



Winter 2016

Winter is behind us, and spring well on its way and with it forward movement on many issues and projects of community interest. In this e-news a quick update and links to information on the Sir Francis Drake Corridor Improvement Project, the subject of much press recently, and worth the attention both per the problems it seeks to solve and the excellent community process informing its evolution into a project that will truly improve mobility through and across the corridor from Ross to 101.

I'll also share the outcome of workshops held on community housing needs and strategies the County will be taking to preserve and create affordable housing here in Marin and provide an update on the Ross Valley Watershed Program.

With these and other challenging issues, robust and meaningful participation among a broad array of community members is essential to designing solutions that address problems and meet needs. Community participation also helps to build consensus towards having a positive, productive outcome as the end result. I'm looking forward to working with all of you to tackle these tough issues to make a positive difference in our community.

Final note: important news with regards to national efforts to gain control of the prescription drug crisis -- the Centers for Disease Control has just issued new federal guidelines to reshape how doctors prescribe opioids such as OxyContin and Vicodin towards reducing potential for addiction, misuse and abuse. This is a huge step forward in addressing what has become an addiction crisis in our community and nationwide. Read recent articles in the [New York Times](#) and [Marin IJ](#) to learn more.

As always, please never hesitate to contact me with your own opinion, comments, questions, and concerns on these or any other issues. Email krice@marincounty.org or call 415-473-7825. You can also connect with me by "liking" my [Facebook page](#) and follow me on [twitter](#).

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Sir Francis Drake Corridor Improvement Project Update

As a reminder, the Sir Francis Drake Improvement Project was launched in spring of last year and the project's aim is to improve efficiency of the roadway and safety for all modes of travel through the Sir Francis Drake Corridor from Ross to 101, with a focus on improving traffic flow and increasing pedestrian safety (e.g. intersections, sidewalks). Importantly, this project will tie into future work on East Sir Francis Drake per improving access to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge and increased throughput made possible with the opening of a third lane on the bridge.

In mid-March, a third community workshop was held at Kent Middle School with about 150 interested residents in attendance. The project team presented revised design concepts, followed by Q&A, discussion and breakout sessions per section/area. The next step is to prepare a preferred alternative based on the input received on the refined design concepts. The final design concepts will be shared with the community in late spring or early fall. During this time, the community and technical advisory committees will continue to meet.

If you weren't able to make the March meeting, you can view the presentation and most current concept alternatives on the [project website](#) as well as provide comments and [sign up for updates](#). I will continue to keep you updated about opportunities for staying involved in this important project aimed at improving mobility, roadway efficiency and safety through Kentfield and Greenbrae.

Preserving Affordable Housing in Marin (published 02/14/16 Marin IJ)

In February, the Board of Supervisors took action to partner with Marin Community Foundation, the Environmental Housing Collaborative, and Tamalpais Pacific Foundation to preserve 27 units of affordable housing in Fairfax. In doing so, we not only ensured that existing affordable housing remain so, in perpetuity, but also prevented the displacement of the 27 families living there. The partnership and action

highlights a new direction within a broader strategy the Board is taking to address community housing needs and the loss of affordable housing in Marin County.

This action has a narrative that goes back several decades and involves land use decisions that have charted the development (and conservation) of Marin County to this day. To begin at the beginning:

Our County is defined by its commitment to the preservation of open space and public lands. We have protected our agricultural lands, have tens of thousands of acres of parks and open space at our doorstep, and an abundance of recreational opportunities accessible from our backyards. Indeed, a half-century of a countywide conservationist ethos and land use policies that support it, have kept at bay the level of commercial development and suburban sprawl that ruined so many other beautiful places.

But the same values which have protected our county and make it such a desirable place to live, combined with a thriving bay area economy with job growth far outpacing new housing, has escalated what has been a long term trend in this great county of ours--housing demand far exceeding supply, and housing costs outpacing income growth at an exponential rate. Indeed, the current booming economy has accelerated the displacement of many long-time residents, workforce, seniors, those on fixed and lower income.

So, while on the surface our communities thrive, the broad mix of housing choices and price points necessary to sustain a natural cross-section of community members is shrinking and our social sustainability with it.

Last fall, at my direction, the Board of Supervisors took up the topic of housing in a series of public workshops. We discussed Marin's housing crisis, its impact on current residents, communities, and what if anything we can and want to do through program, policy or regulation to address it.

We entered the conversation without illusions as to our ability to "solve" the problem, or come anywhere close to creating enough housing at the right price point to satisfy all needs. But we did enter the conversation with a recognition that the status quo is not working, that we are losing both affordable and moderately priced housing options and that the trend has very real negative consequences for overall community character and resiliency.

We shifted our focus away from the conventional solution of new development, to focusing on preserving existing at-risk affordable housing. We also looked at how to

expand housing options in ways that utilize the existing built environment compatible with community character and appetite.

We culminated our discussion at a fourth public workshop in which we settled on a menu of strategies which include: acquisition and preservation of existing housing stock, amendment of existing code and regulation towards encouraging the development of affordable second units and junior second units, landlord incentives aimed at expanding participation in housing programs, and voluntary landlord guidelines geared towards preventing unjust eviction and tenant displacement.

The preservation of 27 units of affordable housing in Fairfax is a great example of our shift in focus and more practical approach to addressing our housing crisis. It emphasizes creative partnering, opportunistic yet realistic solutions, and a shared goal of meeting critical community needs while recognizing long-held community values. Finally, the community conversations we had at the board workshops were a positive demonstration of the kind of inclusive, productive debate that can be had as we tackle the important challenges of the day.

Moving Forward with the Ross Valley Flood Program

As noted in my last e-news, the recent election and discussion in San Anselmo around using Memorial Park for flood risk reduction highlights the challenges of addressing Ross Valley's chronic flooding issues. Studies completed to date demonstrate that multiple strategies need to be employed, from increasing capacity and removing constrictions in the creek, to finding sites for holding back/detaining floodwaters during heavier storms. The true litmus test for any project is that it will effectively address our chronic flooding problem while also providing added benefits consistent with the desires of our community. At every meeting I attend confirms, it is clear that in order to be truly successful in achieving the flood program's goals, the strong community process I have been promoting that authentically keeps the public not only informed but engaged in the design and decision-making around projects and the broader program is essential.

Following a well-attended community discussion this winter concerning possible floodwater detention at Lefty Gomez field, the focus in the coming months will now be placed on investigating some of the other possible detention sites. A study completed last year added the former Sunnyside Nursery property, among others, to a list of potential detention sites which could work together to ultimately meet the community's flood risk reduction goals. Understanding potential opportunities, constraints, and concerns at these sites is needed before we can better define possible paths forward with any of the sites, including at Lefty Gomez field.

In addition to taking a broad look at our detention options in the upper watershed, there is encouraging progress being made with many of our projects, including the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Corte Madera Creek Project](#) (Units 2, 3 and 4), the Phoenix Lake Retrofit Project, bridge replacements, and dredging and storm drainage improvements in lower Corte Madera Creek within Larkspur. The [Flood Control Zone 9 Advisory Board](#) will be meeting on April 19th at San Anselmo Town Hall and will be presented with updates on all of these projects. Please attend if you can. If you can't attend, feel free to take a look at our staff reports available at [RossValleyWatershed.org](#) which contain a briefing of items discussed at the meeting.

I will be keeping you updated as we progress with all of our projects and you can also visit [Ross Valley Flood Program website](#) for more information, including pages dedicated to keeping you in the know on the [Lefty Gomez](#) and [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#) projects, and to [sign up for email updates](#) on these and other projects.

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