



# *San Francisco Tomorrow*

*Working to Protect the Urban Environment*

*Issue 366 Will you want to live in San Francisco – Tomorrow?  
September/October 2014*

## **SFT Endorsements for November 4, 2014 Election**

*Many of you receive absentee ballots in early October. Let SFT persuade you to vote for the endorsements that our SFT Board has made after interviews and thorough study of the candidates and issues. We recommend the following:*

**David Campos** for Assembly

**Tony Kelly** for Supervisor

**No on A** - Transportation Bond - doesn't tell us how money would be spent so we have no assurance that it will actually go to the most needed MUNI projects.

**Yes on F** - Pier 70 height limit - first project to move forward under Prop B, requesting rezoning of site to 90'. We will continue to track the uses and urban design of the site as planning moves forward in order to ensure that this is a good waterfront development.

**Yes on G** - anti-speculation tax - flipping real estate for profit doesn't help our City and it hurts seniors and other long-term renters who can lose their homes in the process

**Yes on H** – would keep the playing fields in the west end of Golden Gate Park as natural grass, free of artificial turf and high intensity stadium lighting.

**No on I** – not a bond measure; unnecessary legislation except as Recreation and Park department's strategy to deliver a “poison pill” to **Prop H** (above) to **invalidate H** (even if it wins) **if Prop I gets more votes than Prop H.**

## *The Case Against Prop A (just an open pot of money)*

Proposition A is a \$500 million General Obligation transportation bond issue which, including interest payments, would exceed one billion dollars in total cost to the populace. Voters should reject this huge bond measure. Here's why:

Prop. A would raise property taxes and rents to significantly higher levels; the measure provides no effective oversight with no indication of who would be making the key decisions or who would be assuring effective oversight. In other words there is neither defined management nor defined oversight.

Unlike most bond issues, Proposition A does not allocate dollar amounts to identified projects. Instead, the measure lists every transportation category imaginable and then tells us that funds “may be allocated”. In fact Prop. A says: “Projects to be funded under the proposed Bond may include but are not limited to the following....” This language would give the SFMTA license to spend the money on virtually anything.

Has the SFMTA earned such trust? In 1999 Prop E called for the SFMTA to keep its buses and trains on schedule at least 85% of the time. The SFMTA's current compliance rate is 60.6%. *(continued on page two)*

### **VOTE NO ON A** *(cont'd)*

Instead of putting the most important things first, Prop A's promoters talk of spreading \$500 million around haphazardly in response to the clamor of assorted benefiting groups. Little or no attention has been paid to: bringing Muni service and vehicle maintenance up to standard; dealing with SF's anticipated growth and the resulting strains on Muni easing the peak period crush in the Market Street subway; putting SFMTA's financial house in order; developing and following a well thought-out citywide transportation program.

Despite the SFMTA's sky-high budget (\$978 million in 2013), Muni service has deteriorated. Since 2006, the SFMTA has eliminated or reduced cross-town runs, slashed neighborhood and night time service, eliminated 7 bus lines, shortened 22 lines and deferred vehicle maintenance. SFMTA's Transportation Effectiveness Plan ("TEP") to be funded by Prop A, would make additional cuts to pay for additional service in selected "high-use" corridors.

SFMTA's Cost-Control System is in shambles, which is nothing new. In 2011 the SF Supervisors' CRG Report concluded that the SFMTA has been historically unable to meet its capital budgets. The cost of the Central Subway has already soared from \$647 million in 2003 to \$1.6 billion today. According to a courageous whistleblower and the Fed's Oversight Consultant, the Central Subway is headed for a major, as yet undisclosed, additional overrun. Throwing billions of dollars at this agency hasn't worked in the past. Why should things be any better this time?

\$500 million in new transportation capital, not one billion, could solve many of this city's most pressing transportation problems, if allocated prudently and spent effectively, before launching a huge new spending program, let's get it right! **Vote No on A.** See also [www.NoOnTransportationBond2014.com](http://www.NoOnTransportationBond2014.com)

## **Pier 70 on the ballot as Prop F would convert an architectural treasure**

Pier 70 is an architectural and historical treasure on the southeastern waterfront for which the Port has just finalized *the Union Iron Works Historic District*. Currently, the 20th Street historical buildings are being renovated, including the grand Union Iron Works Building (see photos on website). Part of the new Crane Cove Park, including the big ship slipway and cranes, is funded and will be built. SFT Board member Howard Wong and SFT President Jennifer Clary have served on the Port's Central Waterfront Advisory Group for several years and report that there's been good neighborhood involvement for Pier 70. After receiving public input, the developer, Forest City has actually factored in many of the suggestions. There will still be a future CEQA process so, as a result, the project will continue to evolve.

The proposed height limit on a portion of the site that slopes downward from Illinois Street has been lowered from previously proposed

120 feet to 90 feet, after passage of last June's Prop B.

Compared to other development, the overall project is fairly balanced. There will be housing (600 low/ middle income homes, 30% of which will be affordable). There will be office and commercial use and a maritime theme, plus structures from the industrial age restored for "light industrial" use, meaning an emphasis of actually making things. There will be preservation on the former pier footprint at the water's edge, parks, trails and "ground level activation". If this plan is carried out effectively and its many parts put in place more or less consecutively, there will be a "new town" at this huge site.

The building that is being proposed for a height of 90 feet in height has triggered the requirement for the voters to weigh in. Any height change on the waterfront must be approved by the voters due to the passage of Prop B on last June's ballot.

SFT has been advocating for creation of a real neighborhood at Pier 70. Unlike Mission Bay, Pier 70 has the urban complexity and mixed use that's appealing enough for SFT to

endorse this ballot measure. Take a look at photographer Ralph Wilson's nice photos and go to Forest City's website with ballot measure info and words about the public process <http://www.pier70sf.com/>

*Visit SFT's redesigned and up-to-date website [sftomorrow.org](http://sftomorrow.org) AND remember to complete and send in the survey that all SFT members received in the mail*

## **WHY YOU MUST ALSO VOTE NO ON I WHEN YOU VOTE YES ON H**

There are all kinds of ballot strategies meant to confuse the voter. SFT members are not the gullible kind but they must be careful to vote **No on I** (and tell their friends) that Prop I is not just about happy children playing in the parks, but a cunningly crafted way of erasing the public vote on another measure (Prop H). Not democratic, you say, but it is legal to propose a measure on the same topic and say whichever gets the most votes invalidates the other. Innocent votes on I to "help the kids" and LET THEM PLAY would ruin the victory on H. SFT members are sophisticated and have run into this type of "poison pill" before, but here it is again. Even if it wins, Prop H would be invalidated by a higher vote count on Prop I. Prop I may look like a bond measure; but it doesn't ask for funding; it is on the ballot solely to deliver a "**poison pill**" to **Prop H** and **invalidate H** even if it wins.

Prop H, on the other hand, must be passed to keep alive the determination of a stalwart group of activists that the western end of Golden Gate Park should remain the naturalistic treasure by the ocean that it is today. What's there today are four playing fields covered in green, growing grass with natural light accommodating daytime play by schools and local teams. The current fields need renovating and should be renovated, everyone agrees. What's proposed by Rec and Park is artificial plastic turf with carcinogenic rubber tire "crumb" infill (that looks like soil). Tall stadium lighting would be installed and illuminate the dark night sky at Ocean Beach with 150,000 watts of artificial light. This measure would enable the west end of the Park to become a major soccer venue for nighttime league play for private soccer teams coming from all over the Bay Area.

*Because there's revenue to be gained, San Francisco's Recreation and Parks Department has been busy leasing and selling our parks and playing fields for the highest dollar. But drawing profit from corrupting the natural environment is the wrong way to go. **Vote Yes on H and No on I.***

## **Prop M of is foundational. But what is Prop M worth today?**

**San Francisco's development and planning cornerstone, Prop M, has been effectively guiding development in San Francisco since its passage by the electorate in 1986. But recently, Prop M has been sidelined and ignored by the Court of Appeals' decision on Parkmerced.** The judges' interpretation of two little words "must" and "shall" and the apparent lack of clarity about their use in the language of Prop M could set a precedent for other large-scale growth throughout San Francisco. The lack of these specific words could allow the interpretation of Proposition M, the core of San Francisco's Planning Code, to be controlled by the rich, powerful and influential backers of the Parkmerced project.

Proposition M was a ballot initiative created by an upset citizenry in 1986 to curb pro-development interpretation of vague city laws. Prop M was incorporated into the City Planning Code as Section 101, containing eight immutable planning rules that needed to be followed to enable approval of a project.

“Must” and “Shall” the citizens of San Francisco accept a project that is in clear violation of Proposition M? On Thursday, August 14, 2014, the California Court of Appeals issued a decision in favor of a massive development plan which would demolish the low-rise affordable units at Parkmerced and replace them with new high-rise apartments served by a rerouted Muni line which is not yet fully funded.

**Proposition M is an overarching planning principle. Yet,** the Parkmerced decision contradicts and flies in the face of actual practice and implementation of Section 101 by the City Planning department. Proposition M has been the overarching planning principle cited in every City Planning evaluation and recommendation for decades. Because Proposition M has been adhered to for the most part, growth in San Francisco has followed a reasonably slower pattern. Proposition M’s language has been sufficiently clear to function as voters intended until this Court’s statement.

*(continued on page four)*



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*Recycled Paper*

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*(continued from page 3)* **Traffic congestion is acceptable for this Court.** This case has profound ramifications for unbridled growth in San Francisco. The Court stated at the beginning of the trial that they were for development, and they would not limit growth because of a lack of sufficient transit, citing a Los Angeles court case which has created a traffic 'nightmare' in Los Angeles. Too bad they did not to cite an example of a case that provided a sound transportation plan. MUNI has cut service in every neighborhood since 2006. With piecemeal transit planning, new developments, like Parkmerced and the Transbay Terminal, will throw thousands of new residents and workers into a stagnant transit system and an already strained street system. Any new MUNI project related to Parkmerced could mean taking MUNI projects funds from other transit-starved neighborhoods.

**Neighborhood Character should be based on affordable housing, not aesthetics.** The Court has determined Parkmerced is not an “Historical Landmark” and concludes that Neighborhood Character, is based on the composition of the residents that live there. Unlike the Victorian housing stock near Alamo Square, the Court believes it is not the aesthetics of the existing Parkmerced community that is noteworthy but whether or not it has rent control. Presently, the Court recognizes that 3,221 units in Parkmerced are under rent control and maintaining that number of rent controlled units is all-important.

While Prop M seeks to respect neighborhood character, the massive new density of more than fifty new high-rises would drastically change it. The existing population of Parkmerced today is around 8,500 residents, living in 3,221 rent-controlled units (i.e., 100% rent-controlled). With the new composition of Parkmerced, at full build-out of 28,000 units, the percent of residents living in rent controlled units would be only 30%. Reducing the percentage of residents living in rent controlled units will dramatically change the Neighborhood Character, using the Court’s own logic.

When Stuart Flashman, the lawyer representing *San Francisco Tomorrow* and *Parkmerced Action Coalition*, was asked how he felt about the decision, he replied, “Evidently the Court doesn’t care what the voters say.” Flashman is referring to Proposition M which was designed to curb and qualify development in San Francisco and is now in conflict with the building boom being promoted by the City’s administration. (*Glenn Rogers and George Wooding contributed to this article.*)