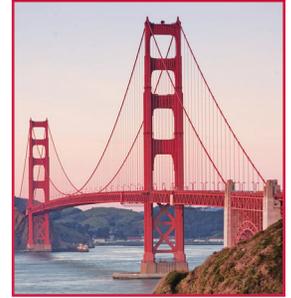




BAY AREA MONITOR

February/March 2017

Volume 42, Number 4



Finding a Way Home

By Cecily O'Connor

This summer, officials are expected to adopt Plan Bay Area 2040, the region's land use and transportation roadmap. While the plan advances environmental goals and transportation system improvements, more work is needed to resolve a confounding Bay Area problem: affordable housing.

That's why regional agencies are forming the Committee for Affordable and Sustainable Accommodations (CASA), a task force that will draw up a housing implementation strategy to accompany Plan Bay Area. CASA will identify actions to fix plan targets moving off course, focusing on displacement risk, access to jobs, and the high costs of rent and mortgages facing low-to-middle-income households.

"The Bay Area is an amazing place to live," said Leslye Corsiglia, co-chair of CASA and executive director of SV@Home, an advocacy group. "It has beauty and is one of the most successful places in the world for innovation and opportunity — yet we have failed in providing sufficient housing for people who live here," she added.

Plan Bay Area grew out of California Senate Bill 375, the state's 2008 climate change legislation requiring California's 18 metropolitan areas to integrate land use and housing into regional transportation plans. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) lead efforts to update Plan Bay Area every four years. In a crucial step toward adopting



Leslye Corsiglia and Fred Blackwell will co-chair CASA, a new task force charged with tackling Bay Area housing issues.

photos courtesy of SV@Home and the San Francisco Foundation

the next update this summer, the agencies approved a "Final Preferred Scenario" last fall, establishing forecasts for transportation and housing needs through 2040 while addressing population growth and greenhouse gas emissions.

The Plan Bay Area scenario earmarks more than \$300 billion in revenue to operate, maintain, and modernize the regional transportation system. It also meets intended environmental targets, including protecting open space and guiding expansion within existing urban growth boundaries. However, housing affordability is a sticking point.

"The math shows that, in terms of affordability, we are moving in the wrong direction," said Ken Kirkey, MTC's planning director. "Over the course of time, we will see those with incomes in the lower half of the spectrum spending two-thirds of their income on housing and transit," he explained.

CASA's formation is the result of a request from groups (such as the Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California, Greenbelt Alliance, and Public Advocates) that



This edition of the *Monitor* focuses on housing, as companion to LWVBA's 2017 Bay Area League Day, held on January 28. Visit www.lwvbayarea.org for more about that event.

continued on page 2

Finding a Way Home (from page 1)

asked MTC and ABAG to delve deeper and create a strategy that resolves affordability issues.

“Our hope is that it will address a number of topics covered by [Plan Bay Area] like housing affordability and open space protection, while creating more transit choices for Bay Area residents,” said Matt Vander Sluis, head of Greenbelt Alliance’s Homes and Neighborhoods initiative.

Fred Blackwell, CEO of the San Francisco Foundation, will serve as CASA’s co-chair with Corsiglia. Individual task force members have yet to be selected, but will likely represent a cross-section of advocacy groups and business interests, among others, Corsiglia said.

One of the biggest issues they will address is the tendency for low-income residents to be priced out of the market. Low-wage earners are expected to spend 67 percent of their income on housing and transportation costs by 2040, according to the Plan Bay Area scenario. That’s up from 54 percent in 2005.

In addition, CASA will consider population growth and other factors influencing the local economy and quality of life. The Plan Bay Area scenario estimates the number of households in the region will jump by 820,000, hitting 3.4 million in 2040, up from 2.6 million in 2010. Employment will grow by 1.3 million jobs, reaching a total of 4.7 million over the next 23 years. By comparison, the 2013 iteration of Plan Bay Area forecasted 660,000 new households and 1.1 million jobs by 2040.

Stated more bluntly, job creation is happening faster than housing supply can respond. Regionally, one house was built for every eight jobs created between 2011 and 2015, according to MTC. Certain areas along the Peninsula are experiencing even greater gaps, with one housing unit built for every 15 jobs.

Limited housing production is one of several factors contributing to displacement risk, which increases 9 percent under the Plan Bay Area scenario. Other drivers include

wage polarization, as well as rising demand by high-earners for homes in gentrifying low-income neighborhoods close to transit and amenities, according to a 2015 ABAG white paper, *Addressing Displacement in the Bay Area*.

While displacement has occurred in San Francisco for some time, it’s now more common in places like Oakland and within Sonoma and Contra Costa counties, said Miriam Chion, director of planning and research at ABAG.

“The concern about displacement is substantial throughout the region,” she said.

To address this and other housing issues, Corsiglia said it is important to focus on factors such as density and location. Not only does the Bay Area need more investment in transit-oriented development, but planners should also maximize infill development opportunities within existing urban areas, a goal that fell short in a recent high-profile project. Corsiglia cited a Palo Alto development on Maybell Avenue as an example in which plans to build five dozen low-income senior housing units and 12 family homes were scrapped in favor of 16 large family homes. Local voters rejected the first proposal by defeating 2013’s Measure D.

“We got 16 units instead of 72,” Corsiglia said. “We have to be better about that,” she declared.

CASA’s efforts could inspire legislation, incentives, and funding solutions that reward smart growth to ensure the Bay Area becomes a more sustainable and affordable region.

“Local election results in the Bay Area show that residents want more affordable homes and protected natural and agricultural lands with a functional transit system,” Vander Sluis contended. “It’s time for our regional agencies to take the next step in providing the region what its voters want,” he added. 

Cecily O’Connor covers transportation for the Monitor.

About the Bay Area Monitor

Launched in 1975, the *Bay Area Monitor* is published six times a year by the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Education Fund, and covers transportation, air quality, water, open space, and land use issues in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The publication is distributed to League members, elected and appointed officials, government employees, libraries, media outlets, nonprofit organizations, business leaders, and engaged residents. Every edition is also posted online at www.bayareamonitor.org.

Subscriptions to the *Monitor* are free, but reader donations are encouraged and help to sustain the publication. Donations are tax-deductible, as the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Education Fund is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

The *Monitor* is also supported by the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Delta Diablo, the East Bay Regional Park District, the Marin Municipal Water District, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board and the San Mateo County Transit District, the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and the Sonoma County Water Agency. The *Monitor* retains editorial autonomy from its supporters.

Contact us at (510) 839-1608 or editor@bayareamonitor.org
Alec MacDonald, Editor • Madeline Kronenberg, LWVBA President

Building Breathable Neighborhoods

By Leslie Stewart

Regional agencies, housing advocates, and local decision makers recognize that the Bay Area needs more housing to accommodate its population. In figuring out where to build it, many have been promoting infill development to take advantage of established transit corridors and existing infrastructure.

Placing housing near services and facilities allows residents to commute or shop without depending on cars, which in turn improves air quality by reducing emissions from traffic. However, that doesn't mean such neighborhoods will enjoy especially clean air. Many potential infill sites are located in areas currently affected by air pollution from nearby industrial operations, freeways, ports, or rail facilities.

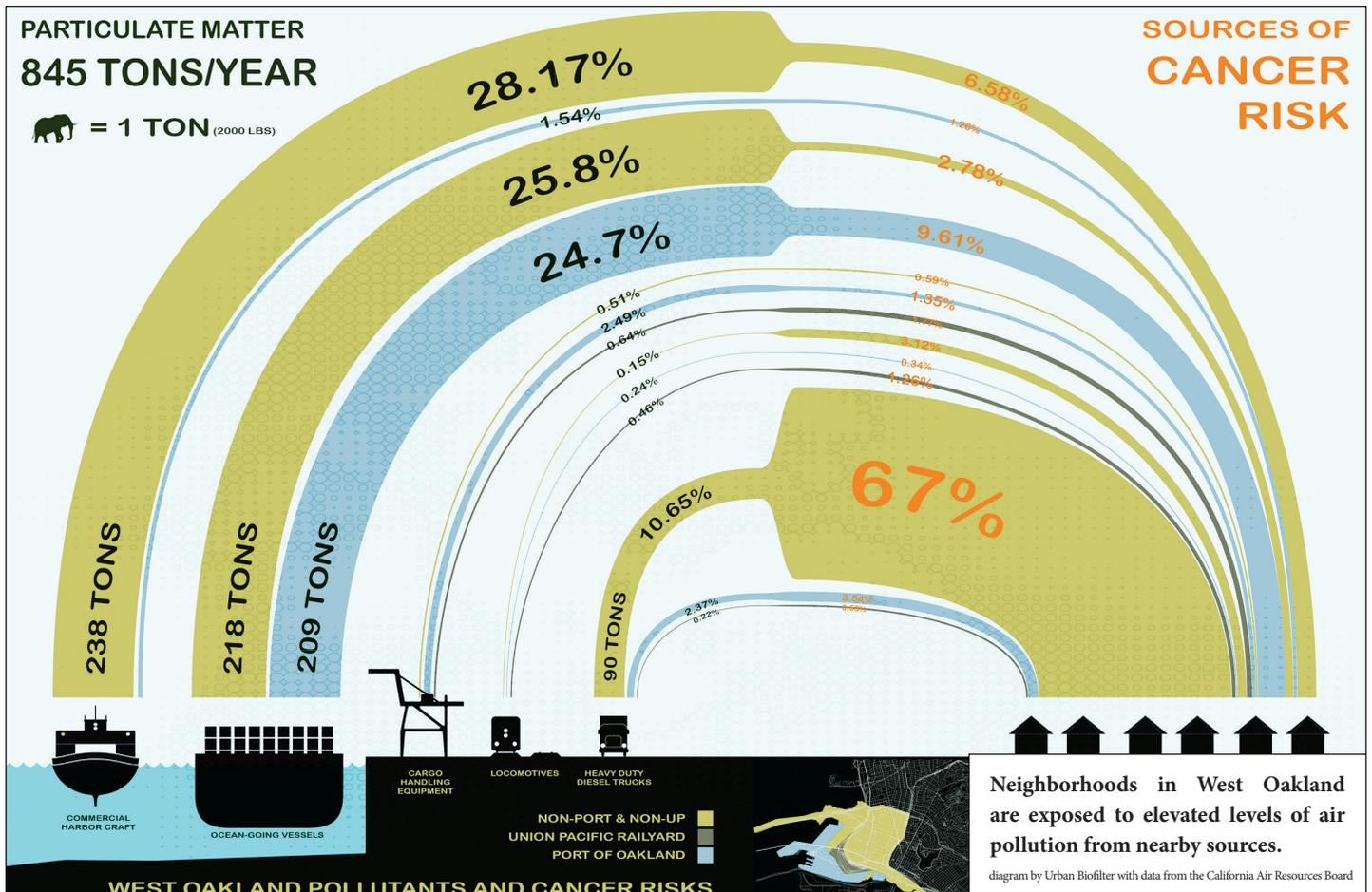
For example, regional plans call for intensified development within approximately 170 designated Priority Development Areas, most of which involve some infill. There is significant overlap between Priority Development Areas and another set of areas which experience elevated pollution levels, as identified by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's CARE (Community Air Risk Evaluation) Program. "As part of the focus on reducing air pollution, there is a focus on

restructuring development patterns to be infill," said Phil Martien, an air quality engineering manager for the agency. "But," he added, "there are areas where we think we need to pay particular attention to air pollution."

Higher air pollution has often meant that CARE communities have been more affordable, so they contain many low-income neighborhoods. Some residents of these have expressed concern that the CARE designation might be an attempt to discourage new development that could improve neighborhoods. Definitely not, according to Martien, who asserted that "we do support strategic infill in these communities."

To navigate the potential conflict between creating needed infill development and placing people in locations that may be less healthy for them, the Air District has taken two types of related actions. First, it has developed planning tools and strategies for use by the agency and by local jurisdictions, including guidelines to help planners evaluate local air quality impacts from proposed projects and plans under the California Environmental Quality Act. Second, expanding

continued on page 4



Building Breathable Neighborhoods (from page 3)

on its work to identify CARE areas, it has created interactive maps which define and locate areas of concern.

The most recent planning tool, released in May 2016, is a guidance document entitled *Planning Healthy Places*, which complements the interactive maps and provides the Air District's recommendations on the best ways to reduce exposures and emissions from local sources of air pollution. It incorporates three strategies: 1) reduce or prevent emissions from pollution sources when possible; 2) implement best practices to reduce residents' exposure to pollution; and 3) do more study on an area where necessary.

Examples of ways to reduce emissions include many transportation-related policies, such as truck idling limits and traffic management strategies, as well as requirements for cleaner construction vehicles and practices, and operating restrictions on diesel generators. Exposure reduction techniques include air filters for residential buildings. Adding vegetation or solid barriers between residences and pollution sources, placing facilities for children or the elderly above ground level, and otherwise separating residents from pollution sources as much as possible are other measures. "The primary recommendation is distance, but communities can't always do that," said the Air District's Dave Vintze, who is responsible for *Planning Healthy Places*.

A number of jurisdictions are already implementing these concepts, adding air pollution concerns as an extra layer of issues that planners need to consider. San Francisco's Community Risk Reduction Plan has been in place for over five years. As part of implementing the plan, Article 38 of its city code requires air filters for developments over a certain size, and city construction projects must use extra-clean construction equipment. The city has developed a set of fine-grained maps which govern development and add predictability for developers

on environmental requirements; meanwhile, the city has streamlined the environmental review process for affordable housing units, so healthier doesn't have to mean pricier.

Hayward has also adopted a Community Risk Reduction Plan, while other communities are in the initial stages. Vintze has presented *Planning Healthy Places* to all Contra Costa County planners, and foresees more presentations in the coming year. He noted, "It's a tool that allows planners to be more informed and knowledgeable in their recommendations when going to a board of supervisors or city council."

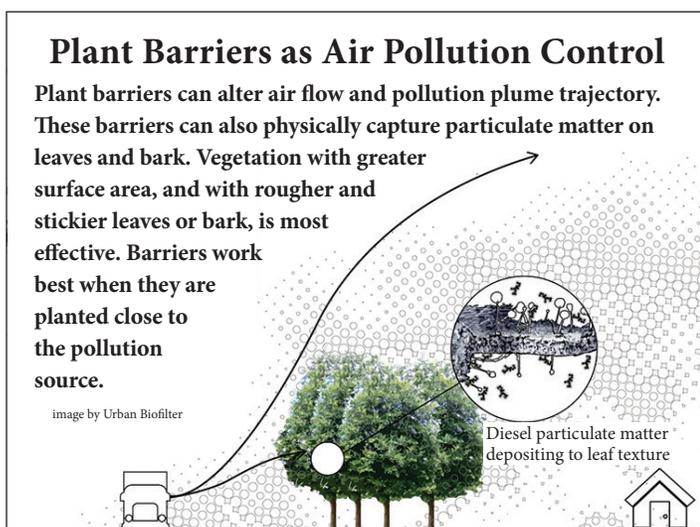
In addition to more outreach and follow-up to see how *Planning Healthy Places* is being used and whether it's making a difference, both Martien and Vintze cited additional work to be done. For example, the "further study areas" identified by the interactive maps usually include large facilities such as refineries, and better air modeling is needed to determine health risks and identify risk reduction strategies. The Air District is currently developing a new regulation, Rule 11-18, which would require a comprehensive evaluation of all permitted facilities that emit toxic air contaminants, and require those facilities above a certain threshold to install technically and economically feasible risk reduction measures. These Health Risk Assessments would add to the data available to developers and planners to make even more informed land use decisions for many of the study areas.

Distance from pollution sources may mean planning for the right time, not place. The Air District continues to contribute to efforts to get closer to zero-emission vehicle fleets; for example, over \$100 million has been spent for cleaner trucks that serve the Port of Oakland, a major pollution source. The expectation is that pollution from freeway traffic will decline over the next few years due to cleaner vehicles, so a recommended strategy is to construct large development projects in phases, with those sections closest to the freeway scheduled to be built last.

Martien is also working on more precise recommendations for vegetation barriers between development and pollution sources. There have been many studies at the national level, but the most effective plantings depend on species, density, and location specifics. "We have enough information to know the types that work and are effective, but we don't know how effective they are," Martien explained. For example, Urban Biofilter, an Earth Island Institute project, is evaluating various tree and bamboo varieties in planters at a West Oakland EPA superfund site. The goal is to provide specific recommendations for local communities.

"The tools are out there if communities want to use them," said Vintze.

Leslie Stewart covers air quality and energy for the Monitor.



Can We Quench Both the Thirst for Housing and Housing's Thirst?

By Robin Meadows

The San Francisco Bay Area is likely to be a lot more crowded in the near future, adding a projected 2 million people to the 7.5 million who already live here over the next quarter century. Planners traditionally focus on meeting housing and transportation needs as the region grows. But more people also means more demand for water — and choices we make today will determine how far our water goes in the future. Now, regional planners have begun to address the disconnect between land use and water supply.

Whether or not we have enough water for growth depends on factors including climate change and the way we grow. “Climate change is a little out of our control, so we should focus on what we can control: the urban form and water efficiency,” said Laura Tam, sustainable development policy director of SPUR, a nonprofit dedicated to urban planning. “If we can sustain the current rate of water conservation, we could add only a fraction of water use even if we add millions of people to the Bay Area,” she explained.

In 2010, California’s per capita water use in cities was 178 gallons a day. And by 2015, several years into our recent severe drought, that was down to 130 gallons a day. “One of the most encouraging outcomes of the drought is that we found out how much urban water use is discretionary,” Tam said.

Strategies for shrinking the water footprint of new housing include compact development, or urban infill comprising multi-family housing with shared green spaces. “The average urban housing unit is more water-efficient than a suburban house,” Tam said. Compact development has less landscaping, which typically accounts for one-third of residential water use statewide. In addition, perhaps a tenth of California’s water supply is lost to leaks, and compact development means shorter pipelines, which inherently reduce the chance of leaks.

Compact development can also help low-income people save money, in part by letting them live closer to work. When low-income people live far from their jobs, transportation costs can be as high as housing costs, according to a 2006 report from the nonprofit Center for Housing Policy. In contrast, living near a city center decreases transportation costs by an average of 40 percent.

Another way to keep growth’s water demand in check is water-neutral development. This approach offsets the increased water needs of new housing via a combination of conservation and retrofits to existing developments. “Many old buildings have old fixtures, and the amount of water you can save with new ones is very significant,” Tam said. Installing water-efficient fixtures could save 22.5 gallons per



The City of Brisbane is asking the developer of the proposed Baylands community (represented in this rendering) to come up with a water supply for the project.
image courtesy of Wallace Roberts & Todd

person per day, according to a 2014 report by the Pacific Institute and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The East Bay Municipal Utility District requires water offsets when new housing is annexed to its existing service area. So far, the district has struck deals on six water-neutral developments, according to a 2015 report by the Alliance for Water Efficiency. Similarly, some Bay Area cities are requiring water offsets before moving forward on proposed developments, said Nicole Sandkulla, CEO of the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA), which represents 26 water suppliers in Alameda, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties.

The City of Brisbane, for example, is requiring water neutrality for the proposed Baylands development, 4,400 residential units on a former landfill and rail yard near the shores of the Bay. “The city says there’s not enough water and asked the developer to come up with it,” Sandkulla said. Likewise, Redwood City is requiring water neutrality for the proposed Saltworks development. This controversial project initially entailed up to 12,000 residential units on a former commercial salt production site on the edge of the Bay.

Moreover, the City of East Palo Alto is so tight on water that a building moratorium is in effect through the summer of 2018. And, said Sandkulla, other BAWSCA cities are short on the water needed to supply new development mandates proposed by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) under the forthcoming Plan Bay Area 2040. “ABAG

continued on page 6

The Thirst for Housing and Housing's Thirst (from page 5)

is looking to push more people into the West Bay urban corridor, but some cities don't have enough water," she said. "ABAG needs to check in with water suppliers earlier — the focus has been on housing and transportation, but the other finite resource we have to address is water."

In a letter to regional authorities last October, Sandkulla wrote, "We strongly urge you to work with local water suppliers to consider the long-term water supply reliability implications of your regional land use planning effort."

ABAG's current regional housing plan states that "local jurisdictions consider infrastructure requirements, including water and sewer capacity, when developing their general plans and neighborhood plans" but then adds that "this information is not used to limit a jurisdiction's housing allocation." In addition, there is little mention of the water supply in the current Plan Bay Area, which was adopted in 2013, said ABAG resilience planner Michael Germeraad.

But he does see signs of better coordination between land use planning and the water supply. "In the past, there was less pressure on discussions of growth and

water," Germeraad said, adding, "Now, we're moving towards considering water earlier in the process."

ABAG's 2015 annual meeting focused on actions cities and counties can take for drought resilience, and in 2016 the agency began facilitating meetings between elected officials and water utilities to discuss growth. "Understanding the water supply could inform the development process — for example, we could build differently to reduce water consumption of new units," said Germeraad, citing built-in dual pipe systems for drinking water and graywater as an example.

The need to plan our future water use is further intensified by climate change. In the years to come, the Sierra Nevada snowpack that provides much of the Bay Area's water will likely be smaller, and the snow that does accumulate will likely melt before the end of the dry season, when we need it most. And, Germeraad pointed out, if our water supply drops as our population grows, "the water that we do have will be shared by more people." 🏠

Robin Meadows covers water for the Monitor.



Want to learn more? Follow the *Monitor* at facebook.com/bayareamonitor for article updates, related news from reliable media outlets, League announcements, agency meetings, nonprofit events, planning documents, and public comment opportunities.

Placemaking and Activation: How to Create an Urban Oasis

By Aleta George

Bay Area residents with the time, money, and means to travel have access to a vast playground of open space and parks in which to recreate and rejuvenate. But not everyone can get to the open space that surrounds us. Therefore, the amenities of open space and parks — fresh air, opportunities for exercise, views that please the eye and spirit, and a place for people to meet — are needed in cities, too.

The current trend in regional planning is to concentrate the bulk of new housing within city centers, and is expected to continue as the population in the Bay Area grows. With this progression, it's important for planners and developers to provide parks and open space for city-centered residents.

"Most people don't want to live a city that's completely paved. A livable city means to walk on dirt, run on grass, take a stroll, and see squirrels, birds, and insects. They don't want just a built environment, but a natural environment as well," said Eli Zigas, a policy director at SPUR.

But you can't merely plop down a patch of lawn in an

urban area and call it a park. To keep parks safe and desirable for everybody, they require activation. The adage, "Build it and they will come," doesn't necessarily apply to parks and open spaces. Park managers and planners have found that they need to apply activation and placemaking to teach people how to use their parks.

Traditionally, park maintenance has meant sending in a crew to "grow, blow, and go," said Angel Rios, Jr., director of the Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services department for the City of San José. "San José has become a huge, fast-paced city, and we're finding that people are hungry for opportunities to stop the clock, take a pause, have some fun, and meet people," said Rios, who manages 51 community centers, 200 parks, and 57 miles of trails. "We use the infrastructure [of parks and trails] as our playground to build community," he noted.

When Rios and his team discovered that people in lower-income and high-need communities weren't using their

local parks, they launched Viva Parks to repopulate a select number of existing parks. They brought in a mobile rock-climbing wall, bungee jumping, movie nights, and food trucks. The first couple events saw roughly 40 people, but by the third event the crowds had increased to 800. “Viva Parks exceeded our expectations,” said Rios. “It also taught us that people don’t know how to interact with their parks, and need to be incentivized to reconnect with them,” he added.

Bringing Parks to the People

For decades, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) has been providing open space and bringing parks to people. “Our goal is to ensure that every child has easy access to a safe place in nature. That includes creating close-to-home parks, particularly in and near cities where 80 percent of Americans live,” said Mary Creasman, the national nonprofit’s California director of government affairs.

TPL works with communities to build new parks and revitalize old ones. Every park looks different because each one is designed based on the needs and wants of the community through a process TPL calls “creative placemaking.”

Boeddeker Park in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood is within walking distance of 50,000 people in dense, urban housing, mostly single-room dwellings. Boeddeker Park was a rundown, fenced-in, paved-over place used by drug dealers until TPL collaborated with community members to rethink and redesign the park. They also worked with the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, the YMCA, and the Boys and Girls Club to plan and implement regular programming for afterschool students, seniors, and families. The restored and vibrant one-acre park has been open for two years and features gardens, a lawn, a full-sized basketball court, fitness equipment, and a new, state-of-the-

art community center. The park is the largest open space in the Tenderloin, and “basically transformed that area,” said Alejandra Chiesa, TPL’s Bay Area program director.

The recent renovation of Richmond’s John F. Kennedy Park serves as a successful new model of how to transform a park quickly with lots of local volunteers. Spearheaded by TPL and steered by community members, the planning and design process took six months and culminated in a workday when 600 volunteers planted and mulched the gardens, and created art on trash containers and sidewalks with mosaics and paint. It was a success, said Chiesa, but more activation is needed to keep the nearby seniors, students, and church members using the park.

“One of the reasons that people don’t use parks is [a lack of] safety,” said Chiesa, who explained that “the ongoing challenge is the same for other urban parks. Parks need to be active, in use, and safe.” The way to do that is to bring people and programs to the park for positive activities on an ongoing basis. “Parks shouldn’t



TPL collaborated with a range of organizations and stakeholders to revitalize Boeddeker Park in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighborhood.

photo by Jamie Hooper

just be designed for construction, but for how they are going to be used,” she said.

People to People

Rios views open space and parks as a bridge. “I didn’t sign up to run a traditional parks and rec program — I signed up to lead a strategy that would push the limits of making an impact in our community by using parks and trails as a conduit to connect people to people,” he said.

Rios says his work is driven by a quote from Mother Theresa: “If there is no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” He believes that parks and open space can play a part in helping to reestablish that connection.

“I know I run the risk of sounding overly romantic

continued on page 8

League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Education Fund
 436 14th Street #1213, Oakland, CA 94612
 (510) 839-1608 ♦ www.bayareamonitor.org



NONPROFIT
 ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 OAKLAND, CA
 PERMIT NO. 2508

Support an Informed Public — Our Democracy Depends on It

News reporting is a challenging endeavor, especially for a small nonprofit operation like the League's *Bay Area Monitor*. This work isn't getting any easier, either, but your donation can help us show that there are no alternatives to facts.



The *Monitor* would like to acknowledge recent donations from Paul McCauley, Robert Piper, Sue Beittel, Sue Lempert, Marion Taylor, Linda Craig, Omar Chatty, Jane Bergen, Elizabeth Brown, and Nancy Burnett. Such generous financial contributions are greatly appreciated, and help this publication continue to fulfill its mission. Donations to the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Education Fund, a 501(c)3 organization, are tax deductible.

How to Create an Urban Oasis (from page 7)

or touchy-feely, but at the end of the day, when you look at what makes people tick and what people are hungry for, it has become clear to me that Mother Theresa had it right," said Rios. "Once people reconnect with that sense of 'we belong to each other,' it becomes the very definition of community. I believe that's when the best community work gets done, because now you're advocating for what is best for the city rather than for your own special interests," he added.

"Parks are an essential service, not just a luxury," said Chiesa.

And with thoughtful activation, they can also help turn a neighborhood into a community. 🏡

Aleta George covers open space for the Monitor.



Members of Tezkatlipoka Aztec Dance & Drum performed at a Viva Parks event in San José last summer.

photo courtesy of City of San José Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services