



San Francisco Tomorrow

Working to Protect the Urban Environment

Issue 315

Will you want to live in San Francisco – Tomorrow?

September 2007

SFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NOVEMBER 6 BALLOT

After studying ballot issues in San Francisco's November 6 Municipal election, San Francisco Tomorrow makes these recommendations:

CHARTER AMENDMENTS

YES on A – For a more reliable Muni and cleaner air. Provides new funding for Muni without fare hikes or tax increases by giving Muni a larger share of parking and traffic revenue. Requires new hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles for a dramatic reduction in harmful emissions that cause air pollution and global warming. Meets the concerns of Muni riders, pedestrians, environmental groups, seniors, the disabled, transit unions, transit justice advocates, and taxpayers.

YES on B – Under this measure, a City Commissioner can serve no longer than 60 days after the term of his/her appointment expires, unless he/she is reappointed. During the term of appointment, a commissioner can apply logic and intellectual honesty to decision-making. When service continues after a term expires, this independence ends because the commissioner can be removed immediately if the appointing officer isn't pleased with a decision.

YES on C – At present, the Mayor or any four members of the Board of Supervisors can place any ordinance onto the ballot just before the deadline without any input from the public, the media or other elected officials – and without considering whether the issue can be better resolved with legislation. This measure requires that ballot measures be introduced to the Board of Supervisors 45 days before the filing deadline to permit analysis, fact-finding, and public comment before it can be put before the voters.

YES on D – The Library Preservation Fund, approved by voters in 1994, is to sunset in 2008-2009. A Yes vote renews the fund for another 15 years and allows the Library to spend excess revenue to update branch libraries when it can be done without reducing library services. This maintains our libraries as a safe haven

of learning for residents of all ages and background in neighborhoods throughout the City and contributes to our City's livability and vitality.

ORDINANCES:

YES on G – To renovate the historic horse stables in Golden Gate Park. The measure will require the City to contribute \$1 – up to \$750,000 – for every \$3 in private donations to the Golden Gate Stables fund.

NO on H – Permits developers to increase downtown parking by 400 to 600 percent, resulting in more automobile traffic throughout the City which would slow Muni transit, increase traffic danger for pedestrians, and create more air pollution. It also takes away the ability of individual neighborhoods to set parking policies that suit their needs. And it reduces affordable housing construction by requiring more expensive parking spaces whether needed or not.

DECLARATION OF POLICY

YES on K – Makes it City policy to block any increase in urban blight and visual clutter by prohibiting creation of additional advertising space on public street furniture, transit shelters, kiosks, benches or newspaper racks – or on the exterior of City-owned buildings.

No Position - San Francisco Tomorrow took no position on the other ballot measures.



Major New Structures in Golden Gate Park? No thanks.

There seems to be no end to the pressure to develop parts of our greatest public park into little fiefdoms. The San Francisco – Shanghai Sister City Committee, announced several weeks ago in the Examiner their desire to build a traditional Chinese garden near the east end of Spreckels Lake in Golden Gate Park. A replica of the Yu Yuan Garden in Shanghai, this garden would consist of a pond, surrounded by walkways and bridges, with waterfalls, pavilions, special trees and rock sculptures enclosed by a classic Chinese wall. A wall? Pavilions? Bridges and waterfalls? A garden is one thing, but the accompanying structures would be a violation of the Golden Gate Park Master Plan. As yet uncounted trees in the forest east of Spreckels Lake would have to be removed on this five acre site between 31st and 32nd Avenues near Fulton Street. For the first time on September 6 the Recreation and Parks Commission received a brief update on the project during Director Yomi Agunbiade's remarks. Apparently, the staff has already "approved" the selection of the site! All of this would be a violation of the Golden Gate Park Master Plan which the planners do not think applies to this project. Further privatization of the park does not seem to faze them very much. Would this area be cordoned off from the public? Our premier public park seems to be compartmentalized already with miles and miles of chain link fence. A garden is one thing, but the accompanying structures would be a violation of the Golden Gate Park Master Plan.

Originally the Sister City Committee proposed a healing garden at UCSF Osher Center and in November of 2005, Mayor Newsom signed an MOU with the city for a 4575-square-foot Shanghai Healing Garden at the Osher Center. But by winter of 2006 the Shanghai Sister City Committee decided that the Osher Center space was too small and began discussions with Recreation and Parks Department (RPD) regarding moving the garden to an RPD site.

This proposal should have been stopped dead in its tracks. First of all, the City's GENERAL PLAN requires that new cultural buildings should be located outside existing parks. The GOLDEN GATE PARK MASTER PLAN restricts construction of additional buildings, structures or monuments in Golden Gate Park because additional structures would disrupt the balance that presently exists between open space and already built special uses that require buildings.

A new road into the Park with parking areas would be created along with the walled garden, pavilion,

etc. How many tree removals would be necessary? How would the new structures be visible from Spreckels Lake and Lindley Meadow? How would access be controlled and security of the site maintained? By chain-link fence all around? Would a visitor's fee be imposed? What is likelihood of commercialization of park land? Is this not precedent-setting for the other 13 sister cities of San Francisco to have similar access to park land for the building of memorials and special use structures?

Before this project gets any further, and before public expense for an EIR occurs, there must be public discussion of the land use issues involved and the precedent-setting likelihood of commercialization of public resources. We recommend that, through the outreach possible by the Mayor's office and Supervisor McGoldrick's office, a series of workshops be held to inform and receive comment on the relevancy of the adopted Master Plan to constructions like these within the sacred grounds of our parks and open space.

...**"the rarest treasure"**...

"And then to the rarest treasure, Golden Gate Park on a car-free Sunday morning, the air wet and clean, the meadows green with the promise of spring. Not a single automobile: The silence is deafening, you can actually hear the branches dripping moisture, squirrels scrambling through the underbrush -- and the birds! Hundreds of redbreasted robins bobbing across the lawns, now that there are no cars to frighten them. On Stanyan, the families are renting bikes and heading into the winding trails. Slowly it dawns on them that they can use the main drive and the roads. For once the world does not belong to the automobile. The bicycle is king again and the rider may go where fancy dictates without looking nervously over his shoulder. You are even allowed, for a few unrealistic minutes, to reflect on how pleasant life would be if the car were banned from San Francisco." Herb Caen, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1/28/73





SFT Annual Picnic featured A Walk in Sue Bierman Park A Forecast of dozens of High Rises Plans for new Transbay Terminal

San Francisco Tomorrow's Annual Picnic was initiated 12 years ago to give members an opportunity to learn something new about an area of the City where plans for new developments were afoot – this year, we had a preview of the plans for construction of the new **Transbay Transit Terminal** and a **forecast of the dozens of new high rises planned for the area.** The new terminal would eventually see Caltrain service brought downtown – and hopefully, High Speed Rail from central and southern California.

At this year's picnic, on Saturday, August 18, we first enjoyed a picnic lunch at the newly named **Sue Bierman Park** across the Embarcadero from the Ferry Building.

The park – between Clay and Washington -- became open space when the 1989 earthquake wrecked the Embarcadero Freeway. It was the site of on and off freeway ramps. The park was named appropriately for Sue Bierman, who fought successfully in the 1960s to keep freeways out of the Panhandle and Golden Gate Park and also made sure the Embarcadero Freeway was not rebuilt.

Later there was a plan to occupy the space with a butterfly museum, and this was defeated by Sue's leadership as a member of the Board of Supervisors.

The park is the only grass-and-trees open space among the high rise buildings of the Financial District at the Foot of Market and also serves the Golden Gateway housing created northwest of the Embarcadero Center office buildings.

The new high-rises downtown

At the picnic, Attorney Sue Hestor spoke about the Planning Department's approval of ten new high-rise buildings on Rincon Hill plus numerous others south of Market. Among them, the megalith still growing at the edge of the Bay Bridge will have a twin tower built next to it with even more congestion and view blockage as a result. Hestor described how the chief planners are allowing numerous exceptions to the limits of the Downtown Plan and then the exceptions are granted by the 4-3 majority at the Planning Commission. Several months ago, San Francisco magazine published a story which located on a map and showed a computer-generated rendering of the enormous changes in the city skyline that the scores of new highrises would make in the downtown. Even the Market-Octavia Plan would permit a high-rise 500' tower (the Bank of America tower downtown is that tall), with no new transit planned, said Hestor. Meanwhile, the high cost of providing seismic safety and life safety features in buildings over 12 stories tall means that affordable housing units cannot be built within these projects, further assuring that the new residents of downtown will not be economically diverse.

After the picnic, we moved on to the **Transbay Terminal at First and Mission**, where Robert Beck, senior program manager of the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, told us about the new terminal, to be built between Mission and Howard, Second and Beale.

The new intermodal bus and rail station will bring Caltrain downtown from 4th and Townsend through a tunnel to connect with MUNI, AC Transit, Golden Gate Transit, WestCAT, Paratransit, Greyhound, SamTrans, Treasure Island Muni and eventually California High Speed Rail.

Helping to fund the project will be construction of 3,400 housing units, including 1,200 affordable ones, on the 12-acre former site of the quake-wrecked Embarcadero Freeway – along Folsom, between Main and Beale.

In 1999 San Franciscans voted for a new terminal to bring CalTrain downtown. State law created the TJPA in 2001 to construct and operate it. Caltrain is expected to be there by 2019.

The TJPA is now negotiating construction plans for the terminal and adjoining high-rise tower, the latter to help fund the terminal. Estimated cost for the entire project is almost \$3.4 billion, with current identified funding at \$1.5 billion.

Phil Frank told it True

We Laughed and Loved You

Phil Frank, beloved creator of the Farley and Elderberries comic strips in the San Francisco Chronicle – and a long-time friend of San Francisco Tomorrow – died on September 12 after a long battle with cancer.

Phil Frank was the only cartoonist in the United States to draw a purely local strip. Having his strip syndicated all over the country would have meant that he had to prepare his themes months in advance. But Phil loved working as an editorial journalist does, giving his humorous twist to an event or issue that was current within a day or two of its happening. His humor hit the mark and skewered the famous while elevating the lowly, all with a sweet charm and never vindictive. He attended one of SFT's holiday parties and thereafter drew the cover

art for each year's invitation. Phil donated his art to us free of charge.

A few weeks before he died, the 64-year-old Frank was honored by SFT at our annual picnic on August 18, with proclamations from Mayor Gavin Newsom and President Aaron Peskin and the Board of Supervisors – declaring August 18 "Phil Frank Day in San Francisco."

"Farley" fan Jane Morrison commented on our loss with a letter to the editor, saying:

"I'm devastated! Life without Farley, Baba, Bruce D. Raven, Orwell T. Catt. our four red by emailing stacy@farleycomicstrip.com.



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