulating in groups like ABAG undermines local control.

With ABAG we get a group of city and county elected officials attending public-private meetings alongside agencies that have alliances with corporations, developers, non-governmental organizations and government agencies.

ABAG and its partners have effectively created a layer of regional government that controls information, manipulates public discussion, and uses a carrot/stick approach to gain compliance.

Let's look at how the ABAG-JPA worked in Marin on July 18, when Supervisors Steve Kinsey and Katie Rice, and Pat Eklund voted on Plan Bay Area. The Board of Supervisors appointed Kinsey as its representative to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, a separate entity. The supervisors appointed Rice as their representative to ABAG. And the Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers selected Novato Mayor Eklund to represent them.

Who represented you and me? For the majority of us, the answer is "no one!"

Typical of JPAs, this failure to have directly elected representatives make decisions undermines local control in four significant ways.

In the case of Plan Bay Area:

• Neither Kinsey, Rice nor Eklund represented a constituency, other than their own small board and the Council of Mayors.

• Not directly representing a constituency, they have no accountability for the outcomes of their decision.

• The plan and the vote were tightly controlled by unelected ABAG staff.

The vote on Plan Bay Area is behind us. However, the next challenge is emerging.

Senators Darryl Steinberg, D-Sacramento, and Mark DeSaulnier, D-Walnut Creek, have introduced SB1, the Sustainable Communities Investment Program, which creates a Sustainable Communities Investment Authority. The SCIA, a JPA, will be a mechanism to implement Plan Bay Area.

SB1 authorizes the establishment of Investment Areas and Investment Plans. Cities and counties that form SCIAs will operate with appointed, not elected members. Its boards will draft policy, issue bonds, borrow money, and use tax increment financing provisions.

All of this will be outside the public eye.

Among many concerns, one is that this new JPA's first audit occurs five years into operations, with no provision to make the findings public.

JPAs like ABAG and SCIA cloud — no, close the window of government transparency. The public is left uninformed, and awareness and commitment to the common good is eroded.

Another JPA will nudge the needle a little closer to "One Bay Area government, diminishing the pesky voice of the people who care about the quality of life in their community and want a vote in determining its future.

Susan Kirsch, a longtime resident of Mill Valley, is one of the founders of Citizen Marin, an organization that raised objections to Plan Bay Area's impact on Marin land-use planning and loss of local control.

Marin Voice: Time for Marin to get out of ABAG

Posted: marinij.com

ASSOCIATION of Bay Area Government chief Ezra Rapport's Marin Voice last Sunday states the Plan Bay Area is not "one size fits all."

On the contrary, Plan Bay Area's "top down" method of projecting growth and allocating housing mandates is the epitome of a one-size-fits-all approach.

ABAG projections for population for Marin for 2010 to 2040 are absurd and deeply flawed. ABAG is projecting population growth of 33,000 as of 2040.

This is radically different than the projections by the state in the 2013 Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit report.

How did Marin get assigned 33,000 in population growth?

ABAG's top-down planning arbitrarily assigned 1 percent of the overestimated Bay Area population growth to Marin.

The state report is designated as the single offical source of demographic data for state planning and budgeting.

The department of finance projects the total population for Marin from 2010 to 2020 will decline by 1,370 people, with a projection of a growth of 6,818 or 2.7 percent from 2010 to 2040. This is a projection based on the specific study of the demographics of Marin County.

ABAG says the state's numbers are incorrect. Really?

The ABAG population projection for Marin, used to decide Regional Housing Need quotas is 484 percent higher than the Department of Finance population projection for Marin.

How does ABAG explain this outrageous variance? The difference, ABAG says, per is projected jobs of 18,400, that of course don't exist and in no way reflect past job growth inMarin.

How did Marin get the projected 18,400 jobs?

The issue is this "top down" planning starts with a job forecast of 1.1 million jobs for 2010 to 2040 for the entire Bay Area. The actual percentage based on 18,390 is 1.6 percent, but in the ABAG report rounds it off to 2 percent. This "top down" planning has no local input of substance.

The proper way to project job growth would be for each jurisdiction to provide its estimated job growth for 2010 to 2040 based on its General Plans, which would provide meaningful context and support for projected growth, which could then be linked to a projected population growth.

The Plan Bay Area for Marin is then adopted by the California Department of Housing and Community Development. That department immortalizes this farfetched number into the amount of housing that needs to be built in Marin.

Since there is no statutory way to correct the state's housing quotas, land must be rezoned by the local jurisdictions to comply.

Checkmate.

The developers, builders and institutional investors win, all in the name of New Urbanism.

Cities can be sued by developers for not zoning per ABAG's goals, which usurps local control.

This is the definition of flawed "top-down, one-size-fits-all planning" and does not take into consideration critical issues such as local general plans, fiscal conditions, funding for services, water, sewer, schools or any other local issues.

If ABAG does not revisit these skewed projections and properly address Marin as an anomaly and outlier, I believe it is time for our county, and Novato, to exit ABAG and its flawed formulas and projections based on "top-down, one-size-fits-all planning", and take control of our own local and county needs.

Marin needs its own Council Of Governments.

Al Dugan of Novato is an activist involved in opposition to Plan Bay Area and regional pressure to build high-density affordable housing.

In Marin, affordable housing opposition stronger than ever despite Marin Community Foundation efforts

Posted: marinij.com

A prominent voice missing from the recent debate over Plan Bay Area was the Marin Community Foundation, which in 2007 announced that it was mounting a major effort to change Marin's "Not In My Back Yard" mindset.

In 2007, the foundation invited nonprofit advocates and developers of affordable housing to submit grant proposals for winning hearts and minds. And it proceeded to spend an estimated $400,000 on the initiative, over the next several years.

This year, however, the foundation was silent over months of heated debate around Plan Bay Area, a regional plan that seeks to promote the development of new, affordable housing along transportation corridors and near mass transit to reduce greenhouse gas production.

Given the furor that erupted around Plan Bay Area — much of it focused on the prospect for more higher density, affordable housing in Marin — was the foundation's effort a flop?

Thomas Peters, the Marin Community Foundation's president, said, "I'm very happy with the work that we did. It was intended to be a couple-year initiative and that's what we did. We never labeled it as a kind of anti-NIMBY campaign. We wanted to be sure that at least the facts were out there about affordable housing being a contributing factor to a healthy community, and not as some folks claim, a detriment."

Susan Kirsch, one of the founders of Citizen Marin, a coalition of neighborhood associations formed to oppose Plan Bay Area, said, "Marin Community Foundation is not the only community foundation that has taken this strong stance, to support building no matter what."

Much of the money spent went to the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California, an affordable housing advocacy group, and Greenbelt Alliance, an environmental advocacy group, to produce two reports.

Published in 2011, the first report, titled "Miles from Home," detailed the role that affordable housing can play in taking cars off the road and protecting against climate change. It noted that 60 percent of Marin's workforce commutes from outside county lines, where housing is cheaper.

The second report, published the same year, titled "Driving Home Economic Recovery," explained how additional workforce housing would create jobs and boost spending in Marin.

The Non-Profit Housing Association and Greenbelt Alliance also passed along $75,000 of foundation grant money to Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, a Novato-based affordable housing advocacy group formed in 2011.

Dianne Spaulding, executive director of the Non-Profit Housing Association, said, "I think part of why Marin has become a hot spot of concern for those opposed to affordable housing

is because the initiative did what it was supposed to do. I think we have moved the needle on affordable housing in Marin; but it is a needle that moves slowly."

In addition to working with Greenbelt Alliance on the reports, Spaulding said her association scrutinized the housing elements of all 11 of Marin's municipalities. State law requires counties and municipalities to create housing elements in their general plans that foster the creation of a specified amount of affordable housing by identifying appropriate building sites and removing red tape that might block construction. The association came up with 33 sites suitable for the creation of affordable housing in Marin, ranked according to feasibility.

Spaulding said her association also developed a leadership program for current Marin residents of affordable housing to teach the residents how to tell their stories and took local elected representatives on tours of local affordable housing projects.

And Spaulding said her association has taken the initial steps to form a Marin Affordable Housing Coalition that would consist of such organizations as the Marin Organizing Committee, Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, Sustainable Novato, Sustainable Marin, Marin Grassroots, Marin Workforce Housing Trust and the League of Women Voters.

Jeremy Madsen, executive director of Greenbelt Alliance, said, "The biggest role that we played was to make it clear that affordable housing is an environmental issue. The more that we are able to accommodate homes for people who are part of our workforce in the cities and towns of Marin the less pressure we're putting on the natural environment, the open spaces of our region. This effort was a good start in a long-term process."

Annan Paterson, a former Novato city councilwoman and one of the founders of Stand Up For Neighborly Novato, said Stand Up has won the endorsement of 1,200 local residents and trained more than 50 people who live in or need affordable housing in Novato to be spokesmen.

"Our ability to do that has really helped to inform the debate," Paterson said. She said some members of the organization receive a stipend, but most are volunteers.

Lynn Wasley, another of Stand Up for Neighborly Novato's co-founders, said despite the foundation's efforts, the intense opposition to affordable housing that she once associated mainly with Novato seems to have spread throughout Marin.

Wasley said the Marin Community Foundation's absence from the Plan Bay Area debate gives at least the appearance that the foundation may have retreated some on the affordable housing issue.

"It's hard not to assume that the attacks on the Marin Community Foundation for what and who they were supporting, including Stand Up for Neighborly Novato, didn't impact them," Wasley said.

Peters, however, said the main reason the foundation chose not to participate in the Plan Bay Area debate was that it was too abstract.

"An awful lot of the debate is about pure hypotheticals," Peters said. "It has gone so far off the rails of what is actually going to be built that it is not an effective use of the foundation's focus or frankly my time."

Peters said, rather than engage in idle speculation, "We stay working with the people who want to have this happen: an owner who has a parcel that is appropriate to develop, a nonprofit housing developer, and somebody who has the consummate skill to put together a financing package for building."

Over the past 10 years, the foundation has contributed to the creation of more than 400 units of affordable housing in Marin through grants and loans.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Marin cities and towns struggle to meet state housing mandate as $2.3 million hangs in the balance

Posted: marinij.com

The county of Marin and three Marin municipalities are attempting to meet a state housing mandate by the end of January in order to collect $2.3 million in state grant money.

Even though they've had nearly seven years to do so, the county of Marin, Mill Valley, Novato, and Fairfax have all so far failed to get the housing elements of their general plans approved by the state for the 2007 through 2014 planning cycle.

California requires that regional planning agencies, such as the Association of Bay Area Governments, periodically determine the projected housing need for an area and assign each local government a share in meeting that need. And jurisdictions are required to adjust their zoning laws to help make the creation of this housing possible.

In the past, some Marin towns and cities have failed to comply with the state housing law. The only penalty for jurisdictions that flaunt the law is that they become ineligible for some state housing and infrastructure grants. This year, however, is different.

Jurisdictions must get their housing elements approved if they want to share in the One Bay Area grant program. One Bay Area is a precursor to Plan Bay Area, which integrates the region's federal transportation program with California's climate law. If all four jurisdictions were to fail to win approval by the end of January, they would lose a total of $2.3 million in state transportation grants.

"OBAG money is related to implementation of Plan Bay Area," said Linda Jackson, manager of planning at the Transportation Authority of Marin. "The intent of OBAG money is to provide transportation funding that promotes the walkability and livability of our communities consistent with the goals and vision in the Plan Bay Area."

Despite fears that Plan Bay Area would result in the creation of overly dense housing developments in Marin, the total number of housing units that the county of Marin and its 11 municipalities have been assigned for the 2014-2022 planning cycle is 2,298 — less than half the 4,882 mandated for 2007-2014. The number of units that must be affordable to individuals with low and very low income dropped to 988 for 2014-2022 from 1,849 for 2007-2014.

The county has the most to lose if it fails to get its housing element approved in time, about $1.25 million in state grant money. Tom Lai, assistant director of the Marin Community Development Agency, said that on Sept. 10 the Marin County Board of Supervisors will consider OKing a housing element that has received tentative approval from the state.

"The original housing element was rejected by the state," Lai said.

The state determined then that the county had fallen 231 units short of creating the 320 affordable units it had been assigned. To comply with the law, the county is considering rezoning several properties to allow up to 30 units per acre. These include: 3.5 acres at the St. Vincent's-Silveira Ranch lands in San Rafael, 2

acres at the Golden Gate Baptist Seminary in Strawberry, and a half-acre at Oak Hill School on Drake Avenue in Marin City.

The city of Novato also has plenty to gain by securing the state's approval: $859,000 in grants. Novato had to revise its housing element after the state decided it needs to increase its density limits to promote the development of additional affordable housing. Novato senior planner Hans Grunt said his town's Planning Commission is scheduled to consider a revised version of the housing plan on Sept. 16. This version identifies five sites where 20 to 23 dwelling units per acre will be permitted, with no conditional use permit requirement.

If Fairfax fails to get its housing element approved before the end of January, it could lose a $300,000 state grant to make improvements in its downtown Parkade.

All the jurisdictions say they expect to get their housing elements approved before the deadline, but Fairfax failed to get its housing element approved during the previous planning cycle, 1999-2006. As a result, Fairfax must not only adjust its zoning to accommodate the 108 units for the 2007-2014 period; the town must also account for the 64 units it was assigned for the previous cycle.

Fairfax Planning Director Jim Moore said one of the changes that will help his town win the state's approval involves changing zoning so that the owners of the property at either end of the town along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard may build second-story apartments without seeking a special-use permit. Moore said the town also hired a consultant versed in state housing law who discovered the town hadn't taken advantage of some of the avenues open to it.

"We were able to take credit for all of the units the town had approved during the last two cycles," Moore said, "and also we had not taken advantage of any properties that were currently zoned for housing that had not been built on yet.

"With those two magic tricks," he said, "we actually were able to get everything under control."

Moore said the town was even able to overcome the fact that the state drastically reduced the number of illegal second units that the town wanted to count, assuming that the units could be made legal through an amnesty program. Fairfax proposed counting 27 of the illegal units; the state allowed only three in this planning cycle, since a short time remains for them to be legalized.

The city of Mill Valley has the least to lose, just $37,500 in state grant money.

"That's not a big issue for us," said Mill Valley Planning Director Mike Moore.

He expects the Mill Valley City Council to approve the housing element by the end of September; then it will be sent to the state for final ratification.

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Marin Readers' Forum for July 19

Posted: marinij.com

'Quasi-government zealots'

All the talk about Association of Bay Area Governments, Priority Development Areas and high-density housing reminds me of a time long ago when San Francisco erected the Sutro Tower.

Beautiful as it is, the justification was to improve TV transmission capabilities. This at a time when cable was just coming to market. Today, we all have cable and no one uses a roof-top antenna to receive television broadcasts.

ABAG and PDAs are working to concentrate high-density housing near transit hubs so that we can enable folks to not drive a car to work and thereby reduce our carbon emissions. This at a time when hybrid and electric cars are just coming to market. Tomorrow (soon) we will all be driving electric cars, our carbon emissions will be zero.

The insistence of these quasi-government zealots to enforce these measures on us makes no long-term sense and one can only wonder about other motives. As Watergate's Deep Throat wisely said, "follow the money."

Steve Fabes, Sausalito

Respect for others

Before we can have reform or new regulations for the use of public trails and open space, we have to have respect for others, human and animal and for authority.

Sadly, this is lacking in our current environment.

Parents need to instill these qualities in their children from a very young age. There is an overwhelming sense of entitlement in this county, exhibited by both adults and teenagers that has got to stop.

No amount of regulation will be successful until the populace is willing to follow the rules.

Linda Riedel, Novat0

Observations from 101

Another day sitting in Highway 101 traffic, another night reading the IJ full of complaints lacking constructive solutions.

Sure, we can sit around and hope the magical candy train from Sonoma will one day solve everything, but even a best case scenario is years away.

Roads and cars are here to stay and what we need are practical solutions that involve roads and cars. Here's one: add metering lights to all those same freeway entrances that create the same backups every

day. It's a simple fix that gets the cars on slower and works wonders.

While we're at it, let's get the cars off faster at places like Third Street by fixing the lights and/or intersections there to keep the traffic from backing onto the freeway. Cars that back up isn't just bad for traffic, it's dangerous.

City traffic lights and intersections are an easy fix that can be done by local leaders; no need to whine and wait for federal involvement.

Here's another one open to a creative solution: Find a way to charge a toll to all those transient commuters working in places like the Presidio, but living in the East Bay.

Ever notice how the Richmond Bridge routes are jammed up in the evening, but not in the morning? No bridge tolls in that direction and it's better than taking city streets to the Bay Bridge.

Come on car people of Marin; let's get some real car solutions.

JJ Jackson, Novato

Marin Readers' Forum for Aug. 5

Posted: marinij.com

Shortchanging transit

With all the talk about Plan Bay Area and affordable housing, I have to ask where the same advocates are when it comes to transit?

With another BART strike coming, it will no doubt lead to massive fare increases. Bridge tolls are raised every other year. Ferry prices have almost tripled since I used it in the late 90s and now there is talk of charging $5 for parking.

Our own Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit train project has reportedly suffered massive cost overruns. Every transit agency in the Bay Area complains year after year about budget shortfalls, having to raise fares and/or cut back services. In some cases the reasons are blatantly obvious.

So I have to ask, isn't one of the primary pillars of Plan Bay Area that in building all this "stack and pack" housing (30 units per acre) right next to the highway, residents of this housing will have affordable and effective public transportation (since, according to Supervisor Steve Kinsey, they won't need cars.)?

And if so, why aren't there any "affordable transit" advocates out there demanding that the agencies start lining up and freezing their fares and preparing for the future?

I can see it now — in another 10 years we'll have all this "smart growth" housing next to "transit centers," but a BART ride will cost you $12 each way. The ferry, $15. Parking at BART and ferry lots will be $10. Bridge tolls will be $15. SMART will have had at least one strike (over pensions no doubt) that will result in a $15 fare.

So if you're going to scream for affordable housing and Plan Bay Area, you had better start hoping like heck for some affordable transit, too.

I find it ironic that all this time, money and effort is being spent marketing smart growth, but where is the same effort and attention being paid to the massive bloated salaries, pensions and cost overruns from transit agencies that will soon make any public transit unaffordable?

Paul Brunell, San Rafael

Overstatements on oysters

It is quite disconcerting to read what Joe Mueller (Marin Voice, Aug. 1) presented as ecological science.

As a matter of fact, it casts into doubt his credential as a marine biologist and is discouraging to Marin taxpayers when they see themselves supporting such polemicists that falsely prejudice the minds of our youth.

It is preposterous to claim that the nutrients in a small part of the sea are depleted by minor human activity when there is an infinite abundance in the adjoining vast ocean.

The column then commits the gross nonsequitur of tying that argument to the need to "protect" the Drakes Estero from the "extraction of 700,000 pounds of oysters per year from an ecosystem that was slated for wilderness 40 years ago."

Indeed, who had the right to decide that this area, which had been duly adapted to human use, was to be returned to wilderness in the first place? How is this different than the port of Los Angeles or the Oakland estuary? Why is no one proposing to turn them into wilderness?

As humanity has steadily increased, unoccupied areas had to be utilized. There certainly have been unnecessary and unacceptable abuses which need to be prevented. But in general, the practice has come to be accepted and the use of the estero is an excellent example.

The oyster farming has come into harmonious coexistence with the marine ecology and the surrounding ranching agriculture.

It is egregious that zealots like Mueller use pseudo science to try to arouse the citizens of Marin into supporting the destruction of a perfectly harmless enterprise that provides jobs for long time residents and delicious organic food for Californians.

Charles Herbert, San Rafael

Marin Readers' Forum for July 24

Posted: marinij.com

PLANNING

Corte Madera's growth

No city in Marin has benefitted more from regional infrastructure and planning than Corte Madera.

The two "regional" shopping centers and other retail, lodging and auto dealerships in the Highway 101 corridor fund more than 50 percent of the town's tax revenues — a far greater share of their municipal budget than any other community in the county receives from these sources and overwhelmingly the most on a per capita basis.

However, these sources of income for Corte Madera are also among the leading generators of traffic and low-income jobs in the region.

Councilmember Carla Condon's response to this significant and ongoing regional impact is to offer the rest of us (who are effectively bearing these burdens) self-congratulations for the heroic efforts of her city council to drop out of the Association of Bay Area Governments.

I suppose the true heroes in this saga are the other city councils and city staffs in Marin who balance their budgets and provide quality services without the largess from which Corte Madera benefits.

Corte Madera town council members would be well-advised to stop their paranoid ranting about regional planning and instead take responsibility for the continuing impacts that they have created by working cooperatively with other cities and agencies in the area.

Bruce Dorfman, Mill Valley

Losing local control

Your front-page headline on July 20 announced a historic moment in Marin.

What the majority of the people of Marin wanted was ignored, we were sold out and lied to by our representatives.

You quoted Supervisor Steve Kinsey, "I voted yes on the plan knowing that it doesn't reduce local control over land use ..."

That is one of the biggest lies in Plan Bay Area.

Our local governments don't have the resources and money for the attorney fees it would take to fight the development that will be imposed on us. This was a done deal even before the vote.

It is crucial that the representatives who voted for this plan be replaced in the next election.

Diane Hoffman, Fairfax

'Socialist scheme'

Besides loss of local control, Plan Bay Area is too much of a socialist scheme of sustainable development, which does not meet the needs of local communities.

I was cut off from saying the above by the one-minute-per-speaker limit as the regional transportation and land-use plan came to a final vote Thursday night in Oakland.

Thank you Pat Eklund for not voting for this plan.

What's wrong with Plan Bay Area is that it won't do any of the things officals claim it will do; using the same approach does not fit all areas of the Bay Area. Marin is suburban and is already meeting the goals of AB 32.

We don't need some giant plan for housing. Local people are perfectly capable of planning all kinds of infill housing with smaller construction projects.

Stack-and-pack 'em housing starts to deteriorate immediately because of fast turnover in occupancy. We end up with trashed housing and crime in the neighborhood.

Basia Crane, Kentfield

MARIN CITY

Don't blame police

I read the article in Sunday's paper about "the deepening rift between the African American Marin City residents and the Marin County Sheriff's Department."

If you miss a court date, you will have a warrant out for you. If you are known to drive on a suspended license, they will arrest you. If you sell drugs, they will arrest you. If you try to hit a police officer with your car, they will shoot you.

It doesn't matter if you're an African American, Indian, Asian, white or any other race.

If you commit a crime, you will be arrested.

Get over it. Stop playing the race card, it's getting old.

You wonder why the police are not warm and fuzzy. It's hard to be warm and fuzzy when they are throwing rocks and shooting at you.

If you think it is an easy job, go on a ride along with an officer for a few hours. This may be a good training ground and a wakeup call for the citizens of Marin City.

Glen Alberigi, Novato

RECALL

Misleading attacks

Justin Kai's July 14 letter has sunk to a new low. Residents of the first district have had to suffer through ugly and misleading attacks from recall proponents for months, but including Supervisor Susan Adams' family in his attacks is going too far.

No, Susan Adams is not "exploiting" her family, but I wonder if Mr. Kai is suggesting the Marinwood meeting was unsafe for children?

Mr. Kai wrote of exploitation, but I ask as a taxpayer who is footing the bill for this $250,000 recall, who is it that is really being exploited for the gain of a few?

Housing is always a difficult issue here in Marin, but we cannot lose our civility over it. I agree with Susan Adams that we must at least discuss these issues in a fair, civil and democratic way.

As we move forward on these issues, we can agree to disagree, but those who advocate recall need to stop the personal attacks.

Jerry Maletsky, San Rafael

Uncivil behavior

I recently submitted a letter deploring the behavior I witnessed at Supervisor Susan Adams' Marinwood town hall meeting.

Justin Kai's July 14 letter compels me to write again.

He has gone beyond spreading misinformation and fear tactics to including Susan Adams' family in his latest attack.

Ms. Adams, not the recallers, convened the meeting at Marinwood. Most of the audience was there to be informed and have a reasonable conversation.

The community center had one microphone, and it was the recallers who were yelling, interrupting the speakers, refusing to give up the microphone and trying to intimidate anyone who disagreed with them.

It exposed for all to see the ugliness of the recall organizers.

I would hope that we could remain civil as we discuss these important issues. Personal attacks are unwarranted and unproductive.

Marcia McLean, Novato

county

Let the people know

Kudos to the Marin IJ for pursuing access to public records in the matter of public employee working conditions.

When Marin settles (or loses) lawsuits over employee harassment, discrimination, etc., it is the taxpayers who pay the bill.

Citizens have a right to know details when our own employees make grievance filings.

Marin should not be like San Francisco, which allowed former housing chief Henry Alvarez to run amok, abusing employees for so long before the public could learn. Liabilities risked by public employees should be shown the light rather than get swept under the carpet. It is better for our employees.

It is better protection for the public.

The Marin IJ should be given the files as requested.

Randy Warren, San Rafael

Marin Readers' Forum for July 26

Posted: marinij.com

Recalls send message

Recalls involving Marin supervisors are rare. The last recall of a Marin County board member occurred in 1961 during the heated debate over the fate of the Civic Center when Supervisor J. Walter Blair was ousted and replaced by Peter Behr.

The idea of recall to some is a waste of $250,000. Not necessarily so.

If the present action does remove Supervisor Susan Adams, it will put on notice to the remaining supervisors that they also can be removed.

Perhaps their future actions could be more in line with what their constituents feel they are lacking now.

They are not impervious to recall.

We have been short-changed by their spending ways, slush funds, the Association of Bay Area Governments, etc.

Gerard S. Sample, Mill Valley

Enabling lawbreaking

It has been a few weeks now since the trail incident that badly injured an equestrian and her horse.

The IJ has been full of blame since this incident — mountain bikers and skittish horses. Lack of enough trails and single track trails.

But to me the blame rests clearly and squarely with the Marin County supervisors who for 15 years have encouraged the discussion of accommodating expanded mountain bike use onto single-track trails barely wide enough for two humans or one horse.

Is it any wonder that we find so many mountain bikers using single-track trails?

And yes, they are. These riders are just getting a head start on what our supervisors have encouraged them to think is going to be their legal right.

Our supervisors have failed to say no and have encouraged dangerous misuse of our trail system.

As our supervisors express their horror at the injury from this most recent equestrian injury and the fleeing riders, they should be looking directly into a mirror. They have found the problem and it is them.

Phil Paisley, Ross

Fighting to save sprawl?

"Rebels with a Cause" is a must-see for anyone who wants to know how Marin was saved.

The people who worked for the preservation had a vision that saw the beauty of the wild places as something inherently valuable in its own right.

They bucked the current trends of the day, which assumed that all development was a good thing.

They didn't shout down their opponents at meetings, defame people, bully or threaten the local leaders. They collaborated with their opponents, the West Marin ranchers, which not only helped create the parklands, but ultimately preserved Marin's local agriculture as well.

The visionaries of today are not the unruly mobs that storm the Plan Bay Area meetings crying "socialism."

Those people are not protecting large tracks of natural landscape, they are protecting low-density sprawl.

Plan Bay Area opponents are right in line with the current view of the day that all development is a bad thing. The true visionaries are the organizations like TranForm and Greenbelt Alliance that lobbied hard to get our state, regional and local officials to understand that, for future growth to reduce traffic and greenhouse gases, it needs to be integrated with shops and jobs, and be near transit with good bike and pedestrian facilities.

This is the very definition of small-town character.

These are the current day "Rebels" from the movie, putting forth a positive vision for the future, and bucking the trends of the day.

Plan Bay Area is the continuation of the efforts of the latter-day "Rebels," continuing to protect open space by directing new development toward our city centers.

Wendi Kallins, Forest Knolls

Marin Readers' Forum for July 27

Posted: marinij.com

HOUSING

A better objective

If Mr. John Young and Marin Grassroots want to help the poor in our county, they could protest the wipeout of the facility to aid young children by Women Helping All People in Marin City.

WHAP provides after school snacks and a safe place for children to do homework.

The Marin Housing Authority seems determined to crush this wonderful, free service to the community.

Instead of a phony attack on phantom lynch mobs (read citizens who are concerned with forced fracture of local zoning regulation), Marin Grassroots should focus on a problem at once real and tragic.

Deke Welch, San Rafael

'Malevolent rhetoric'

God made us all.

We must have a civil discussion on affordable housing where we listen to each other instead of the current name calling and hateful accusations.

The lack of public decorum at the Marinwood meeting, the rancor and the ugly statements showing bias from some present should not represent Marin or its residents.

The behavior of the activists from Concerned Marinites who held a rally accusing people of being racists at the Pickleweed meeting of Citizen Marin, a group that opposes the current Bay Area regional housing plan, should not represent Marin or its residents.

The malevolent rhetoric and personal attacks being written by people on both sides of the affordable housing issue under every article, opinion piece or letter about affordable housing that appears in the online Marin IJ should not represent Marin or its residents.

We need affordable housing so those who work in Marin can live in Marin.

It doesn't have to be the controversial Plan Bay Area from the Association of Bay Area Governments, which calls for high-density, 30-units-per-acre housing that has caused so much dissension in Marin.

There are many ways, in addition to the high-density ABAG plan, to reach our affordable housing goals for both rental units and home ownership.

They should all be explored.

However, progress is not going to happen until there is an open dialogue that not only allows people to

speak about their positions on affordable housing, but for others to listen to the reasons for those positions.

An open decision-making process needs open dialogue.

Phyllis Metcalfe, Corte Madera

Thanks to Grassroots

Kudos to Marin Grassroots for taking a public stand on uncivilized public behavior!

My daughter has developmental disabilities. Last weekend she asked what a PDA is.

I explained, and told her about the Terra Linda meeting in which one speaker proclaimed that no one from Terra Linda will ever ride the SMART train. I told her some citizens are working to have PDAs — affordable housing and transit-oriented development — removed from Marin's future plans.

My daughter said, "I'll ride the train. And I will live in that housing."

My daughter has lived in this city much longer than some of the most vocal Citizen Marin people, and is positively involved in civic activities.

But speakers at recent Marinwood and Terra Linda community meetings say people like her are undesirable, a person who commits crime, one of SMART's "no one."

I have elderly friends in San Rafael who can no longer drive. They treasure the ability to live in housing near public transit and services. They have lived, worked, voted and paid taxes in this city for decades.

These opponents of affordable housing say they are "no one" as well.

There are many "no ones" who live in our city and help make it a civil, civic community. They don't interrupt speakers in public meetings, or call people who disagree with them names, or bully public officials to get their way.

And they are just as much citizens of Marin as members of Citizen Marin.

Gail Napell, San Rafael

Another city abstains

In my July 23 Marin Voice column regarding the Plan Bay Area, I mentioned that Mill Valley had "indicated their support for the Plan Bay Area."

I have since been notified that the Mill Valley City Council did not take a position on the Plan Bay Area, which reinforces my vote as a Marin representative to the Association of Bay Area Governments to abstain from supporting or opposing the preferred scenario of the Plan Bay Area.

I am sorry for any misunderstanding.

Pat Eklund, Mayor, Novato

Remember Marincello

It seems that the philosopher Kenneth Minogue had in mind our county when he wrote, some time ago: "We (citizens) must face up to the grim fact that the rulers we elect are losing patience with us."

Plan Bay Area, high-density developments along Highway 101, affordable housing, creek regulations, the SMART train, flood control in Ross Valley, the TEAM program and honors classes at the Tamalpais Union High School campuses, the huge freeway overpass at Greenbrae, the oyster farm, county pensions reform and even sheriff's deputies called in to silence the protest of homeowners. In each and every occasion our representatives fight tooth and nail the desires and interests of the citizens who elect them.

A wider and wider divide has been building up between the residents and the career politicians who receive marching orders (and funding) from outside power centers that do not really care about our community. Our politicians might still live among us, but their allegiances are clearly somewhere else.

As an immigrant from Europe, I have always admired and cherished the ideal of local control, one of the core values of the American republic. Our democratic tradition starts at the most local level. Anything like Plan Bay Area, that undercuts our sense of responsibility, is to be feared.

It is quite an irony that the same day that its front page announced the controversial approval of Plan Bay Area, the Marin IJ also published a positive report on the documentary "Rebels With A Cause," the story of the fight to keep large swaths of open space in Marin from development.

People fondly remember that fight because "they see the ability for ordinary citizens to make lasting change," says Nancy Kelly, one of the filmmakers.

Remembering the Marincello fight should be a wake-up call for all Marin residents. It is time to realize that our political class has run its course, and that our generation needs a new breed of individuals ready and willing to actually serve the people they represent.

Benedetto Cico, San Anselmo

MARINWOOD

Support for housing

I live in Marinwood and have good relations with my neighbors. We talk about our dogs, the weather and the beautiful blue, cloud-dotted skies.

I support the Association of Bay Area Governments, am against the recall effort and would like to see some form of affordable housing at Marinwood Plaza.

I'm sure there are at least a few others who feel as I do, in all or in part.

Perhaps it's time for them to think about writing a letter to the IJ, too.

Susan Meyers, Marinwood

tiburon

Get the spelling 'strait'

The Marin Independent Journal has repeatedly written of "Racoon Strait" over the years, instead of "Raccoon Strait." I presume this is dictated by editorial policy. Your policy is incorrect and should be changed.

The name of the channel of water separating Angel Island from the mainland of Marin has been a long-standing source of confusion. It was to prevent this type of perplexity that the United States Board on Geographic Names was created as a federal body in 1890. With the surge of activity in the West it became important to document the host of new names.

The board debated whether it should name this water-channel Raccoon Strait, Raccoon Straits, Raccoon Strs, Racoon Straits or Racoon Sts.

Some information the board used to decide the name came from the San Francisco sub-office of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, which stated that the strait was named after the British warship HMS Raccoon. The communicant had used information from the Spanish archives, even though the communicant had already written "no reliance can be placed upon the spelling of proper names in Mexican-Spanish or California-Spanish."

The board decided on the name "Raccoon Strait," approved June 4, 1895, which became the official name up to 2013. In the board's third through fifth report, its definition read; "Raccoon; strait between Angel Island and mainland, San Francisco bay, Cal. (Not Racoon)."

In consequence, Coast Guard maps have consistently used this official spelling. The recently distributed 'Southern Marin Community Map Book' of Spring, 2012, twice names the channel Raccoon Straits (tut-tut, should be 'strait').

The wrinkle in this tidy story is that the British warship was actually named "HMS Racoon." I personally reviewed the original log book in London, written in beautiful clear script by Captain Black, commander of the ship. Unquestionably, the ship was named "Racoon."

There are a number of reasons the error might have occurred, but for the 118 years since giving the official name as "Raccoon Strait," the board has remained firm.

The only way to use "Racoon" for the strait is after the board officially changes the name. Historical correction is secondary to maintaining the valuable purpose of the board.

The official name is "Raccoon Strait," which should be used by everybody. No person nor organization can unilaterally change the name.

I ask the IJ to get into the correct line.

Hillary Don, Belvedere

TRANSPORTATION

Finding consensus

Monday's meeting of the Highway 101 Greenbrae Corridor Advisory Working Group produced something not seen often in public discourse these days — consensus.

At the end of a long and sometimes contentious meeting, the Working Group voted 7-0 to forward recommendations on southbound features for the Greenbrae interchange. I thank everyone involved — committee members, staff, consultants, and the public for their conscientious work.

We have more to do, but it is clear we are beginning to make real progress.

I do want to correct the record regarding the schedule. These meetings were planned to end in July, though the group had discussed extending the date. I opened Monday's meeting by announcing that we could extend the work if we made significant progress, and suggested we discuss it at the end of the meeting.

Indeed, after staff returned with information requested by the Working Group, and the group reached consensus on the southbound improvements, we discussed possible future meeting dates. The group selected two in August, and voted to ask the Transportation Authority of Marin board for funding to continue this process.

There was nothing unclear about this conversation, and I will certainly urge the entire TAM board to continue to support our important efforts.

We have two significant areas to discuss in our upcoming meetings — bicycle and pedestrian facilities and northbound improvements.

I encourage the public to participate. We can work towards consensus by continuing our focus on reaching agreement.

This work is too important to do anything else.

Alice Fredericks, Tiburon, Chair, Transportation Authority of Marin

Progress was 'buried'

I read with interest your recap of the July 22 Greenbrae Interchange Working Group's meeting, as I am a member of the Working Group. Unfortunately, your description of the meeting read like a meeting different from the one I attended.

Most importantly, the group reached unanimous consensus on key areas related to improvements for southbound 101.

This positive news was buried near the end of the article, following derogatory quotes from anonymous sources and an apparently disgruntled Corte Madera representative.

The article quoted unnamed members using unfair, personally derogatory language directed at chair Alice Fredericks for supposedly never discussing why this was scheduled to be the last meeting.

However, Fredericks explained the schedule at the beginning of the meeting, and rightly suggested members discuss further meetings at the end, once we've seen the progress we made.

At the end of the meeting, I proposed, and Fredericks and the rest of the group agreed with scheduling more meetings in light of the significant progress we had made. There was no controversy whatsoever on this issue at the meeting.

The article then also quotes a disgruntled member from Corte Madera for claiming that it was somehow "disturbing" that Transportation Authority of Marin staff provided information to the group that was actually requested by the group at a prior meeting.

Contrary to a small minority, most of the Working Group is committed to reaching consensus to improve the congestion at this important Marin hub.

Tom McInerney, San Anselmo

Marin Voice: A greener approach to planning

Posted: marinij.com

I HAVE LIVED IN MARIN virtually my entire life. I know the history of this county, respect its core conservationist and community values, and I bring that knowledge and those core values to my decision making as county supervisor.

I am a believer in planning — specifically land-use planning — because it is the primary tool used to implement and assure that a community's values are embedded in the blue print for future development.

Those of us who live in Marin are beneficiaries of prospective land-use planning and development decisions made back in the 1970s which had the specific intention to prevent sprawl, target growth, preserve our agricultural lands and protect our open space.

Plan Bay Area is a regional effort to apply similar values and achieve similar objectives throughout the Bay Area with the added goal and responsibility of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It also fulfills a statutory requirement (SB375 adopted in 2008) which requires the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission to develop and adopt an integrated transportation and housing plan for the Metropolitan Bay Area region of which Marin County is a part.

Plan Bay Area is not a mandate to build housing. It does not erode, diminish or supersede local control, local planning or local decision-making authority for this county or any other in the region. The County of Marin as well as each of our cities and towns have general plans in place that prescribe land use and zoning. Changes to those general plans can only be made by the local governing authority (the Board of Supervisors or city council) not by ABAG or MTC or other regional agencies.

Marin County and the entire Bay Area region stand to benefit from planning that seeks to encourage all counties (and jurisdictions within them) to plan for future growth/development with foresight that reduces sprawl, protects our agricultural lands and open space, links future job growth with housing and transit, and as a result reduces vehicle miles traveled and green house gas emissions.

That said, this first edition of Plan Bay Area is far from perfect — for example:

• The plan does not identify or address how communities will fund the expansion of public infrastructure necessary to accommodate projected growth, should it occur;

• The plan does not address water resources and whether there is adequate supply to support projected future growth;

• The plan needs to do a better job addressing and respecting differences in size, density, and community character of cities throughout the Bay Area;

• Neither Plan Bay Area nor its DEIR come close to adequately addressing or accounting for sea-level rise, acknowledging the need for climate adaptation strategies, as well as identifying the funding mechanisms necessary to support implementation;

• The plan does not recognize or account for local projects or programs that reduce greenhouse gas

emissions such as Marin Clean Energy.

But perhaps the biggest problem of all, has been the process in which Plan Bay Area was developed. Though years in the making, the general public did not become engaged or involved until the end and by then most major policy decisions informing the plan had been decided.

Plan Bay Area will be updated on a four-year cycle. The beginning of that update should begin the day after it is adopted.

Authentic engagement and involvement by local delegates, planners and the public early on in the revision cycle will make for a process that builds confidence, and results in a better plan and planning tool for Marin County and the greater Bay Area.

Marin Supervisor Katie Rice of San Anselmo is the county's representative to the Association of Bay Area Governments.

Marin Voice: Bay plan is a guide for smarter growth

Posted: marinij.com

CALIFORNIA here I come "..."

Well, so many came that our state will grow by millions in the decades ahead, even if nobody else could get in.

That is reality. Californians also share a universal interest in secure and prosperous lives, yet it remains an elusive aspiration for many.

Add in global environmental threats and you have the raw ingredients of a monumental planning challenge.

In 2008, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed SB 375, a law responding to those forces. It mandated combining two existing regional plans, one addressing population growth and the other transportation priorities, into one. It added two other daunting challenges to be addressed; climate change and the cost of housing.

Plan Bay Area is our nine-county response to SB375.

Last week, I, along with most of the other locally elected representatives from around the bay who serve on the boards of two regional agencies, voted to approve it. Only one member voted "No," and one abstained.

But don't mistake that for universal support. Many Marin residents vehemently oppose the plan, while others think it doesn't go far enough for all people to have improved transportation, housing and job opportunities.

The plan commits our regional agencies to work on shaping our future, yet recognizes that land uses will continue being decided locally. To quell misleading fears, it explicitly states "Adoption of Plan Bay Area does not mandate any changes to local zoning, general plans, or project review.

The region's cities, towns and counties will maintain control of all decisions to adopt plans and permit or deny development projects."

Such unequivocal language was good enough to get my "Yes" vote, but of little relief for those who believe state and regional planning is intrusive, undemocratic, and will force homogenous urbanization on our communities.

Many critics also object to prioritizing growth along transit corridors. They prefer either expansion into outlying farms and open space, or simply rejecting further development in Marin. Many also condemn SB 375's specific requirement to plan for housing people of all income levels as unwarranted social engineering.

Many legitimate concerns have come forth. Planning for water supply, sea level rise, quality schools and protecting community character warrant careful attention and are getting it. Marin's water districts have

confirmed sufficient supplies to meet the plan's projected growth.

The county is busy preparing for rising seas, school districts have historically adapted to increasing and shrinking enrollments and will keep doing so, and most projects already face careful design review.

However, many of the criticisms have been misleading.

Contrary to assertions that Hong Kong is coming here in a one-size-fits-all high rise assault, Marin's historic slow growth and low-rise character can continue. Only 1 percent of the Bay Area's future population growth over the next three decades is assigned here, and SB375 allows local governments to keep existing environmental review practices unchanged.

Housing within walking distance of shops, parks, and transit hubs in our existing towns is a good fit for Marin. It reinforces our Countywide Plan focus on the Highway 101 corridor, which is exactly what has guided Marin land planning since the 1970s. It makes our investment in the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit train, ferries and bus service more cost effective. It allows existing single family neighborhoods to see only incremental change as remodels and second units get woven in.

It is important to remember that this is a plan, not a project. It points us in a direction, but only subsequent local decisions will determine whether the goals are embraced.

Since SB375 plans must be updated every four years, the debate it has stirred about Marin's future can and should continue. The passion people feel about the place we call "home" is an asset.

By considering our present situation, listening to widely diverse views, and imagining together how to make things better, Plan Bay Area can become a powerful civic tool rather than the destructive power play some suggest.

Marin Supervisor Steve Kinsey is the county's appointed representative to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

Marin Voice: Marin's overreaction to Plan Bay Area

Posted: marinij.com

MARIN OPPONENTS of Plan Bay Area showed up in force on the night of July 18 in Oakland to shout down the regional plan, which passed despite their efforts. While they succeeded at being loud, they were strikingly uninformed about the nine-county regional transportation and land use plan.

Many said, "Why don't you just leave us alone and let our towns decide on our own futures?" But someone has to do regional planning; not just to access nearly $80 billion in state and federal project funds, but also to coordinate the transportation facilities that make inter-county travel possible.

With a population of 7 million people in the Bay Area, rush-hour driving now means crawling in heavy traffic. We cannot build our way out of this — unhindered regional auto travel is no longer physically, financially or environmentally possible.

Instead, better transit service is needed if people are to conveniently travel outside their towns and counties.

Opponents of the regional plan act as if the future will take care of itself. Marin's own traffic congestion should be proof that growth without a well thought-out plan creates serious problems.

While the Pentagon Papers, Iran-Contra and NSA domestic surveillance are reasons for a healthy distrust of government, opponents of Plan Bay Area take that to a level approaching paranoia. They claim the U.N. is plotting to take away their guns and their property rights, and force them into high-density housing. They seem gripped by the fear that the regional plan will harm them personally.

I wonder where these bizarre ideas came from, and why people accept them so uncritically.

Perhaps the biggest misunderstanding is over local control. Nothing in the regional plan forces any jurisdiction to do anything. Regional agencies don't have the legal powers to make planning and zoning decisions.

(Yes, there are requirements to plan for affordable housing, but that is a state mandate, not a regional one.)

Local governments — not the regional agencies — defined the "Priority Development Areas," which are where they would like to locate future jobs and housing.

The state requires planning for housing for a growing population. The strategy of the Bay Area's regional plan is to concentrate the new housing in walkable communities with good transit, with these benefits:

• It leaves existing single-family neighborhoods undisturbed.

• It reduces future traffic, because new residents drive less.

• It reduces emissions of air pollutants, including greenhouse gases.

• It is economically feasible, because young adults and empty nesters want to live where they can walk to stores, cafes and restaurants.

• It preserves open space.

Overzealous opponents seem to want to close the county's borders and freeze both time and the county's racial makeup. Yet the projected growth in population comes mostly from our own children and grandchildren, plus some of the people who will work here.

Santa Clara County is projected to have 26 times more housing growth than Marin, which is projected to have the lowest percentage growth of all the Bay Area counties. Yet Marin residents sent in more comments objecting to the regional plan than any other county.

These Marinites have vocalized their uniquely overwrought grievances in a series of combative public meetings.

With norms of respectful conduct out the window, anyone with opposing views faced a threatening mob mentality.

This oppressive behavior undermines the willingness of residents to participate in government, either as elected officials or community volunteers.

This is no way to solve problems. Managing inevitable growth requires rationality and a willingness to listen to others.

It's not an option to demand that the future not come to Marin.

David Schonbrunn of Sausalito is president of TRANSDEF.org, a transit advocacy organization.

Marin Voice: My vote on Plan Bay Area

Posted: marinij.com

IN JANUARY 2012, I was honored to be elected by mayors and council members of the 11 Marin cities to be their representative on the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board.

Thursday was a tough night. After consulting with representatives of Marin cities I represent on the ABAG board, I determined that it was my duty to abstain from voting on the Final Environmental Impact Report and "Plan Bay Area," which is an integrated long-range transportation and land-use/housing plan for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The plan, which ABAG and MTC have worked on for three years, is our Sustainable Community Strategy that identifies how the Bay Area will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent from cars/light trucks by 2040 as required by SB 375, while focusing on where housing should be provided based on Bay Area economic growth.

The plan raised a number of very serious issues for Marin — and, we simply did not have enough time to work with our community members, "stakeholder" organizations and municipalities to resolve those issues; and, some of those issues couldn't be resolved by their very nature.

ABAG/MTC received over 588 written/verbal comments on the plan. Four hundred of those were written comments from individuals, of which 171 came from Marin residents, many objecting to the potential "priority development areas" in Tam Valley and Marinwood, recently withdrawn by the Board of Supervisors.

Those individuals, along with other Marin community members, dug deeper and raised additional issues, challenged the population and jobs growth projections, the assumption of GHG reductions, and proposals to streamline California Environmental Quality Act in PDAs — that's perceived as "gutting" environmental review.

Most importantly, the public expressed, loud and clear, it wants to maintain local control.

Since I represent the Marin cities on ABAG, I reached out to my colleagues and encouraged them to have public meetings to garner community feedback. I held several meetings with ABAG delegates on the city councils to ascertain how Marin cities should cast our one vote (mine) on the ABAG board.

Of the 11 cities, three (Novato, Sausalito, Mill Valley) indicated their support for Plan Bay Area, one (Corte Madera) voted for the "No Project Alternative" and seven (Belvedere, Tiburon, Larkspur, Ross, San Anselmo, Fairfax and San Rafael) took "No Position." "No Position" is just that — they chose not to take a position for or against any of the alternatives.

Given the majority took "No Position," it was my duty on July 18, to cast an abstention vote for or against the Plan. After hours of testimony, the ABAG/ MTC Boards voted to approve the Plan Bay Area with changes:

• ABAG: 21 Yes, 5 No, 1 Abstention

• MTC: 12 Yes, 1 No

As we go forward, I will advocate for ABAG/ MTC to have open dialogues on what worked well and what needs improvement so we don't repeat past mistakes.

Both ABAG/ MTC need to find a better way to involve the communities at the local level in updating the plan that's due in four years.

I will recommend we start now by working backward from 2017 to ensure there is adequate time for a bottom up effort where the public, stakeholder organizations and elected officials are brought into the process early on. I will continue to advocate for enough time that allows each city, town and county to vote.

We, the elected officials on ABAG/MTC, need to look at options and select the best approach for projecting the population and jobs growth, whether locating housing near transit/transportation reduces greenhouse gas emissions as projected and how needs in our schools, parks and recreation, public safety, etc. can be addressed with the anticipated growth.

I hope that by changing the process and making improvements to the plan, we will have a plan in 2017 that satisfies our individual community values while contributing to the region's values of preserving our environment while having a prosperous economy where everyone has a place to call home.

Novato Mayor Pat Eklund represents Marin cities on the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board.

Mill Valley to unveil new electric vehicles, open first EV charging station

Posted: marinij.com

Mill Valley

The city of Mill Valley will unveil its four new all-electric Mitsubishi i-MiEVs and will cut the ribbon on its first electric vehicle charging station at 1 p.m. Sept. 4 at the Hauke Park parking lot on Hamilton Drive.

Mill Valley Mayor Andrew Berman, City Manager Jim McCann, and Public Works Director Jill Barnes will speak.

The electric cars replace inefficient former police vehicles the city has been using for employee carpools and for general city purposes. The cars will help the town to meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, according to Linn Walsh, assistant to the city manager.

Mill Valley joined with the cities of San Jose, Los Gatos and Campbell on a deal that includes "highly favorable" lease terms on 50 EVs, with 38 going to San Jose. Mill Valley won't have to pay the lease on its four EVs until the third year of the program. In total, the 50 EVs are expected to cut fuel costs by a combined $110,000 over three years and will reduce CO2 emissions by 400,000 pounds, according to the Bay Area Climate Collaborative.

The charging station was established by the city council as a one-year pilot program to evaluate its popularity, ease of use and other operational issues. There will be no fee charged to users during the pilot period.

The project was funded by a $28,000 grant from the Transportation Authority of Marin, California Energy Commission, Association of Bay Area Governments and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

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Novato 56°

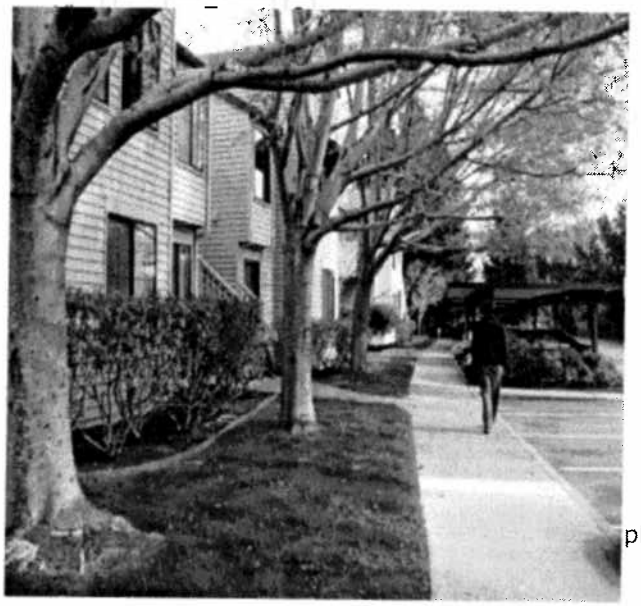
News | Government

New Study Seeks to Dispel Myths About Plan Bay Area

Seeks to redefine what affordable housing means and why denser housing is a good way to reduce green house gas emissions

Posted by Karina Ioffee (Editor) , August 27, 2013 at 08:13 AM

Comment Recommend



plex, in Mill Valley.

The League of Women Voters of Marin County has released a new study aimed at dispelling what it describes as myths surrounding affordable housing and Plan Bay Area.
The long-term planning document for nine Bay Area municipalities seeks to concentrate new development near transportation hubs, while protecting open space from new housing and was approved in July.

The study, released last week, seeks to recalibrate the term "affordable housing," pointing out that a family with an annual median income of $75,000 is considered low-income by Marin standards, where the average median income is $103,000. That means people who work as teachers, bank tellers, EMTs and paramedics, not say anything about those in service-sector jobs, all can't afford to live in Marin.

When it comes to housing, the median-priced home in the county (as of this June) cost nearly $800,000 with a down payment of $80,000, while the median-priced condo cost $330,000, with a $33,000 down payment.

"These figures prevent many workers in Marin's major employment sectors from buying in Marin, including those middle class families who could buy a home elsewhere, but not in Marin where they work," write the authors. "When families 'drive 'til they qualify,' they add considerable transportation costs to their family budgets, not to speak of impacts to family life, the economy, freeway congestion and the environment."

Read the full study here

Another frequent "myth" the report seeks to dispel is that Plan Bay Area forces cities to give up control. But the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments have no direct say over land use decisions and will still have the final say when it comes to approving new projects, according to the study.

All new projects would continue to be reviewed for design, traffic and environmental impacts while zoning will remain "the province of local municipalities."

On the subject of density, the authors say the public often imagines high-density urban public housing projects built after World War II that were a magnet for crime. Instead, Marin would continue to have some of the lowest density in the Bay Area, between 20 to 30 housing units per acre, built in a way that correspondents with the surroundings.

"The important of controlled density in Marin is that it preserves our open spaces and farmland by preventing sprawl," the authors write.

Critics of affordable housing have often said that it draws more crime. In Novato, they pointed to Bay Vista, a housing complex in Hamilton that had some criminal activity. But that may have had more to do with lack of screening of tenants than a true reflection of everyone who lives in affordable housing, the study found.

"Novato is a good example of the incidence of crime not being correlated with a project's density or its tenants' income levels, but is related to how well a property is managed and how thoroughly the tenants are screened. It also depends very heavily on the rules governing the tenants and how strictly they are enforced."

What do you think about some of the points made in the study? Is it important to build more housing for middle class Marin residents? Sound off in the comments below.

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Not Even Silicon Valley Escapes History

By Alexis C. Madrigal

The precise center of Silicon Valley when it was the most important manufacturing region on Earth is now home to Super Space Self Storage.

I was able to map this location thanks to Richard E. Schmieder, who drove 6,000 miles around Silicon Valley, collecting the addresses of more than a thousand corporate headquarters, branch offices, restaurants, and hotels. He published this exhaustive niche Yellow Pages as *Rich's Guide to Santa Clara County's Silicon Valley* in 1983.

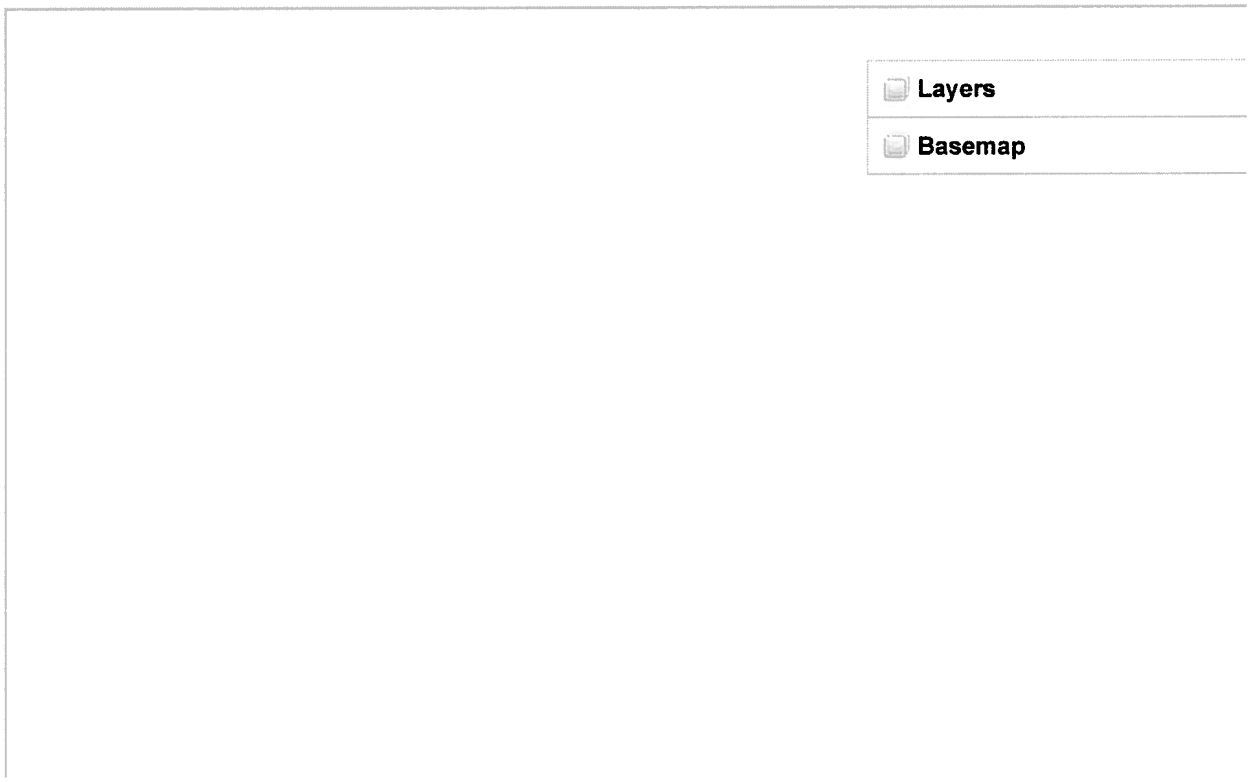
I discovered a copy of this rare book in Berkeley's library system and realized that it was a fantastic dataset: If I stuck all of the locations onto a map, I could reconstruct the Valley as it was 30 years ago, *right before* the Japanese manufacturers and the forces of globalization pulled and pushed chip production to East Asia. And though the *idea* of Silicon Valley does not allow for history, the place, itself, cannot escape it. The Valley we know now, the Paypal-Google-Facebook one, got built right on top of the original boom towns.

In our Internet-happy present, it's easy to forget that up until the mid-1980s, Silicon Valley was an industrial landscape. Hundreds of manufacturers lined the streets of Sunnyvale, Palo Alto, Cupertino, Mountain View, and San Jose. This is the Silicon Valley when AMD, Apple, Applied Materials, Atari,

Fairchild, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, National Semiconductor, Varian Associates, Xerox, and hundreds of other companies made their products right here in the Bay.

The Valley was as important a manufacturing center as Detroit or Pittsburgh were. This was the place making the foundational technology of the era, and it brought prosperity to the region. Between 1964 and 1984, Santa Clara County added 203,000 manufacturing jobs, according to a report by the Association of Bay Area Governments; 85 percent of them were in high-tech. Another economist found that Santa Clara County's manufacturing growth had driven the economic well-being of the entire Bay Area during that period. Without the growth of Valley manufacturing, the San Francisco and Oakland's economies would have severely suffered, not to mention the rest of the country's. This was the industrial heartland of America, even if it was nestled against the San Francisco Bay.

In other words, *Rich's Guide*, I realized, would let me map this first peak of Silicon Valley, the one that gave meaning to the term high-tech. With substantial help from my colleague on *The Atlantic Wire*, Philip Bump, we put this map together. If you worked in the Valley at the time, it should take you back to the days of Ampex, Varian Associates, and the Rusty Scupper. But there's plenty to see, even if you only know the area by reputation.



For example, you'll find Apple headquarters at 20525 Mariana Ave, just across De Anza Boulevard from the current HQ at 1 Infinite Loop. They were part of a little cluster of companies just off Interstate 280, south of the hottest action up closer to Highway 101. Most of the rest have not survived -- Braegen Corp., Iconix, International Memories, Tymshare, Four-Phase Systems. Yet these same people would have all visited the Peppermill Lounge for some 80s-"fern bar" refreshment.

After geocoding all these points -- i.e. finding all their latitudes and longitudes -- I could compute the average of all the locations on the map. In a meaningful sense, the spot was the very center of the corporate ecosystem that we call Silicon Valley in 1983.

My math says it's located in Sunnyvale, south of 101 between North Wolfe Road and the Lawrence Expressway at precisely *37.38260152 degrees north, 122.0094996784 degrees west.*

As luck would have it, this spot was smack in the middle of the headquarters of chipmaker and long-time Intel rival, Advanced Micro Devices, or AMD, in a complex centered at 901 Thompson Place.

The AMD headquarters in 1975 (David Laws)

This is what it looks like now, in its self-storage incarnation:

Google Maps

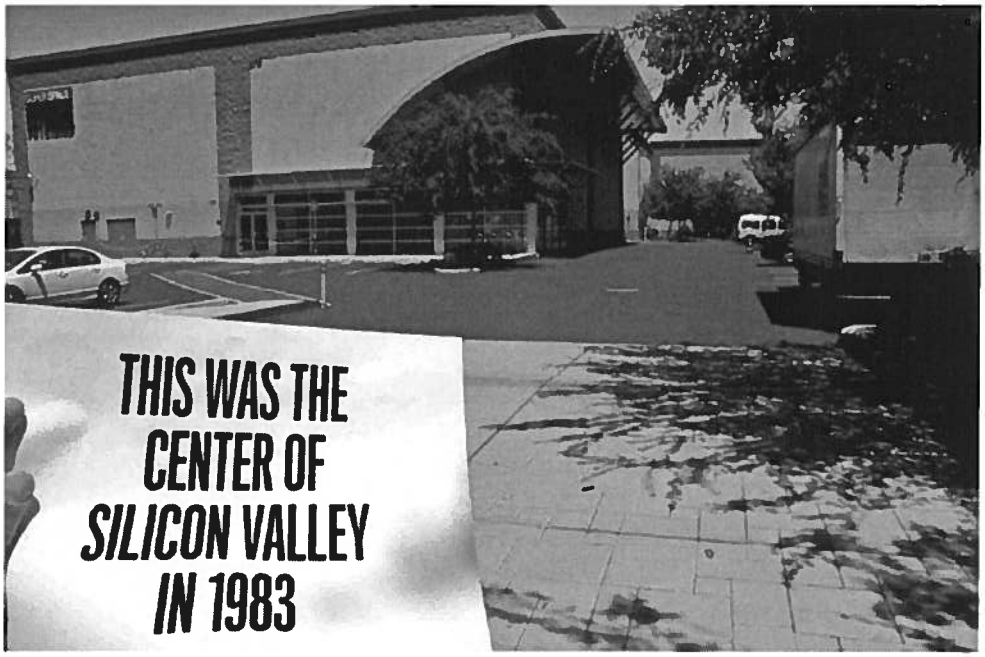
We can see the back of the Super Space Self-Storage. There is no sign of the AMD buildings that once stood here.

I had to see for myself what had become of the center of the Valley, so I got in my car and headed across the Bay Bridge and down the peninsula. I'd use the single block surrounding the center of the old Valley to understand what had happened to this place not as a footnote in a history of the computing industry, but as a landscape. What I found was second-generation suburbia with a far more complex story than the standard Silicon Valley narrative about cherry orchards and the making of a glorious revolution.

* * *

As always, it was sunny in Sunnyvale. I got off at the exit for Moffett Field, the set of facilities that made this area a hotbed of early aerospace (and therefore computing) activity. After a few lights I made a left onto the Central Expressway and zoomed past endless town homes and old suburbs onto Arques Avenue. I parked the car at the Super Space Self-Storage, took out the memorial sign I'd printed, and walked across the street to take some wide-angle photographs of the building.

There was nothing particularly interesting about it. Like most self-storage locations, the building is blocky and windowless. It's nestled in-between a massive Lowe's and Cheetah's, "a small neighborhood strip club," according to a Google Plus review. As I snapped away, a single pedestrian walked by, an Asian man in khakis and a tucked-in, short-sleeved collared shirt. Traffic came and went: a Camry, a Jeep, a Subaru, big white van. Just another part of the great California carscape, it would seem.



The center of Silicon Valley, 1983 (Alexis Madrigal).

As I walked back across the street, I found a big guy walking towards me. "Well, you got our curiosity piqued," he said, pointing to my camera. He had a soul patch and wore an checked Oxford monogrammed with the name of the self-storage place. All-in, he looked like Ted Dansen, if Dansen lifted weights. This was Geoffrey Taylor, manager of the facility.

I explained myself to him, trying not to sound completely ridiculous. "And so, I calculated that, in 1983, this was the center of Silicon Valley, and I came down here to see it --"

"And you ended up at a Superfund site," he said.

I did?

"This was AMD," Taylor continued. "They manufactured chips here."

I went inside and met his staff, enjoying the air conditioning. They told me about the building's many amenities for the discerning self-storage customer: climate-control, special locks, security systems. "Who needs this type of service?" I asked.

"I'd say 75 percent of our clientele is transient engineers working for the tech companies," Taylor told me. They were almost all from India and east Asia.

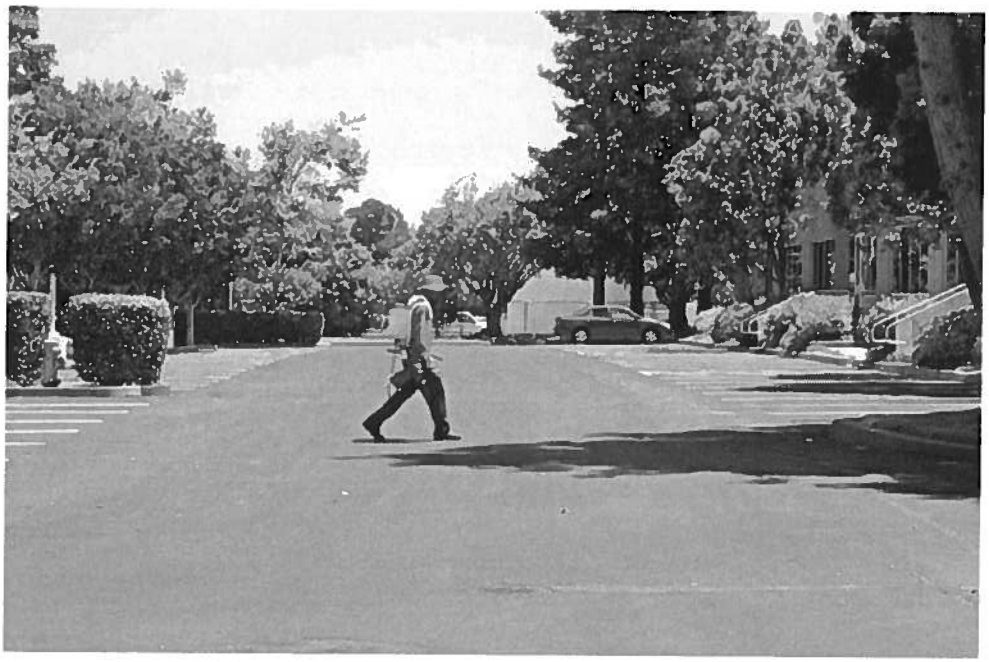
I left my car in the parking lot and headed southeast. Past Cheetah's, there was a large office building being leased by two commercial real-estate brokers named Dixie Divine and Doug Ferrari.

The businesses around were an odd melange: a Bank of America, two auto-body shops, the 5-Star School for Music, a semiconductor company called Synerchip, a signal-processing designer called Teledyne Cougar, and Sri Ananda Bhavan, a bustling south Indian restaurant. At the corner of Deguine Drive, a newly built retail space sat empty, looking almost precisely like the sad, shuttered video stores you see all over America.

Deguine was wide. The landscaping was so regular, it mocked the idea of nature. Tree, door, tree. Here and there, a knoll created by a bulldozer, sodded with grass from Oregon.

Empty office buildings and parking lots abounded. A couple gardeners wandered among them, working solo, carrying chemicals on their backs, ensuring the for-lease billboards looked nice.

Tree, door, tree (Alexis Madrigal)



"Gardening" (Alexis Madrigal)

Heading up Deguine, I noticed that there was a steady stream of pedestrian traffic, largely older Asian women. Many were headed to and from Nine Star University, a Chinese medicine school located in an old office building it shares with an acupuncturist, a sports medicine group, and the China-focused Christian Leadership Institute.

Right next door, Nine Star operates California University Silicon Valley, which caters to IT professionals with the pitch that you'll learn "from instructors with titles like CEO, CIO, CFO, COO, Sr Manager, Marketing SVP, Venture Fund Manager and other real industry positions." In a clear sign about who they're selling education to, their domain CUSV.org autoforwards to CUSV.in, as in India. The university certainly has Silicon Valley-level chutzpah. "Whether you are considering Harvard, Stanford, Santa Clara University, MIT, Georgia Tech, San Jose State, UCLA, or for that matter any other top grad school," they declare, "you will want to choose CUSV to ensure your competitive advantage and maximize the NPV of your expected career income stream."

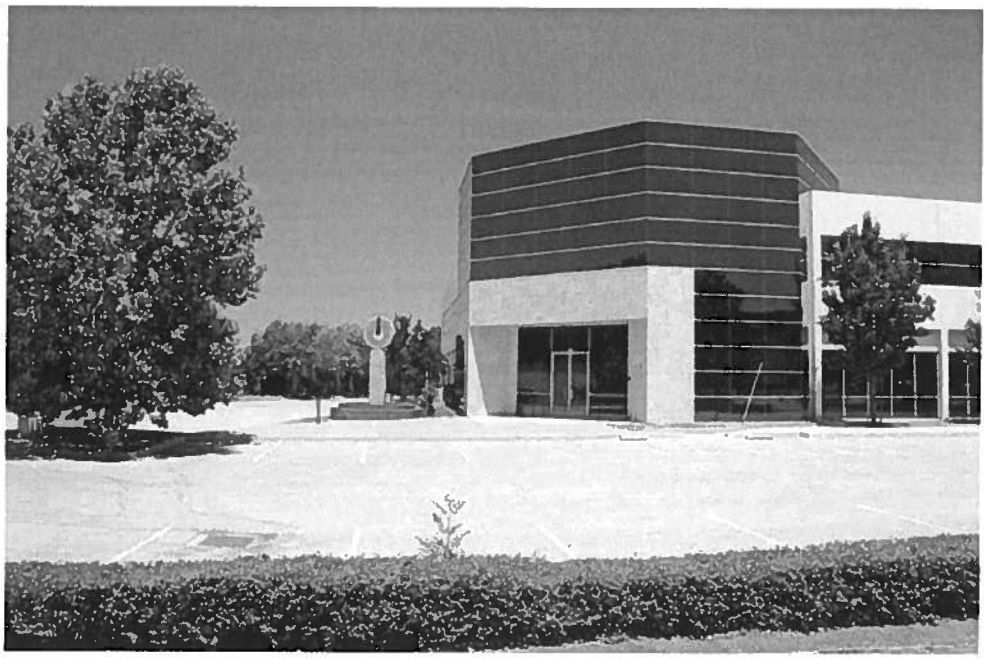
Nine Star University (Alexis Madrigal).

Across the street, UMC, a very large Taiwanese semiconductor foundry, has its North American headquarters. I had to admire the symmetry of its building. Humans could only besmirch it.

UMC (Alexis Madrigal).

At the next intersection, I turned left. Across the street, a man talked on a cell phone in front of BioCurious, "your Bay Area hackerspace for biotech." What are they working on? For example: "We are attempting to insert these genes into other algae, Arabidopsis and Petunias to build a glow-in-the-dark plants. Avatar, here we come!" So that's going on there.

To the right of BioCurious, there was a batterymaker for motorcycles called Shorai. To the left, a Mediterranean restaurant called the Agape Grill. If you were to have a gyro at Agape under the tall, tall palm trees or a Coca-Cola umbrella, you would look across the street at the America Chinese Evangelical Seminary, as well as the Sacred Logos Resource Center, which appears to be another Christian evangelical group catering to Chinese immigrants. These buildings were all beige with glass doors, one and a half floors. There are hundreds of thousands of structures that look just like these across the region and nation.

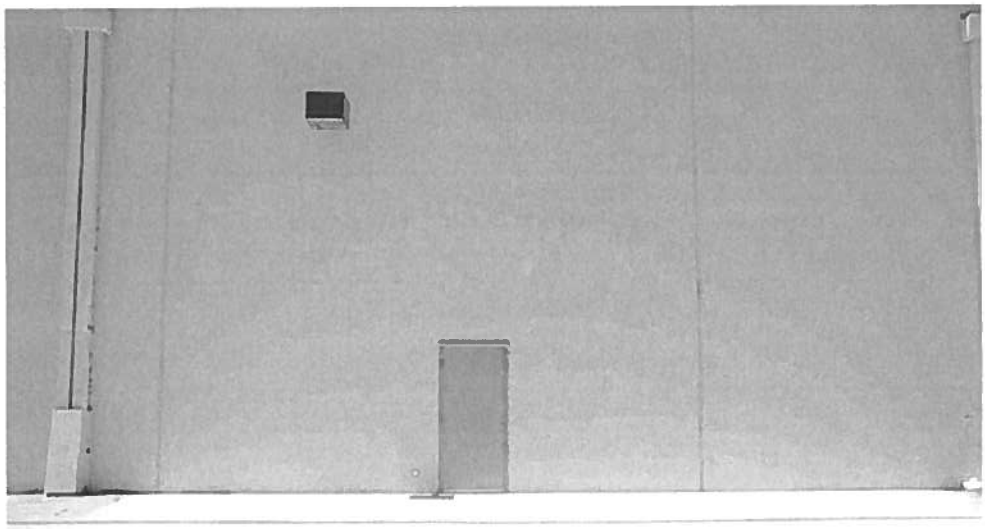


An empty building (Alexis Madrigal)

Another massive empty office building stood out for its hexagonal dark glass atrium and the sculpture just outside its locked doors, which looked like a sundial set permanently to noon.

I found all the white people in a packed parking lot attached to a strange looking building that turned out to be a climbing gym and yoga studio called Planet Granite. I watched toned people go in and out for a few minutes, and then headed back towards my car, cutting through the loading area at the back of Lowe's.

Between the massive blank walls, I was the only human around.



Lowe's loading area (Alexis Madrigal)

I could not parse this neighborhood. It didn't make sense.

When I got home, I found out that for 30 years, and all around the block I'd surveyed, an intense remediation effort was underway. For as long as I've been alive, there has been a plume of chemicals underground at that spot, extending 4,000 feet north, up past 101. Everyone hoped these chemicals wouldn't make it to the water supply before it could be pumped out and treated.

* * *

In contemporary descriptions of Silicon Valley as it was being built, every writer seems to note the absence of smoke stacks. A miracle! A clean industry! A better industrial capitalism!

The aesthetic was intentional. These factories of the future were designed to look like buildings on a college campus, which is to say, Stanford. The Stanford Industrial Park (later, the Stanford Research Park) set the visual standard from its founding in 1951 onward. There were rules governing which parts of the industrial apparatus could be visible, so as not to detract from the idea that these were locations for scholars, not laborers.

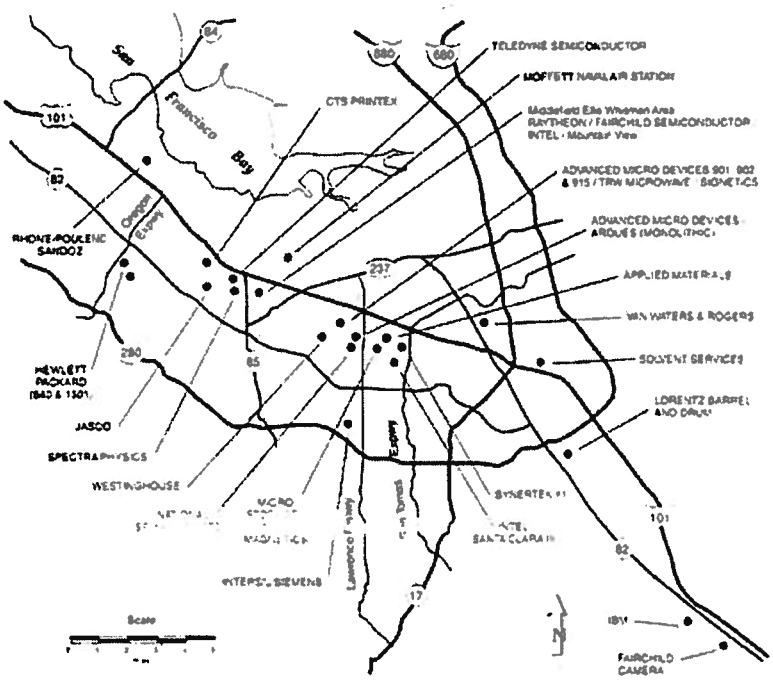
"Companies had to follow strict building codes, which included 'complete concealment' of things like smokestacks, generators, transformers, ducts, storage tanks, and air conditioning equipment," environmental historian Aaron Sachs wrote in 1999.

Other municipalities wanted to encourage similar developments, and as Sachs concludes, "Stanford Industrial Park essentially replicated itself several times over--each time spurring the construction of new expressways and strip malls in neighboring areas." What began as Stanford dean and Silicon Valley godfather Fred Terman's dream to build "a community of technical scholars" in pleasant industrial parks became the architectural standard for the entire high-tech manufacturing world.

But the manicured look and feel had consequences. Storage tanks were placed underground, out of sight and out of mind. Until suddenly, in 1981, people in south San Jose living near Fairchild

Semiconductor and IBM realized they were drinking water contaminated by the two firms' manufacturing plants.

That touched off a search to see if similar leaks were occurring at other sites. "Anyone who looked for leaks found them," Will Bruhns of the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Board told the San Francisco Chronicle in 2004. The final count found that 75 of the 96 underground tanks in the south Bay had contaminated the ground and/or water around them.



Superfund sites in the South Bay (California Regional Water Quality Control Board).

Before the leaks were found, underground chemical storage was not regulated by any level of government. Or, in the current industry parlance, the semiconductor industry was regulating itself. And their methods for preventing and detecting leaks of known toxic chemicals were recklessly, absurdly ineffective.

Planet Granite is located on a site contaminated by Philips Semiconductor. So is Lowe's. The empty octagonal glass building is a TRW Microwave Superfund site. I'd been walking on a paved-over environmental disaster zone, colonized by whoever wanted to benefit from lower leasing prices and a lack of NIMBY opponents.

There are six Superfund sites within a couple miles where the Super Space Self-Storage now stands. Shockingly, Santa Clara County has more Superfund sites than any other county in the nation. By comparison, the entire state of Illinois only has 13.

The cluster of contaminated sites, with the plume extending upwards in the are labeled "Offsite Operable Unit" (California Regional Water Quality Board).

The contamination at the AMD site at Thompson is not the worst in the Valley. Toxic chemicals only reached aquifers near the surface, and did not hit the public water supply. Nonetheless, beginning in July of 1983 with the discovery of volatile organic compounds in both soil and water at the site, remediation began. The main contaminant of concern was tricholoroethene (TCE). Leaking acid neutralization systems were removed along with 217 cubic yards of soil. Groundwater was pumped out and through filtration systems with first one well, then three, then five. Thirty-eight more wells pump the commingled contamination from the AMD, Phillips, and TRW Microwave sites. They run roughly east-west along Duane Avenue, Carmel Avenue, Alvarado Avenue, and Highway 101. All this water gets released back into the water table after it is treated.

The cleanup effort is massive. From the mid-1980s through 2008, 231 million gallons of groundwater were pumped up and treated. Beginning in 2005 (around the time the company sold the site to the people who built Super Space Self Storage), AMD began to deploy in-situ bioremediation, after realizing that the efficiency of the groundwater pumping system was declining. In essence, molasses (literally, molasses) is pumped into the subsurface to feed colonies of microbes, who can degrade TCE into harmless compounds.

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board judged the bioremediation a success; it has managed to reduce TCE concentrations by 90 percent, though the process is on-going, according to the lead project manager with the Water Board, Max Shahbacian.

"They are doing whatever they can," Shahbacian told me. "Some of that contamination you can't capture. Some is stuck to the clay soils. Some has gone off site. They are cleaning it up as best they can."

"A lot of the big companies, except the big oil companies, they are pretty good about cleaning up," he said. "They've been cleaning this site for many years and they're going to continue to doing that."

So, 30 years after the contamination was discovered in July 1983, it's probable that what remains of the plume of chemicals is unlikely to contaminate groundwater. A victory for our age.

* * *

And in the meantime, the people who live here are creating the lives they want on the carcass of this old industrial system, whether that's DIY biotech labs, south Indian restaurants, California University Silicon Valley, rock climbing gyms, or Chinese evangelical training facilities.

What we see here is not simple suburbia. This is a landscape that industrialists, government regulators, and city planners sacrificed to create the computer industry that we know today. It has as much in common with a coal mine or the Port of Oakland as it does with Levittown or Google's campus. All of which should lead us to a simple conclusion: the Silicon Valley of today is a *post-industrial landscape*, like the lofts near downtowns across the country, like Lansing, Michigan, like Williamsburg, like Portland's Pearl District.

What we see now is a surreal imitation of the suburban industrial parks and commercial spaces of yesteryear. They're built atop the past's mistakes, erasing them from our maps and eyes.

And yet, as the humans eat dosas and climb fake mountains and learn acupuncture and buy lap dances, beneath the asphalt and concrete, the microbes eat toxic waste sweetened with molasses, cleaning up our mistakes.

A revolution began here. And this is what's left over.

This article available online at:

http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/07/not-even-silicon-valley-escapes-history/277824/

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Officials approve controversial Plan Bay Area as Marin opponents turn out for Oakland vote

Posted: marinij.com

Members of the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transmission Commission voted early Friday to pass Plan Bay Area and its accompanying environmental impact report. The votes on both documents were virtually unanimous.

In a vote after midnight, Marin County supervisors Steve Kinsey and Katie Rice voted yes on both, while Novato City Councilwoman Pat Eklund abstained from voting on both Plan Bay Area and the impact report.

In an email following his vote, Kinsey wrote: "I voted 'yes' on the plan knowing that it doesn't reduce local control over land use. It actually commits the region to embrace long-standing principles reflected in Marin's protection of ag and open space, while encouraging limited new development along transit corridors.

"Voting 'no project' would not only be unlawful under state legislation, it would increase greenhouse gas impacts, sprawl and transit inefficiency," he wrote.

After months of discussion and half a dozen public meetings in Marin County alone, the regional transportation and land/use housing plan ignited a storm of controversy in Marin.

Vocal opponents of Plan Bay Area were vying with supporters of the plan and those who want more emphasis on mass transit Thursday night as officials were prepared to take a final vote on the proposal. Public speakers were limited to one minute.

When her turn came, Susan Kirsch, one of the co-founders of Citizen Marin, called all the opponents in the hall to join her at the podium.

"This plan has been wrong from the beginning," Kirsch said. "You don't represent us. What we demand is the right to vote."

Linda Rames of Mill Valley, who also spoke, said, "You are so cynical that you don't care about the municipalities that you represent."

Kevin Krick, a leading member of the Marin Republican Party, said, "This plan will not reduce greenhouse gases. It is clearly a social engineering experiment."

While expecting defeat, Marin opponents were out in force to watch their local representatives cast their votes.

Citizen Marin, the coalition of Marin neighborhood groups that united to oppose Plan Bay Area, chartered a 48-seat Marin Airporter bus to shuttle plan opponents to the meeting, which took place in the 500-seat exhibition hall of the Oakland Marriott hotel in downtown Oakland.

Passengers included: Corte Madera Mayor Diane Furst, Larkspur Mayor Dan Hillmer, Sausalito

Councilwoman Linda Pfeifer, former Fairfax mayor Frank Egger, supervisorial candidate Toni Shroyer and Randy Warren, who is running for a seat on the San Rafael City Council.

The decision on the plan was up to the Association of Bay Area Governments' 38-member executive board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's 21 commissioners. Both groups include elected public officials from throughout the nine-county Bay Area. Rice and Eklund serve on ABAG's executive board; Kinsey is a MTC commissioner.

A collaboration of four regional government agencies, Plan Bay Area sets out housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008. The state law requires each of California's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks 30 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050.

The plan seeks to channel 80 percent of the Bay Area's housing growth and 66 percent of its job growth into "priority development areas." These are areas typically located along existing traffic corridors, near mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money.

Opponents of the plan, such as Citizen Marin, assert that it robs counties and cities of their control over land-use decisions and will result in high-density apartment developments that will degrade Marin's pristine environment and erode its small-town character. But another group of Marin residents, Concerned Marinites to End NIMBYism, have defended Plan Bay Area, asserting that opponents of the plan are really worried that the creation of higher-density, more affordable housing will attract lower-income, more ethnically diverse residents to the county.

Responding to a drumbeat of criticism from Citizen Marin and other opponents, county supervisors last week voted unanimously to withdraw Marinwood and Tamalpais Valley from consideration as "priority development areas."

Opponents of Marinwood's participation in Plan Bay Area have launched an effort to recall Supervisor Susan Adams. Randy Warren, a businessman and San Rafael attorney, has said his opposition to Plan Bay Area motivated him to run for San Rafael City Council in November.

It was clear at Thursday's meeting that officials have been listening to the criticism of Plan Bay Area. One of the revisions to the plan underlined the fact that it will not rob local jurisdictions of their control over land-use decisions.

The plan was altered to read: "Adoption of Plan Bay Area does not mandate any changes to local zoning, general plans, or project review. The region's cities, towns, and counties will maintain control of all decisions to adopt plans and permit or deny development projects."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

John Horgan: One size does not fit all along the Peninsula

By John Horgan San Mateo County Times San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

Despite the persistent desires of some influential social planners, one size does not fit all.

Recently, there has been considerable angst along the Peninsula on regional government mandates on housing construction that is designed to accommodate anticipated population growth.

The Association of Bay Area Governments, in concert with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, has come up with a plan to encourage building future dwelling units as close to mass transit routes as possible.

Communities that comply with the dictates of what is called "Plan Bay Area" would be provided with taxpayer-funded grants. Last month, the proposal was approved by officials of both ABAG and MTC. Not everyone is thrilled. You don't have to look far to see why some folks are unhappy.

Massive, new apartment buildings near SamTrans and Caltrain routes are the antithesis of what the suburbs were once all about.

These huge structures, many of them bulky and unattractive eyesores that have been foisted on an unaware populace, amount to urbanization run amok.

Fortunately, not all Peninsula towns are on board with this stark alteration of the local landscape. Take Hillsborough for example.

That leafy hamlet of about 3,000 pricey homes is not buying into Plan Bay Area, although city authorities are watching the proceedings carefully as you might imagine.

According to Hillsborough Director of Building and Planning Elizabeth Cullinan, the town's regulations allow for a minimum lot size of at least a half-acre. Only single-family homes -- the second quarter median sale price of which was $2.6 million -- are permitted.

Hillsborough does not contain apartments, condominiums or commercial structures of any kind. Sidewalks and stoplights are few and far between.

Plan Bay Area simply would not work there, even though the eastern border of the burg is located on or near El Camino Real, a major SamTrans bus corridor.

Cullinan noted that Hillsborough has worked with ABAG on its proposal. "We participated in the process," she said. "We were speaking for ourselves. There doesn't seem to be a problem."

That's encouraging. Suburban communities that desire to maintain their individual character ought to be able to do so without any sort of high-minded intimidation by environmental activists or anyone else with an aggressive agenda.

Sensitive buzzword

Speaking of forced change, the movement to mandate more diversity, simply for its own sake, on a variety of local governing boards, including the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, is picking up steam.

The emphasis, at least so far, seems to be on the key matter of racial or ethnic balance. But, surely, there is more to this simple buzzword than that.

Different backgrounds also involve such characteristics as religion, gender, marital status, affluence (or lack of same), profession, education, etc.

The issue of race or ethnicity is important and, certainly, any number of legal rulings have emphasized that point. But other factors ought to have a bearing on the diversity question too. Qualifications should also play a key role.

Otherwise it's a disservice to everyone. Competence ought to trump everything else.

John Horgan's column appears Thursday. You can contact him by email at johnhorganmedia@gmail.com.or by regular mail at P.O. Box 117083, Burlingame, CA 94011.

Plan Bay Area

Ezra Rapport, ABAG Executive | Posted: Friday, September 6, 2013 12:00 am

Last July, local elected officials on the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Executive Board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) voted to adopt Plan Bay Area, the region's first integrated transportation and land-use strategy. The Plan, developed to meet the requirements of SB 375, seeks to accommodate needed housing growth and transportation investments within the nine counties, while decreasing per capita greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. It also recognizes that the Bay Area's enviable economy cannot grow without building new housing in transit corridors close to the region's major employment centers.

Contrary to what some opponents claim, Plan Bay Area is locally driven, with local jurisdictions defining where they wish to see future housing, retail, office and mixed-use development. As part of the Plan, Livermore elected officials nominated the Livermore Downtown Specific Plan Area as a Priority Development Area (PDA). This PDA supports new housing, streetscape and pedestrian enhancements, employment and retail, and improved access to transit. The PDA is complemented by the locally nominated North Livermore and South Livermore Valley Priority Conservation Area, which was designed to preserve open space and agricultural land. Land within this conservation area serves as an important wildlife habitat and corridor, buffers waterways and regional parks and protected areas, provides an open space separation between the Cities of Livermore and Pleasanton, and supports an array of agricultural uses. Land protection in this area can help maintain these resources for the long-term.

A Priority Development Area (PDA) designation does not change any local zoning, general plans, or land use controls. That is why local residents will continue to have the same voice in determining local land use decisions as they've always had. Livermore residents that don't live in a PDA will notice little if any change. If anything, the Plan should improve their quality of life. Why?

Parts of the Bay Area—Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose—are already planning for more housing near jobs and transit to meet their projected job and population growth. Focusing more of the region's new housing in larger urban areas allows us to take some of the pressure off of smaller towns and rural areas allowing them to focus on preserving small town character, open space and farmland.

This type of long-range planning for the needs of future generations is essential to protect our economy and our quality of life. Plan Bay Area does not have any impact on property rights and it will not force residents to move from single-family homes or give up their cars. Rather, it provides

more options for the range of people that live here now by considering connections to transit, housing for all income ranges, proximity to jobs, and open space. It also provides more choices for your children and grandchildren whether they choose to live in a single family home or an apartment and whether they choose to take public transit or drive their own cars.

Plan Bay Area is a work in progress, because we are required to update and revise it every four years, allowing us to learn from local best practices and new information. We look forward to developing additional ways to engage and involve the public when we revisit this process again in 2015. To learn more about Plan Bay Area, visit http://www.onebayarea.org/.

ABAG is the official regional planning agency for the nine counties and 101 cities and towns of the Bay Area. Formed by local government leaders in 1961, it is recognized as the first council of governments in California.

Marin Voice: Plan Bay Area is not one size fits all

Posted: marinij.com

PLAN BAY AREA will fit into Marin County and the rest of the Bay Area in very different ways.

In Marin, the plan supports the continued preservation of existing neighborhoods and small town characteristics that make the county so unique. It also ensures that all housing and land-use decisions remain at the local level where they belong.

This may come as a surprise to some given all the recent uproar.

Some background is necessary.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) was formed in 1961 to assure that any regional planning body would be controlled by local governments rather than the state or federal government. Since then ABAG has provided a forum for the discussion and study of regional issues and to develop policy recommendations.

Today, 50-plus years later, we continue that mission, led by a 38-member executive board made up of elected city council members, mayors and county supervisors.

Plan Bay Area, a state requirement under SB 375, looks to the year 2040 and charts a course for the Bay Area's first-ever Sustainable Communities Strategy. It seeks to accommodate needed housing growth and transportation investments within the nine counties, while at the same time decreasing greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks.

What does this mean for Marin County?

Plan Bay Area acknowledges where growth is anticipated using areas called Priority Development Areas (PDAs), which are neighborhoods where city councils and boards of supervisors believe that future growth brings positive amenities to their individual communities. A PDA designation does not change any local zoning, general plans or land-use controls.

Other parts of the Bay Area, using the plan criteria, are planning for more housing near jobs and transit, with many more units slated for the South Bay, Alameda County and San Francisco to meet higher projected job and population growth. This works because of our regional ability to discuss how and where housing should go.

What the plan does NOT do, is remove local control over where housing or other buildings can be built by developers, OR change local zoning to require high-rise development, OR demolish existing single-family homes.

Plan Bay Area is not radical, it is incremental, long-range planning that accommodates and recognizes the need to plan for future growth in very different ways. It recognizes that what Marin will look like in the coming decades is very different from what San Francisco and Oakland will look like.

What comes next?

Plan Bay Area is locally driven, with local voices defining where they want to see additional housing, retail, office and mixed-use development in their communities. Toward that end, starting in January 2014, local towns, cities and counties can add new PDAs, or modify, or remove previous PDAs. For instance, the Marin County Board of Supervisors recently informed us that they voted to remove both the Marinwood and Tam Junction neighborhoods from the potential Highway 101 Corridor PDA previously nominated.

We are happy to make that change to accommodate local decision makers.

Plan Bay Area will be revised in four years, allowing us to develop additional ways to engage and involve the public from the very beginning. We look forward to that effort, which begins again in 18 months.

Ezra Rapport is executive director of the Association of Bay Area Governments.

DAILY REPUBLIC

Friday, August 30, 2013 FAIRFIELD-SUISUN, CALIFORNIA

Plan Bay Area supports economy, environment, choices

By Linda Seifert

From page A9 | August 18, 2013 | 4 Comments

Local elected officials on the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission voted last month to adopt Plan Bay Area, the region's first integrated transportation and land-use strategy.

The plan, developed to meet the requirements of Senate Bill 375, seeks to accommodate needed housing growth and transportation investments within the nine Bay Area counties, while decreasing per capita greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. It also recognizes that the Bay Area's enviable economy cannot grow without building new housing in transit corridors close to the region's major employment centers.

With Solano County's population of 413,786 projected to increase 24 percent between 2010 and 2040, Plan Bay Area's proposed growth and conservation strategies aim to improve travel time from home to work and to schools while also improving access to open space, active recreation and services.

Contrary to what some opponents claim, Plan Bay Area is locally driven, with local jurisdictions defining where they wish to see future housing, retail, office and mixed-use development.

As part of the plan, elected officials from Solano's cities nominated 11 priority development areas including Vallejo's downtown and waterfront transit hub, the neighboring downtowns of Fairfield and Suisun City, and Vacaville's historic district. These areas are where local officials believe future growth brings positive amenities to their communities. The priority development areas are complemented by locally nominated priority conservation areas, which were designed to preserve open space and agricultural land.

A priority development area designation does not change any local zoning, general plan or land use controls. That is why local residents will continue to have the same voice in determining local land use decisions as they've always had. Solano County residents that don't live in a priority development area will notice little if any change. If anything, the plan should improve their quality of life.

Why?

Parts of the Bay Area – Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose – are already planning for more housing near jobs and transit to meet their projected job and population growth. Focusing more of the region's new housing in larger urban areas allows us to take some of the pressure off of smaller towns and rural areas, allowing them to focus on preserving small-town character, open space and farmland.

This type of long-range planning for the needs of future generations is essential to protect our economy and our quality of life. Plan Bay Area does not have any impact on property rights and it will not force residents to move from single-family homes or give up their cars.

Rather, it provides more options for the range of people who live here now by considering connections to transit, housing for all income ranges, proximity to jobs, and open space. It also provides more choices for your children and grandchildren whether they choose to live in a single-family home or an apartment and whether they choose to take public transit or drive their own cars.

Finally, attracting more jobs and revenue to Solano County will depend on our ability to better connect our employment centers with new housing and transportation investments and doing so in ways that reduce commuter traffic. As we implement the plan, focusing on our priority development areas, we will also be developing new strategies to mitigate traffic congestion on Interstate 80 and increase the efficiency of tracks serving both freight trains and commuter trains along the Capital Corridor (e.g. adding passing tracks).

Plan Bay Area is a work in progress, because we are required to update and revise it every four years, allowing us to learn from local best practices and new information. We look forward to developing additional ways to engage and involve the public when we revisit this process again in 2015.

To learn more about Plan Bay Area, visit www.onebayarea.org/.

Linda Seifert is chairwoman of the Solano County Board of Supervisors. The Association of Bay Area Governments is the official regional planning agency for the nine counties and 101 cities and towns of the Bay Area. Formed by local government leaders in 1961, it is recognized as the first council of governments in California.Seifert sits on the association's executive board.

Dave Cortese: Plan Bay Area makes sense for South Bay growth

By Dave Cortese Special to the Mercury News San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

What does Plan Bay Area, the recently adopted regional transportation and land-use strategy through 2040, mean for South Bay residents?

The Bay Area is as unique as its rural towns, urban centers and open space. We can choose our lifestyles, from beachfront housing to urban centers, suburban tracts to farms and ranches. Long-range planning for the needs of future generations is essential to protect our economy and quality of life.

With the Bay Area population projected to grow from 7 million to 9 million people, local elected officials and regional agencies developed Plan Bay Area by asking local cities and counties where and how they wanted to grow over the next three decades. Local governments working with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) nominated Priority Development Areas, as well as areas that they wanted to preserve, such as single family neighborhoods, open space and agricultural land. As a result, the Plan helps preserve small-town character and open space and maintains what makes our cities and towns unique. It also considers areas where local jurisdictions want to improve and expand housing near transit, jobs, and services.

Santa Clara County's bustling regional nodes like San Jose, job centers like Palo Alto and areas such as Milpitas that are planning for new mass transit connecting the East Bay to the South Bay will continue to thrive under this plan. Rural areas will continue to enjoy their local town character and the nuances that make them unique.

The Bay Area currently contains about 2.1 million single family homes. Under Plan Bay Area, by 2040 there will be about 2.3 million single family homes, 200,000 more than today.

In larger urban areas closer to jobs, more new housing will be available to help people make connections and reduce commute times and improve their quality of life. Focusing more of the region's new housing in these urban areas allows us to take some of the pressure off smaller towns and rural areas. The Bay Area contains about 1.1 million multifamily units, which will increase to about 1.5 million units in 2040. Much of this housing will be built in the region's larger cities.

Santa Clara County has 1.8 million residents with unique housing and transportation needs. The Plan provides options for the range of people who live here by considering connections to transit, housing for all income ranges, proximity to jobs and open space. Cities with larger employment nodes function better when workers are able to take transit to work. This reduces pressure on highways and reduces downtown congestion.

There is evidence to suggest that industries, in addition to locating at employment campuses, are interested in locating in highly functional city centers. An important element of Plan Bay Area will be to improve the connection from the East Bay to San Jose with new BART extension.

As a result of Plan Bay Area, many things will stay the same, and planning for new development will be coordinated in a supportive way.

The Plan was developed to meet the requirements of California's landmark 2008 Senate Bill 375. In two years Plan Bay Area will be revisited to make sure it is on track and adjusted as needed. It is not a static document but a work in progress.

Dave Cortese represents District 3 on the Santa Clara County Supervisor and is immediate past president of A BAG. He wrote this for this newspaper.

Orinda affordable housing plan disputed

By Jennifer Modenessi Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

ORINDA -- City leaders are moving forward with fine-tuning a fiercely debated housing plan amid calls from some residents to start the whole process anew and get more community input.

Council members took no action this week to adopt the draft "housing element," a state-required plan that shows how the city can accommodate future housing for residents at all income levels. However, they received a status update from city staffers, who reviewed the process some residents and community groups argue is tainted by a lack of transparency and with issues with the draft's submittal to the state.

Officials also heard more than two hours of public comment on the draft before agreeing on revisions -- including some suggested by community group Orinda Watch who say the draft contains "commitments" not required to comply with state law -- about references to a general plan update and rent-controlled second units. The draft needs to be finalized, reviewed for environmental compliance and adopted by the city council before a January deadline. It will then head to the California Department of Housing and Community Development for certification.

Since 1969, state law has required all local governments have an updated "housing element" in their general plan to accommodate future housing needs. Orinda's draft element outlines how the city is planning for the 218 very low-, low-, moderate- and above moderate income housing units it is required to zone for in the 2007-14 housing plan to meet the "regional housing needs allocation," managed by the Association of Bay Area Governments.

The city must also show the state how it will accommodate an additional 64 very-low and low income units -- including some carried over from the previous planning cycle. HCD is requiring Orinda to zone those units to receive what would be the first housing element certification in the city's history. Staffers have suggested the low-income units could be accommodated on a 3.2-acre site near Santa Maria Church zoned for residential multifamily development at a density of 10 units per acre. The city -- which has proposed increasing the density to 20 units per acre -- now says up to 25 units per acre are needed at the Diocese of Oakland-owned site to fulfill state requirements.

On Tuesday, the church's administrator said that while there are no plans to sell, develop or change the Santa Maria site, the diocese supports social services.

"I myself and the diocese have worked together with various organizations to provide senior low-income housing in both Alameda and Contra Costa counties," said Father Robert Herbst. "We do not object to meeting the needs of affordable housing in the entire Bay Area, but I do ask that it's done in a very open and collaborative manner."

Residents questioned the density change and other issues, including the city's process for submitting the draft element to the state. Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu attempted to detail that process in a timeline he presented to the council.

Opponents argue Ursu and city consultant Barry Miller submitted an "official" draft element for state review

without council authorization and public input. Some opponents have been urging the consultant's removal and want an independent investigation.

Ursu says the state received in June a revised "working draft" that incorporated council direction given at earlier public meetings -- some dating back two years -- in response to HCD comments on the draft element submitted December 2010 that did not meet certification requirements.

"HCD did not receive a draft housing element before public comment and council direction was provided," Ursu said in an e-mail.

The planning director also told the council Miller has completed his work and is too busy to continue consulting for the city.

As they have at previous meetings, Orinda Watch members and other residents repeated appeals that the city withdraw the housing element plan and assemble an ad hoc committee of residents and community group members to develop a new draft. A spokesman also denied claims that the group is preparing to sue the city over the housing element.

"We find ourselves in a process that's all screwed up, that's not credible," said resident Chris Kniel. "The only way forward to fix this thing is to have a citizen's commission of qualified people." Council members did not address the request.

HCD spokesman Eric Johnson said that agency has a tentative Aug. 27 date to meet with Orinda Watch to hear the group's concerns. Johnson said the department makes decisions in concert with local governments, and does review the public participation component if necessary.

The council will meet again Sept. 17 to discuss the draft. The city still needs to conduct an environmental review of the housing element and approve the Santa Maria housing density change before the element can be adopted.

halfwaytoconcord.com
http://www.halfwaytoconcord.com/orinda-urges-residents-to-build-low-incoming-housing-in-their-backyards/

Orinda urges residents to build low-incoming housing in their backyards

Richard Colman

We hope your good neighbor fence is sturdy. A law concerning the mandatory movement of low-income Californians into wealthier areas is cited in a report recently released in Orinda. On June 18, 2013, top Orinda officials released the report which describes plans to place low-income people in all parts of Orinda. The report states that so-called "second units" (like guest homes) could be utilized for low-income housing in Orinda.

The Orinda report was released as a "City Council Staff Report." Signing the report were Janet Keeter, Orinda's city manager, and Emmanuel Ursu, the city's director of planning.

According to the report, California law "requires every county and city in the state" to have a plan to house low-income individuals. The report does not limit low-income housing to Orinda's downtown area.

The report notes that between 2007 and 2014, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), a regional government body, has assigned Orinda the task of creating 118 units for low-income people. Of these 118 units, 35 are for "extremely low" income individuals, another 35 are for "very low" income people, and 48 units for "low" income persons.

The report states that Orinda "could accommodate . . . the construction of 530 additional single family dwelling units . . . "

The report says that newly built second units on existing residential Orinda property "would be affordable to very low, low, and moderate income households." The report adds that [t]here are numerous homes in the City that have existing floor space with the potential for conversion to a legal second unit."

The report recommends that "the City explore a program to permit second units on lots where they are not currently allowed today . . . "

The report lists the Orinda city manager's office and the city's planning department as the "Responsible Parties" for the following statement: "The City recognizes second units as an essential part of Orinda's affordable housing supply . . . "

According to the report, "Second units are an important part of the City's affordable housing supply and are often rented at rates that are affordable to low and very low income households." The report adds: "To make such a program [low-income housing] viable for the homeowner, there must be an incentive to maintaining below market rents and limiting occupancy to qualifying households."

The report does not cover how putting more low-income people in Orinda might affect property values or schools in the city.

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Orindans battle over state-required housing element

By Jennifer Modenessi Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times
Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

ORINDA -- Outrage over how the city of Orinda plans to accommodate future housing for residents of all income levels to meet state requirements is reaching a boiling point. Now, a number of angry residents -- and some out-of-towners -- are demanding the city withdraw its "housing element" from state review and form a citizen's committee to come up with a plan they say reflects what residents want.

Members of the group Orinda Watch told the city council Tuesday that they want them to address a list of requests that includes the withdrawal of the draft housing element from state review; a review of the plan by Orinda residents, and its "correction" and resubmittal to the California Department of Housing and Community Development, which certifies the element. The group also said an online petition has garnered hundreds of signatures from people supporting its demands.

"Orinda Watch requests that these issues be put on the Aug. 6 city council agenda and at that meeting, the city council and staff provide complete and satisfactory responses to the concerns of Orinda Watch and the citizens of Orinda regarding these matters," said resident Rusty Snow.

Snow and others have for weeks pressed the city to address their concerns about the state-mandated housing element, which was submitted in June. Some residents are arguing the city is planning to change Orinda's general plan to rezone portions of downtown and allow higher density housing there. They also claim the city wants to increase the residential zoning density from 10 units per acre to 20 units per acre, and rezone a site near Santa Maria Church to at least 20 units per acre to permit high density housing there. Other people argue that the housing element process hasn't been transparent.

The remarks, like those made at past meetings, came during a period of public comment on non-agendized items. City rules do not allow council members to respond to issues that are not on the agenda for discussion.

However, Councilman Steve Glazer did attempt to address concerns about the housing element process and the council's input. He also tried to clarify that a draft had been submitted and no final decisions made. City Manager Janet Keeter said staff had received direction from the council at various points, and had updated officials on what had been submitted.

Glazer also asked whether the council has any obligation to do anything that has been submitted to the state. Keeter said the council did not.

Council members have not asked staffers to place Orinda Watch's request on an upcoming agenda, but Keeter did say Wednesday that staff does intend to bring matters on the housing element and process back to the council. She did not give a timeline.

State law requires that all local governments have a "housing element," a plan to accommodate future residential development, in their general plans, and that those plans be updated every eight years. Orinda's document must show how the city plans to accommodate housing for the "regional housing needs allocation," managed by the Association of Bay Area Governments. That needs allocation is

income-based and provides projections for market-, moderate-, low- and very low income housing. The city is required to show it can provide land for -- but not build -- 218 housing units in the 2007-14 housing needs allocation cycle.

The certification would be Orinda's first.

State HCD officials notified the city June 12 that the draft housing element is in compliance, but the city will have to zone for a carry-over of housing units not included in the previous element. HCD spokesman Eric Johnson explained that the department assumes Orinda will zone for the 28-unit shortfall in the final housing element it adopts.

Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu says the city plans to rezone a 3.2-acre parcel of land near Santa Maria Church to accommodate 20 units per acre of future housing there and fulfill that unmet need, as well as affordable housing in the current cycle. He said it is not the city's responsibility to develop the land, only to provide the zoning. The site is currently zoned for 6 to10 units per acre.

A spokesman with the Diocese of Oakland -- which owns the property -- said the diocese has no plans to change the use of the property and that it is studying the rezoning with their attorney.

Orinda must adopt the element before it can be certified by Jan. 31. Cities cannot opt out of the housing element, according to HCD.

Plan Bay Area critics find fault with government grant to Marin Grassroots

8/17/13

Posted:

marinij.com

Opponents of Plan Bay Area are upset after learning that the Association of Bay Area Governments this summer awarded a $56,750 grant to Marin Grassroots, a San Rafael nonprofit that works to boost the voice of underrepresented communities.

Randy Warren, who was motivated to run for San Rafael City Council due to his opposition to Plan Bay Area, has been circulating ABAG memos that discuss the grant. Warren says it was wrong for Marin Grassroots to receive a grant because it is advocating for the plan.

"The issue is that taxpayers have a right to know when their money is being used by the government to have third parties speak up in support of the government's own policies," Warren said.

John Young, executive director of Marin Grassroots, said his organization has not taken an official position on Plan Bay Area and added that the grant money, which came from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, was not to advocate for Plan Bay Area.

"We were not paid to support Plan Bay Area," Young said. "Our work is around minority participation in government and civic engagement. In Marin, there is a lack of minority representation on a lot of boards and commissions and other elected offices, and that is what we're funded to do, support getting people prepared to be involved on boards and commissions."

Miriam Chion, dirtector of planning and research at the Association of Bay Area Governments, said the decision to give the grant to Marin Grassroots was made by a committee that included a number of elected officials, as well as members of the business community.

"The intent of this grant is to support community stability and appropriate housing for the community," Chion said.

A collaboration of four regional government agencies, Plan Bay Area sets out housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which requires each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks — 7 percent per capita by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035.

Plan Bay Area aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets by requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be situated within some 200 "priority development areas."

Young and others held a press conference last month to assert that hostile behavior by opponents at public meetings to discuss Plan Bay Area was having a chilling effect on public debate.

He issued a statement that cited "ongoing disruptions and implicit racial threats of a growing mob of angry homeowners." A strongly worded press release said a "'lynch mob' opposed to fair housing" was paralyzing civil participation threatening to create "a civil rights state of emergency."

At the press conference, Marin County Planning Commissioner Ericka Erickson, who serves as associate

director of Marin Grassroots, said she felt intimidated by some interactions with housing foes. Erickson has spoken in support of Plan Bay Area at several public meetings, but she has also criticized the plan for not doing more to promote affordable housing.

Susan Kirsch, co-founder of Citizen Marin, a coalition of Marin neighborhood associations opposing Plan Bay Area, said, "It's a misguided use of funds to have more people who don't have means, and aren't living in a world of social justice, to get training to be rabble-rousers and make protest signs and create headlines that are inflammatory, rather than find a way to engage in the conversation."

Kirsch said she wasn't sure how much money Citizen Marin has raised to date. Peter Singleton of Larkspur, who co-founded Bay Area Citizens in March to oppose Plan Bay Area, said his organization has raised about $30,000, all from individuals.

"We don't disclose individual donors," Singleton said.

"By contrast," Singleton said, "on the other side there is this extensive ecosystem of nongovernmental organizations that are very well-funded to advocate for high density housing development and additional mass transit subsidies."

Bay Area Citizens is also receiving some valuable in-kind assistance from the Pacific Legal Foundation, based in Sacramento. Earlier this month, Bay Area Citizens filed suit in Alameda County Superior Court seeking to revoke approval of Plan Bay Area, and Pacific Legal Foundation is handling the case free of charge.

Pacific Legal Foundation declined to supply a list of its donors.

Harold Johnson, a spokesman for the foundation, said, "As a donor-supported, nonprofit public interest organization, we follow the practice of many nonprofits by honoring the privacy and confidentiality of our supporters and not releasing their names."

According to the Center for Media and Democracy, a nonprofit investigative reporting group, Pacific Legal Foundation is a right-wing public interest litigation firm in a network of similar organizations funded initially by Pittsburgh billionaire Richard Mellon Scaife to support capitalism and oppose environmental and health activism and government regulation.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Piedmont Patch

Affordable Piedmont? The Housing Element Challenge

The Piedmont City Council this week approved a contract with a planning consultant who will help find solutions.

Posted by Dixie Jordan (Editor), August 06, 2013 at 11:17 PM

How do you provide affordable housing in a town once known as the "City of Millionaires," where the median household income is $199,304 and only 2.5 percent of the residents are at or below the poverty level?

Where home ownership is more than 90 percent, and those homes have a median value over $1 million? Where fewer than 200 of the city's 3,924 housing units are in multi-unit structures? Where there's very little space to build anything new? (All figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2007-2011.)

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How do you do it in a way that's acceptable to the city's residents? And why?

The why is simple — it's state law. Every city is required to have a "General Plan," a sort of roadmap to its future. Part of the General Plan is a "housing element," described by the state as "a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. It sets forth local housing policies and programs to implement those policies."

But cities don't work in isolation on their housing elements. A regional Council of Governments — in the Bay Area it's the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) — decides how many units of housing each city in its area must plan for, and how many of those must be affordable at various income levels.

For Piedmont, for the period of 2007 to 2014, ABAG set that number at 40 units — a figure that started out much higher but was lowered after considerable negotiation between the state Department of Housing and Community Development and the city.

For 2015 through 2022, Piedmont's allocation is 60 affordable housing units: 24 units for "very low income" (50 percent or less of Alameda County's median income); 14 for

"low income (51 to 80 percent); 15 for :moderate income" (81 to 120 percent); and 7 for "above moderate income" (above 120 percent).

To update its housing element for the next eight-year period, and to show how Piedmont can accommodate 60 units of affordable housing, the city has hired an outside consultant, Barry J. Miller. The Piedmont City Council approved a $34,780 contract with Miller at its Aug. 5 meeting.

Miller also prepared Piedmont's last two housing elements and its 2009 General Plan, according to City Planner Kate Black.

To date, Piedmont has planned for affordable housing mainly through policies that allow adding second units — in-law apartments, even converted pool houses — to single-family homes throughout the city.

An ordinance approved last year provides incentives for home owners to rent second units at various income levels, ranging from "extremely low income" to "moderate," for several years. The incentives include less restrictive parking regulations for some income categories.

Miller, the planning consultant, told city council members Monday that some of the "incentive periods" for low to moderate income units will expire during the period from 2015 to 2022. Those second units could then be rented at market rates to tenants at any income level.

That means the city may need to plan for more than just 20 additional units of affordable housing, Miller said.

The city will hold at least one public workshop plus study sessions as work on the new housing element progresses, Black said.

She said regular updates will be posted to the City of Piedmont website.

For more information on the region's current housing plan, see ABAG's "San Francisco Bay Area Housing Needs Plan 2007-2014," a lavishly illustrated document that even includes a photo of the "Old Woman's Shoe" at the entrance to Children's Fairyland in Oakland.

Walnut Creek Patch

Bay Area Growth Plan Full of Hot Air, Lawsuit Contends

Plan Bay Area fails to consider "less restrictive" housing requirements, the lawsuit charges.

Posted by Jim Caroompas (Editor), August 07, 2013 at 07:29 AM

The Bay Area Plan is the subject of a lawsuit filed Tuesday.

The plan to reduce greenhouse gas in California by building high-density housing near BART stations in Walnut Creek and Lamorinda--approved last month by two regional agencies—violates state environmental law, according to a lawsuit filed Tuesday .

A conservative group called Pacific Legal Foundation argues that Plan Bay Area violates the California Environmental Quality Act because it fails to consider "less restrictive" housing requirements.

"Plan Bay Area's sardine strategy for development — its scheme to squeeze and stack people into high-density dwellings and business complexes — simply isn't needed to reach government air quality goals," said Damien Schiff, an attorney for the foundation.

Proponents of the plan, developed over three years by the Association for Bay Area Government and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, say that the anticipated growth in the Bay Area should be accommodated through the development of pedestrian-friendly areas that combine multi-story housing and retail near public transit. Such a plan, they say, will reduce the need for single-car commuting and the sprawl of single-family housing that encourages it.

But groups like Orinda Watch and Bay Area Citizens say the plan is nothing more than social engineering, dictating a kind of urban-based lifestyle that is inappropriate for quiet, upscale communities.

Local elected officials are not unanimous in their support for the plan.
"It is too early to say how beneficial, if at all, this will be for Walnut Creek or the Bay Area, but, in Walnut Creek, we have already seen a benefit from the establishment of Priority Development Areas," said councilman Bob Simmons, referring to the West Downtown Specific Plan now underway. That plan envisions "transit-oriented housing" near Walnut Creek BART.

Councilman Justin Wedel says the plan takes away a city's right to determine its own fate and imposes a regional agenda from unelected government agencies.

"The plan's one-size-fits all approach by definition removes our individuality and our ability to set our own direction, based on local control and our community needs," Wedel told Walnut Creek Patch.

Plan Bay Area is a regional response to a state law that requires communities to plan for growth in California through 2040, while reducing the level of greenhouse gases. The plan calls for multi-family housing to be constructed in "priority development areas," which in Lamorinda means mostly areas downtown near BART stations. In Orinda, there is also a move to increase the number of so-called in-law units in single family homes to accommodate the required mix of housing for moderate, low, and very low income residents.

SF Chronicle

Plan Bay Area adopted by regional planners

By Michael Cabanatuan **July 22, 2013**

Bay Area planning officials adopted a regional plan early Friday morning that aims to steer development toward urban areas near mass transit and stem suburban sprawl.

The votes by the boards of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments to approve what's known as Plan Bay Area concluded a seven-hour meeting crowded with sign-waving critics and a three-year process involving dozens of public hearings across the region.

The plan, through 2040, melds the association's regional housing plan with the commission's regional transportation plan, and is the Bay Area's attempt to satisfy state legislation that requires 18 metropolitan areas to develop strategies to house future population growth while reducing greenhouse gas emissions from cars.

Plan Bay Area lays out a strategy that encourages Bay Area cities and counties, which control land use, to put the majority of the 2 million additional people expected to move to the region in the next three decades in areas near public transportation. It establishes about 160 "priority development areas," zones cities and counties have identified for future growth, mostly denser development.

In walking distance

The areas are generally within walking distance of shopping, dining, recreation and public transportation, including rail stations. They include urban areas such as Mission Bay in San

Francisco, Oakland's Jack London Square and downtown San Jose as well as suburban centers including downtown San Rafael, Walnut Creek and Fairfield and Suisun City's waterfront.

The plan hopes to direct 77 percent of future growth to those areas with incentives including grants for affordable and higher-density housing and priority in receiving transportation funds not already committed for other uses.

The idea of encouraging denser development and greater use of public transportation has angered many conservative groups, particularly in Marin County and southern and eastern Alameda County who believe the plan is an effort to control development and eliminate the suburban lifestyle.

Critics showed up at Bay Area Plan meetings in increasing numbers as the plan rolled forward, and they dominated the crowd of about 400 at Thursday's meeting at the Oakland Marriott. Groups of opponents from Marin and San Jose chartered buses to the session. Many of them waved signs reading: "No Plan Bay Area," "One size doesn't fit all" and "Marxist Transportation Commission doesn't speak for me."

More than 120 people spoke at the hearing, most of them to blast the plan. Several insulted the commission and board members or pleaded with them to reject the plan, which they called unconstitutional and socialist.

Susan Kirsch a member of Marin Citizens, a group opposing the plan, marched to the podium with about 100 supporters waving signs.

"This plan has been wrong from the start," she said. "You don't represent me. You don't represent us. What we demand is the right to vote."

Backers outnumbered

Plan supporters, including transit, open space and clean air advocates, were outnumbered but argued that the region needs to cut air pollution and slow climate change, sentiments that drew

boos from the opponents. Many were younger people who argued that they want alternatives to cars.

"I represent a generation that doesn't want to drive everywhere," said Clarissa Cabansagan, transportation advocate for TransForm, a regional transit advocacy group.

Adoption of the plan probably won't stop the fight over it. Critics plan to sue, challenging its constitutionality. And since the plan needs to be updated every four years, planners will soon be starting over.

Michael Cabanatuan is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: mcabanatuan@sfchronicle.com Twitter: **@ctuan**

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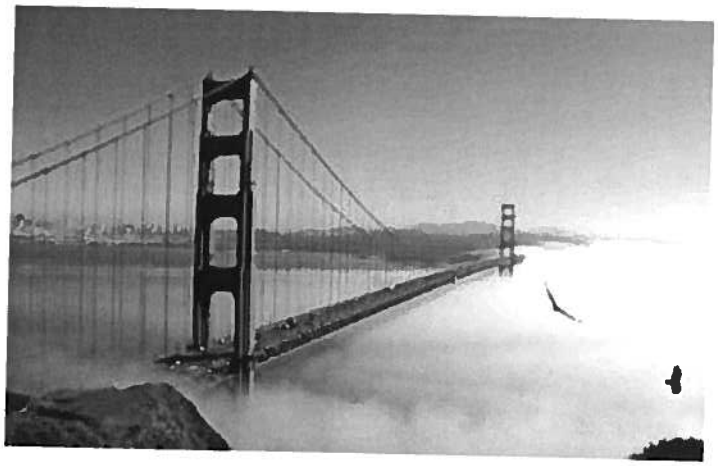
'Plan Bay Area' an Authoritarian Intrusion Into Housing Decisions

August 30, 2013

Wendell Cox



The San Francisco area's recently adopted Plan Bay Area may set a new standard for urban planning excess.

Plan Bay Area, which covers nearly all of the San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Rosa, Vallejo and Napa metropolitan areas, was recently adopted by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). This article summarizes the difficulties with Plan Bay Area, which are described more fully in my policy report prepared for the Pacific Research Institute (*Evaluation of Plan Bay Area*).

Plan Bay Area would produce only modest greenhouse gas emissions reductions, while imposing substantial economic costs and intruding in an unprecedented manner into the lives of residents. The Plan would require more than three quarters of new residences and one third of net additional employment to be located in confined "priority development areas."

These measures have been referred to as "pack and stack" by critics. The net effect would be to virtually ban development on the urban fringe, where the organic expansion of cities has occurred since the beginning of time.

Irrational Planning

Violating perhaps the most fundamental requirement of a rational plan, Plan Bay Area begins with a situation that no longer exists. Further, it is based on exaggeration,

systematic disregard of official federal government projections, and overly optimistic planning assumptions.

Exaggerated Population Projection: The Plan assumes that the Bay Area will grow 55 percent more rapidly between 2010 and 2040 than official California state Department of Finance population projections indicate. These state-produced estimates have themselves tended to be on the high side. The planners scurried about to resolve these differences, but there is no indication that the state will be revising its projections.

Plan Bay Area's population projection would require growth in the Bay Area to increase by more than one-half from the 2000-2010 annual rate. The exaggeration of population growth has its uses: It leads to a higher greenhouse gas emissions projection for 2040, providing a rationale for stronger policy interventions.

Ignoring Current Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections: The Plan also ignores the new, more favorable DOE fuel economy projections. These projections were issued in December, well before the publication of the draft plan in April and the adoption of the final plan in July. Indeed, if the new DOE projections had been published the day before, Plan Bay Area should have been placed on hold and revised. In short, Plan Bay Area was out of date when adopted.

Overly Optimistic Planning Assumptions: The Plan assumes travel by light vehicle (automobiles, sport utility vehicles and pickups) would be reduced by substantial increases in transit ridership. Plan Bay Area presumes that expanding transit service 27 percent over the next 30 years will lead to a near doubling of transit ridership. This is stupefying, since over the last 30 years transit ridership remained virtually the same, while service was expanded nearly twice as much as would be planned from 2010 to 2040.

The plan also assumes that residents forced into the priority development areas will use transit and walking much more, materially reducing their use of light vehicles. The research behind this assumption is skewed toward transit-oriented developments located on rail lines with good access to downtown. But nearly nine out of 10 employees in the Bay Area work *outside* the downtowns of San Francisco and Oakland, and that number is increasing (according to Plan Bay Area).

Given recent history, it seems wishful thinking to believe that small transit service expansions and downtown-oriented transit development can do much to attract drivers from cars. The modest gains in greenhouse gas emissions reductions projected in Plan Bay Area are likely exaggerations.

Plan Bay Area's "pack and stack" densification is likely to produce even less than the modest substitution of transit and walking for driving (see *The Transit-Density Disconnect*). Traffic congestion, in this already highly congested area, is likely to be worsened, which could nullify part or all of the greenhouse gas emission reductions expected from reduced vehicle use.

Dubious Forecasts

Plan Bay Area would only modestly reduce light-vehicle travel and greenhouse gas emissions. The "pack and stack" strategies that would force most new residents and jobs into priority development areas would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2 percent.

By contrast, correcting the Plan Bay Area 2040 population estimates to reflect the state population projections would reduce greenhouse gas emissions more than eight times as much (17 percent), *without* the "pack and stack" strategies. A further correction of the Plan Bay Area 2040 estimates to reflect the latest DOE fuel economy projections, would reduce greenhouse gas emissions 22 percent, 11 times as much as the "pack and stack" strategies.

High Household and Business Costs

The Plan's "pack and stack" strategies seem likely to exacerbate the Bay Area's already high cost of living. Currently, the San Francisco and San Jose metropolitan areas have the worst housing affordability among the nation's 52 metropolitan areas with more than 1 million residents.

San Jose's median house price relative to its median household income was 7.9 last year, according to the *Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey.* San Francisco's median multiple was 7.8. This severely unaffordable housing results from recent decades of urban containment or smart growth policies, which have severely restricted the land on which development can occur. This drives up prices (other things being equal), consistent with economic principle. This has been made worse by house and apartment impact fees imposed on developers that are far above the national average.

By comparison, in major metropolitan areas that have not implemented strong urban containment policies, the median multiple has typically been 3.0 or less since World War II, including the Bay Area before its adoption. The "pack and stack" strategies would largely limit new development to small parts of the Bay Area, an even more draconian prohibition than the long-standing restrictions on urban fringe development. This further rationing of land could be expected to drive land prices even higher, making it even more difficult for households and businesses to live within their means.

High Rates of Poverty

The problem is already acute. The new U.S. Census Bureau housing cost adjusted data show California to have the highest poverty rate among the states and the District of Columbia (metropolitan area data are not available). An early 2000s Public Policy Institute of California report showed Bay Area poverty to be nearly double the official rate, adjusted for the cost of living. Ultra-pricey San Francisco had among the 10 highest poverty rates – topping 20 percent – of any urban county in the country.

Unaffordable housing has also fueled an exodus to the San Joaquin Valley (Central Valley). Now more than 15 percent of the workers in the Stockton metropolitan area commute to the Bay Area, which led the Federal Office of Management and Budget adding Stockton to the San Jose-San Francisco combined metropolitan area (combined statistical area). In addition, the greater traffic congestion is likely to lengthen work trip travel times. This is likely to further increase greenhouse emissions while also burdening job creation and economic growth (see *Traffic Congestion, Time and Money*).

Opposite of Economic Objectives

Plan Bay Area effectively ignores these costs (despite rhetoric to the contrary), by failing to subject its strategies to a cost per ton metric. According to the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), sufficient greenhouse gas emissions reductions can be achieved at a cost between a range of $20 to $50 per ton. The previous regional plan (through 2035) included such estimates. Only highway strategies achieved the IPCC range. Transit and land use strategies cost from four to more than 100 times the top of the IPCC range. Even those estimates did not include the prohibitively higher housing costs that result from urban containment policies.

The cost metric is crucial, because spending more than necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions limits job creation and economic growth, which leads to reduced household affluence and greater poverty. This is the very opposite of the economic objectives of public policy. Virtually all political jurisdictions around the world seek greater prosperity for their residents and less poverty. A legitimate regional plan requires subjecting its strategies to economic metrics.

Opposition Response

There is opposition to Plan Bay Area. A citizen movement worked for rejection and has now filed suit claiming that the Plan violates the California Environmental Quality Act. The suit also alleges that MTC and ABAG used a questionable interpretation of state law and regulation to justify the irrational Plan outcomes.

Recorded Votes

Opponents were also successful in obtaining a rare recorded vote at ABAG. The governing board (General Assembly) is composed of *selected* elected officials from cities and counties who are not elected to their ABAG positions. ABAG adopts virtually all of its actions by consensus, rather by recorded votes, as occurs in many of the nation's regional planning boards.

Consensus decision making seem especially odd in California, where inability to obtain sufficient votes in the legislature for the state budget required a constitutional amendment. Neither do city councils and county commissions operate on a consensus basis on controversial issues.

There is no shortage of controversial issues, at ABAG or other regional planning agencies. ***A good first reform would be for recorded votes to be the rule, rather than the exception.*** Consensus decisionmaking may be appropriate for clubs, but it is not for representative bodies in a democracy (Note).

Expensive, Intrusive Policies

Plan Bay Area was outdated when approved and reflects a world that no longer exists. Drafters have insisted on extravagantly expensive and intrusive policies that produce only minimal greenhouse gas reductions at great cost using, among other things, unreasonably bloated population forecasts to bolster their approach.

Unless changed, the plan will likely be more successful in driving up housing prices, limiting options for families, and further congesting traffic than meeting its stated goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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Author bio:

Wendell Cox is a senior fellow of The Heartland Institute; a consultant to public and private public policy, planning and transportation organizations; and a visiting professor at a French national university. He is principal of Wendell Cox Consultancy, an international public policy firm. He has provided consulting assistance to the United States Department of Transportation and was certified by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration as an expert for the duration of its Public-Private Transportation Network program (1986-1993). He has consulted for public transit authorities in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand and for scores of public policy organizations.

Mr. Cox was appointed by Mayor Tom Bradley to three terms on the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission, where he authored the tax amendment that provided the initial funding for building light rail and the subway. He was elected chairman of the American Public Transit Association Planning and Policy Committee (comprised of transit planning department officials) and the American Public Transit Association Governing Boards Committee (comprise of transit board members).

More recently, Mr. Cox served three years as the Director of Public Policy of the American Legislative Exchange Council, where he oversaw the development of state model legislation and policy reports. In 1999, he was appointed to the Amtrak Reform Council by the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, to fill the unexpired term of New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman.

Mr. Cox is a prolific writer and popular public speaker. He is the author of scores of monographs and book chapters addressing urban sprawl and smart growth, transportation, mass transit, congestion, and demographic trends. He has addressed hundreds of audiences at major industry and academic conferences, international symposia, and government-sponsored seminars. He always receives high marks for his enthusiastic and challenging presentations.

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found online at http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2013/08/30/plan-bay-area-authoritarian-intrusion-housing-decisions

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Market Watch

July 19, 2013, 12:50 p.m. EDT

Plan Bay Area Charts Course for Stronger Economy, Cleaner Air

$292 Billion Transportation Blueprint

OAKLAND, Calif., Jul 19, 2013 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) last night adopted Plan Bay Area, an integrated transportation and land-use strategy through 2040 that marks the nine-county region's first long-range plan to meet the requirements of California's landmark 2008 Senate Bill 375, which calls on each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy to accommodate future population growth and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks. Working in collaboration with cities and counties, the Plan advances initiatives to expand housing and transportation choices, create healthier communities, and build a stronger regional economy.

At an evening meeting in Oakland, MTC and the ABAG Executive Board jointly approved both the final Plan Bay Area -- which includes the region's Sustainable Communities Strategy and the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan -- and an associated final Environmental Impact Report. The ABAG Executive Board separately approved a state-mandated Regional Housing Needs Allocation for 2014 through 2022. MTC separately approved the 2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which updates the list of Bay Area projects that receive federal funds, are subject to federal action, or are considered regionally significant; as well as a final Air Quality Conformity Analysis that establishes both the TIP and Plan Bay Area comply with federal air pollution standards.

"Plan Bay Area is an historic and important step forward for our region," explained Napa County Supervisor Mark Luce, who also serves as President of the ABAG Executive Board and as an MTC Commissioner. "It's the product of more than three years of collaboration between cities and counties to do our part to create a more sustainable Bay Area for current and future generations."

Noting that Plan Bay Area is the successor to Transportation 2035, the long-range plan adopted by MTC in 2009, Commission Chair and Orinda Mayor Amy Rein Worth described the new plan

as evolutionary rather than revolutionary. "For decades, MTC has been charged by state and federal law to produce a long-term regional transportation plan, while ABAG has been responsible for assessing regional housing needs. Plan Bay Area puts these elements together in a way that makes sense."

Projecting a healthy regional economy, the Plan anticipates that the Bay Area's population will grow from about 7 million today to some 9 million by 2040. "Maintaining our region's high quality of life," continued Worth, "will depend on making wise decisions about transportation, housing and land use."

Plan Bay Area provides a strategy for meeting 80% of the region's future housing needs in Priority Development Areas (PDAs). These are neighborhoods within walking distance of frequent transit service, offering a wide variety of housing options, and featuring amenities such as grocery stores, community centers, and restaurants. Identified by cities and towns across the region, the PDAs range from regional centers like downtown San Jose to suburban centers like Walnut Creek's West Downtown area, and smaller town centers such as the Suisun City Waterfront. The Plan funds mixed-income housing production and locally-led planning in PDAs.

Plan Bay Area's transportation element specifies how some $292 billion in anticipated federal, state and local funds will be spent through 2040. Nearly 87 percent (or $253 billion) will be used to maintain and operate the transportation network we already have. Another way of looking at the distribution of the revenues -- which include fuel taxes, public transit fares, bridge tolls, property taxes and dedicated sales taxes -- is by mode of transportation. Maintenance and operation of the Bay Area's existing public transit services will receive about 54 percent ($159 billion) of the revenues. The remainder includes 32 percent for street, road, highway and bridge maintenance; 7 percent for transit expansion; and 5 percent for roadway and bridge expansion. A $3.1 billion reserve comprised of anticipated future funding through the California Air Resources Board's Cap-and-Trade program for greenhouse gas emissions accounts for another 1 percent of expected revenues.

The final Plan Bay Area can be viewed on MTC's website at www.mtc.ca.gov, and on ABAG's website at www.abag.ca.gov. MTC is the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area's transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency. ABAG is the official regional planning agency for the Bay Area's cities and counties.

http://cts.businesswire.com/ct/CT?id=bwnews&sty=20130719005699r1&sid=cmtx6&distro=nx

SOURCE: Metropolitan Transportation Commission

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Plan Bay Area drafters buried critical facts

By Jonathan Wood, guest commentary © 2013 Bay Area News Group Contra Costa Times
Posted:

InsideBayArea.com

Bureaucratic planners are preparing to impose a high-density, one-size-fits-all way of life on Bay Area residents, claiming their plan is required by state law. It isn't.

The scheme is called Plan Bay Area, a strategy to squeeze up to 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs into just 5 percent of the region's surface area, over the next two decades.

The planners call it "transit-oriented development," but the term that some critics employ -- "stack and pack" -- conveys a more vivid picture of the crowded communities and multistory buildings in which people will live and work.

The Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission say this scheme is required by SB375, a state law that sets regional targets for greenhouse gas reduction. However, regardless of whether Plan Bay Area goes forward, air quality in the Bay Area is already on course to reach the SB375 goals.

The targets will be reached by new state mandates for cleaner gasoline and for improved automobile mileage and emissions, according to the state's official projections.

By failing to adequately disclose this fact, the planning agencies violated the California Environmental Quality Act. When an agency proposes something that could have a significant effect on the environment, CEQA requires it to facilitate informed public and agency deliberation by disclosing the environmental consequences of proceeding or not doing so. The environmental report prepared for Plan Bay Area falls woefully short of this requirement.

Instead of laying out all the facts, ABAG and MTC rely, literally, on fiction. Their report assumes away the state's new gasoline and automobile standards. It also ignores the significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions since 2005. The failure to disclose this evidence can only be explained by one thing: it gives the misimpression that the plan simply must be adopted.

The agencies also ignored criticisms and contrary evidence submitted by the public. For example, a well-researched and reasonable alternative plan was put forward by an organization called Bay Area Citizens, a grass-roots association of residents throughout the region dedicated to fully involving the public in the process.

The group's plan would reduce emissions without pushing people into unwanted high-density housing. It would focus on expanding bus service to low-income and underserved communities. It also recommends reducing fares for those riders whose only other choice would be to drive older, less-efficient cars. This approach is supported by extensive evidence demonstrating that transit works best to reduce emissions when it focuses on these riders.

Bay Area Citizens' alternative would have the added benefit of avoiding some of the negative environmental effects that would result from Plan Bay Area. The agencies' own environmental report concedes that their plan would have at least 39 negative environmental impacts, including significant pollution caused by constructing and operating additional light and heavy rail.

And yet, ABAG and MTC gave Bay Area Citizens' alternative no consideration. Here, too, they were violating the law, because CEQA doesn't allow planners to ignore public input in this way. It expressly requires agencies to consider a reasonable range of alternatives, including proposals from the public.

Bay Area Citizens' alternative is precisely the type of proposal that the planners are required to consider: It's better for the environment and protects people's freedom to choose for themselves how and where they'll live.

Public policy must be made in a way that allows informed public participation. But Plan Bay Area was drafted by agenda-driven insiders.

The region's residents deserve better than this -- and they'll get it, if a lawsuit recently filed by Bay Area Citizens is successful. Throughout the planning process, this group tried to speak up -- but it feels it was ignored because ABAG and MTC didn't like what it had to say. With this lawsuit, it aims to hold these bureaucrats accountable to the law and the public.

Bay Area Citizens isn't seeking money or special favors. Its suit only asks the court to order the planning agencies to start the environmental process over, and this time give the people who'll have to live under their plan the information, deliberation -- and respect -- that they deserve.

Jonathan Wood is an attorney with Pacific Legal Foundation. He is one of the PLF attorneys who represent Bay Area Citizens, free of charge, in its lawsuit challenging Plan Bay Area.

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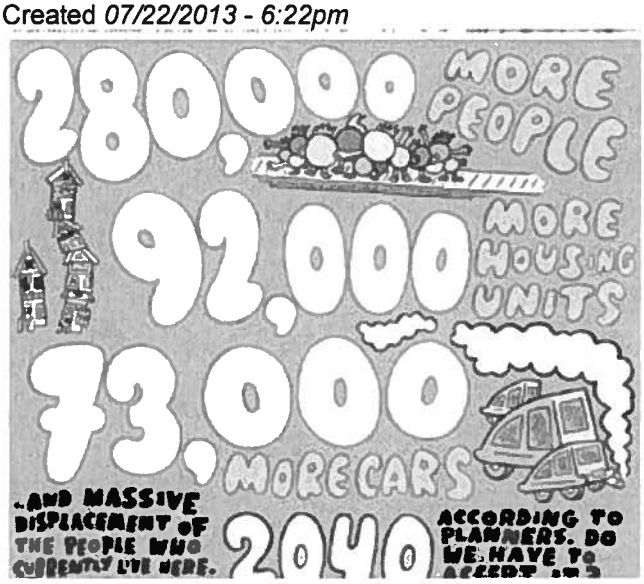
Street Fight: Plan Bay Area falls short of a worthy goal

By *steven*
Created *07/22/2013 - 6:22pm*



Plan Bay Area was the subject of a Guardian cover story on May 28 and public forum on June 12.

Last week's adoption of Plan Bay Area [1] by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission was a watershed moment in regional planning. The plan links regional planning to state policies mandating reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and aims to limit future sprawl by accommodating 2.1 million people, 1 million jobs, and 660,000 housing units largely within the existing built-up areas of the nine-county region.

Newly designated priority development areas (PDAs) will enable modest-density, walkable development in city and suburb alike, while preserving both existing single-family neighborhoods and open space. In a time of urgent need to address global warming, the Bay Area has once again proved a leader by enabling compact housing around transit, and its supporting studies expect the per capita greenhouse gas emissions from driving to decline by 15 percent in 2040.

This will not save the world and it's not without some challenging byproducts — such as preventing displacement of low-income residents [2] from San Francisco and other urban centers — but it is a start. And in a nation hell-bent on denying the urgency of global

warming, it is refreshing and inspiring that someone, somewhere, is trying to do something.

Yet the transportation component – the lynchpin and impetus of Plan Bay Area, according to many local leaders –is mediocre, uninspiring, and inadequate. Despite land use policies enabling compact development, 80 percent of all travel in the Bay Area will still be in cars in 2040, not much different from today, and far short of the real change that is needed in this time of urgency. With 2 million more people, this is a recipe for gridlock, inequity, and ecological disaster – not sound public policy.

It should be no surprise that a big part of the problem is funding. The MTC, charged with assessing future regional transit potential, identifies just $289 billion between now and 2040 for roads, bridges, and transit — far short of what's needed. At $10.3 billion a year that may seem like a lot, but upwards of 87 percent of this is already committed to maintenance of existing roads and transit– not transit capacity expansion. New homes and jobs might be focused around BART and Caltrain stations, but because there's no real capacity expansion, the current iteration of Plan Bay Area can't even reach its own modest goal of 74 percent of trips by car in 2040.

With 2 million more people, cumulative emissions from driving will actually increase by 18 percent because so few new residents will be able to squeeze onto our already crowded transit systems. Today BART is breaking ridership records but it is crowded. Extensions to far flung suburbs might be worthwhile but they don't expand capacity in the system's core. What we need is a second BART line and/or Amtrak service between San Francisco and Oakland, but this is absent from the plan. Meanwhile, most mainline Muni buses and railcars are currently jam-packed, yet San Francisco is somehow expected to absorb 92,000 housing units in Plan Bay Area.

Supervisors David Campos and Scott Weiner, representing San Francisco in the Plan Bay Area process, are to be commended for drawing attention to the transit problem and for asking MTC staff to show how to meet future funding gaps. By broaching the subject, they show that San Francisco might be poised to lead on this critical issue. But Campos and Weiner, working within the "fiscally constrained envelope" as framed by MTC planners, were only seeking to cover deficits for existing service – not visionary expanded service. In the end, there was no real vision for adequate transit capacity expansion.

This foretells a troubling transit future – and one that will likely be more and more private. While many San Franciscans decry the proliferation of Google buses and other private corporate shuttles hogging Muni stops, these buses do lay bare the transit conundrum in the Bay Area. Without well-funded, visionary capacity expansion of public transit, those with the means (and high wage jobs) will shift to private buses while everyone else is left to duke it out on crowded highways, buses, and trains.

This conundrum demands that progressives in the Bay Area ramp up their transit politics to lead locally and nationally. The debate about transit finance needs to be redirected – away from regressive local sales tax measures (which often include more roads) back towards more progressive measures, such as transit assessment districts – which could require developers who profit from Plan Bay Area's growth incentives to adequately finance transit expansion.

The debate needs to move away from demonizing public transit employees to a discussion of the role and responsibility of corporate health care, banks, and the real estate industry in causing economic instability (which has harmed public transit finance more in the last decade than a bus driver expecting a living wage and healthcare). The debate needs to move away from creating new roadway capacity, such as exclusive toll lanes, and focus on how to convert existing highway lanes into transit-only lanes with fast, frequent, reliable regional bus service open to all.

Plan Bay Area is a living document, a work in progress. Within the next four-five years it will need to be revised and can be improved. The current version of the plan, weak on transit funding, has been dominated by a loud, irrational mob of Tea Party cranks bent on sabotaging anything that hints of progressive ideas. They were successful in diluting Plan Bay Area. While a smattering of progressive transit activists showed up and attempted to shape the plan, next time the plan needs a broader progressive movement — including housing, social justice, and environmental activists — to demand a truly visionary transportation plan.

Jason Henderson is a geography professor at San Francisco State University and the author of Street Fight: The Politics of Mobility in San Francisco. *We'll be sharing his perspective regularly in the Bay Guardian.*

Development Plan Bay Area Transportation Jason Henderson

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KQED

forum
WITH MICHAEL KRASNY

MON, JUL 22, 2013 -- 9:00 AM

Plan Bay Area is Approved

Mon, Jul 22, 2013 -- 9:00 AM

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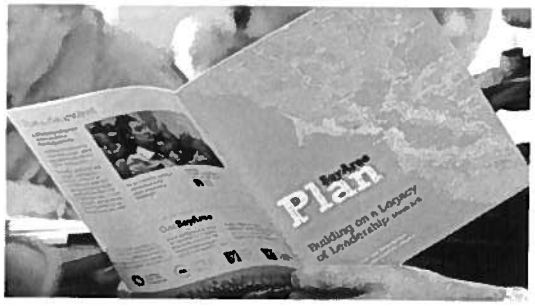

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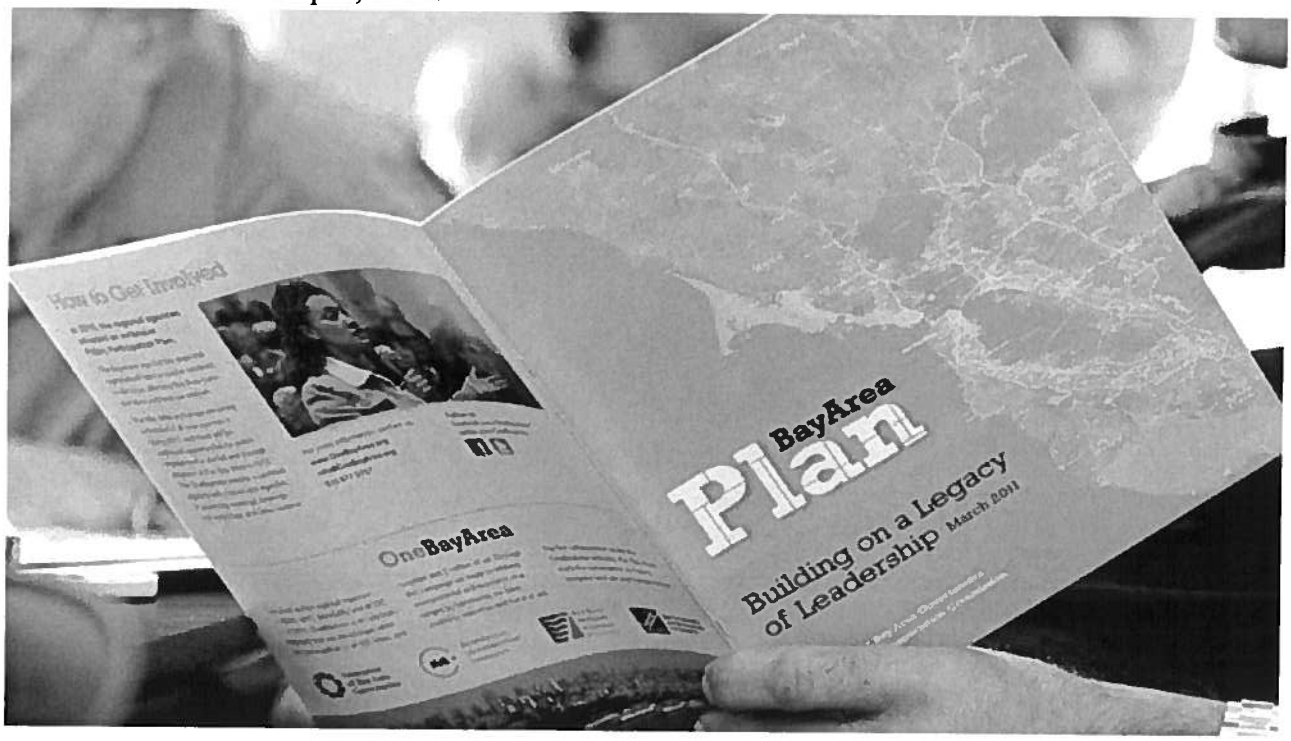
A Plan Bay Area pamphlet at a meeting in Mountain View in April, 2011.



Knight Foundation/Wikimedia Commons

A Plan Bay Area pamphlet at a meeting in Mountain View in April, 2011.

The San Francisco Bay Area is expected to grow with 2.1 million people by 2040. Plan Bay Area, a regional transportation and housing plan to accommodate this growth while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, was approved Friday by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. We'll discuss the plan, and hear from critics who fear the plan will lessen their local autonomy and erode the small town character of their neighborhoods.

Host: Michael Krasny

Guests:

- Angela Hart, writer for SF Public Press
- Bob Silvestri, Author of "The Best Laid Plans: Our Planning and Affordable Housing Challenges in Marin"; resident of Mill Valley
- Ken Kirkey, planning director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission
- Stephanie Reyes, senior program director of Greenbelt Alliance
- Tom Rubin, mass transit consultant

More info:

- Sweeping Plan Would Limit Sprawl in Bay Area Communities (KQED Science)

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Friday
July 19, 2013

THE BERKELEY DAILY PLANET

Plan Bay Area Passed by MTC, ABAG

By Laura Dixon (BCN)
Friday July 19, 2013 - 08:42:00 AM

A coalition of Bay Area leaders late Thursday night approved a long-term regional plan meant to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

The final vote on Plan Bay Area came during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) at the Oakland Marriott.

The two groups are made up of 21 Bay Area county supervisors, mayors and other local leaders.

Several hundred people, many who boarded buses from Marin and Santa Clara counties, packed a Marriott ballroom to protest the plan, voicing concerns that it will bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted "Let us vote!" or "MTC, don't speak for me!"

Several dozen others from Oakland-based public transit advocacy group TransForm carried yellow signs expressing support for alternatives to the plan under the slogan "Equity Environment and Jobs" or EEJ.

According to the MTC, the plan is a "work in progress " that continues earlier efforts to "develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way."

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region's nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

The federal government requires the agencies to update the plan every four years to keep up with shifting demographics and new data, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said.

"There are no easy solutions in this plan but...this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly," said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing.

"It's clearly a social engineering experiment," Fairfax resident Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options - amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

"I'm really glad to see the region take this pioneering step," said Adina Levin of Menlo Park.

The Bay Area is among the state's 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night's vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

Uploaded: Friday, July 19, 2013, 6:25 AM

SAN RAMON express

Plan Bay Area passes

Officials adopt plan to accommodate growth, cut pollution

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A meeting in Walnut Creek in the spring drew a few angry Danville residents vociferous in their belief that it was a plot to force low-income housing on wealthy communities.

Heather Gass, a Danville realtor, carried a sign that said, "ABAG and MTC don't speak for me. This is a rigged meeting."

"Stop lying to the public. This is about socially engineering our lives," Gass told the panel of MTC and ABAG representatives.

She was one of four with Danville connections who spoke at the meeting.

Terry Thompson of Alamo also spoke.

"This is all about central planning. It didn't work in the Soviet Union and it won't work here," he said. "There's no such thing as regional government."

-- Laura Dixon. Contributed to by Dolores Fox Ciardelli.

— Bay City News Service

The Independent
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Plan Bay Area Slated for Approval

Posted: Friday, July 12, 2013 12:00 am

Plan Bay Area Slated for Approval

ABAG and MTC are set to approve a nine-county Bay Area plan created to establish policies that are designed to help curb pollution emissions and promote balanced jobs and housing growth between now and 2040.

The two agencies' executive boards will meet jointly at 6:30 p.m. on July 18 at the Oakland Marriott City Center, 1001 Broadway, Oakland to consider Plan Bay Area (PBA).

The meeting is on the day that the state set for compliance with SB 375, which requires the 18 regional planning agencies in the state to have an approved Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The two executive boards will approve the final plan, final EIR, an air quality analysis and funding contained in a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

On July 12, committees from the two agencies will meet at 9:30 a.m. to review the final documents. The documents will then be passed along to the executive boards. That meeting is scheduled for the auditorium of the Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter, 101 8th St. Oakland.

The plan has been in the making for several years. There have been more than 600 comments on the draft plan submitted by public agencies, stakeholders, neighborhood groups and concerned individuals.

Outreach meetings were held in every county. Revision recommendations were taken at a meeting June 14.

Supervisor Scott Haggerty, a member of both MTC and ABAG, pushed for more recognition of the severe traffic congestion on Interstate 580, which he said will only get worse.

Haggerty said he wanted to see specific language in the plan addressing that, and the fact that congestion on Interstate 580 is choking off the ability to ship goods by truck in the area.

Haggerty said that more than 70 percent of the East Bay truck trips are within the I-580 corridor. He asked for a financial commitment to finance ways to alleviate this congestion. He also wanted language added that talks about preserving existing industrial land, so that there is less need to ship in goods from longer distances.

Haggerty said that the plan should also include involvement in agricultural preservation by local farm groups and agricultural commissions.

Opponents at the same meeting said that the new plan will take planning control away from cities and counties, an opinion they have stated during past hearings. They called the plan social engineering.

However, ABAG representatives state that the documents leave planning up to cities and counties. The numbers set in the plan are goals. Special areas, called Planned Development Areas (PDA), can be eligible for special funds, if and when available.

The cities already have planned growth in the PDAs.

Figures released by ABAG show that the number of housing units in Livermore are expected to grow by 9700 units or 32 percent between the listed 2010 level and 2040. The PDAs are located in the downtown, on the east side, and at the Isabel BART station.

In Pleasanton, growth is expected to add 7700 more units, a 28 percent increase, with Hacienda Park as the PDA.

Dublin will grow by 8430 units, or 54 percent. The PDAs there are identified in the Downtown Specific Plan area, Town Center and the Transit Center.

Livermore Mayor John Marchand told The Independent that the problem with PDA funding for residential growth is that no funds would come for the necessary local infrastructure cost, such as increasing police and fire protection and improvements for water and sewer. "It's simply money for housing. It does provide for all of the planning," said Marchand.

JOBS SAID TO BE UNDERCOUNTED

Employment growth constitutes the other main goal in the plan. A good jobs-housing balance needs to be achieved.

The plan's goals for job creation by 2040 are undercounted, according to Marchand and Dublin Mayor Tim Sbranti.

Employment goals in Livermore by 2040 are expected to bring an increase of 14,760 jobs, or 38 percent. Marchand said that PBA has not counted the many technology jobs projected to locate in the city's technology park, i-GATE, and at the Livermore Valley Open Campus.

Those tech jobs are important both for demands on city infrastructure, and the fact that thousands of people will be able to ride BART to those jobs. The job growth should be recognized as qualifying Livermore for transportation money from PBA.

Sbranti agreed with Marchand about Livermore's need for transportation money. The lab jobs strengthen the whole Valley's economy. Extending BART to Livermore will help Dublin commuters travel to new tech jobs, said Sbranti.

As for job creation, Dublin shows an 88 percent increase by 2040 in jobs in the PBA statistics. That might sound like a high percentage, but it undercounts Dublin, said Sbranti. It ignores the hundreds of thousands of square feet that Dublin has zoned in certain areas for offices.

In Pleasanton, job growth is expected to be up by 28 percent, with Hacienda Park adding 5410 jobs, which would be the location of about one-third of the total job increase for the city.

URBAN AREAS WIN, VALLEY LOSES

Marchand and Haggerty pointed out that of the first funding already allocated to PDAs, nearly all went to projects in Berkeley, Oakland and Fremont, with virtually nothing for the Valley. Sbranti said that a small amount of money went to Wheels.

Haggerty told the policy committee meeting in June 14 that the major urban areas in the nine counties come out winners in funding for PDAs, but the suburbs and rural areas will receive nothing.

Some of the protesters at the meeting said that a vote of the people should decide the plan. Haggerty asked questions of BART staff about whether it would be feasible at least to seek an advisory vote, and delay adoption of the plan until June 2014.

Staff members said that the law is specific about the final date, which is July 18. If there were a delay, it could mean having to start another EIR. Haggerty said he wanted a clear opinion on a delay to allow for a vote of the public by the meeting July 18. A majority of the committee members did not support the idea.

ABAG president Mark Luce, a Napa county supervisor, said that even if it went to a vote of the people, the voters "probably won't even know what they're voting on, much less the impacts."

Leon Garcia, mayor of American Canyon, said he thought the whole process for public input has been "fair and equitable."

Novato Mayor Pat Eklund said, "The outreach has not been good, Leon. You need to be involved from the beginning. I have to tell you, people don't understand what this is about."

8/20/13

Marin Voice: Plan Bay Area is a product of one-party rule

Posted: marinij.com

FROM MARINWOOD to Mill Valley and points in between, residents of Marin County continue to vocalize their opposition to Plan Bay Area, the regional government approach to transportation and land planning.

Initially conceived with the noble goals of reducing emissions and housing costs, the plan morphed into an experiment in social engineering that is administered by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in consultation with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC).

This alphabet soup of overseeing agencies has effectively muzzled the voice of the voters in the nine counties by allowing bureaucracy to become the final arbiter on land planning.

Much has been written about the shortcomings of the plan itself. Doing an Internet search yields a plethora of pages and articles debunking the plan on any number of fronts.

The opposition in our county is particularly intense, yet no one has addressed the root cause of the plan and the problems it is causing in Marin.

It's not the California Global Warming Solutions Act, commonly referred to as AB 32. Nor is it Senate Bill 375, which spawned the plan itself.

Rather, it's Marin's long march toward a one-party system that has manifested the challenges we face today.

Representing Marin on MTC is Steve Kinsey, the Democratic supervisor from District 4. His fellow supervisor from District 1, Democrat Susan Adams, served on ABAG for 9 years.

Surely the supervisors from Districts 2, 3 and 5 could provide some balanced dialogue on this plan that is plaguing us.

They could, if they weren't playing for the same team as Kinsey and Adams.

In fact, over 80 percent of ABAG's leadership is Democratic and, while that shows a problem that is more widespread than Marin, Marin can and should start doing something about it.

With Plan Bay Area demonstrating the dangers of a one-party state right in our own backyard, Marin needs a strong opposition party.

The Marin Republican Party has the potential to be a viable alternative at the ballot box; however, the Marin GOP can't remain idle and just simply expect voters to start turning the tide.

This is a two-way street.

The Republicans in Marin need to revitalize and demonstrate to the voters that they represent the shared

values of our county and our communities.

As a first step in their renaissance and in recognition that Plan Bay Area affects everyone in Marin regardless of party affiliation, the Marin GOP is actively engaged in the opposition to the plan.

By contrast, the Marin Democratic Party remained silent, complicit in the actions of their fellow party members that are enabling this social engineering scheme to threaten our way of life.

Without a resurgence of the Republican Party in Marin, residents can expect to see more Plan Bay Area-esque attempts to disenfranchise their rights.

While it may seem to be an extreme comparison to Marin, one-party states like Cuba and North Korea give little hope to their citizens with no say in the matter.

In Marin, though, the voters have a choice.

Come November, I urge you to remember this fact. Until then, the Marin GOP will continue to revitalize and demonstrate they represent the shared values of Marin residents while supporting everyone's rights by opposing Plan Bay Area.

Kevin Krick of Fairfax is the chair of the Marin Republican Party and a member of the board of directors of the California Republican Party.

The Independent, JULY 25, 2013

Plan Bay Area Passes, with Haggerty, Thorne Voting No

A joint meeting of the executive boards of two regional agencies approved Plan Bay Area, an integrated strategy for land use and transportation designed to curb greenhouse gases and provide more affordable housing opportunities for a growing population.

The boards of ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) voted July 18 in Oakland to approve the plan. The vote came in time to meet a state mandate set in 2008 by Senate Bill 375 for 18 metropolitan areas to have a plan to implement housing and transportation policies.

Twenty-one ABAG board members voted to support the plan, five were opposed, and one abstained. Two of the dissenting votes came from Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty and Pleasanton Mayor Jerry Thorne.

Haggerty serves on the MTC board as well. The board voted 12-1 for Plan Bay Area. On the MTC board, Haggerty cast the lone vote in opposition.

Haggerty's chief of staff Shawn Wilson said, "Haggerty still thinks that a plan of this magnitude should have been voted on by the people."

Haggerty, at an earlier ABAG committee meeting, made a motion to have the ABAG general assembly, which consists of more than 100 members, vote on Plan Bay Area, but he lost the vote.

Thorne told The Independent that he voted against Plan Bay Area because of his concern about how much local control over land use is being taken away by the state Legislature.

"They will tell you it (the plan) is voluntary, and it's not impacting local control. But they are attaching transportation financing. You won't have a shot at getting the tax dollars if you don't follow the plan," said Thorne..

ABAG voted separately and unanimously on approval of a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) list. ABAG talked to each city and county about the jobs-housing balance in those communities, negotiated back and forth, and came up with the numbers.

Thorne said that while he does not like the concept of RHNA, because it interferes with local control, he thought that ABAG "went through the process, as prescribed. They put up the numbers, as prescribed."

More than 150 speakers from the audience were each given one minute to comment on the Bay Area Plan and RHNA numbers, and used three hours to do so. Most focused on Plan Bay Area. Opponents appeared to outnumber proponents.

Opponents disliked what they perceived as loss of local control in land use planning, which some of them equated with socialism and totalitarianism. They singled out the lack of a direct vote by the people on the plan

Critics also said they saw a bias in favor of transit support, instead of their preference for more money for more street maintenance projects.

Several people said they do not want to live in "stack and pack" housing, and "do not want their cars taken away" from them.

There was also a big delegation of supporters in the audience, which totaled more than 200 people. They cited more affordable housing opportunities, healthier air, and better jobs-housing balances in communities as benefits of Plan Bay Area.

Plan Bay Area was also the topic at the Livermore City Council meeting July 22 for Judy Galletti, who spoke during the public forum.

Galletti said she was disappointed that no one from the Livermore council was in attendance at the Oakland meeting to speak against Plan Bay Area. She said that several lawsuits are being planned against the agencies' adoption of the plan.

Plan Bay Area receives final approval, local elected officials defend effort to address global warming

Posted: marinij.com

Elected officials representing the nine county Bay Area voted nearly unanimously just after midnight on Friday morning to approve Plan Bay Area — after listening to more than three hours of often contentious public comment.

Nearly all of the 500 seats in the Oakland Marriott's exhibition hall in downtown Oakland were filled when the climatic conclave began at 6:30 p.m., but only a hardy few hung on for the final vote.

A 40-year, regional transportation and land-use housing plan, Plan Bay Area ignited a storm of controversy in Marin County. The plan was designed by four regional government agencies to conform with a state law that requires each of California's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks 30 percent by 2020 and a full 80 percent by 2050.

The plan seeks to channel 80 percent of the Bay Area's housing growth and 66 percent of its job growth into "priority development areas." These are areas typically located along existing traffic corridors, near mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money.

Opponents of the plan assert that it robs counties and cities of their control over land-use decisions and will result in high-density apartment developments that will degrade Marin's pristine environment and erode its small-town character. Supporters counter that opponents of the plan are really worried that the creation of higher-density, more affordable housing will attract lower-income, more ethnically diverse residents to the county.

The decision on whether to approve the plan, and an accompanying environmental impact report, was made by the Association of Bay Area Governments' 38-member executive board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's 21 commissioners.

Marin County Supervisor Katie Rice and Novato City Councilwoman Pat Eklund serve on ABAG's executive board, and Supervisor Steve Kinsey is a MTC commissioner.

Both Kinsey and Rice voted to approve Plan Bay Area. Eklund abstained from voting on the plan and, with the exception of Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty, who voted against approval of Plan Bay Area, Eklund was the only member of either body who failed to vote for the plan.

Eklund was also one of several Associated Bay Area Government members who abstained from voting on the impact report; no member of either body voted against approval of the impact report.

Kinsey said, "I voted yes on the plan knowing that it doesn't reduce local control over land use. It actually commits the region to embrace long-standing principles reflected in Marin's protection of ag and open space, while encouraging limited new development along transit corridors."

Rice said, "Plan Bay Area is not a mandate to build housing. It does not erode, diminish, or supersede local control, local planning, or local decision making authority for this county or any other in the region."

Eklund could not be reached Friday for comment.

Citizen Marin, a coalition of Marin neighborhood groups that united to oppose Plan Bay Area, chartered a 48-seat Marin Airporter bus to shuttle plan opponents to Thursday's meeting.

Passengers included: Corte Mayor Diane Furst, Larkspur Mayor Dan Hillmer, Sausalito Councilwoman Linda Pfeifer, former Fairfax mayor Frank Egger, supervisorial candidate Toni Shroyer and Randy Warren, who is running for a seat on the San Rafael City Council.

The group's leaders had said it was important for opponents to be there to witness the votes by Marin representatives, but the bus had to return to Marin about an hour before the final vote was taken.

A number of Marin residents spoke during the public comment portion of the meeting. Opponents of the plan, many of whom complained that it smacks of socialism, vied with proponents, many of whom said the plan should be even more ambitious in its effort to cut greenhouse gases and promote the creation of affordable housing.

Marybelle Nzegwu, a staff attorney with Public Advocates in San Francisco, said she supports Plan Bay Area but added that it doesn't allocate enough money for mass transit. She called for everyone supporting the plan to join her at the lectern, and a crowd of over 100 people responded.

When Susan Kirsch of Mill Valley, a co-founder of Citizen Marin, spoke a few minutes later she followed suit, calling all the opponents in the hall to join her at the lectern and what appeared to be a slightly larger group responded.

"This plan has been wrong from the beginning," Kirsch said. "You don't represent us. What we demand is the right to vote."

The opposing coalition, which booed and issued catcalls throughout the evening, erupted then in a chant of "let us vote."

Vic Canby, a former president of the Marin United Taxpayers Association, said, "We don't need a regional approach to anything."

Angelina Randolph of San Rafael said, "Please do not vote for this communistic plan."

Speaking to the elected officials, Sausalito's Pfeifer said, "You've awakened a sleeping giant." She urged the crowd to demand accountability from public officials.

Responding to a drumbeat of criticism from Citizen Marin and other opponents, county supervisors last week voted unanimously to withdraw Marinwood and Tamalpais Valley from consideration as "priority development areas." Opponents of Marinwood's participation in Plan Bay Area have launched an effort to recall Supervisor Susan Adams.

A few Marin residents, including David Schonbrunn of Sausalito and Marin Grassroots Leadership

Network Associate Director Ericka Erickson, spoke in favor of the plan, but said the plan needs to be more ambitious.

Many of the people who spoke in support of Plan Bay Area Thursday were young adults and college students, who said their generation drives less and wants more mass transit options.

Michael Dittmer of Milpitas, a student at the University of California, Berkeley, said he believes The John Birch Society and other far-right groups have been active behind the scenes soughing doubts about Plan Bay Area. He asked opponents of the plan, "What is the alternative?"

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Jul 31, 2013, 12:46pm PDT Updated: Jul 31, 2013, 1:29pm PDT

Plan Bay Area could spark housing development boom. Or not

Blanca Torres
Reporter- *San Francisco Business Times*
Email | Twitter | Google+ | LinkedIn

With much-debated, frequently derided Plan Bay Area now approved, our region is officially on notice that it needs close to 200,000 new housing units over the next few decades. Next question: Who's going to build it all?

Planning for new housing is great and all, but only time will tell if developers bite and actually build the housing the way the plan advises — high-density and near transit.

Plan Bay Area sets out growth and development guidelines to accommodate a 30 percent population increase, 2.1 million new residents, and 33 percent more or 1.1 million job increase in the Bay Area through 2040. The plan's goals involve steering away from sprawl, building housing for all income levels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"Theoretically, (Plan Bay Area) is a good idea," said Paul Menzies, founder of Laconia Development, a multi-family developer. "The issue with the plan is that bureaucrats are imposing rules on the rest of us who are trying to be creative and trying to make money."

Plan Bay Area could be a boon for development, Menzies said, if the policies make it easier and less expensive to develop projects either by streamlining the entitlement process or providing some financing tools.

The plan's main backers, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments, along with congestion management agencies have about $28 million to fund local planning efforts such as creating specific plans that guide development for a neighborhood or environmental impact reports. In some cases, cities establish plans and zoning to comply up front with California Environmental Quality Act regulations.

Many cities already have what are called Priority Development Areas, which are designated zones where local officials want to encourage development such as a transit village near a BART station.

Plan Bay Area also comes with $320 million worth of One Bay Area grants set aside to pay for infrastructure such as roads, street improvements and transit connections.

"It is a long term plan, so it's not expected that the day after the plan passes, the change is going to happen," said Ezra Rapport, executive director of ABAG. "No. 1, the goal is to establish that there's political will to build housing within in those areas. No. 2, the idea that we can focus some resources to make it a lot easier to get a permit in those areas if we spend the extra effort in planning for CEQA."

Beyond that, regional officials are looking at other ways to facilitate development, said Ken Kirkey, planning director for MTC. Methods include expanding the Bay Area Transit Oriented Affordable Fund, a $50 million loan program for new affordable projects, and down the road creating a mechanism for tax-increment financing such as borrowing against the future tax increases after a property is developed.

The plan has drawn much criticism from residents who fear that cities are being forced to allow for housing and population growth they don't want or can't accommodate and that regional authorities shouldn't be able to mandate development at the local level.

The general comeback to that argument is that population growth is coming whether we like it or not, so it's best to plan for that growth in a way that is fair, sustainable and efficient across the entire region.

Ultimately, the development community will play a huge role in meeting the swelling demand from population growth.

"There's no question that Plan Bay Area will definitely provide new development opportunities within our existing cities and towns to create vibrant, walkable communities," said Stephanie Reyes, senior program director for the Greenbelt Alliance, an advocacy group.

Blanca Torres covers East Bay real estate for the San Francisco Business Times.

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Aug 20, 2013, 10:42am PDT

Plan Bay Area sued by Sierra Club, other environmental groups

Eric Young
Reporter- *San Francisco Business Times*
Email | Twitter | Google+ | LinkedIn

A new plan that promotes high-density housing near public transit in the Bay Area faces yet another lawsuit.

The Sierra Club, Earthjustice and Communities for a Better Environment have sued to stop Plan Bay Area, which spells out how much new housing each of the Bay Area's cities must accommodate in coming years.

The lawsuit alleges that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments — the two agencies that passed the plan last July — did not do an adequate environmental review of Plan Bay Area.

"The Plan does not spend enough on public transportation, and instead invests in building new highways. The current Plan will result in more time on the roads and increased greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan also fails to protect West Oakland and other vulnerable communities from the health effects of cars, trucks, ships and rail that pass through their communities. The Plan will also displace low-income and residents of color from their communities," the groups said in a press release.

Representatives from ABAG and MTC said they do not comment on litigation.

This lawsuit is the third such suit against Plan Bay Area since it was approved last July. A libertarian group, the Pacific Legal Foundation, sued claiming the plan violates the California Environmental Quality Act by failing to "justify the plan's high-density development scheme, and refusing to consider the feasibility of a less-restrictive alternative."

The Building Industry Association Bay Area sued alleging that Plan Bay Area violates state law by failing to provide for enough housing to accommodate the Bay Area's projected

population and by failing to provide a realistic development pattern to accommodate residential growth.

Plan Bay Area, the result of three years of work, calls for adding almost 188,000 housing units by 2022. ABAG and MTC drew up the plan in response to a state law that requires every region in California to devise building and transportation plans to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.

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Plan Bay Area: An Open Season Discussion

Raucous Caucus, posted by Tom Cushing, a resident of Danville, on Jul 31, 2013 at 7:03 pm

Plan Bay Area (PBA) was approved in July. By its terms, it seeks to coordinate efforts among Bay Area jurisdictions to plan for a year 2040, when an estimated 2 million more souls will be added to the 7 million who currently inhabit these environs. Promulgated over several years in response to CA state law, an organizing goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by designating various transit-friendly Priority Development Zones, and promoting relatively dense growth in those places, including Danville and San Ramon.

I tried to lure out the objections to this document http://onebayarea.org/pdf/Draft_Plan_Bay_Area_3-22-13.pdf in earlier columns on Sustainability, but got not-one-bite in response. So here's an attempt to take the issues head-on. I've tried to identify various arguments against PBA I've seen expressed hereabouts and elsewhere, given my take on them and I invite your specific responses. Also, please add your own arguments for objections that I've missed.

One request: kindly do not resort to shooting this messenger – we can stipulate that I'm a pinko, libtard, boring, ancient, arrogant, naïve, elitist, radical socialist, and a criminal waste of good carbon, so those kinds of charges won't add anything. I also have it on pretty good authority that they'll be deleted if/as/when they appear – please just focus on content, okay? And actual evidence is much preferred over unsupported conclusions, but that's really two requests, and a lot to expect. So, let's get started.

1 – As Plan Bay Area is aimed at reducing greenhouse gases, it is mis-directed because climate change is: a—not occurring, or b – not human-caused.

Congratulations on this position, which is shared by nearly one-percent of the scientific community, (although it's actually somewhat less, if you factor-out those who are paid by folks who profit from barely-plausible-deniability). There are also a faithful few who believe that if we do nothing, somehow the lord will provide an escape. I'm inclined more toward the 99% consensus on the science, and recall the old story about man drowning in a rising flood, who had refused evacuation by car, boat and helicopter – all the while blaming the deity for not delivering him from his peril. The phrase "The lord helps those who help themselves" was never more applicable.

2 – Plan Bay Area is anti-small-d-democratic, as the product of unelected bureaucrats.

As I understand it, PBA is in response to a state law, duly enacted by our elected officials, with the fingerprints of both political parties on that law: so-called SB 375 (2008). Further, it was commissioned by the Association of Bay Area Governments, an organization of over 100 local governments, with staff. http://www.abag.ca.gov/index.html . It is probably true that the ABAG staff wrote most of the words, but that's the case with any government document, and certainly true as regards bills that get voted-on.

Further, the process was remarkably public, with multiple drafts and numerous exhaustive hearings, forums, message boards and other opportunities to be heard on the subject. It was finally voted-on in public, as well, by elected officials. It seems to me that the process was proper; anyone with an interest was apparently able to express opinions.

3 – But it was "rigged."

I don't know what to make of this, except that some folks seem to confuse their precious and oft-exercised right-to-be-heard with an illusory right to be in-charge. Apparently, some changes were made and others were amply presented and found to be unpersuasive. That would seem to me to be in the nature of democracy. And who rigged it? If you believe that there was a dark, behind-the-scenes conspiracy, please present your evidence – otherwise, you just lost – it happens all the time.

4 – PBA is really the demon-spawn of the United Nations' Agenda 21, an attempt to impose an anti-American world governance on this country, and supersede our Constitution and other stuff.

Agenda 21 http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf , is a product of the UN Environment Programme, first drafted in conjunction with the Rio environmental summit in 1992, and later updated several times. It arose out of a recognition that environmental problems do not respect map lines – that air pollution generated in China, for example, even lands as far away as here. It purports to promote sustainable development among its signatory nations by means of directional, non-binding, voluntary actions. It goes to great lengths to indicate that it is advisory and subject to implementation-or-not by each member nation. Nonetheless, it has provoked controversy among those who believe it somehow erodes American national sovereignty.

Agenda 21 has also been characterized as anti-private property, but it's hard to find good evidence for that proposition. That claim seems to derive from a different UN document, written in 1976, for a different reason. Do I doubt that there

are philosophies represented in that world body that diverge from America's world view? Not for a minute, but the same could be said for any representative body, and it does not represent the policy of the organization.

It might also be noted that ABAG has been around longer than many of us (1961), and its first long term regional plan dates from that era – several years before there was even an EPA, much less an Agenda 21.

If you fear the effects of Agenda 21, which effects and why?

5 – Nonetheless, ABAG and PBA usurp "local control" over property decisions.

ABAG is, itself, entirely voluntary, and utterly without authority to do anything, anywhere. It is a coordinating mechanism. PBA, its product, is also completely voluntary. In carrots-and-sticks terms, there are no sticks. Danville and San Ramon have their own planning processes, and development plans, which are not required to hew to any content of the PBA.

Now, there ARE carrots in the form of transportation-related grants (OBAGs) available to compliant localities. Of roughly $300 Billion of transportation-related spending, most of it going to maintenance of existing systems (80%), 5%, or $15B, is available for grants to localities that comply with regional housing needs assignments. That's a small fraction, but a large number. Is that the source of concern about jack-booted planning geeks tromping roughshod over local prerogatives? If so, how much does Danville or San Ramon stand to gain or lose, depending on their compliance status?

6 – Specifically, PBA calls for high-density "stack-and-pack" housing near transit options. Property values will be hurt.

I have looked in all the wrong places for information on this issue and its impacts on the Danville and San Ramon Priority Development Areas. Can somebody help us out, here?

7 – PBA, if implemented, will forever change the character of Danville and San Ramon.

I am assuming, because I wasn't there, that local Miwoks were the first to utter the phrase: "there goes the neighborhood." Danville and San Ramon both have detailed General Plans, zoning ordinances and approval processes, vetted by professional staff and commissions appointed by elected officials.

The 2030 Danville General Plan was recently ratified, for example, after extensive citizen input, and it calls for carrying forward "the vision set forth in 1987, as part of Danville's first General Plan, preserving and reinforcing our unique small town character, preserving the history and scenic beauty, and protecting the quality of life for our residents."

It seems to me that any changes encouraged by PBA will be marginal tweaks to ongoing processes. Of course our communities continue to grow and will change, but doesn't that argue for conscious choices made to promote the attractiveness of this vicinity? Who's not in favor of that?

8 – "Collaboration? We don' need no steenkin' collaboration!"

Despite the imaginary lines that delineate our various jurisdictions, we Bay Areans share the same water, breathe the same air and travel on common roads. Like it or not, we're all connected in a web of existence. A crash in the Caldecott snarls traffic for miles, and I recall ash from the Oakland Hills conflagration raining down on a 49ers game across the Bay. I would return to that parable of The Commons, wherein when everyone in a community, who depend on each other to some degree, independently pursue their own individual self-interests, it inevitably leads to community calamity.

Without past collaborations, the freeways, bridges and BART would not exist (okay, maybe BART's not the best example this week). The Market is a good arbitrator of many things, but not of everything. Plans are imperfect by their nature, but they are better than nothing in an interdependent world. In addition, this particular PBA document is not a one-off, cataclysmic event, but a flow from past planning on to the future.

If you don't believe in collaboration, with what would you replace it? If your answer is "nothing," how's life going in your own private biosphere?

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News | Government

Plan Bay Area: What Lamorinda Elected Officials Have To Say

Controversial plan has supporters and detractors among Lamorinda elected officials.

Posted by Jim Caroompas (Editor) , July 31, 2013 at 11:07 PM

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Plan Bay Area requires Lamorinda and other areas to make way for low and moderate income housing.

1 0 4

Plan Bay Area, an attempt to manage the expected growth in the Bay Area through 2040, was developed by two regional agencies—the Association for Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA). The plan was approved on July 19 after a raucous and rambunctious group of 160 opponents urged its demise.

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The approved plan calls for new housing around transit centers like BART in the nine Bay Area counties. In Contra Costa, the plan calls for cities to change zoning laws that make way for apartments and condominium projects around BART stations. The new units would be a mix of low-, moderate-, and high income homes.

By locating new housing around transportation centers, the thinking goes, it will also reduce the level of greenhouse gases such growth is expected to generate.

The plan has its supporters in Lamorinda, but it has also generated a hothouse of opposition from those who feel their small-town, upscale way of life is under attack from unelected bodies engaged in social engineering.

The Plan Bay Area website, and Lamorinda elected officials all point out that, while the increased housing numbers are required to be adopted by each city's housing plan, each city retains the right to approve or reject individual projects based on environmental and other factors. However, zoning particular parcels of land for multi-family housing can make it more difficult for cities to reject projects without facing lawsuits from developers.

And, while cities can choose to ignore the Plan Bay Area housing numbers, they face the loss of local, state and federal transportation money if they do.

There has been vehement opposition in Lamorinda to the plan. Among the opponents are Orinda Watch, which organized a petition drive against the plan, and SaveOrinda. Another group, Orindavision, supports new growth in downtown Orinda.

Lamorinda Patch has asked local officials to weigh in on their views of Plan Bay Area. Here is what they have to say:

Lafayette:

The Lafayette City Council has written several letters to the agencies in charge of Plan Bay Area, asking for a reduction in the number of housing units assigned to the downtown area. Though the city did receive a new designation from Transit Town Center to Transit Neighborhood, it did not receive a commensurate reduction in the number of units the plan calls for downtown. The plan calls for 990 units downtown by 2040, while the city's general plan calls for 815. The additional housing could cause unmanageable traffic, parking, and other problems, according to a letter from Mayor Mike Anderson.

City Councilwoman Terri Reilly:

"I'm concerned that the housing and jobs numbers are still pretty high. We got the numbers adjusted somewhat, but not at a place that makes sense for our community. We already have a traffic and congestion problem. Some of the numbers assigned to us

probably won't work. We're trying to work within the confines of the process, but we haven't gotten relief yet.

"The most recent letter got our designation changed from transit to neighborhood vs. transit village, which is higher numbers. We did not get the numbers that should go with that changed. On one hand, we have a better designation, but so far through the process, they're holding firm on the numbers assigned for next four years. When the next round comes around, hopefully there will some adjustments.

"We're all learning as we go. It's all sort of a work in progress. I'm not sure how this will play out. We're trying very hard to advocate for our community, and make numbers that are realistic for our community. We don't have the ability to just grow."

Vice Mayor Don Tatzin:

"Plan Bay Area is generally consistent with Lafayette's general and specific plans, so I do not think there will be much impact. By commenting on drafts of the plan frequently, Lafayette successfully achieved modifications in the Final Plan. We must continue to be diligent in ensuring that local communities retain the ability to review applications and approve projects that are consistent with local plans.

Orinda:

Amy Worth (Orinda Mayor, MTC Chair)

- This is a locally oriented plan that pivots off transportation and land use priorities identified at the city council and county board of supervisors level. Cities continue to have control over their local land use decisions.
- The land use strategies are linked to each jurisdiction's local input and priorities, the transportation strategies reflect priorities advanced by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority and by the city councils in Contra Costa and elsewhere.
- Here in Lamorinda and throughout Contra Costa, the countywide "Shaping Our Future" effort will have far more to do with how we grow than anything in Plan Bay Area.
- Focusing growth in locally selected areas will make it easier for us to retain the unique character of single-family neighborhoods.
- The plan respects the Bay Area's diversity; it emphasizes different kinds of investments and development for different parts of the region. Big cities like San Jose, San Francisco and Oakland are expected to get bigger. Smaller towns like Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda retain their small town qualities.
- In terms of transportation, Plan Bay Area prioritizes taking care of the streets, roads, highways and transit systems we already have. It also includes funding to maintain local streets and roads, and for the operation and maintenance of systems like BART and County Connection — though the needs exceed available funds. Because Orinda residents commute from home to jobs throughout the Bay Area, having a robust transportation network, including both transit and highways is especially important
- Plan Bay Area will be updated every four years to reflect new priorities. As with this plan, much of the future implementation will be at the local level, and it will reflect local values and vision for the future. Our next plan can be guided and improved by that work and vision.

- I think Plan Bay Area is an important next step for our region. We live in one of the most wonderful places on earth. Planning now will ensure that we take the steps needed to keep our towns and our region wonderful for the next generation.

City Councilman Steven Glazer:

"I support local control of land use planning. To the extent that the One Bay Area plan does not infringe on the ability of Orinda to determine our destiny, I don't have a problem with it."

Janet Keeter, City Manager:

"Plan Bay Area does not mandate any changes to the land use policies of the City of Orinda.

"All development proposals in Orinda are subject to a rigorous public review process that provides an opportunity for concerned residents to be heard and that ensures development adheres to local design criteria and land use values. Plan Bay Area has no effect on Orinda's ability to continue to review and approve or deny development proposals in our community."

Patch requested comments from all five Moraga Town Council members, but as of deadline no response has been received.

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Richard S. Colman August 01, 2013 at 10:25 AM
What is the point of building high-rise, high-density housing ("stack and pack" housing) near transit hubs like BART if there is no mass transit? BART went on strike from July 1, 2013, to July 5, 2013, and may go on strike again in a few days. Amy Worth was elected directly by voters to the Orinda City Council. She was not elected directly by voters to her position of Chairperson of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Ms. Worth has a conflict of interest. As MTC chairperson, is she representing Orinda or some other constituency? Ms. Worth should resign immediately from the MTC. The current height limit for buildings in Orinda is 35 feet. In 2012, the Orinda City Council voted unanimously to support a housing project for low-income senior citizens. The project is being constructed at 2 Irwin Way in the heart of downtown Orinda (across the street from the Safeway). The project is worthwhile but should have been built elsewhere -- away from downtown, where parking and traffic are miserable. The Irwin Way project will violate Orinda's 35-foot height limit. By voting to exceed Orinda's existing height limit, the current Orinda City Council cannot be trusted to preserve Orinda's semi-rural, village-like environment. Richard Colman, Orinda, California

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Forrest August 01, 2013 at 10:40 AM
A excerpt from an overview of Agenda 21...Read it...Sound familiar Lafayette? "No matter where you live, I'll bet that there have been hundreds of condos built in the center of your town recently. Over the last ten years there has been a 'planning revolution' across the US. Your commercial, industrial,

and multi-residential land was rezoned to 'mixed use.' Nearly everything that got approvals for development was designed the same way: ground floor retail with two stories of residential above. Mixed use. Very hard to finance for construction, and very hard to manage since it has to have a high density of people in order to justify the retail. A lot of it is empty and most of the ground floor retail is empty too. High bankruptcy rate....."

6 Recommend

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Jason Schmidt August 01, 2013 at 11:00 AM

Nice to hear the politicians speak of their love for central planning. Why, after we have seen the historic disasters that central planning have caused, is this suddenly the way for the Bay Area to proceed? We keep hearing "we have to have a plan" but, amazingly enough, the Bay Area has become the wonderful place it has over the last 200 years without any central planning. Market forces, supply and demand, and people caring about their towns and cities are what works. Instead, we have a small group of ideologues, who refused to consider even allowing a general vote on Plan Bay Area, trying to force their "new urbanism" vision on us. Meanwhile, eager developers sit in the background, excited that they will be able to build high-reward, high-density apartment buildings without having to spend on things like parking or environmental review. Just keep telling everyone we will be "pedestrian-friendly" and you can get rich, while the surrounding town is clogged with traffic, parking problems, strains on schools and services, etc.

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MountainView VOICE

Planning director: 'Plan Bay Area' aligns with Mountain View's vision

A coalition of Bay Area leaders late Thursday night approved a controversial plan designed to accommodate population growth over the next few decades while meeting state mandates for cutting air pollution and improving access to public transportation.

The final vote on "Plan Bay Area" came during a marathon joint meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) at the Oakland Marriott.

The two groups are made up of 21 Bay Area county supervisors, mayors and other local leaders.

Years in the making, the plan has caused anxieties in cities throughout the region where officials have long maintained that the housing and job forecasts in the document are far too high.

The housing forecast used for the plan predicts the need for an additional 660,000 households in the Bay Area between 2010 and 2040, an average of 22,000 a year. It focuses much of the housing growth at cities with a high number of jobs, including San Francisco, San Jose and Oakland.

The plan would provide funds to cities that direct housing development along transit corridors in efforts to reduce sprawl and encourage environmentally sustainable development. Groups like the Committee for Green Foothills lauded the plan's approval.

Mountain View planning director Randy Tsuda said he didn't anticipate any impacts to the city's existing plans for development through 2030, a vision developed during years of community meetings to create a new general plan - a blueprint for the future development in the city.

"For the most part, its objectives aligned with objectives in our general plan," Tsuda said. "I don't anticipate any major impact or change to the city of Mountain View."

The South Bay is projected to see a major growth in both jobs and housing. Forecasts in the plan say Mountain View will see 15,640 news jobs (33 percent growth) and 9,400 new homes (28 percent growth) between 2010 and 2040.

On Wednesday, several hundred people packed a Marriott ballroom to protest the plan, voicing concerns that it will bring overcrowded housing developments and will bypass local control over development. Many arrived on buses from Marin and Santa Clara counties.

Hundreds of attendees from groups such as Discontent with Plan Bay Area said they believe such a plan should be subject to a public vote and toted signs and chanted "Let us vote!" or "MTC, don't speak for me!

That sentiment was shared in an 80-person protest in Mountain View the Monday before the meeting at the Rose Market, where organizers said the 200-unit apartment development proposed to displace a slew of beloved businesses at the corner of Castro Street and El Camino Real was an example of what Plan Bay Area would require.

A resolution approved by ABAG on July 18 says "the plan is not intended to dictate local land use policy or development approvals" and would "increase housing choices by providing incentives for qualifying development projects."

At the meeting, several dozen others from Oakland-based public transit advocacy group TransForm carried yellow signs expressing support for alternatives to the plan under the slogan "Equity Environment and Jobs" or EEJ.

According to the MTC, the plan is a "work in progress" that continues earlier efforts to "develop an efficient transportation network and grow in a financially and environmentally responsible way."

Created by several agencies including MTC and ABAG, Plan Bay Area comes up with blueprints for the region's nine counties to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by the year 2040, as required under state Senate Bill 375. The

plan also focuses on providing housing for all residents of all income levels near transportation hubs, according to MTC and ABAG officials.

The federal government requires the agencies to update the plan every four years to keep up with shifting demographics and new data, MTC spokesman John Goodwin said.

"There are no easy solutions in this plan but ... this plan creates a way for the residents of the Bay Area to discuss our future openly," said ABAG Executive Director Ezra Rapport.

But many of the Bay Area residents who spoke at the meeting said they either did not feel included in the planning process or felt that requests for public input were disingenuous and that board members had already made up their minds to approve the plan.

Some speakers also voiced concerns that the plan would give the government undue authority to dictate where and how communities are allowed to develop housing.

"It's clearly a social engineering experiment," Fairfax resident Kevin Krick said during the public hearing.

Dozens of people said they would support the plan as long as it included amendments to increase funding under the plan for affordable housing and public transit options - amendments that were adopted later in the meeting.

Some speakers praised the plan as it was originally presented, expressing hope that it will provide a wider variety of alternatives to congested Bay Area roadways and prevent the displacement of low-income residents as rents throughout the region soar.

"I'm really glad to see the region take this pioneering step," said Adina Levin of Menlo Park.

The Bay Area is among the state's 18 regions tasked with creating a vision for meeting mandated emissions reduction targets and implementing transit and housing solutions.

Thursday night's vote came at the end of a three-year planning process involving the MTC, ABAG, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Bay Conservation and Development Commission and local communities and agencies.

==I Bay City News Service and Mountain View Voice staff==

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Planning for displacement: Short takes

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05.28.13 - 5:00 pm | Tim Redmond (/category/author/tim-redmond) | (3)

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Regional planning hits Chinatown

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Planning for displacement (/2013/05/28/planning-displacement)

When regional planners at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission funded a study to create a bus-rapid transit system on Van News Avenue, they decided, in the interest of speeding the buses along, to allow only one left turn — onto Broadway.

That would turn Broadway into a much-busier thoroughfare — and have a huge impact on Chinatown, where there's heavy pedestrian traffic. That, Cindy Wu says, is one of the problems with regional planning — it doesn't always consider the impacts on existing, fully developed neighborhoods.

Wu is a planner with the Chinatown Community Development Center and a member of San Francisco's Planning Commission. She's concerned that Plan Bay Area, with its macro focus, ignores the micro — the people who already live in communities that will feel the pressure.

"Chinatown is performing amazingly," she told me recently. There's low car use, high density ... all the things ABAG seems to want. And yet, it's in the Priority Development Area, where new construction could lead to displacement. "It doesn't get to the neighborhood scale, where people will be forced to control the impacts of growth."

Gen Fujioka, policy director at CCDC, noted that the plans says people displaced from a San Francisco community like Chinatown can be accommodated elsewhere in the region. "Like that's an acceptable alternative," he said.

A (somewhat) better approach

The Draft Environmental Impact Report on Plan Bay Area looked at several alternatives, including doing nothing at all, which everyone pretty much agrees is a bad idea. But interestingly, a proposal put together by community groups, including Public Advocates, Urban Habitat, and TransForm, turned out to do a better job of reaching ABAG's environmental goals.

In the DEIR models, "Alternative Five," as it's described, leads to slightly lower levels of displacement and less car travel. It does that in large part through the imposition of a Vehicle Miles Travelled Tax — a one-cent levy on every mile driven by a private car or light truck in the region.

That, it turns out, does indeed discourage car use. It would also raise more than $600 million a year, most of which would go to public transit and affordable housing. Over 25 years, that's a lot of cash.

But ABAG planners rejected that proposal, preferring their own alternative.

ABAG and the UN plan for world domination

One of the biggest problems with opposing, or even questioning, ABAG's Plan Bay Area is that some of the loudest voices against it are, in a word, loony.

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Planning for displacement: Short takes

By *caitlin*
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Planning for displacement [1]

Regional planning hits Chinatown

When regional planners at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission funded a study to create a bus-rapid transit system on Van News Avenue, they decided, in the interest of speeding the buses along, to allow only one left turn — onto Broadway.

That would turn Broadway into a much-busier thoroughfare — and have a huge impact on Chinatown, where there's heavy pedestrian traffic. That, Cindy Wu says, is one of the problems with regional planning — it doesn't always consider the impacts on existing, fully developed neighborhoods.

Wu is a planner with the Chinatown Community Development Center and a member of San Francisco's Planning Commission. She's concerned that Plan Bay Area, with its macro focus, ignores the micro — the people who already live in communities that will feel the pressure.

"Chinatown is performing amazingly," she told me recently. There's low car use, high density ... all the things ABAG seems to want. And yet, it's in the Priority Development Area, where new construction could lead to displacement. "It doesn't get to the neighborhood scale, where people will be forced to control the impacts of growth."

Gen Fujioka, policy director at CCDC, noted that the plans says people displaced from a San Francisco community like Chinatown can be accommodated elsewhere in the region. "Like that's an acceptable alternative," he said.

A (somewhat) better approach

The Draft Environmental Impact Report on Plan Bay Area looked at several alternatives, including doing nothing at all, which everyone pretty much agrees is a bad idea. But interestingly, a proposal put together by community groups, including Public Advocates,

Urban Habitat, and TransForm, turned out to do a better job of reaching ABAG's environmental goals.

In the DEIR models, "Alternative Five," as it's described, leads to slightly lower levels of displacement and less car travel. It does that in large part through the imposition of a Vehicle Miles Travelled Tax — a one-cent levy on every mile driven by a private car or light truck in the region.

That, it turns out, does indeed discourage car use. It would also raise more than $600 million a year, most of which would go to public transit and affordable housing. Over 25 years, that's a lot of cash.

But ABAG planners rejected that proposal, preferring their own alternative.

ABAG and the UN plan for world domination

One of the biggest problems with opposing, or even questioning, ABAG's Plan Bay Area is that some of the loudest voices against it are, in a word, loony.

Around the Bay Area suburbs, people packing hearings on the plan are talking about the secret United Nations plan to confiscate all private property, burn down suburban homes, and force everyone into tiny cells in teeming cities where our personal freedoms will be systematically destroyed.

You haven't heard of that? It's called Agenda 21, and the John Birch Society is convinced that it's a global plot to destroy America.

Actually, Agenda 21 is a weak, unenforceable document that came out of the UN's environmental conference in 1992. It suggests — as does SB375, as does just about every sane thinker in civilization — that the world's growth ought to be planned, sustainable, and energy efficient.

But it's getting dragged up as grounds to scuttle Plan Bay Area. The black helicopter folks, the Obama Wants To Take My House folks, and a few NIMBYs who just don't want density in the suburbs, have been wailing about this massive conspiracy in the past few months.

It's unlikely that the Tea Party types will make common cause with San Francisco progressives on this issue. But there's a real danger here: If the nut cases get the attention, serious questions about the feasibility of this plan could get lumped in with the ravings of conspiracy kooks.

And as far as the UN taking over California? Hey, at least we'll get universal health care.

News Volume 47, Issue 35 Tim Redmond

Source URL: http://www.sfbg.com/2013/05/28/planning-displacement-short-takes

Links:
[1] http://www.sfbg.com/2013/05/28/planning-displacement

Residents react to mayor's opt-out

By Paul Mamalakis | Posted: Wednesday, August 7, 2013 3:11 pm

A reaction to Novato Mayor Pat Eklund's decision to abstain from voting on the controversial Plan Bay Area was fast and furious.

Out of the many phone calls received, some opined she's playing it safe to be reelected in November. Others argued Eklund didn't want to hurt her chances of challenging Marin's District 5 Supervisor Judy Arnold in 2014. Most complained she's just another "spineless" politician.

Plan Bay Area is a state-mandated, integrated long-range transportation, land-use and housing plan that proposes to provide more housing and transportation choices and reduce transportation-related pollution.

In Jan. 2012, Eklund was elected by the mayors and council members of Marin's 11 cities to be their representative on the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board. During her reports at council meetings, Eklund routinely portrayed herself as the only member of the ABAG executive board to consistently expose the myriad flaws in the proposal. And yet, she joined other Novato council members in supporting the scheme.

As recently reported by Advance Editor Nicole Baptista, Eklund explained, "Novato's council voted in favor because in doing so, Novato's high-density housing allocation dramatically decreased. Silicon Valley is really driving the economy of the San Francisco Bay Area," she said. "It's where the majority of growth is anticipated. When we voted for Plan Bay Area, our housing allocation went down to 417 for 2014-2022. That is a third of the previous allocation."

Generally speaking, Eklund hasn't been known to run from a fight. Asked why she abstained, the veteran councilwoman referred me to her op-ed piece in another Bay Area newspaper. She wrote, "Since I represent the Marin cities on ABAG, I reached out to my colleagues and encouraged them to have public meetings to garner community feedback. I held several meetings with ABAG delegates on the city councils to ascertain how Marin cities should cast our one vote (mine) on the ABAG board.

"Of the 11 cities, three (Novato, Sausalito, Mill Valley) indicated their support for Plan Bay Area, one (Corte Madera) voted for the 'No Project Alternative' and seven (Belvedere, Tiburon, Larkspur, Ross, San Anselmo, Fairfax and San Rafael) took 'No Position.' 'No Position' is just that — they chose not to take a position for or against any of the alternatives. Given the majority took 'No Position,' it was my duty on July 18, to cast an abstention vote for or against the Plan." When the final votes were tallied, Eklund was the only member to abstain.

Red-faced, she subsequently apologized publicly for having misrepresented that Mill Valley's council had taken a position on the plan.

Eklund told me she's satisfied local control will not be preempted. That's because of a last-minute amendment to the plan that reads, "Adoption of Plan Bay Area does not mandate any changes to local zoning, general plans, or project review. The region's cities, towns, and counties will maintain control of all decisions to adopt plans and permit or deny development projects."

Our mayor often bragged — as Marin's representative to ABAG's executive board — she had the sole decision-making authority. However, Eklund copped out, threw the decisive cities under the bus, and allowed weak-kneed politicians to rule the day.

Paul Mamalakis is a political columnist for Marinscope Community Newspapers. He can be reached at 892-7361.

Rod Diridon Sr.: Transit Villages are the way to save farms, open space

By Rod Diridon Sr. Special to the Mercury News San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

California's Department of Finance projects nearly 60 million Californians, up from today's 38 million, by 2060. That's like dropping New York's population on our beautiful state, but the growth can't be avoided.

That human deluge can be accommodated, as in the past, with massive urban sprawl that decimates the last Central Valley farms and our Valley's water supply and hillside views. That will create terminal gridlock, exacerbate climate change and jeopardize the continued economic and environmental viability of Silicon Valley.

Or we can create "Transit Villages" on top of many of the Valley's current 50-plus rail stations.

Transit Villages can accommodate much of our area's expected growth in more affordable housing atop a podium platform built right above the stations and station parking. These multi-acre platforms would be restricted to pedestrians and bicyclists with parks and family amenities interspersed between high-rise apartment and condominium towers. The podium-level floor would be dedicated to convenience commercial, neighborhood association community rooms, preschools, libraries and so on.

The Transit Villagers would tend to work along the transit system. So the morning commute would be an elevator to the podium floor, drop the kids at preschool, proceed by elevator to the ground floor transit (BART, light rail, commuter rail) and take that "horizontal elevator" to work. That trip is reversed at the end of the day, picking up groceries, laundry and the children on the podium level, and arriving home without having to buy $4-plus per gallon gas or fight parking, congestion and the baby's car-seat.

Other countries with more population per acre than the U.S. seem to have more open space. Indeed, traveling through Europe or most of Asia is primarily through valuable, protected farm land with intermittent high density cities built on top of and around rail stations. That eliminates the need for a second car, drastically reduces the carbon footprint, provides the riders and revenue that the transit systems were designed to accommodate, creates a healthy sense of local community and significantly reduces the urban sprawl, congestion and pollution that threaten our Valley's future.

The regional Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission recently approved "Plan Bay Area," which calls for transit villages, although often in the form of higher density neighborhoods near rather than on top of train stations. Some of the Valley's cities are beginning to consider those plans with the support of many in the region's industrial, environmental and professional planning communities. But neighbors often seem opposed without understanding the concept or the alternatives to accommodate inevitable growth.

A relatively timid example of this idea is the five to six story proposed development, with ground floor commercial, at 785 The Alameda diagonally across from the San Jose Diridon Station and near the SAP Center. While worthy of support, the number of proposed units is modest for a site so well served by transit.

The rail transit stations in the Valley cost billions of dollars to build and were predicated upon nearby development and transit ridership that Transit Villages represent. The Valley could aim for a more comprehensive approach to these valuable rail transit-interchanges and proceed now to master plan, zone, and expedite the building permits for compatible developments. Our rapidly growing job base and our rapidly warming planet deserve our urgent best effort to accommodate the unavoidable population growth avalanche with sustainable Transit Villages rather than more urban sprawl.

Rod Diridon Sr., executive director of the Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University, is president of the Santa Clara County League of Conservation Voters and former chair of the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission. He wrote this for this newspaper.

San Rafael rescinds two high-density housing plans

Posted:

marinij.com

Pressured by vocal opponents of high-density housing, the San Rafael City Council narrowly approved rescinding a plan to concentrate future housing developments near transit at the Marin Civic Center.

Council members met Monday to decide the fate of the Marin Civic Center Station Area Plan, which outlines transit-oriented housing options for a 1/2-mile area around the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit station near the Civic Center, and the fate of the Marin Civic Center "priority development area," which identifies land for high-density housing near transit. Both overlap and cover the same location.

On a 3-2 vote, with City Councilwoman Barbara Heller and City Councilman Andrew McCullough dissenting, the council voted to remove the priority development area designation. A motion by McCullough to adopt a lower-density designation failed.

In addition, the council unanimously approved a handful of amendments to the Station Area Plan.

San Rafael Mayor Gary Phillips walked a fine line by proposing the council rescind the development area designation, but not completely forget about its existence.

"I would suggest we terminate the PDA designation, but at the same time recognize things change. I strongly recommend we come back after a period of time like three years and take a look at it," Phillips said.

City Councilman Damon Connolly and City Councilwoman Kate Colin supported the mayor's idea and it was added to the resolution.

During its discussions, the council considered changing the type of priority development area, reducing the number of housing units that could be built. The area was set aside in 2009 as a "transit town center" to have a total of 3,000 to 7,500 units around the Civic Center. But changing the designation to a "transit neighborhood" would have a target housing number of 1,500 to 4,000 units.

San Rafael Planning Manager Paul Jensen said the Association of Bay Area Governments has confirmed the housing ranges, which include existing and planned homes, aren't set in stone.

"The residential range is not a mandate and the local jurisdiction is not held to meet the low end of the target range," Jensen said. "It's not uncommon to have a priority development area that won't meet the low range."

Jensen said Napa recently changed the designation of its downtown priority development area.

McCullough said the numbers in the less-dense priority development area match what the city has in its general plan.

While many members of the public supported the lower designation, a handful of others supported keeping the higher designation. A number of speakers worried about the potential loss of funding if the development area is rescinded.

"We will have to tax ourselves for some of these developments if we rescind the PDA," said Gail Napell.

Rescinding the priority development area means the city will lose current and future grant funding for transit improvements, including money for bicycle and pedestrian upgrades around the future SMART station.

Dianne Steinhauser, Transportation Authority of Marin executive director, urged the city in a letter not to get rid of the area.

"Assuming the funding levels remain relatively the same, TAM estimates approximately $2 million per year total, with a minimum of $1 million a year dedicated to supporting PDAs in Marin," Steinhauser wrote.

Both McCullough and Heller voiced opposition to losing funding for bicycle, pedestrian and street improvements.

"The money will be used on roads and beautifying the neighborhoods that come along," Heller said. "I think it fits our community since we have the SMART station there so we do get a chance at that funding."

Many members of the public voiced concern that designating a priority development area would create an expectation by the Association of Bay Area Governments that thousands of new homes be built.

"To accept it would create an expectation for developers that could put the city in a pretty sticky wicket," said Gregory Andrew.

Connolly agreed.

"A free lunch doesn't exist, so to speak," Connolly said.

Transit activist David Schonbrunn said there's no legal mandate the homes must be built.

"It's all just paranoia," Schonbrunn said. "This is way too overcharged for the specific legalities that are involved here."

McCullough agreed.

"No one has identified a string attached to this PDA," McCullough said.

Each candidate for City Council spoke on the topic of priority development areas, with Greg Brockbank supporting the designation, Maribeth Bushey-Lang supporting the smaller designation and Randy Warren opposing the area. Colin, who is also running for election, said she'd like to see the area rescinded.

As part of Monday night's discussion, the city voted unanimously to amend the Station Area Plan to assuage fears of high-rise developments and high-density housing.

Under the revisions, development along Redwood Highway and Merrydale Road wouldn't be allowed to be more than 36 feet or three stories tall, and development sites east of Highway 101 and in the Northgate mall area won't be allowed to be more than three stories tall. Instead of directing the city to implement increases in commercial and residential densities, the revised plan suggests studying these options.

A majority of the public expressed support for the amended plan.

"I'm very happy to see how you've revised the station area plan," Andrew said.

Contact Megan Hansen via email at mhansen@marinij.com or via Twitter at http://twitter.com/hansenmegan. Follow her blog at http://blogs.marinij.com/bureaucratsandbaking.

halfwaytoconcord.com
http://www.halfwaytoconcord.com/sb-1-threatens-local-control-of-urban-planning-process-in-concord/

SB-1 threatens local control of urban planning process in Concord

Richard Eber

One of the first things I learned as an intern-trainee of American Democracy is the truth to the saying *"Politics makes strange bed fellows."* This reality finally filtered down to me as I have tried to figure out winners and losers in the recent battles concerning the urban planning process in Contra Costa and on the State level.

My conclusion is that the victors all have enjoyed support from a coalition of (A) Liberal Democrats (B) Public Employee and Construction Trades Labor Unions (C) Environmentalist Groups.

Breaking this down on particular issues we first have passage of the **One Plan Bay Area** by the Executive Boards of the **Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)** and **the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).** The cornerstone of their program is the construction of publicly financed **Project Development Areas (PDA's)** with accompanying transportation projects primarily on the 101 corridor between San Francisco and San Jose.

Looking at the trail of money that is planned to be spent we see project labor is stipulated thus construction unions will get all of the work. Additional government employees will be needed for administration and filling transit jobs. Environmental groups will be placated by meeting their stated goals of reducing greenhouse gasses and carbon foot prints by building stack and pack housing near mass transit. Lastly, the Democratic Party benefits by having a loyal entitlement oriented political base residing in the communities they create.

Despite a triumph of epic proportions, this apparently is not enough. Legislation is being crafted in Sacramento that would force these policies on local communities. **SB-1** co-authored by Senators Darrel Steinberg (D-Sacramento) and Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord) brings back the redevelopment program done away with by Governor Brown for budgetary reasons in 2111. The bill features increased decision-making powers for the State that includes:

1. This legislation would authorize for creation of **Sustainable Communities Investment Areas (SCIA)** presided over by an appointed board (no direct election) by cities and counties with power of taxation and issuing bonds for developments in these special zones.

2. After receiving one million dollars to fund their operations, these agencies would be required to follow guidelines similar to **Project Development Areas (PDA's)** in the One Bay Area Plan relating to design, planning, construction and operation of areas under their jurisdiction

3. The State department of Industrial Relations would ensure project union labor would be used for construction and living wages be in place for those workers who would be employed once projects are completed. Hiring preferences would be given to military veterans, the disadvantaged, single parent families, and those with a history with the criminal justice system.

4. Provides that the SCIA can secure property from owners without a finding of "blight" which will give them more leeway to appropriate land as they see fit.

5. Sustainable parking standards ordinance would be in place which restricts parking in project areas to encourage public transportation and discouraging driving.

6. Provides that for all tax revenues that SCIA's collect, they must dedicate no less than 25% of net revenues for affordable housing purposes.

Were this legislation passed, we can expect more governmental regulations, higher taxes, and fewer jobs in the private sector, with less decision making authority under local control. At the same time the Democratic Party, labor unions and environmental groups would be able to consolidate their power on all levels.

The strength of this coalition first realized by Congressman George Miller (D-Martinez) has expanded to the State legislature in recent years epitomized by local representatives Mark DeSaulnier, and backbenchers Susan Bonilla and Joan Buchanan. Now with the probable passage of SB-1, these powerful forces will likely diminish the power of City Council's to control their own destinies.

Historically local government have tended to be more non-partisan and conservative than the legislature because these elected officials have needed to be more accountable to their constituents. This has frustrated the ultra-liberal *Super Majority* in Sacramento who wish to exert more control in every aspect of government. A product of this thinking is SB-1 which virtually eliminates any dissent on what course is taken in the local urban planning process

A good example of this are the discussions going on with Concord's Ad Hoc Steering Committee which is addressing how the downtown region will develop in the next thirty years. While the members of the committee, all of whom work or live in Concord concern themselves with improving the quality of life for future residents, others who have been addressing the group tend to be more fixated with meeting the guidelines of ABAG, the MTC, SB=375 and ultimately SB-1.

One such organization is **The Greenbelt Alliance** and the closely affiliated **Coalition for a Sustainable Concord (CFASC).** Both through their spokesman environmental activist Matt Vander Sluis of Berkeley, have advocated an aggressive plan to build a high concentration of low and moderate income housing in the area between the BART Station and Todos Santos Square. They believe "*Affordable Housing will bring more residents and economic investment downtown and strengthen the community fabric.*"

To accomplish this goal, the CFASC feels this activity "*should be primarily developed by non-profit housing projects development organizations*" With this scenario, the private sector is less qualified to handle such tasks. Such a conclusion appears to be in stark contrast with the views of many Ad Hoc Committee members whose experience as been in capitalistic enterprises.

With pressure mounting from outside forces including the CFASC and the recommendations made by the consultants Perkins & Will (whose services are paid by ABAG and the MTC) the Downtown Ad Hoc Steering Committee ponders their vision of what is to transpire in Concord in the years to come.

Unfortunately, it might not matter what they think if the legislature through SB-1 determines where, in what concentration, and the demographics of what people are to reside in SCIA areas. Furthermore, the State controls six parcels of empty property in the downtown area to further consolidate its power in the urban renewal process.

The big question is will higher taxes and tighter governmental regulations allow the private sector to produce enough high paying jobs to make these grandiose plans work? Good questions for the Demo-Labor-Environmentalist Coalition to ponder should their stranglehold on political power continue unabated.

~ The author is a member of the Concord Downtown Ad Hoc Steering Committee. The views expressed are his own and do not represent the views of the City of Concord.

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From the San Francisco Business Times :http://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2013/08/19/second-group-sues-to-stop-plan-bay-area.html

Aug 19, 2013, 2:39pm PDT

Second group sues to stop Plan Bay Area

Eric Young
Reporter- *San Francisco Business Times*
Email | Twitter | Google+ | LinkedIn

A trade group representing home builders has sued to stop a sweeping land use plan that promotes high-density housing near public transit.

The Building Industry Association Bay Area alleges that Plan Bay Area — which was approved last July — violates state law by failing to provide for enough housing to accommodate the Bay Area's projected population and by failing to provide a realistic development pattern to accommodate residential growth.

The plan is "bad for Bay Area working families, bad for Bay Area employers and environmentally counterproductive," said Bob Glover, executive officer of BIA Bay Area, which represents urban and suburban home builders.

Plan Bay Area, which spells out how much new housing each of the Bay Area's cities must accommodate in coming years, was approved by the Association of Bay Area Governments and Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Overall it calls for adding almost 188,000 housing units by 2022. ABAG and MTC drew up the plan in response to a state law that requires every region in California devise building and transportation plans to cut the emission of greenhouse gases.

A representative for ABAG declined comment. A representative for MTC was not immediately available for comment.

A different group has already sued to stop Plan Bay Area.

The Pacific Legal Foundation, a libertarian organization in Sacramento, filed suit earlier this month claiming that the plan violates the California Environmental Quality Act by failing to "justify the plan's high-density development scheme, and refusing to consider the feasibility of a less restrictive alternative."

Eric Young covers law, government and the business of sports for the San Francisco Business Times.

July 24, 2013

'Stalin's Plan'

BY LEILANI CLARK

Despite their best efforts, including accusations of totalitarianism and property-rights infringement, opponents of Plan Bay Area failed to sway a nearly unanimous passing vote on July 18 by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Jake Mackenzie, a Rohnert Park council member, sits on the MTC and is a member of ABAG's general assembly. He was at the seven-hour-long meeting where the deciding vote in favor of Plan Bay Area was cast. More than four hours of that meeting were taken up by public comment.

"We were being compared to Hitler, Stalin and totalitarian regimes," says Mackenzie. "Nothing could be further from the truth."

A group calling itself Citizen Marin chartered a 48-seat shuttle to bring opponents to the meeting at the Oakland Marriott, according to the Marin Independent Journal. Protesters outnumbered those testifying in favor of the plan ("They had made a very deliberate effort by busing people in to have a large number testifying for their point of view," says Mackenzie), which provides incentives for the building of affordable and high-density housing—along with increased use of public transportation—in 160 priority development areas as a way of meeting greenhouse-gas-reduction goals for the coming century.

Plan Bay Area consists of a series of four-year plans that will be under continuous review, says Mackenzie. "It's going to be a dynamic situation, and

it's not going to be cast in concrete," he explains. "It's not like tablets coming down from some mountain or something like that."

Local control over land-use decisions will still rest with the city and the county, according to Mackenzie. "The opponents claim that we are forcing people to live in high-density housing, high rises and taking away their cars," he adds. "These are blatant untruths."

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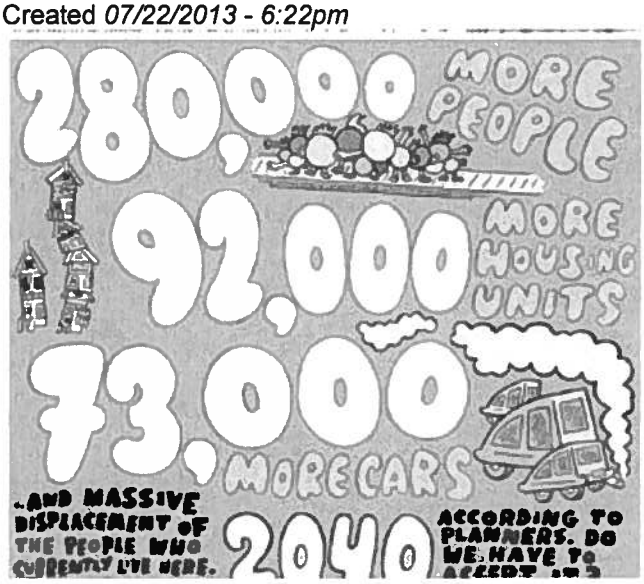
Street Fight: Plan Bay Area falls short of a worthy goal

By *steven*
Created *07/22/2013 - 6:22pm*



Plan Bay Area was the subject of a Guardian cover story on May 28 and public forum on June 12.

Last week's adoption of Plan Bay Area [1] by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission was a watershed moment in regional planning. The plan links regional planning to state policies mandating reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and aims to limit future sprawl by accommodating 2.1 million people, 1 million jobs, and 660,000 housing units largely within the existing built-up areas of the nine-county region.

Newly designated priority development areas (PDAs) will enable modest-density, walkable development in city and suburb alike, while preserving both existing single-family neighborhoods and open space. In a time of urgent need to address global warming, the Bay Area has once again proved a leader by enabling compact housing around transit, and its supporting studies expect the per capita greenhouse gas emissions from driving to decline by 15 percent in 2040.

This will not save the world and it's not without some challenging byproducts — such as preventing displacement of low-income residents [2] from San Francisco and other urban centers — but it is a start. And in a nation hell-bent on denying the urgency of global

warming, it is refreshing and inspiring that someone, somewhere, is trying to do something.

Yet the transportation component – the lynchpin and impetus of Plan Bay Area, according to many local leaders –is mediocre, uninspiring, and inadequate. Despite land use policies enabling compact development, 80 percent of all travel in the Bay Area will still be in cars in 2040, not much different from today, and far short of the real change that is needed in this time of urgency. With 2 million more people, this is a recipe for gridlock, inequity, and ecological disaster – not sound public policy.

It should be no surprise that a big part of the problem is funding. The MTC, charged with assessing future regional transit potential, identifies just $289 billion between now and 2040 for roads, bridges, and transit — far short of what's needed. At $10.3 billion a year that may seem like a lot, but upwards of 87 percent of this is already committed to maintenance of existing roads and transit– not transit capacity expansion. New homes and jobs might be focused around BART and Caltrain stations, but because there's no real capacity expansion, the current iteration of Plan Bay Area can't even reach its own modest goal of 74 percent of trips by car in 2040.

With 2 million more people, cumulative emissions from driving will actually increase by 18 percent because so few new residents will be able to squeeze onto our already crowded transit systems. Today BART is breaking ridership records but it is crowded. Extensions to far flung suburbs might be worthwhile but they don't expand capacity in the system's core. What we need is a second BART line and/or Amtrak service between San Francisco and Oakland, but this is absent from the plan. Meanwhile, most mainline Muni buses and railcars are currently jam-packed, yet San Francisco is somehow expected to absorb 92,000 housing units in Plan Bay Area.

Supervisors David Campos and Scott Weiner, representing San Francisco in the Plan Bay Area process, are to be commended for drawing attention to the transit problem and for asking MTC staff to show how to meet future funding gaps. By broaching the subject, they show that San Francisco might be poised to lead on this critical issue. But Campos and Weiner, working within the "fiscally constrained envelope" as framed by MTC planners, were only seeking to cover deficits for existing service – not visionary expanded service. In the end, there was no real vision for adequate transit capacity expansion.

This foretells a troubling transit future – and one that will likely be more and more private. While many San Franciscans decry the proliferation of Google buses and other private corporate shuttles hogging Muni stops, these buses do lay bare the transit conundrum in the Bay Area. Without well-funded, visionary capacity expansion of public transit, those with the means (and high wage jobs) will shift to private buses while everyone else is left to duke it out on crowded highways, buses, and trains.

This conundrum demands that progressives in the Bay Area ramp up their transit politics to lead locally and nationally. The debate about transit finance needs to be redirected – away from regressive local sales tax measures (which often include more roads) back towards more progressive measures, such as transit assessment districts – which could require developers who profit from Plan Bay Area's growth incentives to adequately finance transit expansion.

The debate needs to move away from demonizing public transit employees to a discussion of the role and responsibility of corporate health care, banks, and the real estate industry in causing economic instability (which has harmed public transit finance more in the last decade than a bus driver expecting a living wage and healthcare). The debate needs to move away from creating new roadway capacity, such as exclusive toll lanes, and focus on how to convert existing highway lanes into transit-only lanes with fast, frequent, reliable regional bus service open to all.

Plan Bay Area is a living document, a work in progress. Within the next four-five years it will need to be revised and can be improved. The current version of the plan, weak on transit funding, has been dominated by a loud, irrational mob of Tea Party cranks bent on sabotaging anything that hints of progressive ideas. They were successful in diluting Plan Bay Area. While a smattering of progressive transit activists showed up and attempted to shape the plan, next time the plan needs a broader progressive movement — including housing, social justice, and environmental activists — to demand a truly visionary transportation plan.

Jason Henderson is a geography professor at San Francisco State University and the author of Street Fight: The Politics of Mobility in San Francisco. *We'll be sharing his perspective regularly in the Bay Guardian.*

Development Plan Bay Area Transportation Jason Henderson

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Suit filed to block Plan Bay Area

By Richard Halstead, Marin Independent Journal San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

Bay Area Citizens, a nonprofit co-founded by a Larkspur lawyer, filed suit in Alameda Superior Court on Tuesday seeking to revoke approval of Plan Bay Area.

Bay Area Citizens is being represented free of charge by the Pacific Legal Foundation, a nonprofit legal organization based in Sacramento that litigates nationwide to protect property rights.

The suit asserts that Plan Bay Area -- a Bay Area-wide plan that seeks to promote the development of new, more affordable housing along transportation corridors and near mass transit to reduce greenhouse gas production -- violates the California Environmental Quality Act.

Damien Schiff, the Pacific Legal Foundation lawyer handling the case, said the law required the regional agencies proposing Plan Bay Area to consider alternatives that would achieve the same results but with reduced effect on the environment.

"Here we think the plan fundamentally failed," Schiff said.

John Goodwin, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, one of the regional agencies that helped create Plan Bay Area, declined to comment on the suit.

Peter Singleton of Larkspur said he co-founded Bay Area Citizens in March.

"It is to basically to protect and represent Californians' interests in areas like local community control, the environment, land use and property rights," Singleton said. "It is a complementary effort to the other citizens groups in Marin and throughout the Bay Area."

Susan Kirsch, one of the co-founders of Citizen Marin, a coalition of neighborhood associations opposing Plan Bay Area, said she was familiar with Bay Area Citizens; but added, "We're completely separate."

Singleton said Bay Area Citizens has about 100 members, a number of whom live in Marin, including Sausalito Councilwoman Linda Pfeifer. Nevertheless, Singleton said Bay Area Citizens chose to file its suit in Alameda County because many of its members also live there.

A collaboration of four regional government agencies, Plan Bay Area sets out housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which requires each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks -- 7 percent per capita by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035.

Plan Bay Area aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets by requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 "priority development areas." These are areas typically accessible to mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money.

The plan was designed to cut greenhouse emissions by reducing automobile trips.

Schiff said, "But the plan's CEQA analysis ignores the air quality improvements that will result from existing clean-air initiatives at the state level. In fact, the region's greenhouse gas targets are projected to be met naturally, largely because of mandated fuel efficiencies that are on track to be imposed."

Schiff said the Plan Bay Area approval process also was flawed because it failed to include an evaluation of an alternative approach suggested by Bay Area Citizens. The alternative called for expanded bus service and reducing transit fares.

Schiff said the regional agencies overseeing Plan Bay Area contend the alternative was offered too late in the process -- during the period for public comment on Plan Bay Area.

But Schiff said, "Nothing in state law sets this arbitrary time limit on reviewing proposals."

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

Sunnyvale officials seek public input on housing element

By Alia Wilson, Sunnyvale Sun awilson@community-newspapers.com San Jose Mercury News
Posted: MercuryNews.com

Affordable housing is at the forefront of discussions for Bay Area cities updating their housing elements for 2014-2022.

With the average price of a single-family home in Santa Clara County now at a whopping $1 million, local cities must tackle several challenges in updating their plan--particularly maintaining and creating affordable housing--while meeting regional housing needs allocations.

The Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission identify areas to accommodate the eight-year projection of a region's housing needs.

These allocation numbers for Sunnyvale require the city to plan for nearly 5,470 dwelling units between 2014 and 2022, or an average of 680 units a year. During the past 15 years, the city has built about 300 housing units a year on average, with some variations.

"There is a lot of heartburn over the RHNA numbers," community development director Hanson Hom said. "In our case, I don't believe it will be a challenge to do. We have sufficient zoning to accommodate."

The state requires cities to update their housing elements every eight years, typically with an eye toward increasing the housing supply and improving the mix of housing types and affordability; promoting efficient development patterns; and promoting an improved intra-regional relationship between jobs and housing.

Cities can use several tools to monitor this, including a jobs/housing balance ratio and a balanced growth profile, which looks at community indicators to see how growth is affecting the city overall.

"We constantly track to see how well we're in balance," said Hom. "For every 1.4 to 1.8 jobs produced, you should have plans for one additional housing unit. A lot of cities are exceeding 2.0 ratios.

"Historically, a lot of cities plan for more employment uses rather than more housing. I think we're doing pretty well. It's all market driven, too."

The city is proactively asking for public input with the hope of having a draft element available for public review in late spring in 2014, before going through the council adoption process in the summer. The deadline to submit the updated housing element to the state is the end of 2014.

Residents can participate in a survey online at surveymonkey.com/s/T86BV6C or attend a housing element public outreach meeting on Aug. 28 at 6:30 p.m. at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, 550 E. Remington Drive.

For more information, visit housingelement.insunnyvale.com.

Upfront: The meaning of Marin

by Peter Seidman | Posted: Thursday, July 25, 2013 9:00 am

Existential: of, relating to, or affirming existence —Merriam-Webster

The fierce emotions that regularly rip through meetings whenever Plan Bay Area and affordable housing are the topics of debate are understandable, if disturbing, when put in context: The county has come to a juncture where the true values of its residents, their existential boundaries, are visible, unedited and raw.

When members of the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) approved Plan Bay Area late last week, the vote marked the end of a long public process. But even now opponents of the regional planning effort show little impetus to drop their criticisms, some justified, some not.

When members of ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) voted to pass Plan Bay Area and its environmental impact report, Marin representatives on both agencies voted with the majorities—except for Pat Eklund. The Novato city councilwoman abstained from both votes. Eklund, who represents Marin cities at ABAG reportedly abstained because, she said, most cities object to Plan Bay Area. Marin Supervisor Katie Rice, who serves as a Marin representative at ABAG, voted in the affirmative for the plan and its environmental report, as did Supervisor Steve Kinsey, who serves at MTC.

The process that led to the vote was marred by an often-vitriolic atmosphere at public meetings marked by yelling and screaming from Plan Bay Area opponents. The tactic is reminiscent of the strategy—or lack of it—that emerged in the Tea Party Summer, when right-wing opponents to the Affordable Care Act attempted to yell people into submission at public meetings. And even after it passed into law, opponents continue to argue their case as if it never had passed. In Marin, the fierce opposition to Plan Bay Area in particular and a general resistance to accept a greater role for the county and its cities to provide affordable housing clouded facts that could have enhanced a rational debate about what Marinites want to see in their county—and who they want to see living in it.

Carla Condon, who serves on the Corte Madera Town Council, is a longtime critic of Plan Bay Area and ABAG. "The whole plan is flawed," she says. "I wish Marin had been

more resistant." Condon, like other Plan Bay Area critics, thinks the strategy to tie land use and transportation planning is ineffective, even counterproductive. The Corte Madera Town Council last year voted to withdraw from ABAG. Councilmembers based their decision on what they said was ABAG's undue outside influence on the town's planning life. They also objected to housing-need numbers that came bubbling out of the regional agency as part of a routine needs assessment and as part of Plan Bay Area.

The process to withdraw from ABAG takes a full year from the time an entity notifies the agency. That timeline came to a conclusion this month, on July 1. "We are automatically out of ABAG," says Condon. "There are no longer 101 cities in ABAG, there are now 100." Condon says the county and Marin cities should form a separate council of governments to handle housing-need chores—anything ABAG can do, a Marin council of governments can do better. Withdrawing from ABAG negates the foundation of the agency's goal of regional planning. But it's regional planning that has generated some of the most intense heat during the Plan Bay Area meetings in Marin.

"We are part of a ... Bay Area community where Marin is considered to be so vigilant about being green," says Condon, "and yet we're thrown into the same basket as say, for example, San Jose. Marin is special."

Supporters of Plan Bay Area say it asks Marin to create a relatively small number of housing units compared to the more urbanized Bay Area counties, and that reflects the Plan Bay Area acknowledgement that Marin is about 80 percent open space.

Plan Bay Area seeks to encourage counties to provide their "fair share" of new housing to accommodate new residents to the Bay Area who will work at new jobs. Opponents have long said the methodology that ABAG used to arrive at the projected number of new jobs and the increase in population is faulty.

Critics who say ABAG has been unresponsive to Marin's request to take another look at the numbers discount the reductions ABAG made in what is called the Regional Housing Needs Allocation for Marin. That's the number of new housing units ABAG projects Marin will need in the coming years. Across the board, ABAG reduced the number of housing units as the process proceeded. The 1999-2006 housing-need numbers for Corte Madera totaled 179 units. In the 2007-20 planning cycle the numbers bumped the total to 244, but the final 2014-22 numbers come in at 72, a reduction of 172 units, or 30 percent. For the entire county, the 1999-2016 projection totaled 6,515 housing units. The 2007-20 numbers total 4,882, a reduction of 1,633, or 75 percent. And the final 2014-22 numbers

total 2,298 units, a reduction of 2,584, or 47 percent. When the housing-need numbers first came out of ABAG, officials at the agency said the numbers would get revised. Critics scoffed. But they did get revised. Those totals include affordable units as well as market-rate units. The affordable component has created an underlying negative buzz in Marin.

The housing need debate focuses the debate on what kind of values Marin residents hold in the highest regard. For some it's the encouragement of a vibrant and diverse populationin skin color, background and socioeconomic statusliving in walkable communities along the urbanized Highway 101 corridor. For others, the paramount value lies in the single-family-home lifestyle and an amorphous "small-town character." Still others maintain that change of almost any kind that involves adding lower-income residents is the enemy. The attitudes lie on a long scale. Somewhere in the middle is a section of compromise. But the vitriolic name-calling and intimidation at public meetings has tended to drown out the moderates.

That kind of visceral objection to the regional planning paradigm of Plan Bay Area came to the fore in Marinwood, which has been a little ground zero for an affordable housing debate. The nonprofit Bridge Housing Corp. has proposed a development that includes 72 affordable units and 10 market-rate units. Opponents of the development say it will destroy the neighborhood. The project has been the focus of planning and public meetings for about eight years, notes Supervisor Susan Adams, who represents Marinwood. Her support for affordable housing has played a major role in a recall effort mounted by residents who say she's unresponsive to her constituents, a charge she vigorously denies.

So much misinformation has swirled around the proposed Marinwood development it's difficult to sort facts from fabrication. And that bending of truth has carried over to the Plan Bay Area opposition, says Adams. The Marinwood project was part of an ABAG plan to concentrate development along the Highway 101 urban corridor, a goal envisioned virtually from the start of Marin countywide plans. ABAG opponents said the agency was pressuring the county to include the Marinwood development in what the agency calls a "priority development area (PDA)." That designation, say opponents, greases the skids for the county to build a high-density development like the one Bridge proposes.

But Adams says ABAG never led the county to the land of high-density development. Quite the opposite. First, says Adams, Marinwood was a potential PDA, not a full-

fledged PDA. And even with that tentative designation, the area received $850,000 for a Lucas Valley pathway project. That's the Plan Bay Area deal. By acceding to the need to tie land use and transportation in a regional planning package, communities can receive a transportation-funding advantage.

"We submitted the Marin site, with a cap of 100 units, to ABAG," says Adams. "ABAG called for cities and counties to self-identify where those areas were that would fit the criteria of being on transit corridors (a key in the planning process that stems from SB 375 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions). It was the county, not ABAG, that put the Marinwood project in the potential PDA. No outside influence."

But the seeds of confusion had been sown, leading Adams to ask county supervisors to withdraw the Marinwood project from the PDA designation. Supervisor Kate Sears did the same, successfully, with a PDA designation in Tam Valley.

"Being in a PDA was cosmetic," says Sears, "because being in a PDA didn't change the zoning." That's the key. The Marinwood development and the PDA in Sears' district are part of the county's Housing Element, the update of which currently is under construction. It's expected to go before supervisors for approval late this summer or early fall, in time to submit to the state for certification before the end of January. Missing that date could mean a loss of state funding, according to Leelee Thomas, a principal planner with the county.

"A lot of people were concerned because I think they have a notion that [the PDA] in Marinwood and Tam Valley changes the zoning," says Sears. "Really it doesn't." The zoning is included in the county's Housing Element. But the confusion sown was enough for Adams and Sears to request withdrawal of the two PDAs.

"Because of all the confusion, the spin that a few individuals put on this that make it sound really scary that it is ABAG telling us what to do rather than the other way 'round," says Adams, "I think it's the most prudent option to ask ABAG to take [the Marinwood development] off and remove us from the opportunities to receive extra transportation-related funding." The same will happen with the former PDA in Sears' district.

Adams says she has been holding small meetings of 12 to 20 people to explain the county Housing Element process, PDAs and the submission of the Marinwood development to ABAG. During the meetings, lights of understanding turn on, she says. It's that kind of rational, moderate-tone discussion that raucous opponents drowned out in larger public venues.

Condon still objects to ABAG and the housing densities in the Plan Bay Area concept. She says the county can satisfy state housing-need numbers without what she calls high-density developments (like the one in Marinwood). But affordable housing proponents say developers need projects with enough housing units to make a project financially feasible, and not enough infill opportunities exist in the county to meet demand.

Condon disagrees. She says there are plenty of locations that can accommodate affordable housing interspersed in neighborhoods, negating the need for larger developments. She's not opposed to affordable housing, she says. "That's why I get so upset when people construe this as a NIMBY attitude." But Condon and other Plan Bay Area opponents aren't shy about voicing their not-in-my-neighborhood opposition to developments that cluster 30 units of housing on a property.

The core idea behind Plan Bay Area is to reduce reliance on the single-occupant vehicle and concentrate development along transportation corridors, a nascent one in Marin with the coming of SMART. And Plan Bay Area proponents say the climate change crisis is critical enough to take whatever steps are possible on whatever level is possible. And leaving climate implications aside, transit-oriented development yields fewer and shorter routine vehicle trips, they maintain.

There's no doubt, however, that the pushback behind that kind of behavioral shift in Marin has gained legs. In San Rafael, opponents of a PDA in the Civic Center Area are putting pressure on the city to rethink the concept.

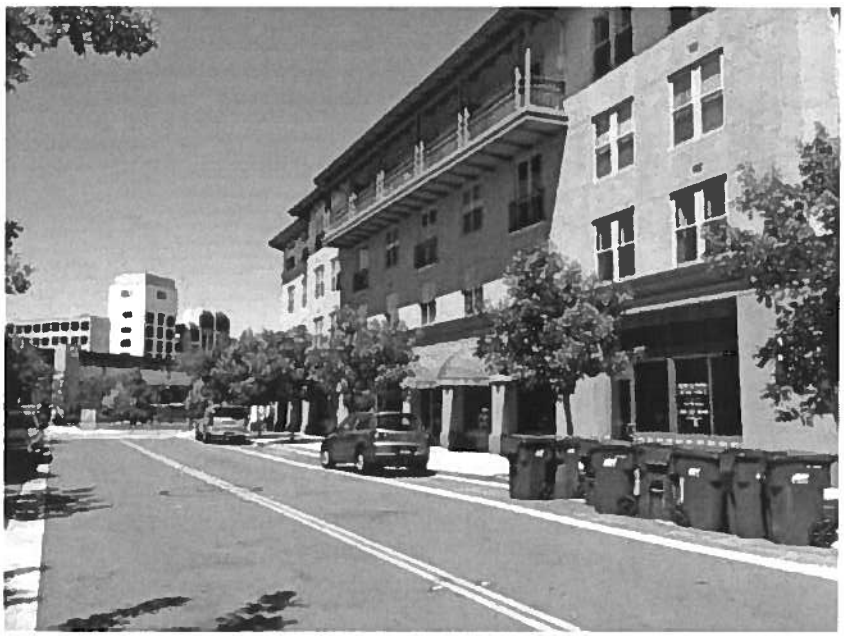
Plan Bay Area opponents scoff at the greenhouse gas reduction possibilities of transit-oriented development in Marin. But for those who want to live near shops and transportation and perhaps try to forego the single-passenger vehicle, transit-oriented development looks like a good deal—for the environment and for their lifestyle.

TRANSPORTATION

Transit-oriented developments are taking the Bay Area back to the future

By Isabel Angell (/people/isabel-angell)

1 of 2



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Listen

6:57

The Bay Area is one of the most congested places in the whole country – behind Los Angeles and Honolulu. Over the next 30 years, another two million people are expected to move here. So, how are we are all going to fit?

The regional planning groups Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) recently passed Plan Bay Area – a master plan that will guide growth in the area for the next thirty years – when the population is expected to swell to nine million. The Plan predicts that most of those two million new people will live and work in transit-oriented developments.

Transit-oriented developments (TODs) are planned areas with housing, office, and retail centered around a public transit hub, like BART or light rail.

The point is to make cars optional for residents and workers. TODs are modeled after dense, urban, walkable neighborhoods. Robert Cervero, an urban planning professor at UC Berkeley, compared TODs to old cities like New York or Paris.

"Before the automobile, you had very compact development roughly within a half a mile perimeter of a transit stop. It was mixed-use, very pedestrian-friendly," he explains. "So in many ways transit-oriented development takes pre-automobile streetcar cities of 100 years ago and tries to modernize it, really tried to adapt it to 21st century."

In other words, these developments are taking us back...to the future. The architects behind Plan Bay Area think TODs are a good idea, but they've gotten a lot of backlash from suburban communities. Patty Denny of Morgan Hill spoke during the public comment period before the plan was passed, and compared Plan Bay Area to Cold War-era communist policies.

"I would like to challenge all of you to get on an airplane and fly to Russia, China, and Siberia. I've been to all three, and if you don't understand what your housing is going to look like, go and look at it," she said.

Do these planned communities – or "stack-and-packs", as opponents refer to them – really work? Well, transit-oriented developments already exist across the Bay Area, mostly along BART lines.

Fruitvale Village

Back in the 1990s, BART wanted to build a big parking garage at its Fruitvale station in East Oakland. But the garage would have cut the station off from the rest of this mostly immigrant, low-income neighborhood. The community resisted, and the Unity Council, a non-profit advocacy group for the neighborhood, brought up the idea of building a transit-oriented development instead of a parking structure. So BART and the Unity Council made a deal.

Jeff Pace, the chief operations officer for the Unity Council, said he likes to characterize the deal like this:

"BART said if you, the Unity Council, if you design something, get community backing for it, and their input, if you finance it, build it, own it, operate it, then we'll let you do that. So, we said, okay, that's a good deal, we'll do that."

So the Council built Fruitvale Village—a collection of apartments, offices, and retail space centered around the BART station. And, as part of the deal, they also built BART a parking structure. But they stuck it off to the side, where it wouldn't interfere with the neighborhood.

Fruitvale Village packs a lot into three blocks, and it's not just apartments and businesses. There's a large health clinic, a pre-school, and a counseling center for foster kids. There's even a charter high school, ARISE, right next to a senior center.

Pace said that, at first, Fruitvale Village, which was completed in 2004, had a hard time filling up its retail spaces. But now, he said he can call it a big success.

"We like to say we're 100-100-100," he said. "We've got 100 percent occupancy in all of our main uses, the residential, the commercial, community service, and the retail."

Fruitvale Village has also made some headway on the main goal of transit-oriented development: getting people out of cars. A 2006 survey – which Pace admits is a long time ago – showed that over thirty percent of residents take BART to work. That's four times the average for the rest of Oakland.

"If you put people really close to mass transit, they use it," Pace said.

Contra Costa Centre

Twenty-two miles inland from Fruitvale Village on the Pittsburg/Bay Point BART line is the Contra Costa Centre. It's right next to downtown Walnut Creek, at the Pleasant Hill BART station. The neighborhood is quiet and spread out, about a half square mile of office parks, condos and retail space. It's a big contrast from Fruitvale Village.

The Centre, which was organized in 1985, attracts residents and businesses by offering a suburban setting that's walkable and close to public transit. It also offers perks to workers who don't drive. Property owners chip in to a general fund that pays for things like reduced price BART tickets and cash for people who carpool. In all, thirty percent of people work at the Centre don't drive there alone. The county's average is twenty percent.

The Centre's executive director Lynn Busby explains part of the Centre's program to get employees out of cars involves...giving them access to cars.

"If you take BART or bus to work, or walk or ride your bike, we have a carsharing program that's free of charge to anyone," she said." "The building owners pay for that."

Busby said the cars let people drive to lunch and run errands, which helps them leave their own cars at home. The Centre has also added a fleet of bikes and Segways people can check out for free. But even after almost two decades, Busby pointed the Contra Costa Centre isn't finished yet.

There's a vacant lot that's entitled for an office building, and another that advertises a future apartment building. There's also some empty retail along the bottom floor of a pair of apartment buildings that were built in 2010. Busby says the retail space is slowly filling up, and she hopes a plan for a restaurant will go through. But overall, the Centre is mostly filled in.

Busby says the Contra Costa Centre is doing its job as a transit-oriented development.

"The whole point is you live here, you work here, you can take the train to work," she said. "It's amazing to watch in the morning, people that are walking to the BART station here. It's quite phenomenal."

And this is exactly what the architects of Plan Bay Area want the future to look like. The Plan estimates that over two-thirds of region's new housing will be built on five percent of the land—mostly in TODs very similar to Fruitvale Village or the Contra Costa Centre.

But not everyone sees the future the same way—it's up to individual Bay Area cities to decide how they want to grow.

Two new lawsuits filed to challenge Plan Bay Area

By Richard Halstead, Marin Independent Journal San Jose Mercury News
Posted:

MercuryNews.com

Two more lawsuits have been filed challenging the legitimacy of Plan Bay Area.

On Friday, the Building Industry Association of the Bay Area sued, asserting that Plan Bay Area violates SB 375 -- the landmark 2008 statute requiring integrated regional housing and transportation plans -- by failing to provide for enough housing to accommodate the Bay Area's projected population and by failing to provide a realistic development pattern to accommodate residential growth.

Then on Monday, Earthjustice, Communities for a Better Environment, and the Sierra Club jointly filed suit asserting that the environmental impact report prepared for Plan Bay Area was inadequate.

Earlier this month, Bay Area Citizens, a nonprofit co-founded by a Larkspur lawyer, filed suit seeking to revoke approval of Plan Bay Area, on the basis that the plan violated the California Environmental Quality Act by failing to consider alternatives that would achieve the same results but with reduced effect on the environment.

All three suits have been filed in Alameda Superior Court and attorneys for the plaintiffs say they expect them to be consolidated and overseen by one judge.

A collaboration of four regional government agencies, Plan Bay Area sets out housing and transportation plans in response to the California Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008, which requires each of the state's 18 metropolitan areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks -- 7 percent per capita by 2020 and 15 percent by 2035.

Plan Bay Area aims to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction targets by requiring 78 percent of new housing and 62 percent of new jobs in the Bay Area through 2035 to be located within some 200 "priority development areas." These are areas typically accessible to mass transit, jobs, shopping and other services that have been identified and approved by local cities or counties for future growth. Local jurisdictions that approve priority development areas will be rewarded with grant money.

The plan was designed to cut greenhouse emissions by reducing automobile trips.

The Building Industry Association of the Bay Area favored an alternative studied in the environmental impact report for Plan Bay Area. That alternative forecast larger population and job growth over the 40 years covered by the plan, and would have allowed more of that growth to occur in suburban areas of the Bay Area.

Bob Glover, executive officer of the Building Industry Association of the Bay Area, said, "Plan Bay Area is a cop out. It neither plans for enough housing nor provides a reasonable

path for developing it and therefore looks a lot more like a pulling up of the draw bridge than a sustainable communities strategy."

Glover said that by planning for the creation of more housing units in the nine-county Bay Area, this alternative would prevent urban sprawl across a broader region.

Critics of Plan Bay Area, such as suburban residents who oppose urbanization of their neighborhoods, have argued, however, that Plan Bay Area's growth projections were already unrealistically high. They pointed to lower projections issued by the state Department of Finance in January.

Glover said the projected need for new housing units started out at 902,000 and was ratcheted down to 660,000 due to political pressure.

"Throughout the process there has been push back from local jurisdictions," Glover said. "We believe as a result of that the growth projections have continued to drop."

The environmental groups who filed suit Monday say Plan Bay Area would spend too little on public transportation and invest instead in building new highways, resulting in more traffic congestion and increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Their suit asserts that the environmental impact report prepared for Plan Bay Area was inadequate because it fails to protect the health of vulnerable communities located near transportation corridors, which will see an increase in the volume of goods movement. The suit also asserts that Plan Bay Area does too little to ensure access to affordable housing, and creates the risk that low-income residents will be displaced to areas with poor access to public transit.

Nile Malloy, a regional program director for Communities for a Better Environment, said, "By failing to plan for the inevitable boom of freight movement in our area, the plan creates a nightmare of toxic air quality for the communities closest to our highways, ports and shipping hubs. We can't accept this."

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Walnut Creek Patch

Bay Area Growth Plan Full of Hot Air, Lawsuit Contends

Plan Bay Area fails to consider "less restrictive" housing requirements, the lawsuit charges.

Posted by Jim Caroompas (Editor), August 07, 2013 at 07:29 AM

The Bay Area Plan is the subject of a lawsuit filed Tuesday.

The plan to reduce greenhouse gas in California by building high-density housing near BART stations in Walnut Creek and Lamorinda--approved last month by two regional agencies—violates state environmental law, according to a lawsuit filed Tuesday .

A conservative group called Pacific Legal Foundation argues that Plan Bay Area violates the California Environmental Quality Act because it fails to consider "less restrictive" housing requirements.

"Plan Bay Area's sardine strategy for development — its scheme to squeeze and stack people into high-density dwellings and business complexes — simply isn't needed to reach government air quality goals," said Damien Schiff, an attorney for the foundation.

Proponents of the plan, developed over three years by the Association for Bay Area Government and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, say that the anticipated growth in the Bay Area should be accommodated through the development of pedestrian-friendly areas that combine multi-story housing and retail near public transit. Such a plan, they say, will reduce the need for single-car commuting and the sprawl of single-family housing that encourages it.

But groups like Orinda Watch and Bay Area Citizens say the plan is nothing more than social engineering, dictating a kind of urban-based lifestyle that is inappropriate for quiet, upscale communities.

Local elected officials are not unanimous in their support for the plan.
"It is too early to say how beneficial, if at all, this will be for Walnut Creek or the Bay Area, but, in Walnut Creek, we have already seen a benefit from the establishment of Priority Development Areas," said councilman Bob Simmons, referring to the West Downtown Specific Plan now underway. That plan envisions "transit-oriented housing" near Walnut Creek BART.

Councilman Justin Wedel says the plan takes away a city's right to determine its own fate and imposes a regional agenda from unelected government agencies.

"The plan's one-size-fits all approach by definition removes our individuality and our ability to set our own direction, based on local control and our community needs," Wedel told Walnut Creek Patch.

Plan Bay Area is a regional response to a state law that requires communities to plan for growth in California through 2040, while reducing the level of greenhouse gases. The plan calls for multi-family housing to be constructed in "priority development areas," which in Lamorinda means mostly areas downtown near BART stations. In Orinda, there is also a move to increase the number of so-called in-law units in single family homes to accommodate the required mix of housing for moderate, low, and very low income residents.

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Published on *San Francisco Public Press* (http://sfpublicpress.org)

What Does Approval of Plan Bay Area Mean for Region?

San Francisco Public Press
— Jul 22 2013 - 3:14pm

The controversial Plan Bay Area was given the green light by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission on Friday. The regional transportation and housing plan is meant to cut greenhouse gas emissions while allowing for more housing growth. San Francisco Public Press reporter Angela Hart appeared on KQED's Forum to discuss the plan.

The controversial Plan Bay Area was given the green light by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission on Friday.

The regional transportation and housing plan is meant to cut greenhouse gas emissions while allowing for more housing growth.

San Francisco Public Press reporter Angela Hart appeared this morning on KQED's Forum program to discuss the plan along with other experts.

In her recent story in the summer [2] print edition of the San Francisco Public Press, Hart found that Plan Bay Area projections will actually result in a 9.1 percent increase in total carbon emissions from vehicles. Publicly, planning officials had used a 15 percent reduction figure, but that was on a per-capita basis.

Read her story here [3].

You can listen to the Forum program here [4].

The San Francisco Public Press produced a special report on Smart Growth, including Plan Bay Area in the Summer 2012 print edition. Those stories can be found here. [5]

- See more at: http://sfpublicpress.org/print/news/2013-07/what-does-approval-of-plan-bay-area-mean-for-region#sthash.3N2ovIi0.dpuf

San Francisco Chronicle

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Whichever way you go, it's chocolate

By Leah Garchik

Back and forth, forth and back. In describing a reversed reel during a screening of "The Last Edition," I wrote that it was of no importance whether chase scene participants are going from right to left or left to right.

Correspondent **Greg Chapnick**, who studied filmmaking at the University of Maryland in Baltimore County, begs to differ. He was taught "that going from left to right is perceived - at least to those of us who read from left to right - as positive or advancing, but movement from right to left is perceived as negative or retreating."

Chapnick supposes that people who read from right to left might interpret this movement in the opposite way, "unless Western 'film sense' has conquered the world. If you read from top to bottom, I imagine that the directionality of movement is either immaterial or causes dizziness."

Your assignment, readers: Watch closely all chase scenes you encounter in the next few days, and let me know what direction they're taking.

I tried to analyze the chase scenes in "The Zigzag Kid," which opened the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival on Thursday, but the movie, made mostly in Holland by Belgian filmmakers, was so engrossing that it was hard to pay attention to anything but the story.

I was particularly taken (drooling qualifies as taken, doesn't it?) by a love scene in a vat of melted chocolate. Apparently this captured the attention of others, too, and during the post-showing Q&A, someone asked director **Vincent Bal** if it was real.

Yes, he said, the factory was in Bruges, and it had been a major task to find such a place that would permit filming on location. "They didn't want us to fall into real chocolate," he said, and "we couldn't bring anything that was non-edible into the factory."

So they ordered up 12,000 liters (about 3,200 gallons) of "a sort of chocolate pudding," which was about 2 degrees Celsius (35 degrees Fahrenheit) when it was delivered. "We tried to heat it up," said Bal, but by the next morning - although the actors wore special "surf suits" under the surface - it was still like "the cold bath in the sauna." The scene was shot in two takes, then "we had to take the actress out of there and put her in a warm shower because she was talking gibberish."

As to chasing after chocolate, the big post-showing chase was over to the Swedish American Hall for the opening-night party, where I lapped up a cup of Mitchell's Oreo Cookie ice cream. Viewed looking north from the Castro, the route from delicious film to delicious dessert was left to right.

Gazing into the future:

-- Just not into global warming as an issue? Worry instead about a press release from two holistic dentists from New York speculating that "bulldog-face" is "the next modern epidemic" brought upon by evolution. According to the docs, "Our faces are becoming more like a bulldog, with smaller mouths, bigger tongues, misaligned teeth and bigger necks." This will be disastrous for the lipstick industry.

-- A Chronicle news story by **Michael Cabanatuan** focused on a recent seven-hour-long Oakland gathering of public transportation and environmental advocates for discussion of Plan

Bay Area, a proposed "region-wide development strategy" encompassing "transportation, housing and land-use policy" for 30 years.

But it was a California magazine blog entry by **Ben Christopher** that shed light on the meeting's all-important ambience. The first speaker charged delegates - from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments - with "treason, sedition and money laundering"; another speaker claimed to be **Ayn Rand**'s hero, **John Galt**; and libertarian singer **Celeste Paradise**, who carried a sign saying, "Who needs sex when ABAG and MTC are screwing us?," sang a song - to the tune of "America the Beautiful" - complaining about faceless bureaucrats.

In the Castro last week, **Jonathan Goldman** came across someone who said she was a location scout for a long-running MTV reality TV show. Is "The Real World" coming back to San Francisco?

Public Eavesdropping

"Bruce Willis is Bruce Willis, and he's a great actor, and I apologize."

Man of the streets to man of the streets, overheard on Fifth Street by The Chronicle's Pete Kiehart

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Sonoma Press Democrat

Will Plan Bay Area projects actually happen?

Thursday, July 25, 2013 at 6:09 by Road.Warrior

On Tuesday, we ran a LIST of Sonoma and Napa County road projects that have been included in the new Plan Bay Area, and the questions rolled in. What does it mean to be on the list? Are theses projects done deals? What kind of work will be done?

The plan, prepared by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Association of Bay Area Governments, is a comprehensive guide to growth and transportation planning through 2040, covering all nine of the Bay Area counties.

Janet Spellman of the Sonoma County Transportation Authority reminds us that it is a long-term planning document, not a funding mechanism, so being included doesn't guarantee the work will get done anytime soon. The exercise is just a way to prioritize projects that link transportation with land use goals in an effort to reduce greenhouse cases.

"We're obligated to update it every four years," Spellman said. "Projects can fall out of the plan if they're not fully funded or if priorities change. Every four years we submit a list of projects, but how do you know what you'll need in 25 years?"

Tom O'Kane, deputy director of Sonoma County's Transportation and Public Works Department, urged residents not to expect anything big until the Highway 101 corridor is finished in five years. Even then, he warns, rural communities will come out behind. By definition, Plan Bay Area focuses on large population centers rather than rural communities, even though "people travel in rural areas, too," he said.

Most transportation money goes through Caltrans, SCTA, MTC and ABAG before it even reaches Sonoma County, he added, "and by the time it's funneled down to us, the amount of money we get is tiny."

In the immediate future, Sonoma County's biggest project will focus on the Old Redwood Highway between Petaluma and Penngrove, the roadway most in need of repair, he said. Starting in late August or early September, crews will start paving there and along some portions of Petaluma Hill Road.