



Of Special Interest

\$9 million per year in property taxes – schools or shopping centers?

A new way to think about “missing rung” housing.

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Trouble with the Tube

By David Howard

On Saturday February 3rd, at about 7:45am, I climbed in the back of an Alameda Fire Department Paramedics van with my 3-year old son, and we headed for Oakland Children’s Hospital with sirens blaring. My son had been sick for several days, and on that Saturday morning, shortly after waking up, he fell into a semi-conscious state with a fever of 105F, prompting me to call 9-1-1. Although he recovered from this episode quickly, after several days of testing, doctors still can’t explain the cause of this episode or the source of his flu-like symptoms leading up to it.

After the initial panic and an overnight stay at Oakland Children’s hospital, I got to thinking about the ride to the hospital. Alameda’s emergency service responders - the 911 call takers and the paramedics and firemen - performed admirably and my thanks go out to all of them. From my house, though, to Oakland

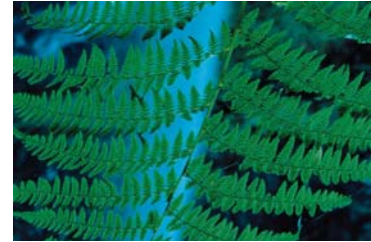
Children’s Hospital, the route takes us directly through the Posey Tube. On Saturday at 7:45am, there were few cars going through the tube, but I shudder to think what might have happened if our trip took place during a weekday morning rush hour, when both lanes of the tube are backed up. Would the paramedics have been able to get me and my son to Children’s Hospital in time?

It leaves me to wonder if Alameda City Council, Development Services staff, or critics of Alameda’s City Charter amendment prescribing low-density land use for the island city have ever been in the situation I faced that Saturday morning, or have even considered it. Local public transit advocates, the majority of city council, and city staff seem to be hell-bent on developing Alameda Point to the highest possible density for residential use, short of sinking the island, without concern for the impact on emergency services vehicles

trying get off or onto the island via one of our five access points. These groups in Alameda are using an argument based on 3-spoked circular reasoning to justify high-density land development for the city.

Public transit advocates demand high-density housing to support public transit and in turn the development gurus say there needs to be more retail stores to support the new population. But the mega-retail stores that City staff is attracting (e.g., Target, Bed Bath Beyond, Borders - see “Big Box Swindle” at the Alameda Free Library...) tend to need larger population bases than Alameda has to support them, thereby making it necessary to build even higher-density housing, or draw shoppers from the mainland. While many new residents will undoubtedly take public

(cont’d on page 2)





“Will it take the death of a small child for Alameda planners to wake up to the practicalities of living on an island and plot a course that doesn’t compromise the health and safety of residents?”

Trouble with the Tube, cont’d...

transit for their commute, and some shoppers will do the same, the reality is that public transit usage is never 100%. New proposals for public transit notwithstanding, increased housing and retail density on Alameda Point will increase the number of automobiles congesting the island’s tubes and bridges.

Further, some housing advocates suggest that we need to build high-density, transit oriented housing to create new homes for purchase within the reach of those families with household incomes above the official affordable housing levels of very low, low and moderate income households. This is the so-called “missing rung” category of home buyers. After these homes are built and sold, what mechanism will govern the market prices for the re-sale of these homes to keep them available for “missing rung” families? None. If we want to create “missing rung” housing for those families with income levels between the poor and the rich, isn’t there a better way to do it?

In fact, there is. When affordable housing is built today in Alameda, deed restrictions are placed on the

property, restricting it’s resale in the future to someone who qualifies in the same income category as when the house was originally sold. For example, a house built and sold to a family in the ‘moderate income’ category (<120% of area median income) has a deed restriction that prevents it from being sold in the future to anyone with a household income higher than 120% of median income. The simple and obvious way to fill the “missing rung” is to extend this system to higher income levels. For example, within the City of Alameda we could enact an ordinance that defines a fourth income category above the existing three very low, low and moderate income categories, at, say, 220% of area median income. A young professional couple with a household income of less than 220% of median income that requires assistance to buy a home could apply to purchase “missing rung” housing, just like traditional affordable housing applicants. Deed restrictions on the property could prohibit the future resale of the house to occupants that earn greater than 220% of median income, just as deed restrictions do the same today for the lower income categories. Such a

system would allow for more housing to be built for households that earn more than the very poor but less than the very rich, without increasing density or the number of automobiles entering and exiting the island each day.

I was very fortunate that my son’s condition turned out to be non life-threatening and that traffic through the Posey Tube that day was light and we were able to speed under the estuary to Children’s Hospital in a timely fashion. Future parents might not be so lucky. Will it take the death of a small child for Alameda planners to wake up to the practicalities of living on an island and plot a course that doesn’t compromise the health and safety of residents?

Boycott the Alameda Journal

By William Davidson

With another editorial on Friday, March 2, 2007 full of lies and mis-characterizations, Alameda Journal editor Jeff Mitchell makes clear his loyalties lie with the forces that plan to run roughshod over Alameda residents who insist on influencing and impacting growth and development in our city.

It's time to hit Mitchell where it hurts - in his newspaper circulation numbers. The Journal's posted and audited circulation numbers are used to justify the advertising

rates they can charge. Lower numbers means lower advertising revenue for Jeff Mitchell.

It's time to call the Alameda Journal and ask them to stop delivering the paper to your door. Call Circulation at 510-339-4040 and provide your name and address, and insist that they stop delivering the paper.

It will take several phone calls to get it stopped, and you will probably have to escalate to the circulation manager and get a call back.

Keep a written log of all of

your phone calls to circulation, and if possible, catch the license plate of the car used to deliver the paper to your door. Gather up the un-read copies of the paper until you have an armful.

If delivery continues, take your log book and your stack of un-read papers down to the Alameda police station at 1555 Oak Street and file a complaint against the Journal for littering. Return the un-read papers directly to Jeff Mitchell across the street at 1516 Oak Street.



"It's time to hit the Alameda Journal where it hurts - in their newspaper circulation numbers."

"Redevelopment" and Education

By David Howard

Do you realize how much of your property taxes in Alameda go each year to fund "redevelopment" projects, diverted from the State or from the City's General Fund where it could be used to support the ailing Alameda Unified School District?

In fiscal year 2004-2005, \$8.9 million in incremental property taxes was diverted to City of Alameda redevelopment agencies. \$4.7 million was spent on 'Administrative Costs' and \$4.0 million was spent on

interest on bonds that the redevelopment agencies issued. How much was spent on re-paying those bonds? Only \$1 million!

The City will tell you that redevelopment agencies pass through funds to the school district. Fair enough, so how much of the \$8.9 million raised was passed through to the school district? *Only four-hundred thousand dollars!*

Something is wrong in our city when the school district cuts \$1.4 million from our schools, while a pot of \$8.9

million of *our property taxes* gets frittered away on administrative costs and interest payments.

What can be done about? Tell Alameda City Council that you want some of this redevelopment jackpot released to keep our schools open and our programs going. Tell the school board that they need to sue the redevelopment agencies to get their hands on that money to keep the schools open.

\$8.9 million of our property taxes in fiscal year 2004-2005 were diverted from schools to redevelopment projects such as Bridgeside, the Cineplex, the parking garage and Alameda Landing.

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*A grassroots voice in the
community.*

Internet Links

State of California's Community Redevelopment Agencies Annual Report

<http://www.sco.ca.gov/ard/local/locprep/redevelop/reports/0405redevelop.pdf>

Municipal Officials for Redevelopment Reform (MORR)

<http://www.coalitionforredevelopmentreform.org/references/morrreport.php>

Coalition for Redevelopment Reform

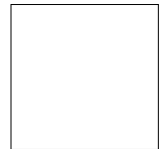
<http://www.coalitionforredevelopmentreform.org/>

About Our Organization

Our Vision: Alameda as a community where our unique quality of life is based on solid principles of civil society, financial and environmental sustainability, social justice, respect for our

heritage and vision for our future. Where citizens are well informed and demand the right to democracy and self-determination.

COMPANY NAME
STREET ADDRESS
ADDRESS 2
CITY, ST ZIP CODE



CUSTOMER NAME
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We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.actionalameda.org
