



Spring 2014

Marin County has a long history of conservationism, defined in decades past by the defeat of proposals for freeway extensions and major development in West Marin. More recently, and affirming our commitment to the environment, open space and agriculture, voters approved Measure A which will provide funding for maintaining and restoring existing open space district preserves, protecting remaining sensitive undeveloped lands, supporting family farms, and investing in programs that will connect more community members with public open space and nurture the next generation of environmental stewards.

Marin's first Countywide Plan, adopted in 1973, codified our conservationist goals and has guided (and regulated) growth in Marin ever since. Those goals prioritized the protection of open space, preventing sprawl, and restricting growth to within established cities and towns and along the 101 city-centered corridor. Those goals, our conservationist heritage, have stood the test of time, and have made Marin County one of the premier, most attractive places to live in all of California, if not the nation. But this County is not without its challenges.

Traffic, aging public infrastructure, a greying community, crowded schools, the high cost of housing, climate change and sea-level rise - we have a lot on our plate.

Recent development and proposals - like the WinCup project in Corte Madera and the current discussion around the Larkspur Station Area Plan - have many residents thinking about future development and the many challenges we face as a community. This is a good thing, important and in keeping with this County's activist history: citizens involved and participating in solving problems, and envisioning what our County, our communities, will look like going forward into the future.

I will be holding a meeting at the Bacich Community Center in Kentfield on Saturday, April 26th, 10-11:30am to discuss development issues specific to the Kentfield/Greenbrae community, and to listen to residents' concerns and thoughts about how we address the challenges Marin faces today and as we look to the future.

At the meeting, I will provide information about the Kentfield/Greenbrae Community Plan, County Development Code and Countywide General Plan which provide the blueprint for what can and cannot be built in the unincorporated Kentfield/Greenbrae area.

These planning documents have guided development in the area for decades. They underscore and emphasize the value we as a community place on preserving historic community character, maintaining parks and public spaces, and planning thoughtfully for the future. They are the tools we use to ensure new development is a good fit (per size and scale and design) with the surrounding community. I welcome all Ross Valley residents and look forward to seeing you there.

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Traffic, Traffic, Traffic

Yes, it is bad, and seems to be getting worse - in our downtowns, around schools, on our main arterials throughout the County. The increased congestion can be ascribed to two primary causes: an uptick in the school age population and a resurging local and regional economy.

Locally, school related traffic now accounts for roughly 25% of morning and afternoon commute congestion. It has been an issue for years, but we are experiencing even more traffic lately directly associated with an increase in number of school age children in the community. This increase is not so much a result of new housing, but of housing turn-over. As one generation ages out of their larger single family homes, a younger one moves in. Marin is especially attractive for young families with its multitude of family friendly communities and great schools. End result, lots of happy, active kids and we drive them everywhere! (Consider these numbers: The average number of car trips per household is 10 per day. Families with children can average up to 20 car trips per day, compared with seniors who average three trips per day.)

Add to the school related traffic , a rebounding economy, which results not only in retail registers ringing, but also lots more folks working and commuting, primarily in their own cars, to and from and within Marin. A majority of Marin County residents use Hwy 101 as a commute route, as do many inter-county commuters (folks traveling from Sonoma to SF, or Richmond to SF). We also have the "in-commuters" (folks who live in other counties coming to work in Marin). In fact, over 60% of jobs located in Marin are filled by people who live in other counties.

Indeed, Marin County’s traffic/congestion is a major problem which has environmental as well as quality of life implications. It is a problem that requires multiple solutions, from personal efforts to reducing car trips, to infrastructure improvements for all modes of travel, and transit enhancements. Please know that traffic congestion and transportation issues are a primary focus of my office. I share below several public agency efforts underway aimed at addressing our traffic woes and will provide updates on these and other transportation projects in future newsletters.

1. Marin Transit in coordination with the Marin County Office of Education is conducting a study of student transportation needs towards identifying “best fit” transportation solutions for specific school sites. The study will bring together school districts and countywide transportation agencies (Marin Transit and Transportation Authority of Marin) to identify ways to improve mobility options for students, with recommendations tailored to specific school sites. The study is funded with a grant from Cal Trans, and is expected to be finalized later this year.
2. Specific to the highly congested Greenbrae/101/Twin Cities Corridor, the Greenbrae/101 Working Group convened last year to provide recommendations to the Transportation Authority of Marin for alternatives to the proposed Greenbrae Interchange Improvement Project. The Group advised directing Regional Measure 2 toll funds towards improving bike, pedestrian and transit infrastructure and connectivity, as well as traffic flow and capacity on east Sir Francis Drake connecting to 580, with an eye towards ultimately reopening the eastbound “breakdown lane” on the Richmond San Rafael Bridge. (See my [October 2013 newsletter](#) for a summary of the Working Group recommendations.)

Last month, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the agency responsible for authorizing regional transportation funding, indicated concurrence with several of the recommendations made by the Working Group. In addition, MTC directed funding to construction of the SMART rail segment from San Rafael to Larkspur, and signaled strong interest in directing new funding towards creating a third eastbound lane on the Richmond San Rafael Bridge as reported in the [recent IJ article](#). MTC will hold a public hearing and vote on the proposal in May.

3. The Marin County Department of Public Works has received funding to design improvements towards improving transit and multi-modal infrastructure through the Sir Francis Drake (SFD) Corridor from Highway 101 in Greenbrae west to the Ross Town border. As Ross Valley residents are aware, high traffic volumes, intersection configuration, and poor bike and pedestrian facilities discourage residents from walking or bicycling through the corridor. In addition, the busy thoroughfare isolates neighborhoods on the north side of SFD from those on the south as well as from nearby schools, shopping, medical and recreational facilities. The roadway functions at or near vehicle capacity during peak periods at several intersections resulting in significant delay and congestion on nearby roadways.

The SFD project will develop alternatives to improve accessibility for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as improvements for transit access and vehicle operations. Public Works will be reaching out to community members to participate in a series of workshops in the near future. When I have those dates, I will share them with the community.

2014-2023 Housing Element

The Marin County Community Development Agency (CDA) is initiating the next Housing Element update for the planning period 2014-2023. Every city, town and county in California has been required by state law since 1969 to include a Housing Element in their General Plan. The Housing Element is not a dictate to build, but rather a document outlining the ability of the County through zoning, development code and housing programs to accommodate and support community housing needs - from market rate single-family homes, to senior, workforce and special needs housing. This will be the County's 6th Housing Element.

For the upcoming 8-year period, the County is required to demonstrate that parcels/appropriately zoned sites exist within unincorporated Marin to accommodate at least 185 homes, across income levels. This compares to 773 units the County was required to plan for in the previous (2007-2014) Housing Element cycle.

CDA will be drawing from the existing housing site inventory which was developed for the last Housing Element cycle and includes 15 sites throughout unincorporated Marin. Two of the sites included on the list are located in District 2: the commercial property located at Sir Francis Drake and Oak Manor Road in unincorporated Fairfax (currently zoned mixed use/residential for up to 10 residential units); and, a two-acre strip of vacant land in California Park (San Rafael along Woodland Avenue adjacent to SMART rail line). This site is currently zoned for up to 50 units of multi-unit housing.

Please note, and I emphasize, any proposal for future development of any parcel ***whether or not included in the Housing Element***, is required to conform to local code and general plan policy, design guidelines, etc. and go through the planning, design, environmental review, and permitting and public review processes required by the County.

There are several opportunities for community members to participate, provide input and contribute ideas in the development of the Housing Element, including an online forum called "[Open Marin](#)" and at public workshops scheduled in April and May. CDA expects to present a draft Housing Element update to the Marin County Planning Commission this summer, and to the Board of Supervisors by November of 2014. [Click here](#) for more information, including upcoming workshops and meetings.

Larkspur Station Area Plan Process

The Draft Larkspur SMART Station Area Plan (LSAP) is a long range vision plan being developed by the City of Larkspur aimed at improving pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation in the Larkspur Station area, and making recommendations for future development at seven "opportunity" sites. The study area includes Larkspur Landing, the Redwood Highway, and a portion of Greenbrae (within Larkspur City limits). The Draft plan was developed through an 18-month process that included public meetings and forums and review by a Citizen Advisory Committee.

The Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) were released last month and are available at the [Larkspur City website](#). The City is accepting comment from the public and agencies on both the EIR and draft plan, and will be holding a series of public hearings before the town Planning Commission and Council over the next several months.

While the Board of Supervisors does not have decision making authority for land-use decisions within the City of Larkspur, what happens in and around the LSAP area will impact not only the immediate surroundings, but the entire County as the area is at the center of critically important transportation infrastructure, the intersection of major transit corridors, and hub for public transit for local and regional residents traveling north and south, east and west. As such, I will be closely following the planning process and ensuing public discussion and have requested that appropriate County departments and agencies review and submit comment on the project documents.

The City of Larkspur is reaching out broadly for input from residents of Larkspur and contiguous areas. I encourage Ross Valley residents to participate in the conversation, provide input and participate in the public discussion. The first (of several) public hearings on the plan will be held May 22nd, 6:30pm at Hall Middle School, 200 Doherty Drive in Larkspur. [Click here](#) for more information and to review the Plan, the Draft EIR, an Overview and Executive Summary and a Station Area Plan FAQ.

Corte Madera Tamal Vista Project (“WinCup”)

The WinCup property is within the jurisdiction and land-use authority of the Town of Corte Madera. As such, decisions regarding the property’s zoning and development potential, as well as permitting authority rests with the Town of Corte Madera. The Marin County Board of Supervisors does not have any decision-making authority with regards to the WinCup site project or any other development within a local jurisdiction’s boundaries.

The 4.5 acre property was zoned at 40-units per acre as adopted by the Corte Madera Council as part of the Town’s General Plan Amendments in 2009. The project consists of both residential and commercial space: specifically, 162 market-rate residential apartments, 18 below-market-rate units, and 5,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space. The developer is MacFarlane Partners of San Francisco, a private, for-profit real estate investment/management firm.

National Safe Digging Month

Many of you may have seen the article in the IJ about the ruptured gas line in Sleepy Hollow that occurred on a Monday evening in February. A contractor remodeling a home had dug into gas and electric underground service lines which in turn, ignited the gas. He had not called for an Underground Service Alert (USA) so was working without having proper markings for underground utilities.

This incident serves as a good reminder that anyone doing a digging project should call 811, a free service to have underground utility lines marked prior to starting work. Every

digging project, no matter how large or small, warrants a call to 811. Some examples include installing a mailbox, building a deck, planting a tree and laying a patio. For more information about 811 and safe digging practices, visit www.call811.com or visit the [PG&E website](#). Note that April 2014 is National Safe Digging Month!

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