



Bay Area groups decide too much for Napa residents

12 HOURS AGO • JACK SIMONITCH

Spare the Air? From what? From the Shell oil refinery? From the PG&E power plant? From the traffic on I-80, I-680, I-580, and I-101? No, none of that. In Napa, it's wood burning in your fireplace.

The problem, folks, is the same as the affordable housing requirement that Napa County has had shoved down its throat by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). ABAG looks at Napa the same way it does Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco and Burlingame. There is one difference: Napa has no land that touches San Francisco Bay. We are really not part of the Bay Area. Napa County does not even extend to San Pablo Bay.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is the culprit when it comes to the ban on wood burning. Again, Napa County is thrown in with the counties that actually do have an exposure to San Francisco Bay.

The solution? We have to demand that the Napa city and county governments get together and withdraw from ABAG. If we could get that done, we would have a chance to get out from under the BAAQMD.

Jack Simonitch / Napa

Benicia set to endorse San Francisco Bay Water Trail

By Tony Burchyns Times-Herald staff writer/ Vallejo Times Herald

Posted:

TimesHeraldOnline.com

BENICIA -- A plan to make it easier for small boaters to enjoy trips around the San Francisco Bay may be endorsed by the City Council on Jan. 7.

Like other local governments with bay shoreline, the council has been asked to adopt a resolution supporting the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail.

Unlike the land-based San Francisco Bay Trail, the water trail is envisioned as a network of small-craft launching and landing sites around the bay rather than as a linear trail.

The project is in its early stages, and project managers are seeking resolutions of support as it moves from being a concept to a reality.

"In terms of our business and what we do ... it's great," Benicia Kite and Paddle Sports owner Chris Gatewood said.

His business, which opened last year on First Street, offers paddle-board, kayak and kite-surfing rentals and lessons.

"It will certainly help bring more people to First Street and the waterfront," Gatewood added.

Support from local governments ties in with another important step in the development of the water-based network -- the designation of launching and landing sites, or "trailheads," that will comprise the water trail.

Four existing Benicia launch sites have been identified as strong candidates for formal designation: The boat launch at the marina; the beach and promenade area at the foot of First Street; Alvarez Ninth Street Park; and Matthew Turner Park.

City officials are also studying a potential water trail site in conjunction with the proposed waterfront park, at the foot of First Street.

Additional potential trailheads have been identified along the Carquinez Strait in Martinez, Crockett and Vallejo.

Bay Area-wide, 112 potential sites are envisioned, five of which have been formally designated so far in Marin, Contra Costa, Alameda and Santa Clara counties.

In a staff report, city officials say the resolution would express the city's support of the project, but wouldn't commit the city to designating any water trail sites at this time.

The site-designation step happens in a public forum; the decisions are made by the project management team, comprised of staff from the California Coastal Conservancy, the

Association of Bay Area Governments, Bay Conservation and Development Commission and the California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways.

The concept for the project originated with Bay Access, a nonprofit group founded in 2001 by non-motorized boaters who wanted to ensure a future in the Bay for small, human-powered watercraft.

The plan was legislated in 2005 and the final plan was adopted by the Coastal Conservancy in 2011.

Key elements include a website, maps and brochures with information about designated landing and launching sites, safe boating practices as well as bay wildlife and habitat. Limited grant funding for designated trailheads is also available.

In addition to promoting healthy outdoor activities and stewardship of the bay, city officials also note the project could benefit waterfront businesses.

Gatewood agreed.

"It's only going to add more foot traffic," he said. "People will come down, have lunch and shop a little bit."

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BUILD IT, EVEN THOUGH THEY WON'T COME

Local Governments - Exclusive — 14 January 2014



*Originally posted at
NewGeography.
By Joel Kotkin.*

The recent decision by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Allan J. Goodman to reject as **"fatally flawed"** the densification plans for downtown Hollywood could shake the foundations of California's "smart

growth" planning clerisy. By dismissing Los Angeles' Hollywood plan, the judge also assaulted the logic behind plans throughout the region to construct substantial high-rise development in "transit-oriented developments" adjacent to rail stations.

In particular, the judge excoriated the buoyant population-growth projections used to justify the plan, a rationalization for major densification elsewhere in the state. The mythology is that people are still flocking to Los Angeles, and particularly, to dense urban areas, creating a demand for high-end, high-rise housing.

The Hollywood plan rested on city estimates provided by the Southern California Association of Governments, which estimated that Hollywood's population was 200,000 in 2000 and 224,000 in 2005, and would thus rise to 250,000 by 2030. All this despite the fact that, according to the census, Hollywood's population over the past decade has actually declined,

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from 213,000 in 1990 to 198,000 today. Not one to mince words, Judge Goodman described SCAG's estimates as "entirely discredited."

This discrepancy is not just a problem in the case of Hollywood; SCAG has been producing fanciful figures for years. In 1993, SCAG projected that the city of Los Angeles would reach a population of 4.3 million by 2010. SCAG's predicted increase of more than 800,000 residents materialized as a little more than 300,000. For the entire region, the 2008 estimates were off by an astounding 1.4 million people.

Similar erroneous estimates run through the state planning process. In 2007, California's official population projection agency, the Department of Finance, forecast that Los Angeles County would reach 10.5 million residents in just three years. But the 2010 U.S. Census counted 9.8 million residents.

Such inflated estimates, however, do serve as the basis for **pushing through densification strategies** favored by planners and their developer allies. In fact, SCAG's brethren at the Association of Bay Area Governments, seeking to justify their ultradense development plan, recently went **beyond even population estimates** issued by the Department of Finance.

The problem here is not that some developers may lose money on projects for which there is inadequate demand, but that this densification approach has replaced business development as an economic strategy. Equally bad, these policies often threaten the character of classic, already-dense urban neighborhoods, like Hollywood. Indeed, the Los Angeles urban area is already the densest in the United States, and a major increase in density is sure to further worsen congestion.

Not surprisingly, some 40 neighborhood associations and six neighborhood councils organized against the city's Hollywood plan. Their case against the preoccupation with "transit-oriented development" rests solidly on historical patterns. Unlike in New York City, much of which was built primarily before the automobile age, Los Angeles has remained a car-dominated city, with roughly one-fifth Gotham's level of mass-transit use. Despite \$8 billion invested in rail lines the past two decades, there has been no significant increase in L.A.'s transit ridership share since before the rail expansion began.

The Hollywood plan is part of yet another effort to reshape Los Angeles into a West Coast version of New York, replacing a largely low-rise environment with something former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa liked to call "elegant density." As a councilman, **new Mayor Eric Garcetti proclaimed a high-rise Hollywood** as "a template for a new Los Angeles," even if many Angelenos, as evidenced by the opposition of the neighborhood councils, seem less than thrilled with the prospect.

If the "smart growth" advocates get their way, Hollywood's predicament will become a citywide, even regional, norm. The city has unveiled plans to strip many single-family districts of their present zoning status, **as part of "a wholesale revision" of the city's planning code.** Newly proposed regulations may allow construction of rental units in what are now back yards and high-density housing close to what are now quiet residential neighborhoods.

"They want to turn this into something like East Germany; it has nothing to do with the market," suggests Richard Abrams, a 40-year resident of Hollywood and a leader of Savehollywood.org. "This is all part of an attempt to worsen the quality of life – to leave us without back yards and with monumental traffic."

Of course, it is easy to dismiss community groups as NIMBYs, particularly when it's not your neighborhood being affected. But here, the economics, too, make little sense. New, massive "luxury" high-rise residential buildings were not a material factor in the huge density increases that made the Los Angeles urban area more dense than anywhere else in the nation during the second half of the 20th century. Even in New York City, the high-rise residential buildings where the most affluent live are concentrated in the lower half of Manhattan; they house not even 20 percent of the city's population.

Under any circumstances, the era of rapid growth is well behind us. In the 1980s, the population of Los Angeles grew by 18 percent; in the past decade, **growth was only one-fifth as high.** Growth in the core areas, including downtown, overall was barely 0.7 percent, while the population continued to expand more rapidly on the city's periphery. Overall, the city of Los Angeles grew during the past decade at one-third the national rate. This stems both from sustained domestic outmigration losses of 1.1 million in Los Angeles County and immigration rates that have fallen from roughly 70,000 annually in the previous decade to 40,000 a year at present.

Nor can L.A. expect much of a **huge infusion of the urban young talent**, a cohort said to prefer high-density locales. In a recent study of demographic trends since 2007, L.A. ranked 31st as a place for people aged 20-34, behind such hot spots as Milwaukee, Oklahoma City and Philadelphia. It does even worse, 47th among metro areas, with people ages 35-49, the group with the highest earnings.

In reality, there is no crying need for more ultradense luxury housing – what this area needs more is housing for its huge poor and working-class populations. More important, we should look, instead, at why our demographics are sagging so badly. The answer here, to borrow the famous Clinton campaign slogan: It's the economy, stupid. In contrast with areas like Houston, where dense development is flourishing along with that on the city's periphery,

California report: Bay Area population gains are strongest in state

Julia Prodis Sulek jsulek@mercurynews.com Contra Costa Times

Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

The Bay Area is the only region in California where more people are moving in from elsewhere in the United States than moving out, another sign of the tech industry's rebound and the creation of more jobs here, according to a state population report released Thursday.

Alameda and Contra Costa counties led the region in "domestic migration," the report says, adding some 5,142 and 3,671 people, respectively.

"It shows that, at least population wise, the recession is starting to dissipate, people are coming to employment areas and they're pretty obviously coming to the Bay Area and to some degree Southern California," said John Malson, a state demographer who helped produce the Department of Finance population report.

At the same time, California's population rose to 38.2 million people, an increase of 332,000 from July 2012 to July 2013. That's less than 1 percent more, but the highest gain for the state since 2003-2004 before the recession. Most of the uptick was due to a "natural increase" of more births than deaths.

Foreign immigration to the Bay Area has remained strong, as it did throughout the recession years in the mid 2000s, adding 169,266 people to the state during the 12-month period.

The "domestic migration" numbers are the best indicators of a region's economic health. The statewide numbers continue to be negative, with 103,000 more people leaving California than coming here during the period -- a downward trend that has continued since 2001.

Domestic migration within the Bay Area has bounced for the last few years and is now in positive territory, with some 4,800 more people moving in than moving out. While Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa and Santa Cruz counties enjoyed gains during the 12-month period, the two main employment hubs of the Bay Area -- Santa Clara and San Francisco counties -- saw 3,522 and 1,824 residents, respectively, move away. Just over 1,900 people left San Mateo County.

"They're not leaving the region. They're just leaving San Francisco and Santa Clara counties because of the cost of living," Malson said. "They're probably just moving over to Alameda and Contra Costa where they can afford to live, but work in San Francisco."

San Francisco, Santa Clara and San Mateo all saw net migration gains, however, when foreign immigration was factored in. Still, Alameda County showed the strongest gains, with more than 15,000 new arrivals both foreign and domestic. Santa Clara County was close behind with a net migration gain of 11,537.

Alameda and Santa Clara counties, plus Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties, account for more than half of the state's growth. Most of the growth was due to more births than deaths, but all have positive net migration as well.

At the same time, 10 counties -- mostly mountain and rural counties across the state -- experienced a "natural decrease" of population, with more deaths than births. They include Nevada, Calaveras, Trinity, Sierra and Amador.

"It tells me the opportunities in California are happening in already established areas," Malson said, "while in the more rural areas of the state, they're not."

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Coming Attractions

2014 brings a slew of new shops and restaurants.

BY ETHAN FLETCHER



A whopping 35,000 square feet of shops, restaurants, and offices in downtown Danville. A 146-unit apartment complex with ground-floor retail in Walnut Creek. A shopping center wooing Michelin-quality restaurants rising up in Dublin. It seems that just about everywhere you look these days, cranes are swooping, and workers in hard hats are swarming.

It's not your imagination: It really is boom time in the East Bay. Cynthia Kroll, chief economic expert at the Association of Bay Area Governments, says the East Bay is at last experiencing the effects of a robust regional economic recovery first seen in San Francisco and Silicon Valley, which is rippling out to the suburbs.

Along with that recovery comes new or long-stalled projects, each bringing shops and restaurants to compete for our suddenly more disposable incomes. And many are breaking away from the typical shopping center mold, looking to offer unique specialty concepts designed to appeal to choosier, higher-end customers.

So what's coming? That's a good question. Diablo hit the streets to give you the latest scoop on the biggest projects, with the hottest shops and restaurants, coming up in the new year.

Walnut Creek / Lafayette / Dublin / Danville

Walnut Creek

Broadway Plaza

Perhaps no single project in Contra Costa has a larger impact on retail and restaurants than Walnut Creek's signature shopping district. The city is on the cusp of signing off on Broadway Plaza's 20-year redevelopment makeover plan. If approved (which could happen before the end of 2013), the plan calls for 200,000 square feet of retail space to be demolished and rebuilt, plus the addition of an extra 300,000 square feet, and considerably more parking, in large multilevel lots.

What's coming: This is a major, major project, and the current plans call for about 40 existing shops, in the "back 40" lot between Macy's and Nordstrom, to be closed during construction. Who will return has yet to be determined. But rest assured, developers are looking to add the type of splashy, name-brand tenants that have made Broadway Plaza the destination district for shopping in the East Bay.

Reps are tight-lipped on specifics, but they do say to expect more dining options—and not to expect another big anchor tenant along the lines of Neiman Marcus.

When: If plans are approved soon, construction could start in February.

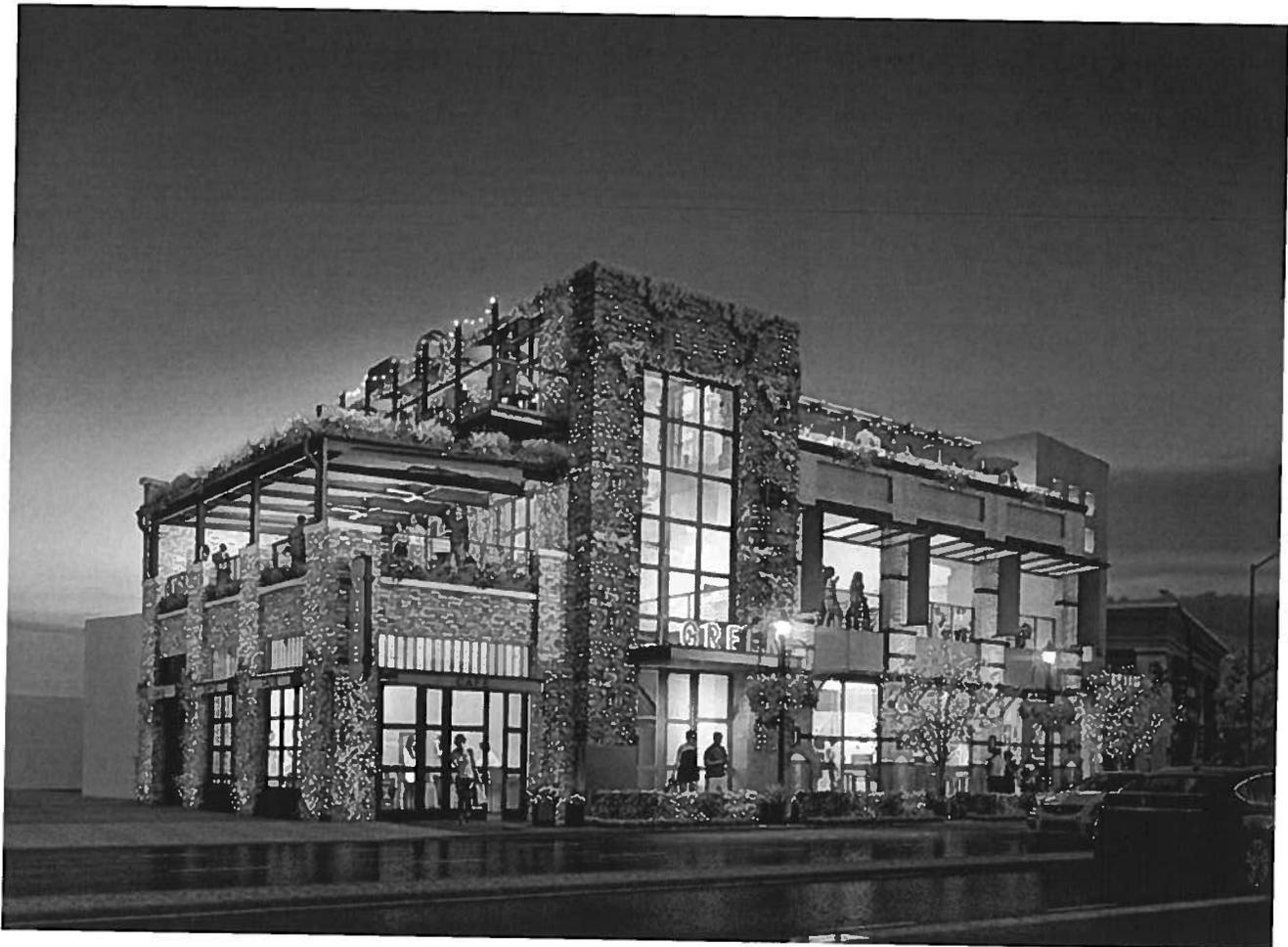
Downtown

There's also plenty happening in Walnut Creek's historic downtown area, including two ambitious projects designed to offer more upscale shopping and dining experiences.

What's coming: 1500 Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

“Plans call for a rooftop dining area complete with a living garden and one-of-a-kind views of the city.”

As the man behind Walnut Creek's Sasa and the Va de Vi-Tiffany & Co.-Apple project, local developer Brian Hirahara has a reputation for small-scale projects of the highest quality.



Hirahara's latest endeavor is a three-story development kitty-corner to Neiman Marcus on Mt Diablo Boulevard, with a café and name-brand retailer on the bottom. It has the potential to be the most spectacular yet. It's the restaurant component that takes this project beyond the ordinary. Plans call for a rooftop dining area complete with living garden and one-of-a-kind views of the city. No official announcements have been made, but Hirahara is talking with well-known San Francisco-based restaurant people, so expect something big.

When: End of 2014.

What's coming: Davidson & Licht.

Davidson & Licht is one of the tenants getting displaced by the Broadway Plaza redevelopment. But owner Jon Licht has chosen to see it as an opportunity—"doubling down," as he calls it—on a new project set for North Main Street. His plans feature two stories of chic, steel-and-glass design that includes small boutique spaces devoted to Rolex and Tudor watches, as well as rare American and Italian jewelry designers such as Todd Reed and Adolfo Courier. There will also be valet parking and bar/lounge areas for both men and women.

When: March 2014.

North Main

A sure sign that Walnut Creek has arrived are plans for a Bentley dealership. The babies start at \$205,000 and run as high as \$400,000. The cars are handmade in England and represent the highest end of the high-end car market.

What's coming: Ultraluxe Car Showrooms.

A 6,000-square-foot showroom at 2003 North Main with a service and parts department, so Bentley owners don't have to truck over to Mill Valley or Redwood City for service. The showroom will have an espresso bar and design lounge where buyers can choose colors and amenities for their new wheels.

A few Bentleys, and cars of its sister brand, Maserati, are temporarily being sold at 2033 North Broadway. (A permanent Maserati showroom will open this March at 2300 North Main.)

When: End of 2014.

WEB EXTRA: Additional Walnut Creek development

The Village development at 1500 Newell Avenue is currently under construction. It's expected to come online in the fall of 2015 and will include 49 luxury apartments in addition to tens of thousands of retail/restaurant space on the ground floor. Leasing agent John Cumbelich & Assoc. has already signed on Starbucks as well as Paul Marth's American Grill, the latest concept from the same national operators behind PF Chang's and Fleming's steak house.

The Avalon Bay development next to the Pleasant Hill Bart station has been slow to fill up, but things are picking up. Lafayette's Main Street Properties signed a big-time restaurant tenant with a casual, modern Peruvian-style spinoff eatery from Michelin-starred San Francisco chef Carlos Altamirano set to open in early 2014. The rumor mill has more splashy restaurant signings to come in the New Year.

And yet another 1500 development, this one at 1500 North California Boulevard across the street from McCovey's. Paul Merzies from developer Laconia says this project, which includes 141 apartments and 18,060 square feet of retail, should come online in late 2015. Expect at least two restaurants, likely on the corners of North California and Bonanza Street and the corner of Bonanza and Locust Street, with up to six other spaces to be filled with various retail tenants. And don't expect the big national chains: Merzies hopes to bring in successful smaller-scale Bay Area operators that reflect the higher-end demographics of Central Contra Costa.

Lafayette

La Fiesta Square

The bustling Chow restaurant has long anchored La Fiesta Square, but exciting new food and retail tenants will add even more life to this center just off Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

What's coming: Two popular San Francisco eateries will offer new spins on old classics. Smitten, coming to the former Cold Stone Creamery location, uses liquid nitrogen to make ice cream that is literally fresh to order. And Roam Artisan Burger, set to go into the former AG Ferrari space in December, sources sustainable meats for its gourmet selection of burgers, which includes exotic options such as bison and elk.



Across Fiesta Lane, the highly anticipated The Cooperage American Grille is taking over for old standby Petar's. Set to open in January, this 295-seat gastropub from McCormick & Schmick's son, Andrew McCormick, will include a huge front patio, dining area, and two full bars. And going up next to The Cooperage are three new retail spaces. Possibilities include a new salon or spa, and a specialty food and/or gift store.

When: Early 2014.

Park Plaza Shops

The quaint little parklet at Moraga Road and Mt. Diablo Boulevard is perhaps the most underutilized space in Lafayette. Now, several shops fronting the park (from the old Handlebar Toys to the former Squirrel's coffee shop) have been vacated, gutted, and remodeled in preparation for up to six newcomers.

What's coming: According to leasing agency Main Street Properties, expect food-oriented tenants, including a breakfast-through-dinner diner concept, an ice creamery, and a fine-dining restaurant. (Hint: A popular Lafayette restaurateur is this close to signing a lease.)

When: Spring 2014.

Dublin

Village at Dublin

Dublin is one of the East Bay's most quickly expanding shopping markets, but it's lagged a bit in bringing the more upscale boutique retailers found in neighboring cities. The new Village at Dublin, under construction at Hacienda Drive and Dublin Boulevard, could change that.

What's coming: Whole Foods, Nordstrom Rack, and Home Goods have already signed on. Leasing agent Ranfic Ancelovici says the bigwigs at national developer Regency Center are looking to bring in even splashier tenants that could give the Village a regional, not just local, draw. That

includes reaching out to boutique clothing stores to complement the Rack, and, if rumors are true, Michelin star-quality restaurateurs from around the Bay Area.

When: Mid-2015.

Danville

Danville Hotel

Yes, it's a historic part of Danville's quaint downtown, but it has also been a decaying eyesore for decades. Now, after nearly 10 years of contentious back-and-forth, the Danville Hotel (minus the historic storefronts on Hartz Avenue) is getting torn down and redeveloped. In its place will be the city's first touch of urban-style infill in the form of an ambitious mixed-use project: 16 condos on the second story and an unusually dense (for Danville) mix of restaurants and retail on the bottom.



What's coming: Around a dozen available spaces are earmarked for three restaurants and a sprinkling of retailers. Of those new restaurants, one will go into the high-visibility space now occupied by Sideboard. (The popular café is moving to 90 Railroad Avenue and is set to open in March.)

While it is still too early for specifics, leasing agent Gary Riele says he is looking for quality, higher-profile regional operators (no chains) that could lure diners from outside Danville. Ditto for the retail: Riele is reaching out to the sort of non-cookie-cutter shops you'd find in the boutique shopping districts of Burlingame, Los Gatos, or Haldsburg. A pedestrian-friendly interior courtyard will allow walking access from Hartz Avenue to Railroad Avenue, coupled with a design that reflects the older downtown architecture. It should add a spark of city energy, without losing the small-town charm.

When: End of 2014, beginning of 2015.

Concord seeks residents' input on housing needs

By Lisa P. White Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times

Posted:

ContraCostaTimes.com

CONCORD -- The city seeks residents' input on current and future housing needs in Concord.

"We were trying to get a sense of what people's situation is now and what they're interested in for the future in terms of housing improvement that can happen, not just downtown, but citywide," said Joan Ryan, senior planner.

A link to the survey is on the city's website. The deadline for filling out the survey is Feb. 10.

State law requires that cities periodically update their housing elements, which outline housing policies and programs. The council adopted the current Concord housing plan in 2010.

To satisfy the region's housing needs, the Association of Bay Area Governments has determined that Concord must accommodate 3,478 housing units -- including 798 for households with very low income and 444 for those with low income -- from 2014 to 2022.

The city is not required to ensure that the housing is built, but it must identify and zone potential sites where developers would be "reasonably" expected to build housing. The state Department of Housing and Community Development will review and certify the housing element.

Since Concord is relatively built out, the city will be focusing on infill housing projects, Ryan said. Although more than 12,000 housing units are planned for the site of the former Concord Naval Weapons Station, construction is still years away.

ABAG has assumed that only 10 percent of the city's current housing allocation will be attributable to the weapons station, Ryan said.

The previous housing element, which covered 2007-2014, identified about 221 acres where 4,189 residential housing units could be built. The analysis assigned more than half of those units to mixed-use sites that are designated for residential and commercial projects including downtown, and the Monument Boulevard and Clayton Road corridors.

In December, the council approved the second phase of the Renaissance apartments project which includes 179 market-rate rental units. The first phase of the Galindo Street project includes 135 units.

For the past year, the city also has been working on a downtown specific plan to guide development of about 600 acres around the downtown Concord BART station, Ryan said. Residents are invited to an open house at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 27, to get an update on the specific plan.

Lisa P. White covers Concord and Pleasant Hill. Contact her at 925-943-8011. Follow her at [Twitter.com/lisa_p_white](https://twitter.com/lisa_p_white).

housing survey

To take the Concord housing survey, visit www.ci.concord.ca.us. Paper surveys are available in the

Permit Center, 1950 Parkside Drive, Concord. The deadline to complete the survey is Feb. 10. For more information, contact senior planner Joan Ryan at joan.ryan@cityofconcord.org or 925-671-3370.

Dick Spotswood: Some good-government goals for Marin in 2014

Posted:

marinij.com

AT THE BEGINNING of every new year, wise elected officials set their legislative priorities. Here's a list of goals that Marin town and county governments should pursue in 2014.

1. Conduct an origin-and-destination study of residents in every Marin apartment complex with more than 25 units. Include a modality question to determine the means of travel, whether it's auto, transit, bicycle or walking, for all their trips.

The regional alphabet agencies' claims about environmental benefits of building high-density housing near transit routes are faith based. There are no North Bay studies to show what means of travel are actually used by residents of large-scale housing.

How much better to make those potentially community-changing decisions with actual facts? Any study must be conducted by a neutral data-compiler who lets the results speak for themselves.

2. Provide public employee retiree health insurance only when employees reach 65 years of age.

Retiree health care insurance costs are consuming an evermore-substantial portion of Marin municipal budgets. The bulk of those unsustainable costs are incurred between the time the employee retires from government service and when they reach age 65.

For police and fire personnel retirement can be as early as age 50.

A good many of those now-retired employees go on to jobs in the private sector that also provide health insurance.

If 65 is the starting date, retirees can participate in Medicare, with a supplemental policy paid by the government for which they last worked as retirement benefit.

Fairness dictates this reform should apply only to new employees.

3. Each city, fire district and the county should be required to prepare a wildland fire safety report card. The effort would determine which agencies and their residents are following best practices to make certain that they are protected from the greatest threat to life and property in Marin: wildland fire.

The results should not only include evacuation procedures after a wildland fire starts. It needs to disclose if communities are doing everything possible to assure that a small brush or house fire doesn't spin out of control, morphing into a community-destroying disaster.

Grade these agencies on the curve so we learn which jurisdictions are outstanding and which need to shape up.

4. Pursue functional consolidations of sewage districts. It's now politically impossible to rationally merge Marin's nine independent and two city-controlled sewage districts into one agency. The next best approach, locally pioneered by some school districts, is called functional consolidation.

That method retains independent sanitary districts with their elected boards but their professional staff is shared among all agencies. There's no reason that maintenance work and front-office functions can't all be performed by one central professionally managed staff.

The functional duplication that's now the norm is expensive. It inevitably results in an inconsistent level of service and repair.

Functional consolidation is fiscally and operationally efficient while retaining district-level control. The only excuse not to pursue this reform is that veteran elected sewage commissioners will cry "we've never done it that way."

5. Require restaurants and institutional food outlets to post a Marin County hygiene grade at each establishment's entrance. New York City mandated this reform years ago, complete with an A-to-F grading system. It's time allegedly progressive Marin followed suit.

Currently, Marin County's Environmental Health Services' hygiene reports for restaurants are posted online without any rating. Realistically, no one enters a café and goes online to check sanitary reports.

County supervisors need to buck Marin's 1,400 food purveyors, some of whom understandably prefer that their patrons don't see a negative cleanliness grade posted on their front door.

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.

Dixon councilman raises eminent domain questions

By Kimberly K. Fu/KFu@TheReporter.com TheReporter.Com

Posted:

TheReporter.com

Is a proposed planning partnership with the Solano Transportation Authority good for Dixon or a case of something that's too good to be true?

Dixon City Councilman Thom Bogue is leaning toward the latter, despite assurances from Mayor Jack Batchelor that nothing out of the ordinary is being proposed.

The issue will be discussed Tuesday when the City Council takes up a resolution supporting a planning grant to prepare a Priority Development Plan in accordance with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission guidelines. Also sought will be authorization to enter into a partnership agreement with the Solano Transportation Authority (STA) and approval of a 2013-14 budget amendment not to exceed \$9,717 to provide a local match.

On its surface, the deal seems like a good one, Bogue said. But upon further inspection, he found what he believes is a hidden agenda regarding eminent domain.

"We have a document in front of us that has drawn my attention to a matter I'd heard about regarding sustainable communities," he said recently. "While I've researched that area, I didn't actually believe it'd come to Dixon. But a recent development has shown I was mistaken. We have Agenda Item 12.4 coming before us (Tuesday) that causes me great concern in all the changes it wants us to impose on Dixon, which appears that we are giving our local control, authority of land use and power of eminent domain over to the Solano Transportation Authority, also known as STA."

According to a city staff report, the matter is based on the FOCUS Program, described as "a voluntary, incentive-based regional development and conservation strategy" that promotes sustainable communities with the aid of such groups as the Association of Bay Area Governments, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Bay Area Air Quality Management District and Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

"The FOCUS Program is about regional agencies, local governments and communities collaborating to protect and improve the quality of life in the Bay Area," Dave Dowswell, Dixon's community development director, wrote in the report. "Local governments in the Bay Area are essential partners, since they are responsible for making decisions about land uses and future development in their communities."

Through FOCUS, he explained, the agencies, along with groups like STA, lend support "by working to direct existing and future incentives to Priority Development Areas (PDAs). PDAs are locally identified, infill development opportunity areas within existing communities. To be eligible to become a PDA, an area had to be within an existing community, near existing or planned fixed-transit or served by comparable bus service, and planned for more housing."

Dixon's Old Town neighborhood, where a train station is underway, has apparently met all requirements to be considered a potential PDA area.

Among Bogue's many stated concerns is that the PDA area, described as within one-quarter mile of the proposed Capitol Corridor train station, focuses on redevelopment rather than new development and at a higher density or with mixed land use. There's also the potential to displace all businesses in that area as well as residents considered low-to-moderate income earners, he said.

In essence, Bogue said, the city's approval of the matter would be handing over its authority of eminent domain to the STA and "relieving themselves of responsibility down the road."

The councilman urges residents to get involved. "I want them to go to the council meeting and look at it," he said. "If they need any clarification or (have) any concerns, they need to be at this meeting to voice them."

Mayor Batchelor also encourages the public to attend the meeting because, he said, many will be enlightened. "It has nothing to do with eminent domain," he said. "The city controls eminent domain, not the STA."

Batchelor, as mayor, also serves on the board of the STA.

"All we're doing is taking the \$75,000 that's been set aside by the STA to put together a downtown development plan, in keeping with the downtown development agreement," he said. "It is not where the STA is going to come in and take over the downtown."

The downtown area has already been rezoned, he said, and officials are looking at all the possible land uses, including a mix of business and residential. The latter already exists, he said, pointing to the Adam Ascher development at East A and Second streets.

Any misconceptions can be cleared up at the meeting, Batchelor said.

The City Council meets at 6 p.m. Tuesday in the City Council Chamber, 600 East A St.

View the agenda documents online at <http://bit.ly/193q1WP>.

Follow Staff Writer Kimberly K. Fu at [Twitter.com/ReporterKimFu](https://twitter.com/ReporterKimFu).

EV charging stations to be unveiled

By Debbie Stutsman, San Anselmo Town Manager | Posted: Friday, December 13, 2013 1:27 pm

The Town has four new electric vehicle charging stations in the Magnolia parking lot. The EV stations will officially be launched at a ribbon cutting event on Friday, Dec. 13 at 10:30 a.m. in the Magnolia parking lot.

The charging stations were provided by the Clean Fuels Connection and installation was paid for by grant funds from the Transportation Authority of Marin, the Association for Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Marin Clean Energy.

Volunteers needed

The Town Council is seeking volunteers for a number of Town Boards, Commissions and Committees:

- Flood Committee – The charge of the Flood Committee is to serve as the Town's expert representatives on flooding and storm water management issues, to become informed on the hydrologic conditions that affect flooding in San Anselmo, to evaluate possible solutions and to make recommendations to the Town Council. Applicants are recruited from professionals in the fields of engineering, hydrology, flood control and other areas of expertise that relate to the control of storm water. The committee meets on an as needed basis and there is one seat available.
- Parks & Recreation Commission - The Commission advises the Council and the Parks & Recreation staff on the planning of the recreation activities, the development of Town parks and management of public lands. The Commission consists of seven members and meets regularly on the third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Council Chambers. There is one seat available.
- Quality of Life Commission - The Quality of Life Commission was established to promote sustainability by enhancing opportunities for sustainable practices in San Anselmo, to secure a high quality of life for San Anselmo residents while simultaneously meeting environmental, economic and community needs. The Commission consists of nine members and meets regularly on the third Monday in Historical Museum, located on the first floor of the Library. There are four seats available.
- Library Advisory Board – The Board is charged with considering, proposing and recommending guidelines with respect to programs and facilities to meet the library needs of the community, in

conjunction with the Town Librarian. The Board consists of seven members and meets on the third Thursday of every other month at 4:30 p.m. in the Library. There is one seat available.

- Economic Development Committee – The Committee’s charge is to work with local businesses and the community at large toward a vibrant and successful local economy that meets the needs of the residents and visitors of San Anselmo. The Committee has seven members and meets on the first Monday of the month at 8:45 a.m. in the Town Council Chambers. There is one seat available.

For more information on these openings or an application, go to:

<http://www.townofsananselmo.org/index?nid=175> or contact Carla Kacmar at ckacmar@townofsananselmo.org or 258-4691. Applications for these openings should be submitted by Friday, Dec. 20.

Ross Valley Toy Drive

Each year many children who reside in the Ross Valley will have a less-than-merry holiday season because their families have fallen upon hard times.

If you would like to help a child, please bring an unwrapped gift to one of the two fire stations at 777 San Anselmo Avenue or at 150 Butterfield Road, or to the Police Station in San Anselmo at 525 San Anselmo Avenue.

Open House

Don’t forget the Downtown Holiday Open House on Friday, Dec. 13, from 5 to 8 p.m. on San Anselmo Avenue. Enjoy the holiday decorations, fine food, great company, live music from the “Band of Pirates,” and, of course, a great shopping opportunity. And, during the holidays, downtown parking is free.

San Anselmo News, published weekly on Fridays, is available at the San Anselmo Town Hall, Library, on the Public Notice Bulletin Board. It is also available on the Town’s website, www.townofsananselmo.org, and by email subscription.

Berkeleyside.com

‘Explosive’ downtown Berkeley housing boom under way

by Emilie Raguso January 14, 2014 12:00 pm



More than 1,400 units are in the works for downtown. Image: Downtown Berkeley Association

More than 1,400 housing units are currently in development in downtown Berkeley, with demolition on one of the first in the pipeline scheduled to begin this week.

There are eight projects, including a hotel, planned in the downtown core, with two more planned just south, on Dwight Way, and another proposal on University Avenue just west of downtown that's set to have its first public city review next week.

Demolition for The Durant, which has frontage on both Durant Avenue and Channing Way, was slated to begin Monday, Jan. 13, according to Downtown Berkeley Association CEO John Caner.

Caner said the project is expected to break ground for construction several weeks after that.

According to Downtown Berkeley Association calculations, the new projects will bring at least 1,414 new units and more than 88,000 square feet of new retail space to the downtown area. Not included in those calculations is the project just beginning city review, The Overture, which would bring an additional 44 units and 4,151 square feet of retail and restaurant space to the city's core.

A recently published association brochure described the growth as "explosive," and described the population gains expected in the city as a result.

"Downtown Berkeley has nearly doubled in population since 2000 and now counts some 3,000 residents in its thirty block footprint," according to the pamphlet. "The number of residents will nearly double again to 5,000 with over 1,400 new housing units slated for completion by 2018."

Experts say the boom signals a rebounding economy. The city has also taken steps to incentivize building by, for example, reducing associated fees related to development within the city limits.

Critics of the boom say Berkeley may face problems as a result of increased density, whether from greater traffic and parking headaches to more issues with noise. Some criticize projects aimed to house students, noting that the university itself should be taking steps to shelter its affiliates, rather

than placing the burden on the city and private developers. Many say the city needs more family-oriented housing, as well. The specter of steeper rents and a lack of affordable housing have been among other causes of public concern.

Last year at about this time, *Berkeleyside* reported in-depth and provided an overview of the 1,000 units in development at that time. Projections have grown since then. Scroll down to learn the latest news about many of the projects underway in downtown Berkeley and beyond.

The downtown core



Image: HSR Berkeley Investments

The Residences at Berkeley Plaza (355 units; 12,000 square feet of retail) The 17-story rental high-rise will be an L-shaped building with one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments at 2211 Harold Way. The Hotel Shattuck Plaza, which sits on the same block but has different owners, would share some of the project's amenities but otherwise remain untouched. Under plans submitted in December 2012, Harold Way will become a string of stores and cafés, part of 12,000 square feet of retail in the building. The project, estimated to cost \$75 million, would include a 180-foot tower next to the property that now houses Landmark Theatre's Shattuck Cinemas and other offices. Developers also plan to include six state-of-the-art movie theaters, said Mark Rhoades, the project's lead planning consultant and the property owner's representative. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** The project had a preview before the zoning board in March 2013, and an updated application was submitted in June, but there have been no rulings made thus far.



Image: Center Street Partners

2129 Shattuck Ave. (293 units; 12,500 square feet of retail) A Carmel-based developer and UC Berkeley graduate were set to submit plans in December to construct a 16-story, 180-foot-tall hotel with office space, meeting rooms and retail space at the corner of Shattuck Avenue and Center Street. The new complex, proposed by Jim Didion and Center Street Partners LLC, would replace the 1970s-era one-story Bank of America building and parking lot, and, if approved, transform one of the most visible corners in downtown Berkeley. The hotel, with 293 rooms, also has the potential to generate millions of dollars in tax revenue for the city, according to Matthew Taecker, a former city planner whose firm, Taecker Planning and Design, has been hired to oversee the entitlement process. The hotel rooms will likely rent for about \$200 a night, and will be taxed at 12%. *Read more*

on *Berkeleyside*. **Status:** The application was scheduled to be submitted in December, but has not been posted online.



Image: Kirk Peterson Architects

Acheson Commons (205 units; 35,000 square feet of retail) The 48,122-square-foot project site includes the MacFarlane Building on Shattuck and University; the Krishna Copy Center building on University; the Crepes a Go-Go building on University; the Acheson Physicians building on University; the Ace Hardware building on University; and two homes on Walnut Street. The project involves the construction of 205 apartments and the rehabilitation of 34,000 square feet of commercial space. The project would increase the city's annual tax revenue by \$600,000, said Mark Rhoades. There would either be 18 permanently affordable dwellings for very-low income households or a payment to the city of \$5.7 million to provide for affordable housing. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** The project was approved in July 2013; groundbreaking is expected this coming fall.



Image: Johnson Lyman Architects

StoneFire (119 units; 8,700 square feet of retail) This eight-story building could take the place of the Firestone garage and parking lot, at Milvia and University, if the development at 1974 University Ave. is approved by the city of Berkeley. The developer, William Schrader Jr., plans to include 11 below-market-rate rental units on site, out of 115-120 total rental units. Including those units allows him, under state "density bonus" law, to build 35% more units than the project would otherwise allow. The units will include a mix of studios and one- and two-bedroom units. Underground parking is included in the project plans. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** The city design review committee considered the project twice in late 2013, but it has not yet been scheduled before the zoning board.



Image: Menlo Management Company

2107 Dwight Way (99 units; 5,607 square feet of retail) We reported last February that Menlo Management Company wants to construct a six-story, 63-foot-tall building with 99 rental units, ground floor retail, and 45 parking spaces at the intersection of Dwight Way and Shattuck Avenue. (Some project documentation notes that 73 total parking spaces will be provided using “automated stacked parking.”) Three retail entrances are proposed. The developer asked for a density bonus to add a sixth story in exchange for providing affordable housing on site. According to the city, the project will include nine below-market-rate dwelling units. The architect is Richard Christiani of San Francisco. *Read more on the city website.* **Status:** The project received city approvals in December 2012. Berkeleyside has requested a status update from Christiani’s firm.



Image: Johnson Lyman Architects

The Durant (96 units, no retail) Located at 2024 Durant and 2025 Channing Way, The Durant is the first project among recent proposals that is expected to begin construction. The building is set to have frontage on both Durant and Channing; it’s set mid-block between Shattuck Avenue and Milvia Street. The south side of the building is proposed to rise to four stories, and the north side to six. The architects are Johnson Lyman Architects of Walnut Creek. Developer William Schrader Jr. said he believes 70-80% of the building’s units will be occupied, at least at first, by students. The project includes 34 parking spaces, which Schrader said is 30% more than the city code requires. The project also features four electric car-charging stations, two car-share parking spots and at least 40 bike parking spaces. The project will not include below-market-rate units, but will send about \$1.5 million into the city’s Housing Trust Fund. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** Construction is scheduled to begin in January 2014.



Image: Nautilus Group

Garden Village (84 units, no retail) "Garden Village," at 2201 Dwight Way at Fulton Street, brings with it a number of innovative features, from its composition — it's made up of 18 distinct but connected "volumes," or towers, which range in height from three to five stories and are connected by open-air walkways — to its more than 12,000 square feet of rooftop farming plots and its small garage, which offers just enough space for a fleet of shared vehicles that will be rentable by tenants. Without the car-sharing idea, the project would have required room for 71 vehicles. Instead, Berkeley-based developer Nautilus Group decided it would purchase a fleet of four to 10 automobiles and contract with a car-sharing operator called Getaround to run the "car-share pod" operation. Units are tentatively slated to cost \$800-\$1,000 per resident. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** The project was approved in October 2013, with groundbreaking planned in June 2014. It is expected to open by summer 2015.



Proposed L'Argent site. Image: Google Maps

L'Argent (78 units; 5,000 square feet of retail) One of the newest projects on the list, this condominium proposal is for a 12-story tower with two floors of retail topped by 10 of residential. The application was expected to be submitted in December, with architect Jim Novosel of The Bay Architects handling the design. Novosel said the units will be comparable in size to many of the bungalows in the Berkeley flats. The Nasser family, whose ancestor, Abraham Nasser, built the Castro Theater in San Francisco and was instrumental in popularizing Nickelodeon theaters, owns the property. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** Zoning and design reviews are still to be scheduled, and the application has not been posted online.



Image: Rony Rolnizky

1931 Addison (69 units; 7,240 square feet of retail) This 69-unit building, with 7,240 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor, was approved by the city's zoning board last July for construction on Addison Street. The six-story 60-foot-tall building is the latest development by property owner Avi Nevo, who has built numerous projects in Berkeley over the last 17 years, including Telegraph Gardens across from Whole Foods at Ashby Avenue. The Addison Street project, at 1931-1935 Addison (between Milvia and Martin Luther King Jr. Way), is set to take the place of two garages on adjacent parcels. Ten studio apartments, five one-bedroom units, 53 two-bedroom units and one three-bedroom unit are planned. Ten percent of the units, a total of seven, will be affordable to very low income households — those earning 50 percent of the area median income. Nevo is not taking the "density bonus," which would have allowed him to build a taller building. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** The project was approved by the zoning board in July 2013; an appeal by neighbors was filed but withdrawn, leaving Nevo free to move forward.



Image: Tolbert Design Architects

The Overture (44 units; 2,668 square feet of retail and 1,483 square feet of restaurant space) This mixed-use development at 1808-1814 University Ave., set to contain 44 units, began wending its way through the city of Berkeley's permit approval process in November. The "amenity-rich, sustainable development" would feature "large units" near downtown, according to the applicant statement submitted by the city. In addition to 44 dwelling units, a 1,483-square-foot commercial space is proposed, as well as nearly 2,700 square feet for a quick- or full-service restaurant with café seating. A 7,200-square-foot underground garage, with room for 19 vehicles, is planned. Four below-market-rate units would be included. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** The project is scheduled to go before the zoning board Thursday, Jan. 23. Read the latest applicant statement, dated January 2014, [here](#).



Image: The Bay Architects

Fidelity Apartments (16 units; 2,580 square feet of retail) Prasad Lakireddy is in the process of building a Mediterranean-style, five-story, 16-unit building with 1,600 feet of ground-floor retail between his Namaste Restaurant (housed in the historic Fidelity Bank building) and Mechanics Bank

on Shattuck. The apartments, in the 2300 block of Shattuck Ave., will mostly be large two-bedroom units from 850-1,300 square feet, according to Jim Novosel, of The Bay Architects, "bigger than the typical student apartment in the downtown." Three affordable units were scheduled for inclusion. Off-site parking, totaling nine spaces, was required. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** As of February 2013, construction had already started and the building was scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2014.



Photo: Frances Dinkelspiel

These projects join Berkeley Central, which came on the market in late 2012, at 2055 Center St., with 143 units. With the rent for a one-bedroom starting at \$2,500, and a two-bedroom at \$3,900, the apartments were marketed mostly to empty-nesters and well-paid professionals. According to the Downtown Berkeley Association, the project reached full occupancy in a matter of months. Another project to come online in recent times was Telegraph Gardens. This five-story, 38-unit building on the corner of Telegraph and Ashby opened for rentals last February. All the units have two bedrooms and two bathrooms and range from 800 to 1,100 square feet.

The Association of Bay Area Governments determined in the late 2000s that Berkeley should set a goal of constructing 2,431 housing units to deliver its fair share of the region's housing. As of January 2013, Berkeley had issued permits for 860 building units, according to a Berkeley city planner. (The projects listed in this round-up were not included in that count.)

Other developments in the works

In addition to what's listed above, Berkeley has various other projects in development. Scroll down to learn more about those we've covered in the past year.



Image: CityCentric

Parker Place CityCentric won approval in January 2012 to construct a 155-unit building at the intersection of Shattuck and Parker, the current home of Berkeley Honda. The project calls for two five-story mixed-use buildings at 2658 and 2660 Shattuck (both sides of Parker at Shattuck) and a three-story residential building at 2037 Parker. In addition to 155 dwelling units, there is nearly

23,000 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** The late Patti Dacey, a Berkeley planning commissioner who died in 2013, joined with other local residents to file a lawsuit challenging the project. **Update, 11 p.m.:** Via Mark Rhoades, this site was purchased by Lennar Multifamily and is being developed by Lennar and the Rhoades Planning Group. They are in the construction process now. The Court of Appeals upheld the Superior Court's decision to allow the project to proceed in December 2013. They expect to break ground this fall or winter.



Image: Gerdling Elden

The Higby After lying vacant for years, work began in December on a five-story, 98-unit mixed-use housing development at the southeast corner of San Pablo and Ashby avenues. Gerdling Elden, which specializes in infill and sustainable development, bought the property at 3015 San Pablo Ave., along with all related city entitlements, in 2012 from its previous owner, Ali Kashani of CityCentric. The price was not disclosed, although online real estate sites estimated it was worth \$38 million. The complex had been known as "Ashby Arts," but has been renamed "The Higby." *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** Construction on the project began in December.



Image: Kirk E. Peterson & Associates

2501 Haste St. The proposal by Telegraph Avenue property owner Ken Sarachan shows a six-story, 14,000-square-foot mixed-use building, which includes a ground floor and sunken courtyard space for retailers, four residential floors of 79 one- and two-bedroom apartments, and a landscaped roof deck. The lot has been vacant for more than two decades. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** After the city brought a lawsuit against Sarachan for \$640,000 in liens related to the property, the two parties settled in October 2013 with the understanding that Sarachan would have 45 days to move his proposal forward through the design review and zoning approval process. The project sailed through a preliminary zoning board preview in December and is set for design review Jan. 16. (The zoning board has not yet voted on the project.)



Image: Trachtenberg Architects

The Aquatic This proposal for a mixed-use development at 800 University Ave. is set to include 58 units. City zoning board commissioners have lauded what they described as its beautiful design and sensitivity to the surrounding neighborhood. The 45- to 55-foot-tall building will feature 1,175 square feet of office or retail space, and 60 parking spaces. Two structures currently on site — which have housed a construction company, a veterinary clinic (circa 1973) and, later, medical research labs — will be demolished to make way for the project, which was designed by Berkeley-based Trachtenberg Architects. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** Construction is expected to begin in February 2014, with a possible opening by summer 2015.



Image: Mikiten Architecture

Lion's Hall St. Mark's Episcopal Church is building Lion's Hall, with frontage at 2300 Bancroft Ave. and 2301 Durant Ave. The five-story 44-unit building will be set over a 59-space parking garage on an L-shaped parcel that fronts Bancroft, Dana Street and Durant Avenue. The building will be a private dormitory for approximately 160 students. They would each rent a small bedroom slated to be arranged around a common area. Rooms will rent for around \$1,100 a month, according to Chris Hudson, whose firm Hudson McDonald developed the project with the church. The project also includes a 2,722-square-foot church community center. **Status:** The project received its entitlements in 2012 and began construction early last year. Units will likely be available for rent later this year.



Image: Kahn Design Associates

2441 Haste St. The owners of a property destroyed by a devastating fire in November 2011 hope to build a new 42-unit, 65-foot-tall, 43,000-square-foot apartment building to replace it. The fire also destroyed popular Telegraph Avenue spots Café Intermezzo, Raleigh's bar and La Fiesta. The building's replacement would include two restaurants with courtyard access. The design calls for a U-shaped building around a courtyard with the entrances to the two restaurants on Telegraph, as before. Access to the apartments would be through a gated forecourt on Haste. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** The project received a use permit from the zoning board in July 2013 and had its final design review session, with approval, in October.



Image: Panoramic Interests

2701 Shattuck Ave. A controversial “micro-unit” mixed-used proposal struggled through the city review process in 2013, and was rejected by the zoning board in December when commissioners said the project was out-of-scale with the surrounding neighborhood. San Francisco-based Axis Development group had presented a five-story project that was set to include 67 units ranging in size from 269 to 344 square feet, as well as a roughly 2,000-square-foot full-service restaurant with valet parking, and a small parking garage. As an aside, a residential hotel proposal planned next door, in development by Patrick Kennedy, is reportedly still alive, though there are no indications of imminent action. *Read more on Berkeleyside.* **Status:** Instead of appealing the zoning board’s ruling, an Axis rep said this week, the company is moving forward with previously won entitlements that allow for 23 units above a street-level commercial and parking podium, and a separate townhouse unit, for a total of 24 units (four inclusionary) and five stories. The existing entitlements also include 24 parking spaces and approximately 3,200 square feet of retail space. (See those specifications here.)



Image: The Bay Architects

Stranda House The city approved plans in 2005 for a 21-unit mixed-use building, with an average height of 53 feet, set to include 1,725 square feet of commercial space at 2489 Martin Luther King Jr. Way. The approved project, on the former site of the Dwight & King Drop-Off Recycling Center, was slated to include three affordable units. *Read more on Berkeleyside here.* **Status:** Site preparation began in November 2013. According to a construction worker on site at that time, the project is expected to take about a year to complete. Official representatives from Overaa Construction, the apparent construction management company, declined to respond to multiple requests for information.

See more of Berkeleyside’s past real estate coverage here. We invite readers to alert us to new projects or construction around the city. Send a note to tips@berkeleyside.com with details. Photographs are always appreciated.

Related:

- Improving Telegraph Ave. on new UC official’s ‘to-do’ list (12.17.13)
- Berkeley aims to bolster housing fund with fee discount (02.21.13)
- 1,000 new apartments planned for downtown Berkeley (02.07.13)

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Feature: Ten big local stories of 2013

by Jason Walsh | Posted: Thursday, December 26, 2013 9:00 am

A proposal for a mixed-use development on the five-acre site of the Marinwood Plaza Shopping Center came to a head in June, with many Marinwood and Lucas Valley residents staunchly opposing the idea of affordable housing in their neighborhoods, and launching a controversial (and ultimately unsuccessful) drive to recall District 1 Supervisor Susan Adams.

A bizarre traffic incident on July 7 between a Marin County Sheriff's deputy and a "suspicious" African-American man in Marin City leads to three bullets in the arm of 44-year-old Chaka Grayson, stones being hurled at Deputy Evan Kubota, a neighborhood-wide manhunt, and an eyebrow-raising investigation into the officer's actions by the Novato Police Department where Kubota's wife works. Kubota is eventually cleared of wrongdoing, and the Marin City community's trust in authorities grows ever dimmer.

Former Ross Valley Sanitary District manager Brett Richards has his sojourn to an idyllic South Pacific resort town cut abruptly short July 11, when he's arrested by the Philippine authorities on several outstanding FBI warrants, including one charge of embezzling \$350,000 from the RVSD.

No less than the future of the county was at stake—or so it seemed—July 18 when the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) approved Plan Bay Area, inciting critics to predict the transit-oriented development plan would turn Marin into an Eastern European-like conglomeration of authoritarian-run housing blocks or, worse, Richmond.

A pair of equestrians cross paths July 27 with some bike-riding kids on a no-bikes-allowed county trail in Novato. Lisa Zeppegno is thrown from her horse, breaking her back, and the kids flee the scene—setting off the latest (and one of the most intense) debate between cyclists, hikers and equestrians over rights to Marin's crowded trails.

Drakes Bay Oyster Company's ongoing fight with the feds to reverse the congressionally imposed expiration of its lease made headlines all year. But the oyster farm's plea to halt the closing of its mariculture operation appeared dead in the water Sept. 3—when the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld an earlier district court decision that would ostensibly force the farm to honor the lapse of its lease and shut down. Drakes is appealing. Stay tuned.

Improved bicycle and pedestrian access appeared to have won the day Sept. 26 when Transportation Authority of Marin officials approved a \$39.6 million plan for Highway 101

improvements at the Greenbrae interchange—a dicey traffic weave that everyone agreed needs an overhaul, but few found consensus in a plan to do it.

Government shutdown in October hits home in Marin, as the Point Reyes National Seashore and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (including Muir Woods) close up shop to await an end to the latest round of partisan bickering in Congress.

Measure F, the \$394 million obligation bond to upgrade Marin General Hospital to state seismic standards, is passed by voters Nov. 5, with 68 percent approval (it needed 66.7 percent) —meaning, for all intents and purposes, Marin's going to build itself a brand-spankin'-new hospital.

"Alphabet Killer" Joseph Naso's lengthy trial comes to an end late summer with a guilty verdict and, then, a Nov. 22 death sentence from Marin Superior Court Judge Andrew Sweet, who describes the serial killer as "evil and disturbed," his actions "abhorrent and repugnant" and saying his presence on earth has made the world "a worse place." Naso, 80, was convicted in August in the killings of Roxene Roggasch, 18, whose body was found in Fairfax in 1977; Carmen Colon, 22, whose body was found in Port Costa in 1978; and Pamela Parsons, 38, and Tracy Tafoya, 31, whose bodies were discovered in Yuba County in 1993 and 1994.

Marin Voice: Is Marin's soul being sold?

Posted:

marinij.com

TAKE A CAREFUL LOOK at the Corte Madera WinCup massive development that is 40 units per acre. It towers next to Highway 101 in Corte Madera; you cannot miss it. This is what the Marin supervisors and the Association of Bay Area Governments have done to sell out the soul of Marin in the future.

This is only the beginning, the opening salvo.

On Nov. 14, a conference was sponsored by Institutional Property Advisors Marcus & Millichap entitled, "How Will Plan Bay Area Affect Your Development Plans?"

ABAG president Mark Luce, the keynote speaker, told an audience of more than 400 investors, brokers, developers and property managers, "Plan Bay Area — the Priority Development Areas and Transit-Oriented Development — are what local jurisdictions have asked for."

Really? Plan Bay Area, created by ABAG, was massively flawed with over inflated population and job projections for Marin.

The ABAG population projection for Marin from 2010 to 2040 is 482 percent higher than the projection by the state Department of Finance Demographic Unit, the single source for planning and budgeting in California government planning.

What about the 400-plus comments pointing out massive flaws in Plan Bay Area and many asking for the plan to be scrapped and started over?

Mr. Luce went on to enthusiastically describe the rush of benefits that flow to developers with the passage of SB 743. That's the bill Gov. Jerry Brown signed in late September which eliminates the right of communities to stop development on the basis of impacts on parking, traffic, schools, adequate water supply or aesthetics.

The new proposed plan for Larkspur Landing is massive. There could be as many as 920 housing units. Yes, that number is correct. This is approximately 17 percent of the current population of Larkspur.

Besides four times the number of residential units as are in the WinCup site development, the plan calls for 177,000 square feet of new retail, commercial and hotel space, resulting in an estimated 1,000 more cars on Highway 101 and Sir Francis Drake Boulevard during evening peak travel times.

The goal of the triad of developers, builders and institutional investors is to turn Marin into a highly urbanized transportation corridor, linking it to San Francisco via the Golden Gate Bridge and to the East Bay via the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

In a community that focuses on dwindling environmental resources, how can we suggest adding thousands of new homes to a county that doesn't have the water to support existing residents?

What could be more important than balancing environmental resources with city planning?

It is time to wake up, or find the place we love changed forever by the triad — for a profit. They will walk away with the profit while we have to live with the results.

How can you make a difference?

Replace all the incumbent county supervisors. It is not too late for action.

Speak out against development proposals not including a balance between resource, housing, jobs and realistic population growth, like the proposed Larkspur plan.

This is your county. If you want a say in how it grows, then stand up and be counted.

ABAG's plan will be reviewed and revised in four years.

Marin is a pristine jewel of the Bay Area.

This is not the first time Marin has needed protection.

In 1965, a small group of activists called the Golden Gate Headlands Committee stopped a massive development called Marincello, financed by Gulf Oil that wanted to add 30,000 people to the Marin Headlands.

This time around, we need to prevent the building of high-density housing up and down the 101 corridor.

The triad of developers, builders and institutional investors will not stop until Marin looks like the East Bay/Walnut Creek corridor.

Al Dugan of Novato is an activist involved in opposition to Plan Bay Area and regional pressure to build high-density affordable housing.

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Lags in agency's move will cost \$5 million-plus

Michael Cabanatuan

Updated 7:06 pm, Thursday, January 9, 2014

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www.chilihousesf.com

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It's taking the Metropolitan Transportation Commission longer than anticipated to transform a former tank factory and postal center in San Francisco into a regional government center. And that delay will end up costing more than \$5 million.

A committee of the Bay Area Toll Authority, which is part of the transportation commission, voted Wednesday to spend the money to move the FasTrak customer service center into a temporary home while it waits for the new regional government center at 375 Beale St. to be completed.

The pricey move is likely to raise even more criticism of the commission's decision to abandon its Oakland headquarters and move into a South of Market fixer-upper with other regional agencies, including the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Association of Bay Area Governments. The moved prompted protests from Oakland officials, state legislative hearings and a state audit, which concluded it was legal to use toll revenues to buy the building.

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The FasTrak service center, operated by a division of Xerox, is now at 475 Embarcadero, but its lease expires at the end of June. Original plans called for it to extend its lease for four months, then move into the new government center in October.

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But the commission learned last year that remodeling delays, caused by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's failure to move a laboratory out of the Beale Street building as quickly as hoped, would push the new center's opening back until the middle of 2015.

Efforts to negotiate a longer contract extension or arrange an earlier move into the Beale Street building failed, so the authority found a short-term home - for up to a year and a half - at 62 First St. The move will cost \$5.4 million, including \$3.2 million to make the interim customer service center useable. The money will come from bridge tolls.

Napa County Supervisor Bill Dodd, committee chairman, said he was stunned by the improvement costs but understood the need for a temporary center. So did Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates, a committee member.

"It's not like we have a lot of choices in this game. They can't stay where they are, and we're not ready to receive them," he said. "Unfortunately, it's going to cost a lot of money, but it will be great to have them in the building, and I think it will be worth it."

Michael Cabanatuan is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: mcabanatuan@sfgate.com Twitter: @ctuan

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Southern California consistently lands near the bottom of the list for GDP, income and job growth, barely above places like Detroit, Cleveland or, for that matter, Las Vegas.

Despite many assertions to the contrary, **densification alone does not solve these fundamental problems**. The heavily subsidized resurgence of downtown Los Angeles, for example, has hardly stemmed the region's relative decline.

Instead of pushing dense housing as an economic panacea, perhaps Mayor Garcetti should focus on why the regional economy is steadily falling so far behind other parts of the nation. One place to start that examination would be with removing the regulatory restraints that chase potential jobs and businesses – particularly better-paying, middle class ones – out of the region. It should also reconsider how the “smart growth” planning policies have helped increase the price of housing, **particularly for single-family homes**, preferred by most families.

At the same time, the mayor and other regional leaders should realize that L.A.'s revival depends on retaining the very attributes – trees, low-rise density, sunshine, as well as entrepreneurial opportunity – that long have attracted people. People generally do not migrate to Los Angeles to live as they would in New York or Chicago. Indeed, Illinois' Cook County (Chicago) and three New York City boroughs – Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn – are among the few areas from which L.A. County is gaining population. Where are Angelinos headed? To relatively lower-density places, such as Riverside-San Bernardino, Phoenix and Houston.

Under these circumstances, pushing for more luxury high-rises seems akin to creating structures for which there is little discernible market. Once demographic and economic growth has been restored broadly, it is possible that a stronger demand for higher-density housing may emerge naturally. Until then, the higher density associated with “smart growth” neither addresses our fundamental problems, nor turns out to be very smart at all.

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Lawrence J. McQuillan: How your tax dollars finance Calif. lifestyle

Lawrence J. McQuillan | Posted: Wednesday, December 25, 2013 12:51 am

The next time you swipe your debit or credit card at the gas pump, you'll be doing more than filling your tank. You'll also be helping to finance parks, bike paths, pedestrian walkways, overlooks, viewing areas, parking lots, turnouts, "stack-and-pack" housing and government land grabs in California. In short, you'll be subsidizing the California lifestyle, without enjoying any of the benefits.

To understand how this works, just follow the money.

When you purchase gasoline in the United States, you pay an 18.4 cent-per-gallon federal gas tax. That money goes into the Highway Trust Fund, created in 1956 to fund the construction and repair of the Interstate Highway System.

To nobody's real surprise, over time the trust fund has become a slush fund to finance various "smart growth" projects unrelated to highways.

For example, the so-called Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), signed into law in July 2012 and funded primarily by the Highway Trust Fund, provides more than \$105 billion in fiscal years 2013 and 2014 for "surface transportation programs."

Those programs, however, include far more than roads and bridges.

They also include "transit, bike and pedestrian" projects. So, according to the government, walking is now a "surface transportation program."

But that's not all.

Nearly \$800 million of MAP-21's money also was funneled to the OneBayArea Grant Program (OBAG). This program, coordinated with Plan Bay Area, a master plan for housing, transportation, and land use in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area through 2040, was approved by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in July 2013.

According to official documents, the first round of MAP-21 OBAG funding commits \$10 million to "Priority Conservation Areas" — primarily local government purchases of land for "long-term protection."

This will further restrict private development in more than 100 Bay Area locations.

From afar, this may seem like no big deal. But it is a big deal, since roughly 75 percent of the land in the Bay Area already is off limits to development. The effect of these government-supported land purchases, therefore — paid for with your gas money — will be to jam more people into a smaller area by creating more "open space" preserves.

An additional \$50 million of OBAG funding is intended to spur the development of high-density residential housing near mass transit hubs. Like walking, the government apparently considers crowded housing a surface transportation program.

Plan Bay Area will force 80 percent of the new housing needed in the area over the next 28 years, as its population grows from 7 million to a projected 9 million, into just 5 percent of the Bay Area's land, clustered near mass transit.

Your gas money is helping to finance this scheme as well.

Your gas money also will fund Bay Area parks, bike paths, pedestrian walkways, scenic overlooks, viewing areas, and even parking lots. None of this will give you or anybody else better, safer highways.

"Sustainable communities" advocates have captured the Highway Trust Fund to finance their lifestyle choices and political agenda. And it's not just in California. Property owners in a seven-county area of South Florida — including Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties — currently are fighting a scheme similar to Plan Bay Area, called Seven50. In other words, the fever has spread from coast to coast.

Most motorists probably aren't aware where their gas money goes, but they know from experience that many of our highways and bridges are in terrible condition.

Next time you hit one of those freeway potholes, be reminded that the money you paid at the pump to maintain our highways is being used to purchase land in Napa Valley, so wine snobs can ride their \$5,000 mountain bikes.

That's how "smart growth" really works.

Lawrence J. McQuillan is a senior fellow and the director of the Center on Entrepreneurial Innovation at The Independent Institute in Oakland.

Marin officials approve affordable housing design guidelines

Posted:

marinij.com

Guidelines for the design of affordable housing and other multifamily residential complexes won approval from county officials this week amid concern that activists who have loudly protested housing policies did not show for a conversation.

The guidelines, in part a response to a federal edict that county government doesn't do enough to provide housing for the poor in Marin's suburban neighborhoods and thus jeopardizes its transportation grant funding, range from policies covering sidewalk and parking to roof, porch and landscape design. The goal is attractive housing that complements the neighborhood.

The guidelines were drafted by a consultant following several community meetings, review by a "working group" of architects and others, as well as an unusual "visual preference survey" that drew more than 300 local responses. The Planning Commission recommended a thick packet of policies after detailed discussions at three public hearings.

Although interest in housing programs has been at a full boil, triggering heated protests about zoning policies and a bid to recall a county supervisor, only a handful of observers showed up to talk about how affordable housing should look when the Board of Supervisors reviewed the matter Tuesday.

"Why is there an absence of the voice of concern?" wondered Supervisor Steve Kinsey, adding that while it's comforting to approve policies "without all the controversy," more must be done to involve different voices.

"We need to find a way to engage folks," Kinsey said. Otherwise, "people will complain later that 'you never told me about it,'" he said. "We need to have more than good design guidelines, which these are," he advised the staff.

The guidelines, drafted with the goal of promoting "greater diversity of housing opportunities to all Marin residents while respecting those qualities that make Marin livable and attractive," come at the same time county officials are proposing controversial 30-unit-per-acre zoning in some neighborhoods.

The guidelines involve a spectrum of issues, from street improvements and "curb appeal," building mass and spacing, to rooflines and eaves, street facades, landscaping, drainage, building materials and lighting.

The guidelines "define positive design regarding the character of multiunit and mixed-use buildings in unincorporated Marin County communities" and provide "general design criteria that would apply in every type of community," according to a staff report.

The guidelines were drafted by consultants Dyett & Batia Urban and Regional Planners under a \$55,000 grant from a regional consortium sponsored by the Association of Bay Area Governments, Metropolitan Transportation Commission and others. Key goals of the program include increasing "compact" affordable housing.

The guidelines won unanimous approval from the county board after minor changes.

Marin 'priority development' issue on TAM agenda

Posted:

marinij.com

Strawberry residents, up in arms with the county for designating their community as a "priority development area," finally may get to sound off in a public hearing.

The Board of Supervisors, bowing to district Supervisor Kate Sears, has refused to put the issue on the county agenda for discussion, with Sears claiming most recently that it is a matter for the Transportation Authority of Marin to discuss.

Although San Rafael Mayor Gary Phillips, a member of the authority board, last week indicated the county claim was nonsense, Sears noted the designation allows state transportation grants to flow — and the authority has a role in transportation funding.

Sears announced this week that the TAM board on Jan. 23 will discuss priority development areas, and redesignating grant money from jurisdictions that dropped out of the program.

Strawberry residents will be able to air their views.

"Decisions that specific jurisdictions make about priority development areas...affect funding decisions TAM board members make," Sears said, noting communities in priority zones get more transportation money than those who are not.

She also said that officials "are looking for a date" next February on the Board of Supervisors' agenda to discuss the designation and allocation situation.

Priority development area designations are being pushed by regional government and were endorsed by county officials for a number of areas along Highway 101 until communities began balking at the prospect of affordable housing development. County supervisors withdrew Tamalpais Valley and Marinwood from the priority area, but left Strawberry in it despite relentless protests.

"The Strawberry community did not volunteer for this designation and does not support it," according to Staci Simonton of Belvedere Drive, who noted opposition to the zone as reflected at www.savestrawberry.org.

Sears, facing the biggest political flap she has encountered on the board, has indicated there is no need to hurry.

"I'm not precluding doing that but I don't think there is a rush to make this an agenda item," Sears said when the issue began boiling several months ago. "I do believe we would all benefit from more community conversation."

Although the priority area qualifies the community for more grant money — urgently needed to fix the Tiburon Wye traffic tangle — it does not change existing zoning.

"There is absolutely no plan to rezone traditional single-family neighborhoods to higher density attached housing," according to Sears.

Marin Readers' Forum for Jan. 6

Posted:

marinij.com

Courage and compassion

Thank you for the remarkable story on Dec. 24 about the Bosnia war refugees who found a home and employment at the Marin Jewish Community Center.

Many members, myself included, had no idea that these staff members had fled Bosnia surviving the "ethnic cleansing" by Serbia forces. Five Muslim and Catholic refugees were able to find employment at the JCC and rebuild their lives here in Marin County.

Although I was raised Buddhist, I am a member of the JCC and know just enough about Judaism to understand that this act of compassion (karuna in Buddhism) is tikkun olam, healing the world.

Just imagine if we all began 2014 with setting the heart's intention with tikkun olam.

Imagine the possibilities.

Mark Noguchi, San Rafael

Densities that fit Marin

Jerry Belletto (Readers' Forum, Jan. 3) seems to be marching to the beat of property developers' drum.

Rather than addressing important questions around impact on soon-to-be rationed water, schools and taxes, he suggests that I believe "there is no need to plan for anything."

Mr. Belleto, like his Sustainable San Rafael counterpart Bill Carney, appears to support planning for unsupportable high-density growth, inflicting dozens of WinCup developments upon Marin along with desalination plants, traffic, schools and tax impact.

Fueled by profits, developers will gladly embrace Mr. Belleto's plans to urbanize Marin — but only if we allow them.

Slow-growth Marin need only plan for and accommodate just 1,740 new units in the next 25 years (state Department of Finance projections are for 4,543 new residents and the U.S. Census average is 2.61 residents per household).

We can achieve this without more high-density developments such as the one under construction at the former WinCup site in Corte Madera.

Instead, the Association of Bay Area Governments should relax its rules on second units and building conversions.

Assemblyman Marc Levine needs to succeed in the state Legislature and have Marin more accurately defined as "suburban" and not "urban" — reducing the density requirements being imposed upon us.

As demonstrated by WinCup, Marin needs to stand up to preserve its small-town character, not let itself be overrun by those who would envision Marin becoming more like the cities in the East Bay or South Bay.

Richard Hall, San Rafael

Marin Voice: Larkspur Landing plan -- A vision for today and tomorrow

Posted:

marinij.com

WOW, 920 new homes in Marin? At Larkspur Landing? Isn't there quite a bit of traffic there now?

These were my first thoughts, shared I am sure, by many in Marin.

A recent opinion piece published in the IJ gave the impression that Larkspur is on the verge of approving the development of 920 new housing units in the Larkspur Landing area. I would like to take this opportunity to dispel this understandably alarming notion, and offer some insights.

The Station Area Planning Process is about land-use policies and the range of possibilities in the Larkspur Landing area.

The Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission help fund this process to develop plans that promote transit ridership and reduce vehicle usage, increase housing supply (particularly affordable housing) near station areas, increase jobs near transit corridors and locate key services and retail within the station areas.

These are worthwhile goals to discuss.

There are no mandates to approve specific numbers of units and the station area plan is not about specific development proposals.

And rest assured — your voice has been heard: unlike other planning processes that have occurred in Marin, the plan will not streamline approvals for developers. Individual projects will still be subject to the complete and normal public review procedures.

This planning process is a very necessary one for Marin and the city of Larkspur.

Major changes are occurring in the Larkspur Landing area and we owe it to our community and to the affected property owners to evaluate these changes and prepare for the future.

In many cities, a new train station (SMART train) is the catalyst for development and activity. That is not the case for Larkspur Landing. The area is in the midst of a renaissance and the train station will simply be one more element in a sea of change.

Marin Country Mart is drawing people into shop and eat, occupancy in the office buildings is on the rise, the apartment complexes are full, and demand for ferry service is at an all-time high. We are already experiencing the challenges that come with these changes, particularly increased traffic and fewer parking opportunities.

Through the Station Area Planning Process, we can discuss how best to address the current challenge, range of options and what must happen before we consider new projects.

We also recognize Larkspur Landing is a natural hub — located between two freeways and base to the Golden Gate ferry and the Marin Airporter — it has long been a central connection point in transportation planning.

The Larkspur Landing's importance to bicyclists and pedestrians will only increase in a few years when a new bridge is constructed over Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. When the SMART train arrives, Larkspur Landing will be one of the most unique multimodal transportation hubs in the Bay Area.

But the traffic at commute times is already unacceptable — so we must carefully study the total plan before we take any action.

I encourage everyone who is interested in this topic and participating in this discussion to visit www.cityoflarkspur.org and follow the link about the plan that you will find on the left hand side of the page. You can also sign-up to receive notifications of public meetings by following the "Notify Me" link on our website.

I want to take this opportunity to invite and welcome Larkspur area residents to join in this important community discussion, to be a part of the solution to this challenge of maintaining the small-town character of our community while managing the constant external pressures to grow.

I look forward to the discussion.

Ann Morrison is mayor of Larkspur.

Marin Voice: Time to save Strawberry from high-density development

Posted:

marinij.com

NUMEROUS "rebels with a cause" have spoken up against Priority Development Areas in Marinwood, San Rafael's Civic Center area , and Tam Valley —and have won.

That's not the case in Strawberry where, after months of requests, supervisors have yet to even place the issue on their agenda.

We've read opponents "haven't shown they are speaking for a majority of their neighbors." While not a hearing requisite, the numbers suggest otherwise.

To date, more than 700 have signed petitions to remove Strawberry as a PDA. Those favoring inclusion have been oddly silent. In fact, nobody appears to be speaking up for a Strawberry PDA — except our non-resident supervisor, Kate Sears.

Of former Strawberry Recreation District directors and Strawberry Design Review Board members located, every past member has signed a letter opposing PDA inclusion — without exception.

These community representatives have served Strawberry for a combined 162 years and understand what's at stake.

They understand how dense mega-housing blocks like Novato's Millworks and Corte Madera's Tamal Vista would negatively impact Strawberry. They understand our serious traffic and parking issues, our crowded schools and overburdened facilities. They understand how the combination of a PDA designation and state-mandated housing quotas will eventually usher in high density development.

They understand visual blight and don't want it in Strawberry.

It's been said that PDAs won't change zoning, but that isn't the issue. Mixed-use zoning already exists throughout Strawberry and awaits "encouraged" development. That encouragement comes in the form of streamlined approvals, tax breaks, waivers, and other incentives.

Once state funding is leveraged to this end, the floodgates will open for higher-density projects.

To suggest local design committees have the final say is incorrect. Development entitlements are rarely challenged in design review.

Indeed, the only benefit offered our community is the promise of transportation dollars that may — or may not benefit the area.

Once consultants are paid, most believe the amount would be minimal. With increased usage brought on by denser development, it's hard to imagine any traffic improvement.

Fifty years ago, a group of Marin activists challenged pro-development supervisors and won. Thanks to them, we now enjoy the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Point Reyes National Seashore — free of the high-rise housing developments that would have littered these landscapes. Their efforts were chronicled in the inspiring film "Rebels With A Cause."

Today, Marin faces another assault by high-density housing advocates. This time, it's by state-mandated housing quotas that will bring more urban-style housing blocks to Marin. Groups like the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission use funding allotments to promote this density in Marin's transportation corridor.

The latest folly would urbanize Larkspur Landing, further clogging one of the worst freeway connectors (Highway 101 to Highway 580) in all of California.

In Strawberry, the prime target is the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary property, which doesn't even meet the PDA's own standard of proximity to transit.

As a member of the county Regulatory Improvements Advisory Committee (a.k.a. "Red Tape Committee"), I can say one of our primary recommendations will be to provide a more cooperative, "team" approach for planning projects. That means listening and working together.

To date, the Board of Supervisors hasn't taken this approach with Strawberry. Residents question Supervisor Sears' unyielding attitude in particular.

To learn more, come to the Strawberry Community Association's public meeting Jan. 12 at 7 p.m. at the Strawberry Recreation Center, or visit www.Savestrawberry.org to access the petition.

Marin's historic tradition of preserving its character is being challenged once again. The concepts of PDAs and mandated housing quotas might seem obscure, but their unbridled implementation will be anything but.

Charles Ballinger of Strawberry is a former chairman of the Strawberry Design Review Board. He also served on the county Regulatory Improvements Advisory Committee.

Pacifica Patch

Pacifica Mayor Elected New Chair of San Mateo County Council of Cities

Posted by Christa Bigue (Editor), January 14, 2014 at 09:22 AM



Newly elected Chair of the San Mateo County Council of Cities and Pacifica Mayor Mary Ann Nihart is pictured here at a recent holiday event at the fire house in Colma where elected county officials are served a meal prepared by Colma firefighters.

Pacifica mayor Mary Ann Nihart was recently elected new Chair of the San Mateo County Council of Cities/City Selection Committee.

She was elected by the voting members (mayors or their proxy) of each of the 20 cities in San Mateo County.

Nihart previously served as Vice Chair and has also been elected as the San Mateo County representative to the Executive Board for the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG).

She officially takes on her new role as chair on Jan. 24 at the meeting that for the first time will be hosted by the County at the San Mateo County Historical Museum in Redwood City, where Supervisor and Board President David Pine will deliver a "State of the County" address.

The Council of Cities meets monthly to take care of issues and share concerns common to all of the Peninsula cities. Members also serve as the electing body for all county wide appointments that cities hold, such as the San Mateo County Transportation Authority, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, SamTrans Board of Directors, and the Association of Bay Areas Governments, to name a few.

The San Mateo County Council of Cities rotate hosting the meeting, which is usually accompanied by a dinner paid for by each council member.

Pacifica will be hosting the Council of Cities this year in September.



<http://paloaltoonline.com/blogs/p/print/2014/01/10/planning-and-investing-for-whom>

By Steve Levy

Planning and Investing for Whom

Uploaded: Jan 10, 2014

Recent planning discussion in Palo Alto has centered around development issues with many residents dissatisfied with the pace of housing and office growth. One rallying cry has been "let's do what's best for the residents". I think our planning and investment decisions should take more constituencies into account than just the current residents and this thread explores that idea.

Palo Alto is and was a university town long before any of us moved here and will be so after we are no longer residents. Although some residents moved here before the regional research park, medical center and shopping center were developed, the same reasoning applies.

Many key city services and planning/investing decisions serve these groups of people and organizations in addition to serving new businesses. Our police, fire and utility services serve many people besides current homeowners and renters, Our traffic and parking challenges are created by the continuing growth of Stanford and the regional centers mentioned above--more so than the increase in downtown activity, which is also important for planning and investment decisions.

How do these voices get heard and factored into our planning and investing? Their decisions certainly have an impact on the city.

Then there is the question of which residents we should be planning and investing for.

The first point to acknowledge is that planning and investing inherently requires taking a long term perspective. Infrastructure investments are supposed to last for 30 years or more. The impacts of our decisions on planning for growth will mostly be felt in the future.

Many residents are here temporarily. Some are here for a long time. Many active participants in recent growth and investment debates are older as I am and will not be here in 30 years.

How do we include the voices of those who are yet to come? How do we include the voices of younger residents? I am going to a Leadership Palo Alto meeting next week and will present to a group that includes many younger residents. I will be asking them for their views on growth, planning and investing.

For it soon will be their city.

Planning and investing is for the future so how do we take that into account.

I read posters arguing that everyone wants to live the way they do or did but I find that is not true for our children. My son and his wife do so many things differently than we do, it is hard to keep track.

I see his friends and other young people having different preferences for living space and transportation as well as all smartphones and related activities that we used to do differently.

My view is that I have both a generational obligation to carry on the investments and planning done by the generation that gave our family a great city to live in AND acknowledge that I knowingly moved to a city that is a great university and regional tech center town AND try to anticipate what kind of city the next generation might want, remembering that I am now over 70 and should be listening to the voices who will live here in future years.

Solano supervisors get organized for 2014

By Melissa Murphy/ MMurphy@TheReporter.com TheReporter.Com

Posted:

TheReporter.com

The Solano County Board of Supervisors is ushering in the new year with new seat assignments and yearlong appointments to various boards and commissions.

Meanwhile, the board also will set a public hearing date to discuss an appeal of a decision to deny a business license for a medical marijuana dispensary.

Tuesday, supervisors will pick a new chairperson, vice chairperson and chair pro tem. They'll also decide appointments to various boards and commissions for 2014, such as the Association of Bay Area Governments Executive Board, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the Delta County Coalition, and the Delta Protection Commission.

In other action, as part of the consent calendar, the board will consider setting a public hearing for 2 p.m. Feb. 11 to discuss the appeal of the Resource Management director's denial of a business license for Salubrius, a medical marijuana dispensary proposed at 4169 Suisun Valley Road in unincorporated Fairfield.

Last month, the board unanimously decided to ban for good all medical marijuana dispensaries in the unincorporated parts of the county.

The consensus of the board was that it was up to the cities to decide whether to allow medical marijuana dispensaries within their boundaries. The city of Vallejo is the only city in Solano County that allows medical marijuana dispensaries.

The Solano County Board of Supervisors meets at 9 a.m. in the County Government Center, 675 Texas St., Fairfield.

Follow Staff Writer Melissa Murphy at [Twitter.com/ReporterMMurphy](https://twitter.com/ReporterMMurphy).

San Francisco at 1 million: Can city's housing supply keep up with demand?

By Dan Schreiber

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MIKE KOOZMIN/S.F. EXAMINER FILE PHOTO

More than half the homes under construction in early 2013 were in developments of at least 250 units, suggesting a move toward taller projects in 49-square-mile San Francisco.

The signs have been there for a couple of years, and there's no mistaking it now: We are living in Dot-Com Boom 2.0.

That's given rise to a fully formed rent war that's creating eye-popping rates for even small apartments while forcing many San Franciscans to skip town for good.

Among each of the skirmish's regiments — developers, city planners, landlords and renters themselves — there is plenty of prognostication and blame, but few solutions. The City, no stranger to superlatives, is now the most expensive real estate and rental market in the U.S.

Earlier speculation that housing costs would have reached a plateau by now has not come true — not even close.

Where's the story?



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U.S. Census Bureau figures put the median of The City's rental rates — the midpoint on the spectrum of rental prices — at \$1,463 per month. Almost 40 percent of San Francisco rental properties demand at least 35 percent of tenants' total income. The Trulia real estate listings website shows the median cost of buying a home is \$850,000, which is nearly \$200,000 more than five years ago and more than double what it was in 2000.



Traditional economics might hold that the high price would eventually curb growth over the long term. Not so, according to an upcoming report by the Association of Bay Area Governments, which projects that The City's 2010 population of 805,263 will grow 35 percent by 2040 — the fastest 30-year rate of increase in nearly a century. By 2032, 1 million residents will make San Francisco their home, the report predicts.

Unsurprisingly, the first reaction to high rents in this supply-and-demand problem has been simply to create more supply — and fast. After a “reservoir” of stalled projects built up following the 2008 housing crisis, the proverbial dam has now opened, according to the Planning Department's most recent development “pipeline report.”

As of the second quarter of 2013, more than 5,000 housing units were listed as under construction, with an additional 15,500 units in some stage of the planning process. Of the properties under construction, more than half included at least 250 units each, suggesting taller buildings are on the way for new workers flooding into the area to get a piece of the recent healthy job growth.

But here in the densest urban landscape west of the Mississippi, even small projects come with conflict from neighbors, leading some to question whether The City's Byzantine development approval process is nimble enough to meet demand. Anti-growth movements have permeated city politics for decades, contributing to the low housing supply and high prices, says Gabriel Metcalf, executive director of the think tank SPUR.

“The desire to keep The City intact is leading to the hyper-gentrification of our neighborhoods,” Metcalf said. “If you're going to be in the middle of a region that's creating jobs, but you make it really difficult to add a supply of housing because you want it to look the same, then you are de facto choosing to make The City super-expensive.”

Richard DeLeon — a San Francisco State University political science professor and close observer of The City's “anti-Manhattanization” movement of the 1980s and '90s — isn't so sure that more housing supply will solve affordability issues, especially if most of the new units fall into the price range of the wealthy and only a small percentage are required by The City to be below market rate.

“Housing advocates have been talking for years about this kind of permanent colonization of The City,” DeLeon said, noting that the high-tech sector, although prolific, makes up less than 10 percent of the total economy. “All of this, in some sense, is still the tail wagging the dog.”

San Francisco at 1 million

The City is poised to hit the mark in less than two decades. This five-part series explores the challenges San Francisco faces in handling this population milestone.

SUNDAY: What will San Francisco look like with 1 million residents?

MONDAY: Utility operators prepare for the population crush

TUESDAY: More people means more work for police and fire personnel

THURSDAY: Muni will need big changes to handle big boost in passengers

FRIDAY: Housing philosophy of "build more now" sure to be tested in the future

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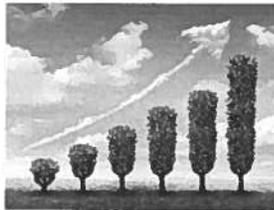


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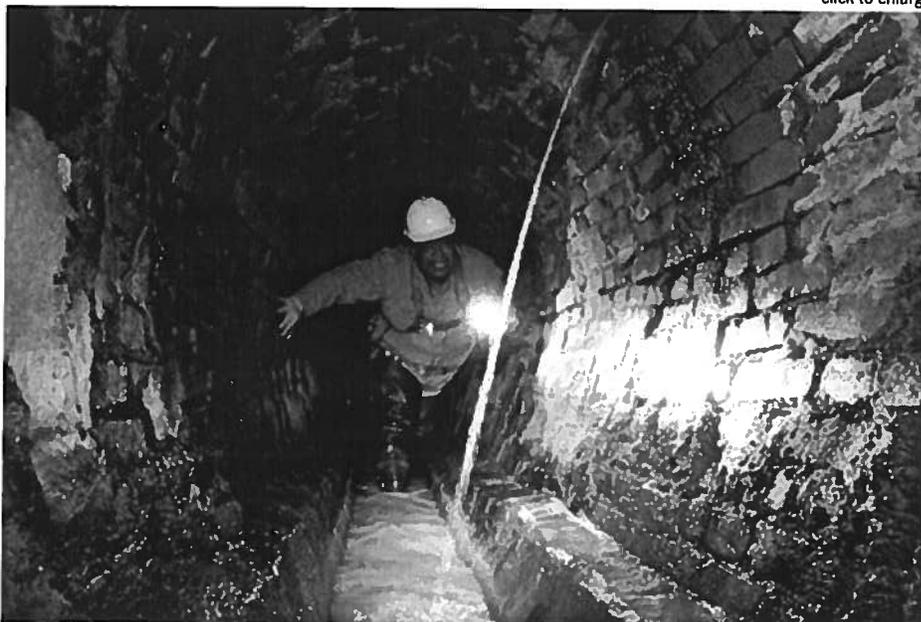
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By Dan Schreiber



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San Francisco at 1 million: City's population is booming once again

By Dan Schreiber

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Although some parts of San Francisco's sewer system date back to the Gold Rush, the SFPUC doesn't anticipate greater repair costs for the 1,000-mile network.

Every major aspect of San Francisco is set to feel daunting strain due to a sustained population surge, but here's some relief: The City's utility infrastructure is ostensibly prepared to shoulder the burden, officials say.

Despite the 35 percent population growth rate between 2010 and 2040 predicted in an upcoming report from the Association of Bay Area Governments, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission appears confident that it can utilize enough conservation techniques to keep water demand flat for 20 to 25 years. The report predicts the roughly 825,000 current population will balloon to 1 million by about 2032, and that the Bay Area will increase from 7.2 million people to 9.3 million by 2040.

Electric and gas lines are already being replaced, mostly within the eastern half of The City, where PG&E has pledged up to \$1.5 billion to upgrade transmission lines and replace old natural gas pipelines with plastic in some cases to better handle earthquakes.

The City also possesses one of the best and most reliable water systems, with its source from Sierra Nevada snowmelt at Yosemite National Park. Total residential water usage has been dropping as the population has started to increase. San Franciscans used an average of 57 gallons per person per day in 2004 compared to 51 gallons in 2011, according to SFPUC monthly sales data.



Where's the story?



1 Points Mentioned

Still, more people means total usage could creep up in the future and create an increased need to conserve.

The SFPUC has already tried to set the standard for future buildings in The City with its new \$200 million headquarters, dubbed “the greenest building in the world.” It boasts 60 percent less water usage than a normal office building. And last fall, the agency announced it had completed a \$225,000 effort to update The City’s Housing Authority units with thousands

of efficient showerheads and toilets. San Francisco is even looking into the very early stages of desalinating Bay water.

Currently, the SFPUC is helping to launch a grant program encouraging Sunset district residents to take their concrete front yards and replace them with grass or some other permeable surface in order to cut down on the amount of stormwater runoff that floods sewers during heavy rain. Similar efforts are getting underway for the “Wiggle” bike corridor, according to SFPUC spokesman Tyrone Jue.

A weak spot for San Francisco is that stormwater shares effluent pipes with treated wastewater, so when the skies open so do the pipes that pump liquid waste to its final destination — more than 30 discharge locations along the Bay and Pacific Ocean.

And with more people inevitably comes more, well, poop.

Parts of San Francisco’s 1,000 miles of sewer date back to the Gold Rush era, and wastewater system maintenance accounts for nearly a third of the SFPUC’s \$889 million annual budget.

Still, Jue said he doesn’t anticipate higher sewer repair costs than the 15 miles or so that is either replaced or fixed every year.

“Will more have to be maintained with more people? No, not necessarily,” Jue said.

San Francisco at 1 million

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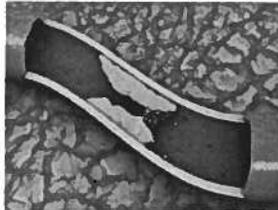
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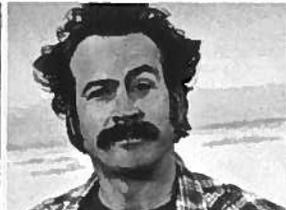
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San Francisco at 1 million: City's population is booming once again

By Dan Schreiber



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San Francisco at 1 million: Can utilities handle population boom?

By Dan Schreiber

Most U.S. cities have only just begun to crawl out of the trenches of the Great Recession, but San Francisco has been charging back to the front lines.

Reverberations from the 2008 housing market collapse put a four-year hold on most local projects, creating a colossal backlog of stalled buildings and renovations. But looking at The City these days, signs of a sustained boom are on the horizon – quite literally.

Any clear view of the skyline is strewn with gangly construction cranes as developers scurry to build more housing and offices that can accommodate the labor needs of cash-heavy companies in San Francisco and Silicon Valley alike.

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In less than four years, following the largest fiscal crisis since the Great Depression, San Francisco's downright depressing 10.1 percent unemployment rate in January 2010 has been nearly halved to 5.2 percent, according to November numbers from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Where's the story?



4 Points Mentioned

The City's impressive rebound outpaces the 8.3 percent jobless rate across California, the 8.5 percent level in New York City and the 9.4

percent of workers unemployed in Los Angeles.

Unsurprisingly, San Francisco's population has skyrocketed, especially for an already-dense 47-square-mile metropolis with little horizontal space left to grow. The City added 28,500 new residents between 2000 and 2010, for a grand total of 805,263. Then, in just the following two years alone, an additional 20,600 folks wedged themselves into The City's superlatively expensive living space.

And although the City by the Bay now appears poised to become an economic recovery model for the Western world, big questions remain on whether it can prove nimble enough for such rapid growth and ultimately avoid becoming a victim of its own success.

MARCH TO 1 MILLION

The population of roughly 825,000 in 2012 will have steadily increased to a milestone by 2032, when a projected 1 million people will make their home inside city limits, according to an upcoming report from the Association of Bay Area Governments. By 2040, the report speculates that the growth rate will begin to level out at 1,085,700.

Sounds crowded for just the upper tip of a narrow peninsula, right? If the sidewalks and buses seem busier even now, and it begins to feel like San Francisco just can't get any more crowded, doubters need look in only one direction -- up.

"The future is tall," said Richard DeLeon, a San Francisco State University political science professor and close observer of The City's "anti-Manhattanization" movement of the 1980s and '90s. "There has been a shift from the anti-high-rise movement. ... These new progressive politicians, they have no problem with going tall and vertical."

If the current population projections hold steady, The City will have grown in population by 35 percent between 2010 and 2040 -- the fastest 30-year rate of increase in nearly a century. San Francisco has not seen droves like this since the post-agrarian period between 1920 and 1950, over which the population grew by 53 percent before abruptly losing tens of thousands of residents to the 1950s suburban boom.

The forthcoming population report also estimates that 190,000 more jobs will need to be created before 2040, when 759,500 people will work here. The projected population growth is assumed to be greatest in the denser eastern side of The City, where tech businesses continue to fill out former warehouses in South of Market and residential developments are being aggressively pitched -- and combated -- in the bustling and diverse Mission district.

'GOOD PROBLEMS'

The expansion -- and its inevitable challenges -- fill urban planners with nervous excitement.

"The Bay Area job creation engine is the envy of the entire world," said Gabriel Metcalf, executive director of SPUR, the region's most active urbanist think tank. "But it has created its own set of problems for us -- problems that don't solve themselves. Still, it's better to have the problems we have than the problems of not enough jobs."

Metcalf, and just about everyone else in town, can quickly identify the top conundrum: the cost of housing. It's an old and contentious discussion that rears its head with each boom time, and solutions to the hard facts of supply and demand aren't getting any easier.

Ellis Act evictions, which landlords can use to rid their units of tenants as long as the properties are taken out of the rental market, jumped by 170 percent between 2010 and 2013. Evictions overall are up 38 percent in that three-year period, according to recent city legislative reports.

The City's rent median -- the midpoint on the spectrum of prices -- outpaces all other U.S. cities at \$1,463 per month, according to recent U.S. census figures. Currently, nearly 40 percent of San Francisco rental properties demand at least 35 percent of tenants' total income. At last glance on the Trulia real estate listings website, the median cost of buying a home was \$850,000, nearly \$200,000 more than it was five years ago and more than double what it was in 2000.

WHAT SAN FRANCISCO MAY NEED

Despite the cost of living's torrid upward pace, projections indicate people will come anyway. And all of this, no doubt, will lead to an increased burden on The City's aging transit system, as workers dash to tens of thousands more jobs that they will hold increasingly dear in order to pay the rent or mortgage.

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency has long identified a multibillion-dollar funding shortfall for capital improvements such as street fixes and hundreds of new vehicles over the coming decades. Mayor Ed Lee wants to patch a \$6.3 billion funding hole with increases in vehicle license fees and by going to voters with general-obligation bonds, but an early sour response in a public poll suggests the effort will require politicians to restore faith in the much-maligned system's ability to improve.

One bright spot is that, by most accounts, officials believe The City's utility infrastructure can handle the increased burden. San Francisco runs California's most pristine water reservoir system, with its main source at Yosemite National Park. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission is undertaking a strategy of water recycling, green building requirements and more efficient home fixtures that officials believe will actually keep water demands flat over the next 20 to 25 years.

But there's no dignified way to put it -- more people means more sewage, and the current system will need a smattering of conservation efforts to deal with wastewater, which is periodically pumped into the Pacific Ocean. Parts of The City's 1,000-mile sewer system date back to the Gold Rush era of the mid-1800s, and the wastewater system as a whole is currently in need of \$250 million in annual maintenance, according to SFPUC spokesman Tyrone Jue.

Jue said more green space needs to be created in order to capture heavy stormwater runoff. It shares the same effluent pipes as The City's treated sewage, and is therefore dumped into the ocean with all other wastewater when the system becomes overloaded. A new pilot project in the Sunset district is encouraging residents to replace impervious concrete surfaces with lawns.

"The idea is that the stormwater goes into the ground instead of down the streets," Jue said. "That does benefit the overall system."

While often billed as a childless city, the San Francisco Unified School District is still charged with educating 56,000 students. Estimates vary on what a major population increase will mean. With only 13.5 percent of the population under 18 years old, San Francisco has the fewest minors of any major city in the U.S. The SFUSD's statistics show that after more than two decades of declining school enrollment beginning in the late 1980s, The City will return to its 1985-level of approximately 65,000 students by about 2021. Anecdotally, private-school enrollments appear to be rising, most notably in the Mission district.

More people would also require more police on the streets, and that's exactly what Police Chief Greg Suhr said he would like to see happen. In 1979, The City set a minimum police force standard of 1,971 officers, which at the time was about one officer per 350 residents. To help keep up with the ratio, Suhr said he hopes have 2,300 to 2,500 cops on patrol by the time San Francisco reaches 1 million residents.

While homicides are down by 50 percent since 1993, The City has seen a recent troubling spike in property crimes -- attributed mainly to thieves preying on pedestrians and transit commuters carrying expensive mobile devices. The Police Department's CompStat crime monitoring database shows that The City is on track to log more than 55,000 crimes in 2013 -- a 22 percent increase from 2012. Nearly 40,000 of those are property crimes.

Despite shifts in trends, Suhr said a fully staffed police force should remain a constant.

"We always act around here like we're in the middle of a crime wave," Suhr said. "Otherwise, you're tempting fate."

WORK HARD, PAY HARD

No matter what the future holds, growth generally means two things for the budgets of The City and citizens alike -- higher revenue and higher expenses. Despite a recent surge in property taxes, San Francisco has yet to keep its spending growth in line with increasing costs. The latest budget grew by more than \$700 million since last year, for an annual \$8 billion. That's more than the annual budgets of 12 U.S. states.

For a middle-class individual between jobs, that same scenario means life in the big city comes with little wiggle room. Metcalf, who moved to San Francisco in 1996, said some positive change has taken place since then. But he fears if the reaction to growth is slow, The City could set itself up for a "super-rich monoculture."

"We have not been nimble enough," he said. "We've done some things right in the last 20 years in terms of public space and bicycling. But economically, we've priced out regular people."

San Francisco at 1 million

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San Francisco at 1 million: Population boom has cops and fire looking to hire

By Dan Schreiber



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MIKE KOOZMIN/2012 S.F. EXAMINER FILE PHOTO

Firefighters battle a blaze at Pier 29 in June 2012. The Fire Department, which currently has 1,450 firefighters, anticipates needing at least 400 more as the population grows.

With San Francisco's population set to ignite, the days of police and fire hiring freezes are over.

The City's population is projected to rise by 35 percent between 2010 and 2040, meaning 300 to 500 more cops need to be hired, along with up to 600 more firefighters.

An upcoming report from the Association of Bay Area Governments predicts that San Francisco's roughly 825,000 current population will grow to 1 million by 2032, and 1,085,700 by 2040 — the most rapid three-decade period of growth since 1920 to 1950.

When Police Chief Greg Suhr took over the department in spring 2011, the force was 300 officers below its mandatory minimum of 1,971. At the time the minimum was set in 1979, that was about one officer for every 360 residents. To keep up with the droves of people moving into The City, two annual police academy classes are up and running again, and Suhr said the department should reach full staffing by 2018.

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Where's the story?

And the chief doesn't expect the new recruits to stop flowing for some time.



2 Points Mentioned

"We believe the number of officers, given what's going on with the population growth in The City, is probably somewhere more between 2,300 and 2,500," Suhr said. "Cops do count. There is no one in this town who believes we have enough police officers."

While homicides in San Francisco are down by 50 percent since 1993, The City has seen an uptick in property crimes, attributed mainly to thieves taking advantage of pedestrians carrying pricey smartphones and other mobile devices.

The City, according to the Police Department's CompStat database, is on pace to report more than 55,000 crimes in 2013 — a 22 percent increase over last year. Nearly 40,000 of those are property crimes, prompting police to pass out fliers saying "You've been mugged" to phone-absorbed residents walking in trouble spots like The City's new tech hub in the mid-Market Street neighborhood.

San Francisco also is constructing a \$243 million public safety building in the Mission Bay redevelopment area that will include a restored 1920s-era fire station, the Fire Department's 44th. No new full-fledged fire stations are currently planned. But Lt. Tom O'Connor, the president of San Francisco Firefighters Local 798, estimated that the current level of 1,450 firefighters will need to return to the standard staffing level of 1,840 — and then some — to deal with both fires and mounting paramedic calls.

"We can already feel it that the population is increasing," O'Connor said. "And you couple that with the widespread use of cellphones — everyone is a 911 Samaritan when it comes to things that happen on the streets. Calling about almost anything has never been easier."

O'Connor said ending the department's widespread use of overtime to cover the shortage of personnel would require 250 to 300 more firefighters at present, and even more when the population increases.

"We'd have to hit 2,000 [firefighters and paramedics] between fire and ambulance," O'Connor said. "We're going to need more ambulances more than anything. That's sort of our Achilles' heel."

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SFpark statistics help SF create smarter policies

By Examiner Editorial

Stand on a sidewalk in any of The City's busy commercial corridors and you will see many consistencies, including heavy foot traffic, bustling storefronts and drivers hunting for open parking spaces — an exercise that can be futile and test one's patience.

The vehicles circling around the blocks in search of parking also cause congestion and add unnecessary vehicle miles and pollutants to the air. In 2011, San Francisco launched an innovative pilot parking program, SFpark, that added sensors to metered spaces in several commercial corridors. The multifaceted program allowed The City to launch a real-time data feed for open parking spaces, as well as adjust the price at meters according to supply and demand.

The real-time information from the sensors ended Monday, as the pilot project came to a close. Now the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency — tasked with overseeing ground transportation in The City, including parking and Muni — is working on analyzing data from the yearslong project, evaluating the role the sensors play in SFpark and assessing the next step for the program.

The analysis for the parking sensors likely depends on myriad factors, but one that should weigh heavily in the debate is the future of transit in San Francisco. The City currently has 825,000 residents, and that is not including the workers who commute here for their jobs. As pointed out in The San Francisco Examiner's ongoing series, The City is expected to hit 1 million residents by 2032, and that does not include the 759,500 people the Association of Bay Area Governments projects will work here by 2040.



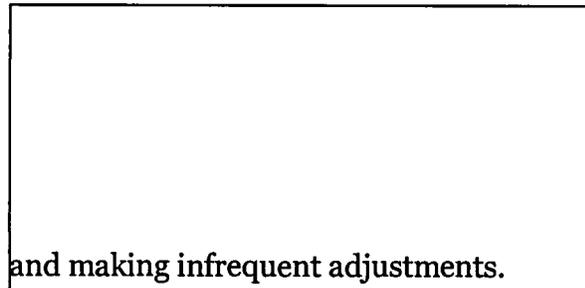
COURTESY PHOTO

The SFpark app was designed to help reduce traffic by giving drivers information on available parking spaces in their vicinity, thus reducing time spent searching for a spot. It has been downloaded by tens of thousands of iPhone and Android smartphone users.

Having more people living and working in a city that cannot expand its overall footprint means an increased stress on the transportation system, including public transit, roads

Where's the story?





and walkways. Only a 1 Points Mentioned
multipronged approach to
fixing the system will work to move more
people around The City in an efficient manner,
and this should include a parking system that
does more than plunk down meters in highly
trafficked areas, studying the use over the years

and making infrequent adjustments.

The parking meters, and their use, need to be seen in the larger context of how they influence other means of transportation, especially when real-time data is available. If a person can see before driving to an area that the demand for parking spaces is exceeding the availability, then that person has the option of other transportation, including carpooling, public transit or parking in an area near his or her destination and walking. People who are given the proper information have the tools at their disposal to make smarter transportation choices, which should add up to more efficient transportation for everyone.

Parking meter information is far more useful than just finding spots in commercial corridors. It is also a key tool in The City's transit-first policy, and the real-time sensors should be included in SFPark to help make all transportation options more efficient in San Francisco.

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SF's Supply-and-Demand Problem

By [Erica Hellerstein](#)

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[\(http://missionlocal.org/author/erica-hellerstein/\)](http://missionlocal.org/author/erica-hellerstein/)

Posted January 4, 2014 3:00 pm

We've all seen those luxurious new apartment complexes sprout up in the Mission and the rest of San Francisco. In fact, just down the street from our own office, construction workers toil daily over the "[Vida \(http://vidasf.com/\)](http://vidasf.com/)" condominium complex — a structure, according to the building's promotional website, whose "fresh, contemporary design and caring craftsmanship are inspired by modern Latin culture — literally weaving the urban fabric of the Mission into the building itself."

While projects like Vida and others continue to flourish, San Francisco is slated to hit the 1 million mark (<http://www.sfexaminer.com/sanfrancisco/san-francisco-at-1-million-citys-population-is-booming-once-again/Content?oid=2659836>) in less than two decades. Can the city possibly keep up with its swelling supply-and-demand problem? Dan Shreiber of The San Francisco Examiner digs deeper (<http://www.sfexaminer.com/sanfrancisco/san-francisco-at-1-million-can-citys-housing-supply-keep-up-with-demand/Content?oid=2664429>).

Earlier speculation that housing costs would have reached a plateau by now has not come true — not even close.

U.S. Census Bureau figures put the median of The City's rental rates — the midpoint on the spectrum of rental prices — at \$1,463 per month. Almost 40 percent of San Francisco rental properties demand at least 35 percent of tenants' total income. The Trulia real estate listings website shows the median cost of buying a home is \$850,000, which is nearly \$200,000 more than five years ago and more than double what it was in 2000.

Traditional economics might hold that the high price would eventually curb growth over the long term. Not so, according to an upcoming report by the Association of Bay Area Governments, which projects that The City's 2010 population of 805,263 will grow 35 percent by 2040 — the fastest 30-year rate of increase in nearly a century. By 2032, 1 million residents will make San Francisco their home, the report predicts.

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[\(http://missionlocal.org/2014/01/mission-protesters-take-on-condo-dwellers-cops-cafes/\)](http://missionlocal.org/2014/01/mission-protesters-take-on-condo-dwellers-cops-cafes/)

Last week, protestors marched down Mission Street in response to the amplified police presence around the 16th street BART plaza. Many also criticized the slick new Vara apartment complex at 15th and Mission and yelled at residents watching the protest from their balconies. Read more [here \(http://missionlocal.org/2014/01/mission-protesters-take-on-condo-dwellers-cops-cafes/\)](http://missionlocal.org/2014/01/mission-protesters-take-on-condo-dwellers-cops-cafes/).

[High Rise Condos Proposed for 16th and Mission \(http://missionlocal.org/2013/10/high-rise-condos-proposed-for-16th-and-mission/\)](http://missionlocal.org/2013/10/high-rise-condos-proposed-for-16th-and-mission/)

9 Comments

John

January 4, 2014 at 5:41 pm

The problem seems clear enough. In most places, supply and demand are in perfect balance because the price is allowed to go up or go down. The same principle applies for stock prices, commodity prices and any other product that isn't manipulated.

SF's problem is clear enough. NIMBY's and overly strict land use regs constrain the new supply that we all know we need. While the existing housing is under-utilized because of rent control which deters mobility and directly causes what some estimates say are up to 35,000 units being deliberately held off the market because the owners do not want to risk having a lifetime tenant.

Meanwhile people irrationally think that the rest of the Bay Area doesn't exist and that they must live in SF, even when it is blatantly obvious that they lack the fiscal power to be here.

If you wanted to create a housing mess from scratch, you would pretty much choose the housing policies that SF has developed over the last 35 years, and then just wait for the debacle to unfold.

SFSquee

January 4, 2014 at 7:48 pm

What John said. Perfect summary.

John

January 4, 2014 at 8:22 pm

Thank you. The truth is often very simple but, for those with an ideological bias that makes the truth too unpalatable, then they must devise ever more complex theories and systems, believing the delusion that they can control everything including human nature.

Adam Smith had all this stuff figured out 250 years ago.

Jerry

January 4, 2014 at 9:35 pm

Amen. Thanks John.

Kaliman

January 4, 2014 at 7:52 pm

Blah, blah, blah...I'm a landlord...blah, blah, I don't like low-income residents...blah, blah...I hate rent control...blah, blah...I dislike Hispanics..blah, blah...if you can't afford SF, get out, blah,blah,blah...the private market rules...blah, blah..I'm a troll...blah, blah.

John

January 4, 2014 at 8:05 pm

So, no refutation? Just insults?

Eli

January 5, 2014 at 8:07 am

If it's really a supply and demand problem, let's go after banks that are sitting on foreclosed homes, artificially raising the median price by limiting supply. Let's go after the Catholic dicoese of SF for sitting on vacant property. How many abandoned buildings can be converted to multi-unit housing?

The bigger problem, imho, is that real estate for rent and purchase is skyrocketing while wages remain flat. All it takes is one well-paid newbie to the area for vicious real estate agents to claim a new market rate beyond everybody else's reach.

The "invisible hand" of Adam Smith is only a theoretical interpretation of a free, unrestrained economy. It does not apply to SF, where every level of the economy, from federal policy to local land scarcity, is being deliberately manipulated to transfer every last dollar to the already-rich and already-privileged.

two beers

January 6, 2014 at 1:44 pm

I agree wholeheartedly with John: government intervention distorts the housing market.

So, let's get the meddling government out of the housing business, and let Adam Smith's invisible hand work it's magic: To that end, let's revoke Prop 13, end government flood insurance, end the mortgage interest deduction, end property tax and depreciation write-offs, end govt-backed mortgages, end QE2, charge landlords for enlisting the police for evictions, and restore higher capital gains tax rates.

Remember, markets don't exist to serve people; people exist to serve markets. Laissez-faire in all things, except when I need laws and regulations to serve my own interests.

John

January 6, 2014 at 2:29 pm

TwoBeers, I would support some of those ideas.

Flood insurance could be privatized in the same way as earthquake insurance is.

It is illogical to oppose rent control if I support Prop13, so ending them both is viable, if some basic precautions are taken.

Fannie/Freddie isn't the government anyway, as we discovered a few years ago.

the deductibility of mortgage interest, property taxes and depreciation are tax policies and not housing policies per se. The government wants to encourage home ownership over renting and that is a separate issue.

I was never a fan of QE although I've certainly made money from it. I would have let Citi and GM fail.



<http://paloaltoonline.com/blogs/p/print/2014/01/03/should-zoning-ever-change>

By Steve Levy

Should Zoning Ever Change

Uploaded: Jan 3, 2014

My answer is yes just as it is for laws regarding civil rights when I was growing up in the 1950s or for laws regarding gay marriage or a women's right to choose. Conditions change and people should be able to adapt to new realities or new views about matters as long as no constitutional rights are voided.

So I would love to see zoning changes that permitted and facilitated so-called granny units or permitted small apartments if people change their views on how much living space is needed, Our valley was built on changes that allowed orchards to become homes and offices. Still, today there is excess land zoned for industrial uses in some areas and it is being converted to uses that are in demand.

Locally I can see zoning changes that facilitate better (and denser) use of properties along El Camino and I suspect growth pressures will slowly change zoning along parts of Alma and in additional streets as downtown expands.

I understand that many residents wish growth would go elsewhere, And how growth pressures are handled IS one of the primary functions of local government, But I do not agree that zoning is a promise written in stone and comparable to the Bill of Rights.

If you wish to respond to this blog, please start by answering two questions--

1) Do you think zoning should ever be changed in Palo Alto--why or why not. I am trying to uncover whether resident opposition to zoning changes depends on whether they like the proposed change or not or whether there is a principle involved and

2) If you think zoning is a promise that should never be changed, do you feel the same about public employee retirement benefits or the nation's long term possible Medicare or Social Security funding challenges--both of which to me involve more longstanding and significant "promises" on which people made important life decisions.

I think all of these are subject to change if the situation demands and will go better with feelings of trying to work together on complicated changes that need to be made.

SMART station still in planning phase

By Dan Schwarz | Posted: Friday, December 27, 2013 12:21 pm

In early December, Larkspur received considerable press coverage about a workshop we conducted to inform residents and interested parties about the soon-to-be released Draft SMART Station Area Plan.

The plan takes a look at the area in and around Larkspur Landing, where the SMART station is expected to open, as soon as SMART has the means to make it happen.

The planning process was funded with money from the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Transportation Authority of Marin, the Golden Gate Highway and Transportation District, the County of Marin and the City of Larkspur.

The reason so many agencies are involved with this study is because there is a lot on the horizon for the Larkspur Landing – and all of these agencies have projects that are affected by what happens.

Without a plan, Larkspur will be unprepared to coordinate these projects and ensure they do not facilitate development to a scale that we cannot sustain or support.

We are still midstream in the planning process. Nothing has been approved to date, and we do not anticipate anything will be considered for approval for many months.

The Draft Plan was crafted after an 18-month public input process that involved discussion and debate by a Citizens' Advisory Committee. And there was lively debate.

This plan touches on significant issues involving the most urban part of our city and the committee and it examines the potential impact of growth and development at many different scales. These are controversial topics and the committee did not shy away from the challenge.

We expect the draft plan and the accompanying Environmental Impact Report to be released in January 2014. With its release, we will enter into a public comment period.

After the public comment period, we envision a series of public meetings to discuss the many elements of the plan. What the plan ultimately says and how it is incorporated into Larkspur's General Plan will be decisions for the city council.

To be kept abreast of the SMART Station Area Plan, visit the city's website cityoflarkspur.org and follow the link about the plan that you will find on the left hand side of the page.

Considerable information is already available, and when the draft Station Area Plan and EIR are released, you will be able to download them from this page.

You can also sign-up to receive notifications of public meetings by following the “Notify Me” link on our website.

Vacancy on the planning commission

Kevin Haroff’s election to the Larkspur City Council has created a vacancy on the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is an excellent way to be involved in critical issues about land use and the character of Larkspur.

Applications for the seat are due Jan. 17, and the council has scheduled interviews for the vacancy for Feb. 5. To be considered, complete the application found at cityoflarkspur.org or call City Clerk Cynthia Huisman at 927-5110 to obtain a copy.

Oversight committee for Measure C

Residents and business owners have another opportunity to be involved – the Citizens’ Oversight Committee for Measure C, the Larkspur Street Repair and Essential City Services Measure.

Measure C created a one-half-cent sales tax in Larkspur that will go into effect on April 1, 2014.

The Oversight Committee is charged with making recommendations to the city council about the use of this money and then reviewing the audits of its use.

The Council has established that no less than 80 percent of the Measure C money will be spent on road repair and improvements each year. The deadline is Friday, Jan. 11. Appointments will be made on Jan. 16.

Happy holidays

On behalf of the Larkspur City Council and all city staff, I want to extend best wishes for the holidays and a Happy New Year.

City administrative offices will be closed beginning at noon on Tuesday, Dec. 4; we will reopen on Jan.2. The Larkspur Library will close Tuesday, Dec. 24, and reopen on Friday, Dec. 27. The library will observe holiday hours of 10 a.m.-6 p.m. during this period.

If you need assistance from the Department of Public Works during the holiday break, you may leave a message with dispatch at the Central Marin Police Authority at 927-5150.

Suburban living linked to bigger carbon footprint

Stephanie M. Lee

Published 6:03 pm, Tuesday, January 14, 2014

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A city with a minimal carbon footprint looks a lot like San Francisco, where residents tend to commute by bus or train, live in apartments and walk to nearby shops and restaurants.

Nationwide, those kinds of cities are keeping greenhouse gas emissions low - but their outlying suburbs essentially negate those climate benefits.

In fact, suburbs account for 50 percent of the nation's household carbon footprint, even though they are home to less than half of the U.S. population, according to a new UC Berkeley study. Their inhabitants drive more, consume more goods and use more electricity, gas and water, the research showed.

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The study was published last month in the journal *Environmental Science and Technology*, arriving at a time when urban populations are booming, here in the Bay Area and worldwide, and planners are trying to accommodate that increase in a sustainable way.

Unchecked growth could have consequences for the environment and personal health. As carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from human activities get trapped in the atmosphere, scientists expect the temperatures that rise as a result to worsen air quality, change the patterns of infectious diseases and make it harder to grow a stable food supply.

"We need to understand how to balance the urban core with the broader periphery," said the study's lead author, Daniel Kammen, a professor of energy and public policy at UC Berkeley and director of the university's Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory.

The analysis

The study analyzed 37 sources of data, including the census, weather, fuel prices, demographic information and household size to come up with estimates for the average carbon footprint of households in more than 31,000 ZIP codes across every state.

The resulting map shows a clear pattern of major urban areas with light carbon footprints surrounded by the heavy footprints of their suburbs.

For example, San Francisco's Hayes Valley neighborhood - ZIP code 94102, just west of downtown - generates 26 metric tons of carbon dioxide per average household annually. By contrast, households in ZIP code 94583, in San Ramon, generate a whopping 58 metric tons per year on average. Suburb-dwellers drive their cars longer distances and more frequently; typically have bigger houses that gobble up more electricity, water, natural gas and other fuels; and have higher incomes to buy more food and goods - all activities that drive up emissions.

Increasing population density in cities reduces emissions - but only to a point before the savings aren't that substantial and quality of life begins to suffer, said Kammen, who worked on the study with doctoral candidate Christopher Jones.

"The idea that your carbon footprint is lower if you live in the urban core doesn't mean everyone should be dumped into apartment buildings like Tokyo and live like an anonymous number," he said. "There are really interesting decisions and trade-offs we can get at by not just making everyone live in huge mega-blocks or spread out across a rural landscape."

Strategies to reduce emissions should be based on a region's unique needs and resources, Kammen said.

Parts of the Midwest, for example, largely use coal to generate electricity, which drives up emissions. California, on the other hand, has relatively low emissions associated with household electricity, but greater amounts from transportation. In the Bay Area alone, transportation is the source of more than 35 percent of emissions.

Much longer commute

Traffic has become familiar to Kelly Weekes, 33, who used to walk from her studio apartment to her job in downtown San Francisco. Now, every weekday, she commutes three to four hours between the condo in Concord she shares with her fiance and her new job in Daly City, which requires her to have a car on-site.

Weekes despises the drive, but says it was the more environmentally sustainable decision for her and her partner, who works near their home. "It made more sense for one of us to be driving," she said. "We live less than a mile from his job, and he's able to bike and walk."

Kammen knows that Weekes' dilemma isn't isolated. Bay Area planners know, too.

The region expects to add 2.1 million people in the next 25 years, bringing the population to 9 million. Commutes could lengthen as rising housing costs drive residents from San Francisco, and as new residents move in droves to the more affordable Alameda and Santa Clara counties.

To ease pressure on the region's transportation systems, Plan Bay Area, the region's outline for development until 2040, calls for concentrating housing in neighborhoods within walking distance of public transit and amenities like grocery stores and restaurants.

That reflects an increasing desire of people of all ages to live in walkable communities, said Jeff Hobson, deputy director of TransForm, an Oakland group that advocates for public transportation.

"Having a low-carbon lifestyle is not just for hipsters," he said. "It should also be for soccer moms and NASCAR dads and Instagram teens."

Most suburb dwellers will still drive cars, said John Goodwin, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, which developed Plan Bay Area with the Association of Bay Area Governments. But public transit will at least be "a viable option" for more of them, he said.

Weaning off cars

Plan Bay Area also specifies how nearly \$300 billion in anticipated federal, state and local funds will be spent on maintaining and operating the current transportation network, and expanding transit, roadways and bridges. Under state law, the Bay Area must carry out this expansion while reducing per-capita carbon dioxide emissions from cars and light-duty trucks by 15 percent by 2040.

To make the air cleaner, agencies are trying to wean people off their cars.

One example is the Bay Area Bike Share program, which allows the public in five cities to rent bicycles. In addition, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission plan to launch a

commute-benefits program that may allow employees at large companies to pay for their public transit commutes with pretax dollars.

In the future, Kammen hopes that urban centers and their neighbors will achieve a sort of balance. "It's not that the urban core is good and the suburban core is bad," he said. "It's that infrastructure and planning are really critical."

Maps online

Look up your ZIP code's carbon footprint map at <http://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/maps>.

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Tina Swanson's Blog

The Power of Measurement, Part II: Projected Freshwater Inflow to the San Francisco Bay Estuary with the Bay Delta Conservation Plan



Posted December 17, 2013 in Curbing Pollution, Health and the Environment, Living Sustainably, Reviving the World's Oceans, Saving Wildlife and Wild Places

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If your doctor, or even the pharmacist at your local drug store, measured your blood pressure, found that it was higher than what modern medicine tells us is healthy, and advised you to lose weight, get more exercise and reduce your salt intake, what would you do?

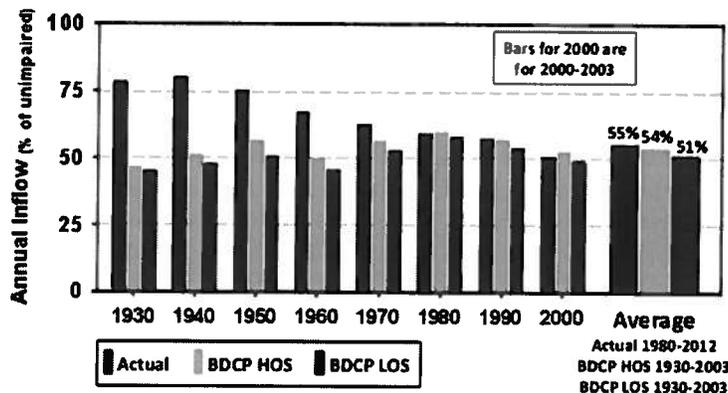
Measurements like this can be life savers—but they only have power if you actually measure them and, when they indicate a problem, if you act on them.

In my last post, I described updated results of measurements, or indicators, developed for the San Francisco Estuary Partnership's 2011 *State of the Bay* report. These measurements revealed a long-term and ongoing decline in the amount of freshwater inflow to San Francisco Bay, resulting in the estuary—the largest on the West Coast—experiencing chronic man-made drought conditions and predictable drops in fish populations.

These results are disappointing but not unexpected: concern about reductions in freshwater inflow to the Bay goes back to the 1970s. Back in 1993, following years of research, workshops and hearings, the San Francisco Estuary Partnership adopted a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan that included the goal to “increase freshwater availability to the Estuary” (page 109 in the 2007 update). But, even as the 2011 *State of the Bay* report and my updated indicators documented failure to meet the goal (or even to make any progress), there is strong consensus that improved inflows are necessary to protect and restore the Bay and its upstream Delta. In just the past three years, the State Water Resources Control Board (page 5), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (page 10), the Association of Bay Area Governments, the Public Policy Institute of California (page 5), and extensive surveys of scientists (figures 1, 2 and 3) have all concluded that freshwater inflows need to be increased.

So how will the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, described as “part of California’s overall water management portfolio” and “a 50-year habitat conservation plan,” address this need?

The plan, which was just released for formal public review, includes two alternative scenarios for managing water exports from the Delta and freshwater inflows to the estuary, a Low Outflow Scenario (LOS) and a High Outflow Scenario (HOS). (Note: Freshwater inflow to the Bay is also referred to as “Delta outflow.”) With thanks to Greg Reis of The Bay Institute for compiling the data from the Administrative Draft version of the plan documents, I used the two freshwater inflow indicators and the Bay Delta Conservation Plan’s projected flow data for their “high outflow” and “low outflow” scenarios to measure how the plan would compare to actual freshwater inflow conditions.



This graph compares the actual freshwater inflows to the estuary, expressed as the average percentage of estimated unimpaired inflow for each decade, with inflows predicted under the Bay Delta Conservation Plan's high and low outflow scenarios. The last trio of bars shows the longer term averages, using 1980-2012 for actual flows and the 1930-2003 period used in the plan's analyses for the high and low outflow scenarios. (Before 1980, dams and water diversion facilities in the watershed and Delta were not operated at full capacity, so quantitative comparison of historical actual flows with the plan's projected flows for those early years is not useful.)

The results show that, despite its name, the high outflow scenario is anything but. At best it perpetuates the status quo with inflow to the estuary reduced by nearly 50%; at worst, it's slightly worse than conditions that have already driven the Delta to collapse. The low outflow scenario is, put simply, just plain worse.

Frequency of Critically Low Inflow Years

	Actual (1980-2012)	BDCP HOS (1930-2003)	BDCP LOS (1930-2003)
# of years with low inflow	18 of 33 years	40 of 74 years	46 of 74 years
% of years with low inflow	55%	54%	62%
Increase in low inflow years ("man-made drought")*	Double	Nearly Triple (2.9 fold)	More than Triple (3.3 fold)

* Based on unimpaired inflow, the frequency of critically dry years was 27% for 1980-2012 and 19% for 1930-2003.

This table compares the frequency of critically low inflow years, or drought conditions, for actual inflows during the 1980-2012 period, during which 27% of the years were naturally dry, and for the 64-year period analyzed for the high outflow and low outflow scenarios (1930-2003, during which 19% of the years were naturally dry).

During the past 33 years, actual water management operations have doubled the frequency of drought conditions in the Bay. But, under the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, the frequency of critically low annual inflows would triple, reaching 62% of all years under the low outflow scenario.

Since Delta fishes, which are affected by flow as well as other factors, have consistently experienced substantial population declines during periods with multiple years of low inflows, it's hard to understand how the Bay Delta Conservation Plan can meet its objectives to restore the ecosystem and contribute to the recovery of the numerous already endangered fishes that live in the estuary.

Unfortunately, the Bay Delta Conservation Plan is not unique in its failure to use measurements like these, also called "performance measures," to test and evaluate its plan. In a recent article, Dr. Judy Meyer, an ecologist from University of Georgia and member of the Delta Independent Science Board, which has already critically reviewed the plan several times, said this:

"Having observed the science-policy interface in the Delta for over a decade, I have concluded that implementation of a limited and carefully chosen suite of performance measures is a crucial missing link in the adaptive management cycle."

I still believe in the power of measurement—but I also recognize that, when the responsible agencies fail or are unwilling to use them, it can fall to others, like the San Francisco Estuary Partnership, to bring to light the important evidence such measurements provide.

Rescuing the San Francisco Bay estuary and managing its water resources for both human and ecosystem benefits is important and has broad public and political support. It's time to put the facts on the table, identify the real problems, set reasonable and balanced goals, and get to work.

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Top 10 of 2013: No. 2 — After years of debate, Napa Pipe gets green light

City and county work out their project differences



DECEMBER 29, 2013 8:00 PM • PETER JENSEN

After years of debate over one of the largest development projects in Napa County's history, 2013 witnessed a major step forward for the Napa Pipe redevelopment plan, making it the Register's No. 2 story of the year.

In a resounding victory for the developers behind the project, the Napa County Board of Supervisors in June unanimously approved the land-use changes needed for

a mixed-use development to take root at a 154-acre former industrial site on the east bank of the Napa River.

The project is planned to feature a Costco store, up to 945 homes, a hotel, and retail and commercial space, among other uses. Construction is at least a year away.

But before any vote could take place, Supervisors Bill Dodd and Keith Caldwell had to broker a deal with Napa Mayor Jill Techel and Councilwoman Juliana Inman that may shape the future of development projects locally for decades to come.

The city agreed to take on 80 percent of the county's regional housing allocations from 2022 until 2058, which is when the land-use initiative Measure P, which controls the conversion of agricultural and open space land in the unincorporated areas, sunsets. If voters approve a subsequent initiative, the agreement between the city and the county will extend even further into the future.

Housing allocations, handed down from the state government via the Association of Bay Area Governments, were a driving force behind the county's willingness to consider an application for development at Napa Pipe.

Several years ago, while grappling with a large allocation and with few suitable development sites in the unincorporated area, the county placed 300 units of its allocation at Napa Pipe.

That amounted to a pledge that the Board of Supervisors would at least rezone a portion of the site for residential development.

Years of environmental review followed that decision, and the project finally won approval from the Napa County Planning Commission in late 2012.

At 2013's outset, the Board of Supervisors announced that they'd delay taking any action on the application until negotiations with the city of Napa could take place.

The goal in the negotiations was to secure city water for the project in exchange for agreements on revenue sharing, city annexation of the site, affordable housing, land uses and services.

The final deal, announced in May, resolved years of disagreement and friction between the city and the county over the project.

"What we have here to date really gets at what the county needed and wanted," Dodd said at the time. "It is nothing short of phenomenal. I wish we had done that a long time ago."

The deal was ratified as a memorandum of understanding between the two governments this fall. It also paves the way for more negotiations and additional agreements that will have to be ratified in 2014.

As it stands currently, the project will likely face an initiative on the November 2014 ballot for city of Napa residents. If they approve it, the site would be annexed within city limits.

Environmental cleanup of the site would follow in 2015, and construction of the Costco store — the first development phase of several — would happen at the same time.

Upfront: Dry and dry again ...

by Peter Seidman | Posted: Tuesday, January 14, 2014 9:00 am

The Marin Municipal Water District ended 2013 logging the driest year on record. The new year began with opponents of transit-oriented development and Plan Bay Area using the lack of rain as a wedge issue to continue their attacks on transit-oriented development along Highway 101.

The district, which serves about 186,000 people in eastern Marin (except Novato and parts of West Marin), ended the year logging 10.68 inches of rain at Lake Lagunitas. Since the district began keeping records in 1879, three serious droughts have hit the county. The first drought came in 1929, when the district logged 19.06 inches of rainfall, substantially more than the amount that fell in 2013. Drought held off for decades, until it hit again in 1976, when the district logged 21.34 inches of rain. And drought hit again in 1988, which began a five-year spell of lower than average rainfall.

Although decades passed between the 1929 drought and the two-year event that began in 1976, only about a decade separated the 1976 drought and the five-year event that began in 1988. And now, in 2013, the prospects for another drought have water managers and district customers getting a bit twitchy and everyone's talking about climate change and the possibility of large fluctuations in rainfall. Whether the truncated time period between low-rainfall years can be attributed to climate change is uncertain. What is certain is that water managers are looking at all the data they can find in an attempt to predict what the future will hold.

For the present, the level of the district's reservoirs on April 1 will determine whether district residents will face a call for voluntary—or mandatory—reduction in water use. Unless, that is, the county is visited by another "March miracle." In past years, rains have missed the county until the last month of the rainy season, when they broke so strong that reservoirs spilled over their dams in a last-minute wet season deluge.

The average storage level for the district's eight reservoirs on Jan. 5 should be 59,791 acre-feet, or 75 percent of capacity. (An acre-foot is equivalent to 325,851 gallons, enough water to cover one acre, about the size of a football field, to a depth of one foot or to supply three families for one year.) The lack of rainfall is evident in the actual storage tallied this Jan. 5: 44,587 acre-feet. That represents just 56 percent of capacity. Last year, the district's reservoirs were at 79,566 acre-feet, or 100 percent of capacity. But that was before an exceedingly dry spring started draining the district's supply.

In 1976, district residents faced a tough rationing regimen. It was a time for bricks in the toilet to reduce the amount of water per flush, along with letting lawns go brown and cars go unwashed.

Since then, the district has enacted measures that have increased infrastructure efficiency and boosted conservation, measures that could result in a less strenuous need for cutbacks if a drought takes hold again. A major boost to supply that sets the current situation apart from the one district residents faced in 1976 is the water pipeline infrastructure that brings Russian River water to Marin. That water now accounts for 25 percent of the water district customers use. But if drought hits Sonoma County, the water agency there could ask Marin to reduce its take this coming summer, according to John Lahaye, Marin Municipal Water District principal engineer.

The district has enacted a water policy that calls for an assessment of supply on April 1. If the combined reservoir level is 50,000 acre-feet or less, the district will ask customers to cut back their consumption by 10 percent. If the reservoir level is 40,000 acre-feet or less, the district will implement a 25-percent mandatory reduction. The call for a 10-percent reduction seems likely. The county could, however, see that miracle March or February, making immediate water-supply concerns academic.

The current lack of rain already has created a wedge that opponents of transit-oriented development and Plan Bay Area have been mining. They contend that increasing housing density along Highway 101 would change the character of Marin forever, robbing them of a protected lifestyle they enjoy and consider critical to the county. Whether those criticisms are valid is a legitimate subject for debate. But another attack on the plan to promote transit-oriented development along the freeway by increasing housing density within a narrow strip of Highway 101 is less debatable, at least from the standpoint of a water manager.

The opponents say Marin has a finite water supply that already is strained, and the county cannot increase its population without additional supply, which they also vehemently oppose. Calls for a ban on new water hookups are being raised among opponents who contend that the current lack of rain will prove the county has reached its population saturation point. There's not enough water to supply added population, they say, including the people who would live in the new housing that would be built along Highway 101. But does the contention fall within the limits of credibility? It's a worthy question.

Using water as a wedge issue to block development, even if that development would create a greater good for a community, is far from a new phenomenon. The legal implications of banning new water connections have a long and varied legal lineage. Bolinas has a moratorium on new connections that has withstood court challenge.

In a 1976 case, Swanson versus the Marin Municipal Water District, a state appellate court made reference to an earlier case in 1921 in Butte County: "Our Supreme Court aptly stated that 'a water company supplying water for irrigation has not the power to take on new consumers without limit. Its power to supply water is, of course, limited by the amount of its supply, and when the demands

of its consumers upon it have reached this limit, it has no right to take on new consumers to the necessary injury of those it has. But it is not always easy to determine just when the limit of supply is reached, and the factor of safety which should be allowed against exceptional seasons may vary from locality to locality ... The matter is one of judgment, a judgment which may well should be exercised conservatively, but a matter of judgment nevertheless."

To a large extent, state law drives water issues. Included in the California water code is a section that mandates developers of 500 units or more must secure and prove rights to a water supply for their projects. That mandate also holds if the project would increase "the number of the public water system's existing service connections by 10 percent." Cynthia Koehler, a Marin Municipal Water District board member, thinks that section of the code makes sense. "The law is a great thing in my view. There are people who have tried [unsuccessfully], to extend it to smaller developments."

A water district doesn't act as a planning agency. Its responsibility rests with providing water, under rules and regulations in state law, to customers within its jurisdiction. It can, however, enact a moratorium on new connections if it can no longer meet the needs of current customers. But it cannot use water connections as a primary tool to control development.

Whether the Marin Municipal Water District has adequate supply to deliver water to customers currently within its jurisdiction—and to continue supplying water if the population increases because of transit-oriented development—is unambiguous, according to the water district. It does and it can.

Lahaye notes that the district compiles an urban water management plan every five years. The last document came out in 2010. That was one year after the state enacted a mandate that calls for a 20 percent reduction in water use by 2020, a target the water district already has met.

The population numbers included in the management plan come from the state and from the Association of Bay Area Governments. They're the same numbers used in the forecasts for the numbers of jobs and housing the county can expect. "We determined that our water supply is adequate for the foreseeable future, 20 years, which is what the requirement is," says Lahaye."

Opponents of transit-oriented development say the state and ABAG numbers are faulty and lack a predictive reliability that results in a call for more housing than actually will be needed in the county. But if the numbers from the state and ABAG are accurate, or are at least in the ballpark, the argument that the district will have inadequate supply for the projected demand may not hold water.

The district's proposal to build a desalination facility was aimed at providing a drought-free facility that could tide it over during drought events. Opponents of that plan, many of whom also oppose transit-oriented development, killed the proposal, at least temporarily. The idea went to

district voters, who passed a measure that calls for the district to return to voters for permission to build the facility. But building a facility could take more than a year, even if voters approve. And when the time to secure permits gets thrown into the mix, it could be a few years or longer before any desalination facility is running. Hardly a help in the event of an immediate drought emergency.

Emails contending, among other theories, that the district might use the current lack of rain to bring the desalination proposal to voters are circulating among scores of recipients. The theory just isn't true, say Koehler and water district officials. There's no thought of resurrecting the desalination proposal in the near future.

With desalination out of the picture, conservation and increasing the efficiency of the district's delivery system represent the biggest bang for its water buck. District residents already have firmly embraced a conservation effort. That's the reason in large part that in the event of a continuing drought, district residents may face the need to cut back 25 percent instead of the 50 percent they cut back in past droughts. Adding Russian River water to the district's supply, as well as increasing reservoir capacity also has played a role in improving the district's water supply.

Koehler is among a contingent that says the district can go even further down the conservation, recycling and reuse path. The new way to look at conservation in water districts considers conservation to be a source of supply rather than as solely a mechanism to control use.

Limits do exist, however, on the district's ability to increase its supply. The state controls how much water the district can collect from streams and how much it can store. Lahaye says it's unlikely the state would approve an increase in reservoir capacity.

And as for an idea that dredging silt from reservoirs could increase supply, state regulations also would make that a tough move. And even if the district could get clearance, disposing the spoils would present a huge problem. As would the fact that dredging would increase the amount of water the district draws from streams and stores, an amount constrained by state mandate.

As Koehler says, conservation is the best route. "We have so far we can go to stretch our current supply." And that includes a supply that could serve new residents in those proposed transit-oriented developments.

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Upfront: Unhappy Landing

LARKSPUR NO-GROWTH PROPONENTS IGNORE CONSERVATION HISTORY

by Peter Seidman | Posted: Monday, January 6, 2014 9:00 am



The debate over the proposed SMART station plan in Larkspur isn't really about SMART or a train station. It's about values, past and present. It's also about history, forgotten or ignored.

The goals of the Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan, stated in a presentation during a public meeting in Larkspur last month, are straightforward. They're also controversial, especially these days: Promote transit ridership. Reduce vehicle use. Increase housing supply (particularly affordable housing) near station areas. Increase jobs near transit corridors. Locate key services and retail within station areas.

While the goals are straightforward, they also rile conservatives who have been exercising their collective voice as they protest each transit-oriented development proposal along the Highway 101 corridor that comes before planners, council members and supervisors.

A relatively small contingent of protestors was on hand at the meeting that presented the latest version of the Larkspur plan. Their slogans are just as

straightforward as the goals contained in the plan: "Save Marin (Again)" and "Stand Up For Small Towns" and "Welcome to Clogspur."

The modestly multistory buildings proposed for Larkspur and the other sites along the freeway are not unlike the ones already dotting the Highway 101 corridor. In the end, residents, planners, design experts and elected officials will hold ultimate sway over what each of the projects looks like, if built.

The anti-growth sentiment from protestors sounds laudable, but it ignores a history that should inform the debate. Many residents who oppose any development along Highway 101 are newer residents of the county and are unaware of a long lineage of slow/no-growth efforts. Others who protest housing and commercial development along Highway 101 do it with a dose of disingenuousness.

The debate should give Marin residents a chance to confront a philosophy that began decades ago. Opponents of adding housing and commercial buildings, at medium densities, in the towns strung along the freeway, sometimes cite the freeway war of the 1960s, when Marin residents coalesced into a potent political force that stopped development of West Marin in its tracks. It was in 1966 that a dedicated group of politicians, activists and planners pushed back against a plan to extend what would have amounted to a new east-west freeway from eastern Marin to the pasture lands of West Marin. The freeway would have lowered the starting flag on a plan to add thousands of homes in the most bucolic part of the county.

That effort often is a referral point for protestors who are pushing back against the concept of transit-oriented development along the freeway corridor in eastern Marin, developments that would add badly needed housing and provide a commercial boost to towns whose coffers run routinely low. The opponents rally under a battle cry that if Marin did it once, it can do it again. Hence the slogan "Save Marin (Again)."

But the opponents fail to grasp—or are unaware of—the accompanying planning strategy that the revolt against the West Marin plan triggered—a strategy that's as alive today as when it was enacted, a strategy that forms the bedrock of the planning vision that includes transit-oriented development and higher density housing along Highway 101.

Marin is far from unique in the effort its citizens mounted to use restricted freeway access to slow growth. Suburbs across the country engaged in the same exercise ever since residents first started becoming wary of suburban sprawl. Marin, as it happens, proved to be a good place to investigate the phenomenon. That's what Louise Nelson Dyble of the University of Southern California did in the *Journal of Urban History* in a study titled "Revolt Against Sprawl: Transportation and the Origins of the Marin County Growth-Control Regime" published by Sage Communications in 2007.

Dyble makes the connection between the nascent movement to halt sprawl in Marin in 1966 with the creation of the first countywide plan, released in 1971. She notes that plan "elaborated on the basic principles of the Balanced Transportation Program and provided the template for all subsequent growth-control efforts" in the county. That observation holds true right through the current period of Plan Bay Area, which extends the transportation principal throughout the region. The effort in Marin that began in 1966 was the progenitor of the transit-oriented development concept, whether activists back then saw it or not.

The 1971 document described a planning process that looked at Marin as three distinct areas, each of which should have its own impulses and strategies for future development—or lack of development. The Inland Corridor was reserved for agriculture and uses compatible with agriculture, and planning policies would protect those uses. The Coastal Recreation Corridor would set parameters that still hold in West Marin, which has become an important recreational asset for the Bay Area. The third distinct area forms the basis for the discussion still alive today: the City Centered Corridor.

To protect agricultural Marin and the recreation corridor and open space in the rest of the Marin, proponents of the county planning document foresaw the advantages of corralling development along the freeway in eastern Marin, which they viewed as a kind of urbanized suburbia, a logical place for commerce and housing. Developing along the freeway made transportation sense, they believed. It also would provide a planning tool to keep development off of the ridges and open spaces that Marin residents held—and still hold—as one of the best aspects of living in the county.

The concept made sense, and it has held for decades. But with the introduction of Plan Bay Area and the idea of transit-oriented development, cracks formed in the understanding of the concept. Opponents of the Larkspur area plan now are among a contingent of Marin residents who want to stop development along the corridor. They want to break faith with the City Centered Corridor concept. That breaks faith with the original intent of the county's planning document.

Nowhere in the towns along the freeway is there a more likely place to build a transit-oriented development than near the Larkspur Ferry Terminal and a SMART station. Opponents say new residents will not use the transportation enough to justify development. But that view ignores a future that could be for a present that is. Transportation patterns change; paradigms shift. And that includes how people travel. If a family lives in new housing in the Larkspur planning area would they not walk over to Larkspur Landing to pick up items? Would they not walk five minutes to the SMART station to take a train into downtown San Rafael for a bite to eat?

The debate about the Larkspur planning area—as well as the other development sites along Highway 101 currently under discussion, give Marin residents a

chance to look into the mirror to see who they are and what values they want the county to reflect. Conservatives would cover the county in a development resin, casting a model of the county that would remain unchanged. Progressives, on the other hand, would like to see change that adds vitality to the county—within limits and guided by sound planning and design practices.

Only a minority believes the county needs no additional housing for its younger residents, for its teachers, for its lower-wage workers and its elderly residents. Even people with solid middle incomes find it harder and harder to maintain the Marin lifestyle brought on by slow/no growth.

The housing deficit is too often cast as an affordable housing issue to the exclusion of market rate housing the county also needs. An intriguing theory holds that as communities restrict new housing at the upper price levels, prospective new residents who are affluent seek the next level down, the less expensive housing. That shift puts a greater burden on the medium-level housing. And as that housing is bought by the affluent, middle-income prospective new residents get squeezed and seek lower-price housing. That shift then squeezes the lowest-price housing possibilities. The theory holds that increasing the amount of housing at all price levels is important and creates the greatest diversity. Slamming the door on new housing does the opposite.

Dyble notes the implications of the pushback against the freeway to West Marin. "Freeway revolts were some of the earliest manifestations of a nationwide growth control movement, which changed the purpose of planning and the orientation of many local governments as their collective power increased with the new federalism of the 1980s," she writes. "The case of Marin County demonstrates some of the best and the worst results of this movement and the local regimes that it empowered: open space and environmental resources were protected at the expense of affordable housing, accessibility, and social integration." The pressure the slow growth/no growth movement in Marin put on Sonoma County and traffic that flows between the two counties also is often unmentioned among critics of the projects to build transportation oriented housing and commercial opportunities along the City Centered Corridor.

The latest draft of the Larkspur planning area idea calls for the possibility of adding a new hotel, office buildings, retail and up to 920 residential units. Nothing is set in stone. Everything is up for review. The proximity to the SMART station and to access by bicycle from San Rafael would add an incentive for residents to use those forms of transportation. It also could attract non-vehicular traffic from the north—and the south—to a newly revitalized Larkspur Landing, which has underperformed. Bicycle riding has exploded in Marin, as it has elsewhere. In essence, transit-oriented development is a case of if you build it, they (eventually) will come.

That could be especially true for Marin, which has an aging population that could use smaller houses outside of the white-picket-fence paradigm. And study after

study shows that younger people are increasingly amenable to living situations in smaller units not of the white-picket-fence variety. Preparing for the future is a key element of the transit-oriented strategy. Conservatives, however, still want to pour that resin cast over the county to freeze the status quo. That might seem noble, but demographics is a force not easily kept at bay.

Traffic is usually the issue that gets the most negative attention when a development of any size lands on a Marin planning table, and the Larkspur plan is no exception. Elected representatives and appointed officials acknowledge that traffic on Sir Francis Drake is at critical levels, as is the approach to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. Dealing with traffic implications of a development in the planning area would have to be an intrinsic part of the plan. It should include improving access to and from the bridge and possibly adding an additional lane on the bridge to relieve congestion going to and from Highway 101 and the East Bay.

If the traffic problems cannot be ameliorated, the plan should be altered or delayed. But to dismiss the possibility of creating a forward thinking plan that could create a showcase of livability as well as provide an attractive destination for visitors from San Francisco (and the north via SMART) is shortsighted.

It also refuses to acknowledge the original intent of the countywide planning document that called for the City Centered Corridor, a document that in large part created the Marin that opponents of the Larkspur plan say they are trying to protect.

Proponents of the Larkspur plan and the other plans that call for moderate density development along other so-called opportunity sites along Highway 101 caution that the county shouldn't turn its back on future demographic vitality in the name of maintaining a frozen conservative suburban stage setting.

Those should be the issues on the table as the Larkspur plan undergoes public scrutiny starting next month.

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Zone changes bridge gap between city, critics

City Council walks a fine political line in adapting to state housing mandates

by Gennady Sheyner

Palo Alto's elected officials and land-use watchdogs rarely walk in stride on zoning issues, but as the City Council approved a series of revisions to the city's zoning code Monday night, the two sides found themselves united against a common foe -- state bureaucrats whose housing mandates are creating massive planning headaches for the city.

With much discussion and little enthusiasm, a reluctant council revised its zoning code to create a new menu of incentives for developers of affordable housing and to codify some of the policies in the recently adopted Housing Element. The policies include increasing the number of housing units that could be built at certain commercial zones and planning for a homeless shelter on an industrial parcel east of Highway 101. But in an overture to resident critics, the council also agreed to scrap the most controversial proposal on the table: one that would have given council members the leeway to approve design concessions beyond those in the code to developers whose projects consist entirely of affordable housing.

In approving the changes, council members stressed again and again that their action is an attempt to make the best out of what they all see as a terrible situation. Under the state's Density Bonus Law, the city is already required to adopt a local density-bonus ordinance and to offer "design concessions" to builders of affordable-housing developments -- concessions that could include added density, greater heights or smaller setback requirements. Traditionally, the city's negotiations with developers have proceeded on an ad hoc basis, with the developer requesting and the city generally assenting. The city's newly approved law seeks to add some predictability to the process by creating a menu of concessions for developers to choose from, including the relaxing of daylight-plane requirements, height exemptions and less stringent side-yard setback requirements.

Planning Director Hillary Gitelman said having a local ordinance in place will "hopefully steer developers toward concessions and design exceptions that we think are less objectionable and less problematic than others." Without such an ordinance, she added, "the field is wide open" for developers to request any concessions they can think of and the city has a very limited ability to say no.

"There's an opportunity that we leave on the table if we don't adopt a local ordinance," Gitelman said.

The council ultimately agreed and voted 8-1 to enact the local density-bonus law. The only vote of dissent came from Councilman Larry Klein, who strongly objected to having the city cater to a state process it so vehemently opposes. The city, he said, is already forced to comply with state law. By approving a local density-bonus ordinance, the city is "implicitly going along" with the state

agenda, he said. He characterized the state's requirement for a local density-bonus as a bureaucratic "loyalty oath."

"I'm really scratching my head and trying to think of another example where the state says, 'You shall include in your ordinance laws that we, the state, have already passed,'" Klein said.

Klein called the housing-allocation process (which is driven by the regional Association of Bay Area Governments with the goal of encouraging housing construction near job centers and transit hubs, thereby reducing traffic and decreasing greenhouse-gas emissions) as a "bureaucratic nightmare" and treats local council's like rubber stamps.

"I just can't believe that we have a legal system in California where a Legislature can say to a City Council that it has to vote for a particular item," Klein said.

His colleagues generally agreed. Mayor Nancy Shepherd said the state-driven process is "clearly in violation of everyone's democratic values," and Vice Mayor Liz Kniss said it's "tempting to just say no" before she voted yes. Both were convinced by Gitelman's arguments that time is of the essence. Failing to comply with state mandates, Gitelman said, could leave the city vulnerable to lawsuits and subject to new state restrictions on housing policies.

Gitelman said staff is facing stiff time pressures to to implement the policies of the existing Housing Element, a state-mandated document that lists the city's housing policies and its strategies for addressing the state's housing mandate. The Housing Element that the council adopted last June after years of delay has a planning horizon of 2007-14, which makes for a very short shelf life. This means the city has to approve a new Housing Element within a year or face possible lawsuits and "significant penalties." These include a requirement that the city submit a Housing Element every four years rather than every eight.

"All of this would cost a lot of time and energy, in addition to taxpayer dollars," Gitelman said.

Codifying the existing Housing Element policies now will give staff more time to work on the next version of the document, she said. The revisions that the council approved include an increase in the number of affordable-housing units a developer can build in certain commercial zones from 15 to 20 per acre; and the designation of an industrial site east of U.S. Highway 101 as a possible site for an emergency shelter.

The former policy proved particularly controversial, with several residents urging the council not to enact any new laws that encourage densification. Joe Hirsch, a Barron Park resident who was one of the most vocal opponents last year of a proposed housing development on Maybell Avenue, cited the "extremely strong sentiment in this community against high-density development" and its impacts and asked the council not to enact any new ordinances that would support such development.

The proposal to increase density in "commercial neighborhood" zones from 15 to 20 units per acre would apply to 32 local parcels (mostly along El Camino Real) and is expected to yield an additional 64 units citywide, according to a report from city planners. Not everyone was thrilled about this revision. Cheryl Lilienstein, president of the citizens group Palo Altans for Sensible Zoning, said she was "puzzled" by the city's decision to encourage more density on El Camino Real, which she said is not a transit hub and offers little neighborhood-serving retail.

But Lilienstein, who led last year's successful "No on Measure D" campaign, also said that while she understands that the city is responding to a state mandate in raising the number of units allowed on El Camino, she would like a "remedy" to help neighborhoods deal with the impacts of densification. In response to concerns about increased density, the council voted to direct staff to

explore reducing the "floor-area-ratio" FAR) requirements in commercial zones, an action proposed by Councilman Pat Burt.

"While it's true that we have to go from 15 to 20 (units), we're not bound to the FAR that we have in our current zoning," Burt said.

He also observed that while the changes the council was considering are in response to state mandates, changes, most are "actually favorable to our community." Burt and his colleagues also agreed that the most contested part of the local density-bonus ordinance -- one that gives the council discretion to go beyond the menu of concessions for affordable-housing projects -- is far too broad and should be scrapped.

Councilwoman Karen Holman called the provision "way too open-ended," thanked the community for flagging it and suggested deleting it. The city's new density-bonus law, she said, pushes against the state mandate.

"While we'd all like to have local control, we just don't have that right now," Holman said.

Councilman Marc Berman agreed.

"This is a bad state law but we're doing our best to make it better," Berman said, summing up the view of both the council and its fiercest critics.