



Development Proposed For Large Orinda Valley

Continued from page 1

landslides.

At the April 16 meeting, officials of Design Resources said that they did not know what the probable cost of each of the 18 proposed homes would be. A member of the audience familiar with construction estimated that each individual home would cost a buyer between \$2.5 million and \$4.0 million.

Making a presentation at the meeting was Emmanuel Ursu, Orinda's former planning director. When asked if any of the 18 proposed homes would be set aside for low-income people, he refused to reply and quickly walked away.

To learn more about Orinda's plans for Southwood Valley, an inquiry to a high official of the Orinda government went unanswered. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Icon is a periodic publication designed to inform Orinda residents about important issues in their community.

The Icon has no political affiliation and is non-partisan. The Icon is available by regular mail and over the internet. <www.iconnews.org>

The Icon is a wholly owned subsidiary of Biomed Inc., a multi-national informatics, publishing, and biotechnology company located in Concord, California.

The editor and publisher of The Icon is Richard Colman, a resident of Orinda since 1999.

CONTACTING THE ICON:

The Icon can be contacted at:

The Icon
21-C Orinda Way, #248
Orinda, CA 94563
TEL (925) 609-2820 ext. 203
FAX (925) 363-7798

E-mail: info@iconnews.org
Website: www.iconnews.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

The Icon welcomes letters to the editor. Please submit letters to <info@iconnews.org>. FAX (925) 363-7798.

© Copyright 2018, The Icon

Development Proposed For Large Orinda Valley

By Richard Colman

An engineering firm has outlined a proposal for the development of housing in Southwood Valley, a large, natural area in the midst of Orinda.

The Southwood plan might not comply with Orinda's General Plan. Each city in California is required to have a General Plan, which is a document covering a city's governance, especially in the area of land use.

At a meeting at the Orinda Public Library on April 16, 2018, Design Resources, an engineering firm in Walnut Creek, described a plan to build 18 homes in the valley. The 18 homes would occupy 10 acres of Southwood Valley's 43 acres.

Over 100 people attended the meeting, many of them critical of the plan.

Southwood Valley is near such Orinda streets as Bates Boulevard, Tahos Road, and Southwood Drive.

Orinda's General Plan, which provides rules governing the city's use of its land, specifically mentions Southwood Valley. The General Plan states: "Prior to development . . . for the 43-acre Southwood Valley parcel, an environmental constraints study shall be completed by the

City at the expense of the owner and upon request of the owner."

Chris Kniel, an Orinda resident, has criticized development of Southwood Valley. Kniel, in an April 19, 2018, written statement said: "The General Plan specifically says for Southwood Valley that a complete Environmental Impact Report must be prepared prior to any determination of development and the number of homes that might be supported on 10 acres . . ."



Developers want construction in Orinda's Southwood Valley, a large, natural area in the city.

Ross Avedian, an official of Design Resources, said at the April 16 meeting that an Environmental Impact Report has "not yet" been done.

Referring to Design Resources proposal, Mr. Kniel said, "Their proposal is absurd. It represents a major insult to the neighborhood and the Orinda community."

Another Orinda resident who attended the meeting said, "The development, if carried out, could easily lead to mudslides during a rainstorm."

According to Yuri Eliyahu of Design Resources, Southwood Valley is a geologically active site and can experience

See Development on page 4

Chocolate: A Smart Food?

By Dr. Laura Pawlak

There is universal agreement that chocolate is a feel good food. Chocolate melts in your mouth, releasing its sweet, creamy, cocoa flavor, and the brain follows with a burst of "happy" chemicals.

Beyond the sensory joy of eating chocolate, there are claims that chocolate is a healthy food for the brain. Most of us would gladly eat more chocolate if proven to benefit the brain.

Several ingredients in cocoa have been proposed to explain the possible cognitive benefits of chocolate. Cocoa contains caffeine, a substance that en-



Is chocolate a healthy food for the brain?

hances cognitive functioning and alertness. Major nutrients have also been identified in the cocoa bean. Presently, studies focus on the chemical group called flavanols.

Flavanols are micronutrients found in many fruits and vegetables, especially the fruit called the cocoa bean, the basis of chocolate. Flavanols have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties -- important for brain health.

Small studies, often supported by chocolate manufacturers, state that the

See Chocolate on page 3

Housing & the Free Market

By Richard Colman

Economically, everything appears to be getting worse in Northern California.

The same situation may also exist in Southern California.

Housing in Northern California is drastically overpriced. Try finding a decent home for less than \$1 million or \$2 million (or more).

Taxes are high. California leads the nation in the sales tax, the gasoline tax, and the top-bracket of the state's personal income tax (13.3 percent).

The freeways are jammed in Northern California. There is limited parking, assuming one can find a parking space at all. The public schools in many areas are overcrowded, offer a poor education, or face both conditions.

Crime appears to be growing. On March 18, 2018, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that there were 31,000 auto break-ins in San Francisco in 2017. Arrests, according to the Chronicle, were made "... in just 550 cases ..."

Higher education at the esteemed 10-campus University of California is, for many students, unaffordable. Tuition alone costs \$12,630. Fifty years ago, tuition was \$180 per year. Costs for books, room, and board make the cost of attending the University even higher.

The California State Legislature keeps intervening to try to remedy the state's problems. In recent years, the state government has told local communities how much cheap housing to build. A certain portion of new homes has to be set aside for low-income individuals.

Currently, in the state legislature, are bills giving the state the right to grab a local community's land. State Senate Bill 827, for example, would, if enacted, allow the state to seize a local community's land within one-quarter mile of a frequently used bus route and within one-half mile of a train station. The seized land would be used to construct high-rise, high-density housing. And the housing can be as high as 85 feet regardless of local zoning ordinances, in-

cluding local height limits. Parking at such housing may be prohibited.

What is the remedy for California's problems?

Some people advocate more state-government intervention to solve California's problems.

However, there is another approach. That approach is to let the market work.

The economist, Milton Friedman, who died in 2006 and was for many years a professor of economics at the University of Chicago, was a strong advocate of free-market economics and a vigorous opponent of government intervention in the marketplace.

Dr. Friedman, who had libertarian views, said many of society's problems were caused, not solved, by government intervention.

One of Dr. Friedman's often repeated quotations is: "If you put the federal government in charge of the Sahara Desert, in five years there'd be a shortage of sand."

Perhaps, in Northern California, the free market is already working. In March 2018, the Wall Street Journal reported that more people moved out of the San Francisco metropolitan area "... than moved into it from other parts of California or the U.S., according to U.S. census data."

The Journal continued: "In the year that ended July 1 [2017], the region showed a net loss of nearly 24,000 residents to the rest of the country, roughly double the loss of the previous year and a sharp reversal from net annual gains of about 15,000 as recently as 2013-2014."

Perhaps the solution to Northern California's problems is to do nothing at all, letting the current mass exodus continue unabated.

If enough people leave Northern California, the state's government won't have to intervene in the economy, especially in the area of housing.

If the free-market works, home prices might drop, but at least residents would be able to find a parking space. ■



A free market in California's housing might allow single, detached family homes like this one not to be surrounded by large, high-rise apartment complexes.

The State Wants More Control Over Orinda

The State of California wants to dictate more land-use policies to Orinda and elsewhere.

Additional state mandates for Orinda (and other cities) go beyond a recent plan to require high-rise, high-density housing in transit-rich areas.

In February 2018, the Orinda City Council supported the sending of a letter by Amy Worth, a member of the Orinda City Council and the city's current mayor, to State Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco).

The letter stated that the City of Orinda opposes State Senate Bill 827 (SB 827). SB 827, which was defeated in a State Senate committee vote, would have given the State of California control over Orinda's land one-quarter mile within a frequency-used bus stop or within one-half mile of a train station.

Senator Wiener is the sponsor of SB 827. The co-sponsor is Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley).

In February, Ms. Worth wrote: "Based on our review an understand of the proposed legislation, the impact on the City of Orinda's land use and development standards and processes would be severe."

SB 827 may be introduced again at a later time.

Now, there is a new threat to Orinda's control over the city's land. The threat comes from Senate Bill 828 (SB 828), also sponsored by Sen. Wiener.

SB 828 affects the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA). Under RHNA, California cities must construct homes for low-income people.

SB 828, if enacted, would increase the RHNA to 125 percent of the current number.

According to the Marin Post, an online publication, "SB 828 is yet another naked attack on California's dwindling middle class and our livable suburban communities."

The Marin Post added, "... small cities simply do not have any economically viable land to designate for multifamily development ..."

Other parts of SB 828 would allow the state to speed up the state's demand for a local community to construct more housing, whether or nor the community had space for more housing. Also, there is no guarantee that the state would reimburse a local community for any costs associated with the building of more local residences.

At press time, there is no word on what, if anything, the Orinda City Council plans to do about SB 828. ■

Richard Colman

Chocolate: A Smart Food?

Continued from page 1

cocoa flavanols can boost mood and cognitive performance -- as well as blood flow to the brain. Researchers are now evaluating the significance of these small studies by conducting large, clinical trials using a cocoa extract with known flavanol content, not chocolate.

A dose of 600 – 750 milligrams of flavanols is considered healthful for the brain. To obtain this dose, you would have to consume 4.75 ounces of dark chocolate, a total of 750 calories, or 40 ounces of milk chocolate, which has 5,850 calories.

A day with adequate flavanols from commercial chocolate is also a day heavy in sugar, saturated fat, and calories -- not a formula for a sharp brain. Perhaps future studies examining chocolate's healthful ingredients in the cocoa extract will provide more healthful ways to capture the goodness of the cocoa bean.

Meanwhile, manufacturers divert your focus from calories to health by presenting chocolate paired with a superfood, the avocado. Called a health food, the Avocado Chocolate Bar is made of freeze-dried avocado pulp powder, 70 percent dark chocolate -- plus added sugar -- and has nearly 600 calories.

The bar is a convenient, but calorie-laden, snack. The alternative -- consuming whole, fresh plant food -- is always a good choice for the brain.

My suggestion: Eat dark chocolate in moderation if you like it, not because you think it will make you smarter. For added flavanols, focus on the abundant amounts of this nutrient in grapes and berries. Enjoy!

Dr. Laura Pawlak (Ph.D., R.D. emerita) is a world-renowned biochemist and dietitian emerita. She is the author of many scientific publications and has written such best-selling books as "The Hungry Brain," "Life Without Diets," and "Stop Gaining Weight." On the subjects of nutrition and brain science, she gives talks internationally. ■

ICON

EDITORIAL Re-Elect Catherine Baker To The State Assembly

In November 2014, Catherine Baker (R-Dublin) won election to a two-year term to the California State Assembly. She was re-elected in 2016.

Now running for a third term, Assemblywoman Baker deserves re-election. Her name will appear on the June 2018 primary ballot.

Assemblywoman Baker, whose 16th Assembly District includes Orinda, has been a tireless advocate of good government. Her district includes such cities as Lafayette, Moraga, San Ramon, Danville, and Pleasanton.

Ms. Baker is hard-working, frequently holding town-hall meetings to obtain the views of constituents. She is actually an elected official who listens to her constituents. How many other elected officials do people know who pay attention to voters?

The assemblywoman is a lawyer, having graduated from the Law School (Boalt Hall) of the University of California at Berkeley. Ms. Baker holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Chicago.

Ms. Baker is an unusual Republican. She is not part of the Republican establishment -- an establishment that is personified by President Donald Trump, who knows more about making enemies than friends and comports himself in a rude, polarizing way that is not presidential.

In her almost four years in the Assembly, Ms. Baker has worked to obtain results and avoid polarizing partisanship. She is a strong supporter of education at all levels. In the area of higher education,

she favors giving more priority to students who are residents of California. In a written statement, Ms. Baker says, "I have authored bipartisan legislation that will limit the number of out-of-state UC [University of California] admits

[and] ensure out-of-state students admitted do not have lower academic qualifications than in-state students ..."

Assemblywoman Baker opposes the high-speed rail project that, if completed, will connect Northern California and Southern California by train. She opposes the Twin Tunnels project designed to deliver more Northern California water to areas further south. She wants the money that might be spent on high-speed rail and the Twin Tunnels to

be re-directed toward water-storage projects, schools, and transportation.

In 2013, BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) workers went on strike twice. Ms. Baker opposes strikes by BART workers. If her anti-strike stance sounds unacceptable to organized labor's supporters, Ms. Baker's position is identical to a famous advocate of working people. In 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt wrote that he opposes strikes by public employees.

In the area of women's equality and health, Ms. Baker has written, "We need to ensure women are treated equally in the workforce and are afforded the same opportunities as their male counterparts."

Ms. Baker, on the subject of abortion, is pro-choice.

The Icon enthusiastically endorses Assemblywoman Catherine Baker for re-election. ■



Assemblywoman Catharine Baker (R-Dublin), right, is definitely worthy of re-election to a third term in the California State Assembly. In the Assembly, Ms. Baker represents Orinda and other cities in the 16th Assembly District. Appearing with Ms. Baker is State Senator Steve Glazer (D-Orinda).

ICON

page 3