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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Two recent Orinda City Council (OCC) meetings have devoted considerable time to Plan Bay Area (PBA)--in one case, an entire Special Meeting convened solely for this purpose. Regrettably, although these meetings have been beneficial in developing public awareness of PBA, citizens appropriately concerned with maintaining the semi-rural character of Orinda have been led to believe that PBA will destroy or significantly alter it.

Not true. Review of PBA's evolution reveals that, after requests made by OCC, Orinda's preliminary housing allocation has been reduced by ABAG to the point where it now conforms to Orinda's existing General Plan. These requests occurred after public discussion at OCC meetings. In this regard, OCC and city staff have served Orinda citizens well by closely monitoring the development of Plan Bay Area as it affects Orinda.

Additionally, according to the staff report presented to OCC at the May 13 Special Meeting (report available on the Orinda website), Orinda has not applied for Priority Development Area (PDA) designation for its downtown area. As stated in the report, should Orinda want to consider this action, the advantages and disadvantages would be discussed at a city council meeting with prior notice that would allow for public input.

I also want to draw attention to the following excerpt from the PBA Draft EIR (http://onebayarea.org/pdf/Draft_EIR_Chapters/3.1_Alternatives.pdf), page 3.1-48:

"Consistency with Local Plans . . . Plan Bay Area will not supersede existing general plans. . . . Land use patterns included in the adopted Plan Bay Area would only be implemented insofar as local jurisdictions adopt the policies and recommendations included in the proposed Plan."

OCC has forwarded all of the communications it has received regarding concerns about various aspects of Plan Bay Area to ABAG/MTC. Citizens can also lobby our local Assembly Member and Senator requesting the elimination or modification of AB 32, SB 375, and related laws that mandate coordinated regional transportation and land planning (and Assembly and Senate candidates can be asked to state their position). In the end, these are the only agencies--not OCC--that can act to address the concerns.

Robert Burt
Orinda

Editor:

Opponents of regional planning have engaged in distortion and coded language to whip up fear and hostility toward Plan Bay Area and the regional planning agencies ABAG and MTC. I recently received an alarming flyer and robo-call telling me of the imminent destruction of Orinda, loss of property, and massive high rise apartments for low-income people foisted upon us by "unelected bureaucrats". The hysterical claims made by these groups and individuals are just not true.

Long range planning for the needs of future generations is essential for the economy and quality of life in the Bay Area. Orinda is not an island. Like most Orinda residents, my daily life and activities frequently take me to other communities and cities in the Bay Area. I believe that residents of Orinda, and all residents of the Bay Area, have an obligation to work with other communities and address our long term needs together. I think it is imperative that our Orinda elected officials have a seat at the table to represent our interests.

Plan Bay Area does not usurp local control of land use decisions. Any new development proposal will continue to go through the same stringent process and design review as it always has. There is no plan to bulldoze downtown Orinda and erect soviet style "pack and stack" high rises for low-income people as opponents have baselessly claimed. Residents of Orinda are the ones who will decide what their downtown will look like now and in the future. Our freedoms and property rights are not under assault. There is no nefarious plot to move people out of single-family homes or to force them to give up their cars if they don't want to. However, Plan Bay Area does suggest that we look at broadening choices of housing options. I wish those who zealously speak of freedom to live in single family homes would also concede that some of us might prefer to live in apartments, townhomes or condominiums close to BART. The tiresome repetition of "stack and pack" to describe such housing is insulting, elitist, and just not true. I for one favor a mix of retail and residential development in downtown Orinda.

I also believe we have an obligation to provide affordable housing and I am proud that Orinda has fulfilled some of our obligations through the development of the Eden Senior Housing and the Pulte development.

Valerie Sloven
Orinda

Editor:

In regards to the 6/5/13 article, "Neighbors Challenge Moraga Center Specific Plan", please tell me Jennifer Stacy and Daniel Martini didn't really say the \$750,000 townhomes planned for the empty lot between Moraga Way and Country Club Dr. would draw riff-raff to neighborhoods and "within a few years this type of development would attract the wrong type of people to Moraga". Please tell me the author of the article paraphrased or misheard their remarks.....please.

My family and I have lived in the Paseo Moraga townhomes off Alta Mesa for the past 10 years. These townhomes are similarly priced and arranged as the planned townhomes for Country Club Dr. Does the fact that we've lived

there for 10 years "grandfather" us from being thrown into that riff-raff clause of "wrong people" living in Moraga? Because if not, I'll tell my wife she never should have volunteered for the Moraga Juniors all those years, raising thousands of dollars for improvement projects in Moraga and for riff-raff in less privileged communities in the Bay Area. We'll stop giving money every year to the Moraga Education Foundation and the PTA, and stop voting for parcel tax hikes and volunteering for the phone banks to pass those measures. We'll stop volunteering for the park clean-ups, the pear picking, the Moraga Triathlon, and stop giving towards the fireworks fund. We'll both quit our jobs and collect welfare and food stamps like the "riff-raff" who live in \$750,000 townhomes always do. Miss Stacy and Mr. Martini, riff-raff is not defined by the money you make or the size of the house you live in. The "wrong type of people" may live in a gated community or a \$1.5mil home in the country club. Just because one's townhome may not cost as much as your home, doesn't mean that they don't volunteer in the community, donate to their schools, and do their very best to make our community richer, safer, and more desirable for people to live in. For ALL people to live in.

Regards,
John Silberman
Moraga

(Editor's note: In the article entitled "Neighbors Challenge the Moraga Center Specific Plan," some of the comments made by the speakers referenced were paraphrased for brevity and were not contained within quotation marks. In the interest of clarity, here are the quotes in question as transcribed by our reporter.

J. Stacy: "They did the same type of development in Half Moon Bay. The crimes increased, you have burglaries, you have robberies, you have gangs coming from over the hills to deal with the gangs in the affordable housing units; we didn't have those before."

D. Martini: "I'm a retired Chief of Police Services (city withheld) and I can tell you that every development that I watched over my 34 years when it's built in this condensed housing format or affordable housing increased our calls for service, increased our crime statistics. It is a given fact that within two to three years you're going to see renters and leases, it's going to attract the wrong (people), it's going to take away from the charm that drove me to come here."

Editor:

When retired police chief Mr. Martini was quoted saying, "within a few years this type of development would attract the wrong type of people to Moraga." Did anyone bother to ask him what he meant by this statement, specifically? What is the wrong type of person for Moraga? Is there a sliding scale based on our particular tax bracket? Personally, I think it would be great to build affordable housing like that proposed in the Moraga Center Specific Plan. That way our very own teachers, or even policemen, could afford to live in Moraga... before they are retired that is.

Matthew Eglin
Moraga

Editor:

In the front page article, "Neighbors Challenge the Moraga Center Specific Plan," June 5, 2013, Sophie Braccini reminds us: "This would not be the first time Moraga residents have challenged an already-approved project. For more information, read 'Palos Colorados: A Long Time Coming' in our first issue, March 14, 2007 . . ."

As Ursula K. Le Guin wrote, "There are no right answers to wrong questions."

The wrong question is: "How can we provide sufficient water, food, housing, education, jobs, transportation, infrastructure, health care, recreation, open space, etc. for our perpetually increasing population?"

The right question is: How can we stabilize the population of America, California, and Lamorinda?"

When will we begin asking the right question? My guess would be about 2075 when Lamorinda's population will be approximately . . . Well, you don't want to know.

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Editor:

On Saturday June 1, 2013 my husband and I hosted a Fiesta celebrating the last day of my 59th year. Thank you. We have lived in Campolindo for 29 years, raised our children here, and celebrated every memory in our beautiful home. Our home this evening was filled with music, Love, and laughter. We sent a thoughtful flyer to our surrounding lovely neighbors letting them know the stark quiet would be disrupted for a time. At 9:45pm, a polite police officer let himself into our yard to tell us a neighbor TWO blocks away had called in a noise complaint. We were told if we didn't shut the music down, he would return and issue a \$500.00 citation. The officer could certainly see this was not an out of hand situation, but rather a wonderful party in which most of us would understand and applaud. My issue here is tolerance and the use of good judgment. We were planning all along to quiet the music in particular at 11pm. Our immediate neighbors were always a priority. Neighbor TWO blocks away WOW!! In my humble opinion, our police officers should look into a situation before threatening a citation (as well as calling for backup) AND as citizens lucky enough to have a police force, we should be thoughtful when using our emergency resources rather than abusing them.

Libby Duryea
Moraga

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[back](#)

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