



San Francisco Tomorrow

Working to Protect the Urban Environment

Issue 367

Will you want to live in San Francisco... Tomorrow?

April / May 2015

It's Coming!

San Francisco Tomorrow's **Annual Awards Dinner**

Thursday, May 21 at Delancey Street Restaurant

Cocktails at 5:30; Dinner at 7

Once again, San Francisco Tomorrow is celebrating the City's progressive heroes at our Annual Awards Dinner. This year our Jack Morrison Lifetime Achievement Award honoree is **Mary Anne Miller**, a longtime board member and leader of both San Francisco Tomorrow and Sunset Parkside Education and Action Committee. An experienced planner, Mary Anne has been of invaluable assistance in developing San Francisco Tomorrow's positions and comments on planning documents; has served as SFT's point person on Presidio issues; and has been the keen and diligent editor of San Francisco Tomorrow's newsletter for more than 15 years.

The first of our Unsung Hero awards goes to the **Plaza 16 Coalition**, the face of the new progressive movement, which is fighting to preserve affordability and neighborhood character in the Mission against an onslaught of high-end development proposals.

Our second Unsung Hero Award goes to **Karen Babbitt**, a longtime community advocate pushing for good government, environmental protection, and neighborhood preservation in Noe Valley and beyond. Karen's local and City Hall advocacy sets the standard for neighborhood activism.

PATRON \$120 or \$150. SPONSOR \$80. Dinner ticket \$50.

PLEASE SEND YOUR RESERVATION to Denise D'Anne, 351 Guerrero, San Francisco 94103
or call Jennifer at 415-585-9489

Visit SFT's website at sftomorrow.org

About the Drought

Despite clear evidence of a massive insufficiency of future water supply, City Planners and Administration are proposing a population increase of 300,000 persons in San Francisco by 2020. The Governor's administrative directive to 40 water agencies to cut water usage by 25% is grossly inadequate to deal with the water crisis now and in the long run.

This is the fourth straight year of below-average rainfall, and this year's snowpack is 6% of normal. No amount of new surface storage would help us because it would have been used up in one of the prior below-average years. SFPUC has plans written for an eight-year drought - but any drought management plan has to rely upon conservation.

The future of California's water supply lies in management of our groundwater supplies, which provide about 40% of California's water in normal years. Some local surface storage that aids in groundwater replenishment might be needed, but the days of large reservoirs are over. The good news is that legislation to regulate and manage groundwater was passed last year.

The call for more surface storage in reservoirs

ignores the fact that the two main surface projects being proposed would add less than 1% to the state's water supply, and cost more than any other water supply. That's because all of the major rivers out of the Sierra are already dammed, and these new dams would only fill up in years of excess rainfall. The capacity of all the reservoirs in the state is a thimbleful compared to our groundwater capacity.

Unlike the Planning Department, which has limited outside oversight, the SFPUC is required to prepare and submit an Urban Water Management Plan to the State every 5 years that describes their current water supplies, provides a 20-year population projection and identifies the water supply for that 20-year period. The 2015 plan is due at the end of the year.

The Governor knew years ago that in addition to conservation measures, statewide desalinization and storage were needed with enormous capital expenditures. The recent water bond measure allows continued "fracking" and farming on Tule Lake's arsenic soils. What kind of political blindness is this?

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New DISCLOSE Act Unveiled

On February 28, the California Clean Money Campaign held its northern California Grassroots Summit in Palo Alto. In attendance at the all-day event were about 130 volunteers from every part of northern California. A seminal moment came early in the day with the introduction of the new DISCLOSE Act, AB 700, co-authored by Assembly members Jimmy Gomez and Marc Levine.

Like its immediate predecessor, Mark Leno's SB 52 (killed by union leaders in 2014, arguably against the wishes of the rank-and-file), AB 700 would require ballot measure advertising to specify in clear, unambiguous, and easy-to-read language the top three funders for the ad. This means the actual companies or individuals providing the money rather than the ever-misleading "committees" - no more "Stop Special Interest Money Now" (the ludicrous name of 2012's Yes on 32 coalition). Television ads must display the disclosure for a full five seconds.

AB 700 also has language addressing the "concerns" expressed by the unions, and a much larger coalition behind it. If it fails to garner the 2/3 vote required to enact it, it could be put on the 2016 ballot by a simple majority. For more information go to www.caclean.org.

"Carrying Capacity": What Does It Mean?

The concept of "carrying capacity" means that there are limits on available infrastructure to sustainably support future population increases and activities. With regard to water, because of the Congressional Raker Act, San Francisco has access to the Tuolumne River without the constraints placed by the state or federal government on users whose water flows through the Delta. If Hetch Hetchy were torn down and SF waived its water rights to the Tuolumne, then "San Francisco's water" would become part of the statewide system, with all its problems, and that seems very unlikely. In essence, San Francisco already has its own private peripheral canal. Nevertheless, because San Francisco does share its water supply with other Bay Area cities, and because even Hetch Hetchy's supplies are limited, there are constraints on San Francisco's water supply. There are also limits on SF sewer treatment, electrical supplies, and roadway capacity. All these elements would be taken into account if San Francisco were seriously interested in determining a sustainable carrying capacity.

Parkmerced Will Never Be the Same

Last August, the First District Court of Appeals issued its decision in favor of Parkmerced development interests in the case *San Francisco Tomorrow et al. vs. the City and County of San Francisco et al.* Now, that decision has been upheld.

At issue in the case is the fate of Parkmerced, the serene mid-twentieth-century neighborhood that is a San Francisco landmark. Developers, along with City and County politicians, propose to demolish Parkmerced and replace most of its existing 3,221 residences with 8,900 housing units.

When the project, which currently houses about 8,000 residents, is completed in 2040 an additional 14,000 people will be living in the 152-acre neighborhood. Units that are currently rent-controlled will stay that way, but new units will be rented or sold at market rate. The rebuilt Parkmerced will have a maximum of 3,200 rent-controlled units, the same number it has today. The Court stated it will not limit San Francisco growth because of a lack of, or because of a poorly designed, transportation system. The decision cited as a precedent, from a Los Angeles court case, is perhaps not unrelated to the traffic gridlock present there today.

In 1986, as well as today, San Francisco was in the middle of a real estate boom. Citizens here decided that there was a need to limit growth in San Francisco and so Proposition M came to pass. The language of Proposition M was adopted into Planning Code Sec.1 01.1, requiring that the City adhere to eight "Priority Policies" of the Master Plan when it approves projects, covering issues such as promoting existing neighborhood businesses,

providing and preserving affordable housing, solving commuter congestion, providing blue collar jobs, preserving historic buildings and neighborhoods, protecting open space and lastly, promoting earthquake safety.

There were three aspects of Proposition M considered to be fundamental to a successful growth strategy. First, there should be a correct relationship between new office space and housing for the projected new work force; secondly, there should be adequate transportation for them; and lastly, there should be a cap on the amount of office space built in one year. Mayor Feinstein believed, as does Mayor Lee today, that allowing a building boom to occur would be desirable for the economy. The referendum petition gained enough signatures but the measure was put on the ballot by four Supervisors instead. Although the eight guidelines were regularly ignored, a cap of 875,000 square feet a year on office construction remained inviolate until recently.

Proposition M a Success

Proposition M curtailed a serious real-estate collapse in the early 1990s, after the savings and loan institutions created a building boom. Houston, Boston and other cities faced a financial backlash due to surplus office space unable to be rented. San Francisco was hit by the same recession, but since its economy was more diverse, weathered the recession better.

There may have to be a strengthening of the language of Proposition M proposed as a new referendum for an improved version in the future.

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‘Earthquake Shack’ Under Threat of Demolition

The current owner of a historic Earthquake Shack at 369 Valley Street is attempting to overturn its ‘historic resource’ status so that the building can be leveled and replaced with a new, multi-unit construction. Such a demolition would violate not only the intent but also the letter of the law put in place in the form of Proposition M, specifically for historically significant buildings like this one.

SF Tomorrow is unwaveringly opposed to the demolition of this historic building and urges you to contact your supervisor and the Planning Department to lobby for its continued preservation. Petition at: www.savetheshack.net

Labor is not Honored

Now with reformulated ownership, Parkmerced management has fired its maintenance staff. On Tuesday, April 14, they faced a union demonstration of their fired former maintenance and janitorial workers. These union workers, who have in many cases spent a working lifetime of diligent labor, will be replaced by non-union scabs.

San Francisco Tomorrow has led and lost the battle fought in state appeals court to protect the residents of Park Merced, its unions and the need for responsible stewardship. The project is now expected to go forward to destroy this renowned, iconic new town urban setting built in the 1930s.

This firing of the maintenance staff should be decried in the strongest terms and could be called “moral infamy.” It is now added to the loss of permanent rent control housing and tenuous affordable rental protection that will accompany the Court-approved development program which will allow the creation of 5,000 new market-rate units and the demolition of the current townhouse affordable units.

A judge at the state Court of Appeals asked the appellants, “Do you wish to preserve the city in amber?” The answer in this case is yes.