



# San Francisco Tomorrow

## Working to Protect the Urban Environment

Issue 316

Will you want to live in San Francisco – Tomorrow?

November 2007

### Voters and SFT Agree: TRANSIT FIRST!

Voters in the November 6 election voted "Transit First" on ballot Propositions A and H – as they agreed with all San Francisco Tomorrow positions.

Prop A: 55% of voters said YES for a more reliable Muni and cleaner air: New money for Muni without fare hikes or tax increases. New hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles to reduce air pollution. And no more garages to bring more cars into the city and increase traffic and air pollution.

Prop B: 71% of voters said YES to limit service of commissioners so they can be independent of appointing officials.

Prop C: 68% agreed the Mayor and Supervisors can no longer place measures on the ballot just before filing deadline. They now must introduce each measure 45 days earlier for a public hearing.

Prop D: 74% voted to renew the Library Preservation Fund for another 15 years and spend more on branch libraries.

Prop G: 55% agreed to help renovate the historic horse stables in Golden Gate Park with limited city money and private donations.

Prop H: 67% said NO: Developers can't greatly increase downtown and neighborhood parking – which would have resulted in more auto traffic throughout the City, slowing Muni transit, increasing traffic danger for pedestrians and bicyclists, and creating more air pollution. If you questioned this, just join the slow-moving auto traffic jams already filling streets downtown and in the financial district—and in neighborhoods.

Prop K: 62% said keep current limits on commercial signs on public property.

SFT took no position on other ballot issues – and did not endorse any candidates for public office.

### YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS ARE INVITED TO PARTY WITH SFT

6 to 9 PM,

Wednesday

December 12, 2007

Forest Hill Clubhouse,  
381 Magellan Ave

At the Forest Hill Clubhouse  
381 Magellan Avenue  
Muni to Forest Hill Station  
From Laguna Honda  
Go west 2 blocks on Dewey  
One block NW on Montalvo  
Turn right onto Magellan.

RSVP: Please mail check to:  
"SFT"

41 Sutter, # 1579,  
SF 94104.

**\$35** Sponsor **\$60** .

Patron (& 1 Guest) **\$120** .

Phone: Jane Morrison  
564-1482



#### COME GOSSIP WITH INVITED GUESTS:

State Senators Carole Migden & Leland Yee . Assemblymembers Mark Leno & Fiona Ma . Mayor Gavin Newsom . Supervisors Jake McGoldrick, Michela Alioto-Pier, Aaron Peskin, Carmen Chu, Ross Mirkarimi, Chris Daly, Sean Elsbernd, Bevan Dufty, Tom Ammiano, Sophie Maxwell, Gerardo Sandoval. BART: Tom Radulovich, James Fang, Lynette Sweet . SF Muni: Nathaniel Ford. PUC: Susan Leal . Port : Monique Moyer . Transbay Joint Powers Authority: Maria Ayerdi . SF Environment: Jared Blumenfeld, Commissioner Ruth Gravanis . Sierra Club: John Holtzclaw, John Rizzo, Becky Evans . League of Conservation Voters: Amandeep Jawa . SF Bicycle Coalition: Leah Shahum . Neighborhood Parks Council: Isabel Wade . Clean Water Action: John DeCock . Sustainable Watersheds Alliance: Alex Lantsberg . Presidio Environmental Council: Steven Krefting . SF Chronicle Urban Design and Architecture: John King . SF Bay Guardian: Bruce Brugmann, Tim Redmond, Steven Jones.

## ***The Big Year for Endangered Species***

The Golden Gate National Parks contain more endangered species than any other unit of the National Park System in continental North America: more than Yosemite, Yellowstone, Kings Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks combined.

This astounding array of imperiled biodiversity—in the midst of the Bay Area’s vibrant civilization—is certainly a source of wonder and celebration, but also for reflection and concern, as the species’ dire status may indicate that something is wrong with our relationship to the Park.

In 2008, an exciting campaign to reconnect people with the superlative resources and values of the Park will begin: the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Endangered Species **Big Year**. The Endangered Species Big Year will provide Park visitors with opportunities to see each of the 33 listed species found in the Park, both through individual exploration and guided expeditions. It is hoped that by designating 2008 as the Endangered Species Big Year, individuals will feel encouraged and empowered to take 33 conservation actions that will assist these species toward recovery, thereby connecting urban people with the local possibilities for the preservation of local species of flora and fauna that are found in this urban national park experiment.

The Endangered Species Big Year is a competitive event: participants who see and help the most endangered species by the end of 2008 will win! Each sighting must occur while you are within the GGNRA’s legislative boundary, but the conservation action items may take you to different places around the Bay Area: sometimes even your congressional representative’s office!

You can sign-up for the Endangered Species Big Year at <http://www.ggnrbigyear.org> and download a checklist of the 33 species and each species’ corresponding action item. There are thus 66 Endangered Species Big Year activities to complete, but you can do as many or as few as you like: come out for one trip or one conservation action item, or try and do them all over the course of 2008.

The Big Year will have a kick-off celebration on Sunday, January 6, 2008 at the San Francisco Zoo, starting at 1 p.m.. We’ll have on hand two Endangered Species Act success stories: the recovered Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. We’ll also have a San Francisco Garter Snake on display: the world’s most beautiful serpent is still found within the GGNRA, but needs our help if we hope to have it around for future generations to enjoy. After a short presentation and some snacks, we’ll take participants on their first guided expedition of the Big Year: we’ll walk across the street and hike north on Ocean Beach until we approach (bring your binoculars, we won’t get too close) the habitat of the threatened Western Snowy Plover.

Over two-dozen other trips to see endangered species within the GGNRA’s legislative boundary are already scheduled for the Endangered Species Big

Year. You are also encouraged to explore the park on your own, and the Big Year website can help you understand where these species are most likely to be found. You’ll also learn more about the mission of this urban national park, the importance of the Endangered Species Act, and the complex legislative boundary of the GGNRA (the Park is bigger than you think!).

The GGNRA’s astounding array of imperiled biodiversity—in the midst of the Bay Area’s vibrant civilization—is certainly cause for celebration, but also for concern, as the dire status of these species may indicate that something is wrong with our relationship to the Park. Take part in the 2008 GGNRA Endangered Species Big Year and explore this relationship while getting to know your imperiled neighbors and helping them recover.

You can find out more and sign up for the 2008 Golden Gate National Parks Endangered Species Big Year at the following website:  
[www.ggnrbigyear.org](http://www.ggnrbigyear.org)

## **NORTHEAST WATERFRONT STILL UP FOR GRABS**

The administration of Mayor Brown was notorious for promoting inappropriate developments on Port of San Francisco property. Mayor Newsom has, until recently, been more hands off, allowing his Port Director Monique Moyer to run the Port like a business instead of a fiefdom. Unfortunately, the last of da Mayor’s development proposals refuses to die. Piers 27-31 has been and continues to be perhaps the most manipulated parcel under the Port’s jurisdiction.

Mayor Brown’s influence on this parcel was first felt shortly after he took office, when his enthusiasm for New York City’s Chelsea Piers led to the Port’s identification of these three northern waterfront piers as an ideal location to replicate that development. As a necessary prequel, Pier 27 was declared surplus to maritime in 1998, and, in 2000 (after one aborted attempt) a Request for Proposals (RFP) was released, soliciting developers to create a recreational venue on Piers 27-31. In a laughable change of heart, Mayor Brown switched his allegiance from Chelsea Piers to the Mills Corporation mid-stream, and the latter’s proposal for a shopping mall/office building with recreational elements was granted an exclusive right to negotiate by the Port Commission. The overt political machinations involved in granting the development rights to the Mills Corporation doomed the proposal from the start. As the years passed, the proposal increased its recreational component, but failed to pacify the opposition of local neighbors, environmentalists, and local businesses, including Pier 39. In the Spring of 2006, the Mills Corporation gave up on the project, selling development rights to the Shorestein Company.

The Shorenstein Company has strayed even further from the original RFP. Their current proposal consists of

- 500,000 square feet of office space located in renovated Piers 29 and 31, as well as in a new 4-story building located at the end of Pier 29. It appears that these buildings would have limited or no public access.
- Recreational space (operated by the City) located on top of a parking garage, to be constructed in the valley between Piers 27 and 29.
- A cruise terminal, to be built and operated by the Port of San Francisco, at Pier 27, which would be truncated on both ends and modified to serve as the terminal. (Note, the developer has requested restrictions be placed on the terminal to ensure that their views and enjoyment of the piers be protected.)

The developer cites the increasing cost of seismic retrofit as the reason for the increase in office density – and also for the need for Port subsidies to pay for substructure upgrade. The Port agrees with their estimate of up to \$400 per square foot just to prepare the platform, and has pointed out that this cost has made preservation of the historic piers along the Embarcadero prohibitively expensive.

So, we have come full circle. After a decade of disagreements and discussions and negotiations, we have a proposal to restore maritime activity to Pier 27 (and all but eliminate the concept of recreational development at the site).

Unfortunately, despite the massive changes in economics and in proposed uses, the Port and the developer continue to operate under a nearly 7-year old development agreement that essentially allows the developer to dictate terms. And the Mayor's office has now decided to take a hand in waterfront development, and is reportedly urging the Port to make a deal with the Shorenstein Company.

SFT supports the preservation of historic buildings on the waterfront, and has accepted the need for some non-Public Trust uses to fund preservation. But if this intensity of office development is our only alternative, we may need to rethink our position.

Meanwhile, it is wholly inappropriate for *this* development process to continue. The proposal has strayed so far from the original RFP that it bears no resemblance to the original vision for the site. If the original vision for this site is no longer feasible, the Port should reissue a revised RFP and solicit new ideas. Enough is enough.

*To view the comment letter on this development submitted by San Francisco Tomorrow and Save the Bay, go to our website at [www.sftomorrow.org](http://www.sftomorrow.org)*

## SFT HIGH-RISE RESOLUTION

San Francisco Tomorrow (SFT) was in the forefront of the 1987 ballot measure known as Proposition M that put a cap on commercial high-rise buildings. After decades of confining high-rises to the downtown and assuming they would always be used for office and commercial purposes, a new wave of high-rise **residential** development proposals is being rushed onto the scene. In the pipeline at the Planning Department are applications for dozens of high-rise residential towers, some at fifty or sixty stories, so that high-priced condominiums for the very wealthy can be built, some of them at heretofore unthinkable heights of 1,000 or 1,200 feet.

Developers are taking advantage of the unintended loophole that did not specify capping high-rise housing. As these applications are received, it seems that little or no consideration is being given to safety concerns during a natural disaster (earthquake) such as fire truck lanes, building access for fire fighters, availability of water and equipment at high floor levels and timely evacuations. There has been very little public discussion and concerns are brushed aside.

SFT suggests strong consideration be given to San Francisco's carrying capacity of land and resources. Studies that need to be made as to open space, view corridors, sunshine, public transit needs, sewer services, road congestion and other infrastructure and social amenities are being made building by building and not after deliberation on the impacts of the wholesale increase in density and height that would transform the City as we know it.

**At its November Board meeting, San Francisco Tomorrow passed a resolution unanimously urging that City boards and commissions not approve high-rise permits until all of the above concerns are addressed and weighed for the benefit of the whole City.**

San Francisco Tomorrow proposes that a new type of Proposition M be drawn up, restricting the number and size of residential high-rises to be built in San Francisco. SFT wishes to encourage and participate with a coalition of political and community groups, together with individuals, to propose such a measure which would reinforce the Downtown Plan, the Urban Design Plan and the entire General Plan of the City, not seek to subvert it bit-by-bit, piecemeal, by requesting "exceptions" and "exemptions" one-by-one for each project as it surfaces. San Francisco is a unique city known world wide for its small-scale European pattern of city form and architecture and its uniquely beautiful setting. Critics of today's City say that we must come up to date and look around the world at Dubai, Hong

Kong and Kuala Lumpur and their high-rise excesses, or we will look out-of-date. The treasure that is San Francisco should not be locked up and never improved. But likewise, its manageable urban size and

human-scale urban form should not be destroyed for the benefit of the few who will live in these condominiums high in the sky, out-of-touch and never really a part of the City.

**San Francisco Tomorrow decries the process and result of the Healthy Saturdays legislation** just passed by the Board of Supervisors. (**Healthy Saturdays** removes 'most' motor vehicles on JFK Blvd from the Concourse west to Crossover drive on Saturdays From April through September.) By barring those knowledgeable on the actual impacts of road closure in Golden Gate Park and creating a "by invitation only" panel to negotiate the current legislation, great harm is being done to the citizens of San Francisco and of the Bay Area.

The current legislation, as temporarily implemented this past summer, was shown to double illegal traffic in the Music Concourse, increasing Saturday afternoon cut-through traffic from 200 to 400 cars/hr. This has caused an increase of illegal left turns at various other intersections bordering the Park as well. As out of town drivers are directed to JFK where only 14% of the available surface parking exists, the majority of these visitors ignore the posted NO LEFT TURN sign at the Concourse to access the 86% of parking south of the Concourse.

Equally, (1) Healthy Saturdays ignores the existing pedestrian pattern and increases traffic on eastern JFK where there is the majority of pedestrian use. (2) By enacting Healthy Saturdays only during summer or fog months, recreational users are offered the worst experience possible. (3) The City is forced to staff three positions to provide access to the deYoung loading dock on Saturdays. (4) The ADA mandated shuttle, running on JFK west of the Concourse, serves no ADA designated destinations. This forces those with mobility issues to find drivers to drop them off at destinations in eastern Golden Gate Park where there is only one ADA space serving the Conservatory of Flowers.

The citizens of San Francisco deserve better than this legislation, which ignores the reality for those that actually use the Park while encouraging visitors to violate existing laws. Many sensible alternatives exist to provide a car free experience for actual visitors to Golden Gate Park, but this legislation ignores all of them.

## JOIN THE FIGHT AS AN SFT MEMBER!

You can help protect our urban environment as an up-to-date member of San Francisco Tomorrow. Celebrate SFT's 35<sup>th</sup> **Year of Action** by sending in your dues check as a 2006 member. Your choice: \$15, \$25, \$35, \$50 or more. Make checks payable to "San Francisco Tomorrow" and mail them to SFT at 41 Sutter Street, #1579, San Francisco 94104-4903.



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