



Report on SunCal Meeting

On December 13, 2007, SunCal presented two alternative development proposals for Alameda Point, one which was Measure A compliant, and one which assumed an exemption to Measure A for Alameda Point. This latter exemption proposed at least twice as many homes—2800 to 3000 homes—on Alameda Point than the Measure A compliant version. You can bet that if Alameda voters approve an exemption, we will see far more homes on Alameda Point than that.

The next day, a letter writer to the Alameda Journal responded to a 'MyWord' contribution written by yours truly and which appeared November 30. Between the day she submitted it to the Journal, and the day it appeared in print on the streets, SunCal had proved wrong her assertion that Alameda Point could be Measure A exempt "without increasing the projected population and traffic."

Oh sure, SunCal provided traffic studies showing the high number of transit riders in the Measure A exempt plan. But Alameda residents know well from the Planning Department's attempt to locate a Target at Alameda Towne Center just how overly optimistic they and their contractors are with traffic studies. As if that wasn't enough, the rosy traffic predictions Calthorpe presented were

also premised on an imaginary light rail transit line from Alameda Point through the center of Alameda to Fruitvale BART. A line for which there is no committed funding, no approved proposals and which is outside the scope of SunCal's project at Alameda Point. Further, planners are notorious for being overly optimistic about ridership projections for transit systems. As an example, [here](#) is just one of many analyses of the ridership shortfalls of San Jose's light rail system. Getting people out of their auto's and into public transit is a good thing, but a) we should be practical about it and b) if we're going to pay for it, and the taxpayers always do, it had better work.

Unfortunately, the public tends to lap up such optimistic projection, because they want so badly for it to come true, even while they themselves decline to use public transit. Charles Revson, founder of Revlon cosmetics, is well-known for his quote: "In the factory we make cosmetics. In the store we sell hope." If Revson were alive today and in land-use planning, his quote might read "On the project site we build houses. In the public meetings, we sell pipe dreams."

The Journal letter writer also seems to have missed the point of my column with regards to Measure A and the state density bonus law. If the state density

bonus law is exercised, Alameda Point could be developed in the manner she proposes - re-use of the enlisted-men's barracks, variety in physical structures, different sized houses at different price points (although whether or not they would be "affordable" remains a question) and so on. An ordinance enacting the density bonus law for some sites on Alameda Point would provide for all of that, while keeping Measure A intact for the rest of the city, and without setting a risky precedent that some sharpie land-use attorney could use to undo Measure A for the entire island. HOMES promptly started throwing mud at that proposal with a stunning about-face by suddenly claiming that we should let local people determine what's best for Alameda instead of state law. Well, the truth is, any ordinance regarding the density bonus law would have to be enacted locally and subjected to public hearings and so on. HOMES is desperately trying to silence this discussion because it proves they've been lying all along about a Measure A exemption for Alameda Point.

Getting back to SunCal's proposals, there is some subtle irony in their Measure A exemption plan. We were told that to enable sustainable development, which is required to mitigate global warming resulting from human activity, we have to bring MORE people to Ala-

ameda Point. How ironic is that? Let's challenge SunCal and Calthorpe to make Alameda Point sustainable by leveraging the 30,000 homes in Alameda just across the street from Alameda Point.

SunCal claims to have made no decision to date about Measure A, but it was odd that they would present two alternatives that are as polarized around Measure A as the rest of the community. They could do better to unify the community and win our support by also presenting middle-ground proposals.

SunCal's Measure A Exempt Plan promises to put at least twice as many homes—and probably more than—on Alameda Point as a Measure A compliant plan.

Links in this Brief:

www.ti.org/vaupdate32.html