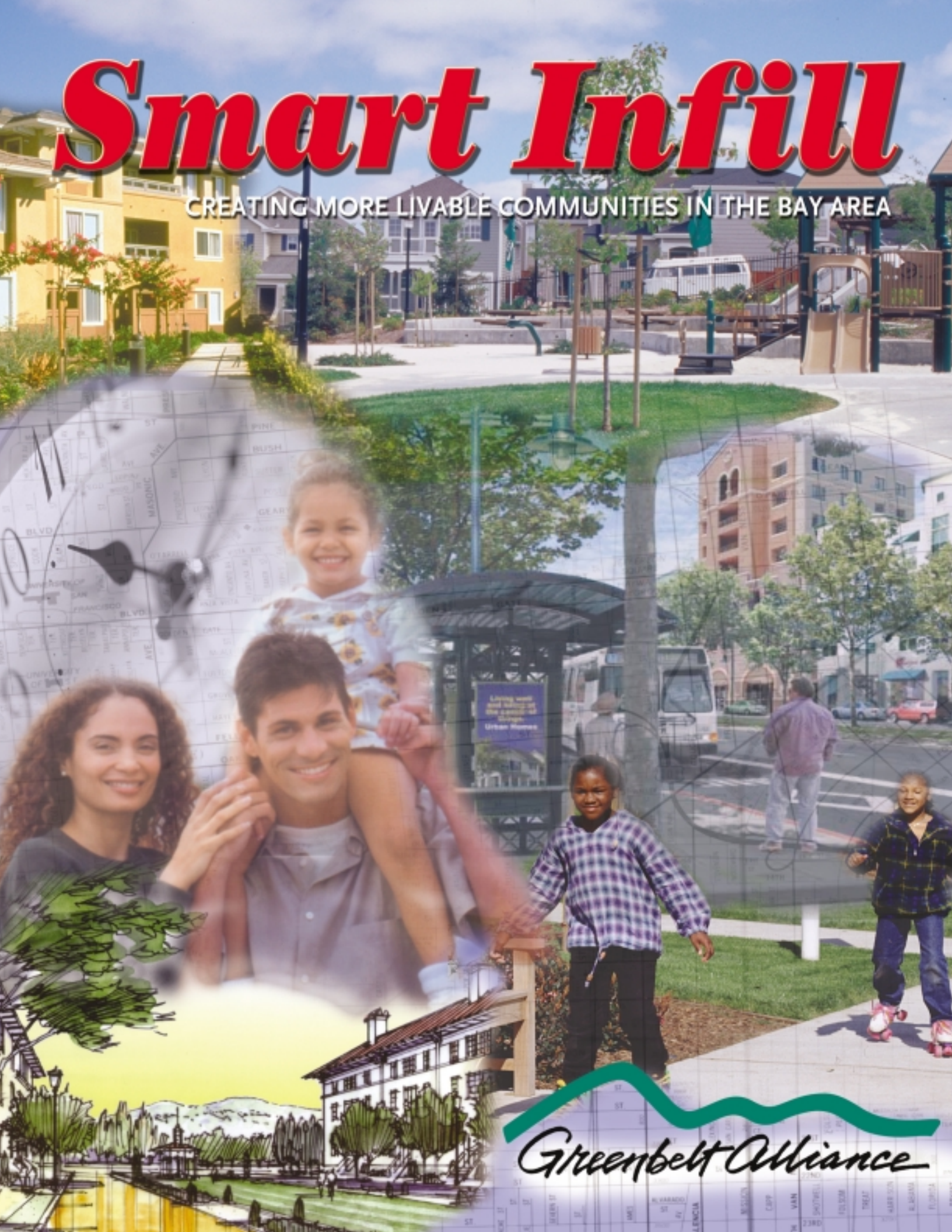
Smart Infill

CREATING MORE LIVABLE COMMUNITIES IN THE BAY AREA



Greenbelt Alliance

Smart Infill

CREATING MORE LIVABLE COMMUNITIES IN THE BAY AREA

A GUIDE FOR BAY AREA LEADERS

By
Stephen Wheeler, PhD, AICP

SPRING 2002

Greenbelt Alliance

PROTECTING OPEN SPACE AND PROMOTING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Smart Infill: Creating More Livable Communities in the Bay Area is a guide for local government officials, planners, and citizens concerned about how development within existing towns and cities—especially infill housing and mixed-use development—can help revitalize communities and accommodate the future growth of the Bay Area.

This Greenbelt Alliance report was researched and written by Stephen M. Wheeler, Ph.D., AICP, in collaboration with Greenbelt Alliance staff and the Greenbelt Alliance Livable Communities Board team. Team members include Roberta Borgonovo, Andrew Butler, Peter Cohen, Zach Cowan, Ignacio Dayrit, Marilyn Farley, Robert Johnson, Vivian Kahn, Trish Mulvey, Margaret Spaulding, Michele Stratton, and Michelle Yesney.

The author and Greenbelt Alliance would like to thank the many individuals interviewed for this report who gave generously of their time and knowledge (see list of interviewees at the end of this report), and especially those who reviewed drafts of this document: Steve Barton, Roberta Borgonovo, Peter Cohen, Ignacio Dayrit, Stephanie Forbes, Tom Jones, Vivian Kahn, and Laurel Prevetti. *Infill Development for Livable Communities* was designed by Lisa Roth.

Copies of this guidebook can be obtained from Greenbelt Alliance at the address below, or on the web at *www.greenbelt.org*.

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Greenbelt Alliance

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Our mission is to make the nine county San Francisco Bay Area a better place to live by protecting the region's greenbelt and improving the livability of its cities and towns. We work through public policy development, advocacy and education, in partnership with diverse coalitions.

Tom Steinbach
Executive Director

Janet Stone
Livable Communities Program Director

executive summary

If the Bay Area is to meet the growth challenges of the twenty-first century, much more of the region's building will need to take place as "infill" development within existing cities and towns. Infill development can help the region save open space, improve housing options and affordability, reduce traffic congestion, make more efficient use of existing infrastructure, and create more livable communities. Given the region's housing crisis, residential or mixed-use infill is particularly important to create additional housing near jobs in many existing Bay Area communities.

Infill development faces many obstacles in the Bay Area. Impediments include land availability, fiscal disincentives for local governments to approve infill projects, outdated zoning requirements, excessive parking standards, financing difficulties, neighborhood opposition, lengthy permitting processes, toxic contamination of sites, and poor schools and a lack of amenities in older communities. These obstacles must be addressed if infill is to achieve its potential of accommodating a majority of future Bay Area development.

Local governments can play a central role in making infill happen. Local officials can take the lead by creating Specific Plans for areas with infill potential, revising zoning and parking codes, adopting design guidelines, streamlining permitting processes, facilitating cleanup of contaminated sites, and coordinating involvement of neighbors and other local constituencies. It is particularly important for Bay Area cities and towns to encourage multiple infill projects in close proximity with new amenities such as parks, streetscape improvements, public plazas, child care centers, local shops, and restaurants.

Such infill would produce not just individual buildings, but revitalized communities that can meet the needs of a wide variety of residents. At the same time, cities and towns should adopt policies to protect existing low-income residents from displacement and to ensure that new housing units serve all income groups. Along with open space protection, improved transportation alternatives, and measures to promote regional equity, infill development can form the core of a regional Smart Growth strategy.

Some Bay Area communities have already taken leadership in creating a favorable context for infill. San Jose has adopted a city-wide strategy combining an Urban Growth Boundary with zoning changes, permit streamlining, financial incentives to developers, and creation of Specific Plans. Other communities such as Mountain View, San Rafael, and San Francisco are also creating Specific Plans for infill locations. Emeryville has been a leader in cleaning up contaminated "brownfields" sites and in providing information and assistance to developers. Redwood City, Hayward, and Oakland have built new civic facilities to help leverage downtown infill. San Francisco's Mission Bay project creates an entire new infill neighborhood on former railyard lands. Infill around rail transit stations is underway in Pleasant Hill, Millbrae, El Cerrito, Walnut Creek, Richmond, Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood, and other locations.

Together, all of us can help Bay Area cities and towns become more livable and sustainable through infill development.

Creating a context that nurtures infill development in the Bay Area means putting in place mutually reinforcing programs at different levels of government. State and regional policy should promote local action. The active involvement of citizens, business groups, neighborhood associations, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, and the media is also crucial to building political support for infill. Together, all of us can help Bay Area cities and towns become more livable and sustainable through infill development.

contents

introduction

Many Bay Area local leaders support concepts such as "Smart Growth" and "Sustainable Development." But how is the region to achieve such goals? The purpose of this guidebook is to provide information on how cities and towns can implement one key strategy—infill development, especially of housing. Through well-designed infill, the region can grow smarter and more sustainably while improving quality of life for current and future residents.

Infill development is an essential complement to greenbelt protection. It provides positive and constructive alternatives to suburban sprawl development—alternatives that can help revitalize existing Bay Area communities and provide much-needed housing for the region.

Infill development also offers a prime way to satisfy the "three E's" of sustainable development: environment, economy, and equity. It meets environmental goals by lowering threats to open space, reducing automobile use, and cleaning up polluted urban lands. It meets economic goals by supporting existing community businesses, providing needed housing for Bay Area workers, and using the region's infrastructure more cost-effectively. And it meets equity goals by reinvesting in older or more established Bay Area communities that have lost tax base and economic opportunities in recent decades, and by making a greater range of housing, transportation, and employment choices available to the full diversity of area residents.

This guidebook presents a range of specific policies and programs which local governments and regional decision-makers can use to help the region "grow up, not out." The analysis here focuses on infill development that is residential or mixed-use in character. There are two reasons for this: the Bay Area is suffering from a severe and growing housing crisis, and bringing residents back into the centers of communities and older neighborhoods is one of the best ways to revitalize these areas. Even in times of slow economic growth, planning for infill can still occur. The region's economy will rebound, and periods of economic downturn allow municipalities a chance to prepare the way for well-thought-out infill development when times are better.

Part 1 of this guidebook explains the concept of infill development, summarizes the Bay Area's current growth crisis, and describes how infill development can help address many of the problems resulting from rapid, poorly planned regional growth. Part 2 provides a handbook of strategies that local governments can use to promote well-planned infill. Part 3 supplies Bay Area case studies of successful infill—places where municipal action is helping infill development revitalize neighborhoods or entire cities. Finally, two appendices provide a resource list and bibliography on infill development.

By publishing this guidebook, Greenbelt Alliance seeks to give local decision-makers tools with which to promote infill. Mayors, city council members, and city staff persons are on the front lines of infill development, in the most pivotal positions to make policy changes to encourage the development of more vibrant communities through infill.

The Bay Area is at a crossroads. Either we get serious about guiding new development toward our existing cities and towns, or we risk losing the high quality of life, open space, and diversity that make this region so wonderful.

—Tom Steinbach
Executive Director
Greenbelt Alliance

However, this guidebook also provides a resource for citizen activists and the media by supplying detailed information on how successful infill development can occur as well as an extensive list of further resources. Citizens' groups can play a crucial role in ensuring good infill development in the Bay Area. They can work with planners and developers to ensure that project designs are responsive

Actual photo of existing Bay Area street (top); computer-generated image (below) shows this area attractively transformed through mixed-use infill, plus a light rail stop.

Images courtesy of Joint Venture Silicon Valley and Urban Advantage

to neighborhood needs, support good projects in front of city councils and zoning boards, and mobilize support for broader changes to municipal plans and zoning in order for successful infill development to occur.

Overall, this document intends to stimulate debate about how the Bay Area can use infill development to improve the livability and sustainability of its communities, rather than continuing to sprawl outwards. Infill development is likely to be one of the main planning challenges of the twenty-first century, and in the Bay Area like other regions a comprehensive, strategic approach at each level of government is needed to bring it about.

the need for infill

WHAT IS INFILL DEVELOPMENT?

"Infill" development refers to construction of new housing, workplaces, shops, and other facilities within existing urban or suburban areas. This development can be of several types: building on vacant lots, reuse of underutilized sites (such as parking lots and old industrial sites), and rehabilitation or expansion of existing buildings. Through infill, communities can increase their housing, jobs, and community amenities without expanding their overall footprint out into open space or otherwise undeveloped lands.

Computer-generated visioning (left) shows a suburban commercial street transformed into a pedestrian friendly, mixed-use corridor with a dedicated bus lane...

Images courtesy of Joint Venture Silicon Valley and Urban Advantage

Some infill development has always taken place within cities and towns. But the percentage of development that is infill instead of "greenfield"—on open space or agricultural land at the urban fringe—is relatively small in the Bay Area, as it is in most U.S. metropolitan regions. Instead of caring for and reusing our urban land, we have literally moved on to greener pastures. Meanwhile, as sprawl development draws jobs and people to the urban fringe, many older Bay Area cities and suburbs have languished, with declining tax bases and little new investment.

Infill development can take many forms (described further below). In the past, not all infill has managed to create attractive places. But much has been learned in recent decades about how to design and build infill projects that add to quality of life for all members of the community. Successful infill development carefully integrates new projects into the urban context, adds needed housing and amenities, and attempts to meet needs of both existing neighbors and new workers or residents. Because of the Bay

Area's enormous need for housing—particularly housing affordable to a broad range of workers and located near jobs and transit—it is especially important for infill projects to include residential units.

...and how additional housing options-duplexes and fourplexes-can be added in a manner compatible with existing homes.

Images courtesy of Joint Venture Silicon Valley and Urban Advantage

In many ways infill development represents the opposite of sprawl, in that it can help create compact and vibrant communities with a diverse mixture of land uses, well-connected street patterns, and much-needed community amenities such as parks, child care centers, shops, cafes, restaurants, schools, and walkable public spaces.

Although infill development is sometimes thought of as a concern of older central cities, it is an important strategy for suburbs as well. Such development can help create active downtowns and neighborhood centers, and foster a "sense of place" within suburban communities. It can also add a broader range of housing options, a better balance of workplaces, homes, and stores, and other community amenities.

Infill by itself won't solve the Bay Area's growth problems. But combined with greenbelt protection, better public transit, more pedestrian-oriented street design, new congestion management efforts, measures to promote housing affordability, and protections for existing residents at risk of displacement, infill will be a central part of achieving regional smart growth and sustainability.

THE ROLE OF INFILL IN ADDRESSING BAY AREA'S GROWTH CRISIS

In the decades since World War II, the Bay Area has expanded outward primarily through development in the 'greenfields.' Subdivisions have gobbled up farms, ranchland, and wetlands. Walnut Creek lost its walnut trees, and the South Bay, once known as "Valley of Heart's Delight" because of its flowering fruit trees, became Silicon Valley instead. The five-county Bay Area became a nine-county region and threatens to become a 14-county metropolis as a lack of housing choices forces many Bay Area workers to commute from homes in the Central Valley.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) projects there will be a million new residents in the Bay Area by 2020. Whether or not this

turns out to be an entirely accurate projection, we can conclude that without smarter growth focusing on infill development, the result will be enormous environmental and social problems. Our current pattern of suburban sprawl development imposes a number of specific burdens on the region which infill development can help reduce:

Loss of open space

As many as 490,000 acres of Bay Area open space may be lost in the next 30 years without strong action by local cities and counties to manage growth and promote infill. Sprawl development is likely to follow major freeway corridors such as I-80 toward Sacramento, I-580 toward Tracy, and 101 north past Santa Rosa and south past Gilroy. This open space threat is documented in previous Greenbelt Alliance *At Risk* reports (see *www.greenbelt.org*).

Infill development is one of the main antidotes to suburban sprawl. Every housing unit, office, or store developed in a Bay Area infill location is one less that adds to sprawl. Infill development tends to be more compact than sprawl, so the same number of dwelling units, stores, or offices takes up much less land. Increasing the Bay Area's infill development rate even slightly would save hundreds of square miles of open space and farmland.

How much open space could infill development preserve? The answer would depend on the amount of infill that we are able to build. No agency currently keeps figures on the percentage of infill versus greenfield development in the Bay Area. (Such figures also depend on exact definitions of infill.) But judging by the experience of other western U.S. metropolitan areas such as Portland, the current Bay Area percentage of new housing accounted for by infill development is probably between 20 and 30 percent. With moderate effort, that level could be increased substantially within five years. With much stronger efforts over several decades, levels of 60 percent or more are possible. In its recent Envision Utah planning exercise, the Salt Lake City area even studied an alternative in which development would have been nearly 90 percent infill.

Traffic and automobile use

Traffic congestion is already severe on Bay Area roads at many hours of the day. The total mileage that Bay Area residents drive each day is expected to grow by nearly 50 percent by 2025, according to the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan developed by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). The amount of traffic congestion is projected to more than double (increasing by 149 percent), even with the expenditure of tens of billions of dollars for new transportation infrastructure.

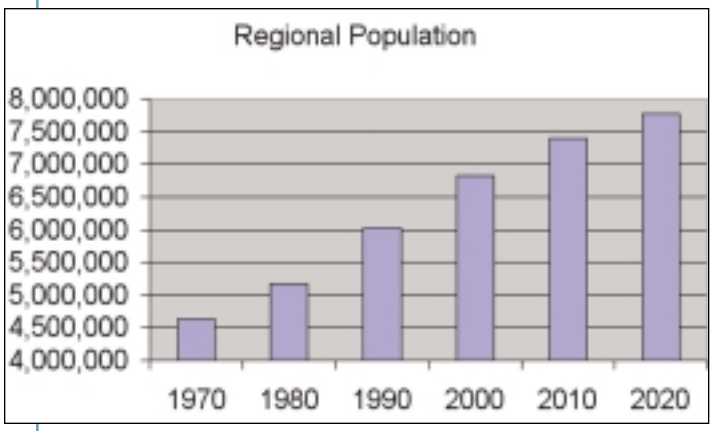
Infill development can dramatically reduce this growing need to drive. Well-designed infill puts people into walkable, transit-oriented environments where they don't have to drive as much as if they were living or working on the suburban fringe. Studies have shown far lower levels of automobile use in more compact Bay Area cities—where much infill would occur—than in newer, low-density suburbs. For example, a 1995 study published by the California Air Resources Board found that annual vehicle miles traveled per household varied from 5,500 miles in northeast San Francisco to 12,500–14,300 in older cities like Berkeley and north Oakland to 22,300 in suburban Lafayette and Walnut Creek. However, even newer suburbs and established suburban communities can reduce auto dependency by pursuing appropriate infill development.

Public attitude has definitely changed to be more understanding that everyone can't live in a single family home or the freeways are going to be just jammed. People see that it makes more sense to put higher density homes near transit and downtown.

—Kevin Roberts
Community Development Director
Walnut Creek

Lack of housing affordability

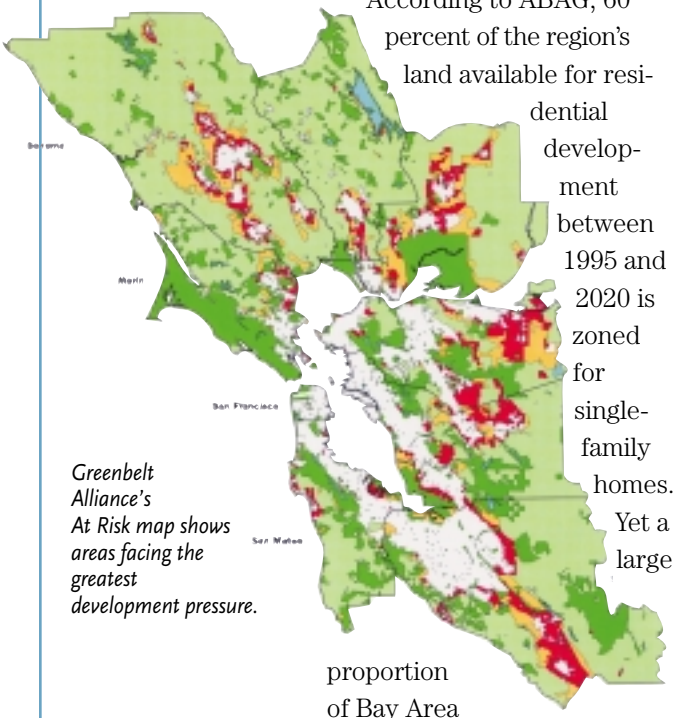
For much of the 1990s the Bay Area produced nine times as many new jobs as housing units, according to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). Not surprisingly, housing costs have skyrocketed. Median home prices in the region neared the $500,000 mark in 2001. To find affordable housing, many workers have moved to outlying cities or Central Valley towns, exacerbating traffic problems.



Approximately one million new Bay Area residents are expected in the next 20 years.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Because of the homogenous nature of suburban sprawl development, Bay Area residents have a relatively narrow range of housing choices. According to ABAG, 60 percent of the region's land available for residential development between 1995 and 2020 is zoned for single-family homes. Yet a large proportion of Bay Area households cannot afford or do not need such single-family detached homes. Many communities lack well-designed duplexes, townhouses, or garden apartments that can provide attractive, high-amenity residences at densities that can support public transit and save open space.



Greenbelt Alliance's At Risk map shows areas facing the greatest development pressure.

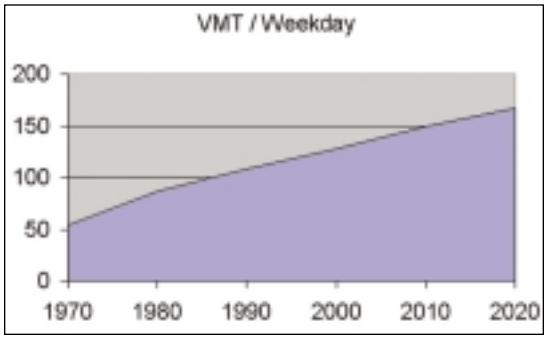
Infill development typically creates a wider variety of housing choices than greenfield development. Second units behind existing houses provide small, relatively inexpensive units for students or the elderly. Studio, one-, and two-bedroom apartments and condominiums accommodate singles and couples without children. Larger apartments, townhouses, and single-family detached homes meet the needs of families. Assisted living facilities and supportive housing provide on-site services in addition to housing. Infill can help add all these housing types to existing communities. To provide a complete range of housing choices affordable to lower income residents, though, will require subsidies or other actions by local government.

Uneven growth

While some communities face intense growth pressure, such as those in Silicon Valley, San Francisco, the North Bay's 101 corridor, and eastern Alameda and Contra Costa counties, other parts of the Bay Area have seen little new investment. Older cities such as Oakland, Richmond, Vallejo, and East Palo Alto suffer from low tax base, deteriorating infrastructure, and accumulated social service needs. A recent study by the Urban Habitat Program found that per capita tax base varies by a factor of five between wealthy cities such as Atherton and Danville and poor communities such as East Palo Alto. New infill development, especially mixed-use development containing offices, retail stores, restaurants, and hotels as well as homes, can substantially increase the tax base of older Bay Area cities.

Jobs/housing imbalance and mismatch

The balance between jobs and housing within the region and within individual cities has become seriously skewed. Housing is being created in cities like Tracy, Brentwood, Fairfield, and Vacaville, while jobs are being created in the Silicon Valley, San Francisco, and San Ramon. Many municipalities have zoned overly generous amounts of land for commercial or industrial development, but are unwilling to accept much housing. The result is a worsening "jobs/housing imbalance"—meaning among other things that



The number of miles Bay Area residents drive each day is expected to rise more than 30 percent in 20 years, more than twice as fast as the rate of population growth, in large part due to sprawling land use and the fact that jobs and housing are located far from one another.

Bay Area residents must drive long distances to get to work, and that traffic congestion and air pollution increase.

Even within individual cities, jobs, housing, and shops are often widely separated by conventional zoning and suburban development patterns. This means that few daily travel destinations are within walking distance of homes, and that residents must drive to get to most places they need to go.

Further, there is not a good match between the housing being built and the incomes of many who live or work in the area. In most Bay Area communities, many more above-moderate income homes are being constructed than low or moderate-income units, which means that people with modest incomes have few affordable housing options.

Infill development can help create a greater mixture of land uses and housing options within communities, both of which will add vitality and interest. Particular efforts are needed to add infill housing to areas such as Silicon Valley and San Francisco in which job growth has vastly outpaced housing production, and to create multifamily housing with larger unit sizes to accommodate families.

Declining community livability

As traffic mounts, open space vanishes, older downtowns decline, and affordable housing disappears, in large part due to sprawl development, quality of life falls for many residents of the Bay Area. Sprawl has led to disinvestment in city services and schools within central Bay Area cities and towns, and has fueled the movement of jobs to newer suburbs far from where many current Bay Area residents live. As such problems mount, many individuals and businesses begin to wonder whether the advantages of the region are worth the costs, and consider moving elsewhere. For those committed to the region, daily life becomes slowly more difficult.

We cannot have livable communities in the Bay Area without a range of housing options affordable to residents at all income levels, plus good schools, safe and walkable neighborhoods, good employment opportunities for existing residents, and local shops and services. Infill development can add these vital ingredients. It can begin to reverse many of the urban livability problems created by sprawl, bringing older Bay Area communities back the vitality they once enjoyed, while creating walkable downtowns and new neighborhood centers for more recent suburbs.

Infill development can improve the Bay Area's livability in a variety of ways. By creating a range of residential options, it can help provide housing for the local workforce as well as seniors and others. By putting new residents and workers near existing local businesses, infill helps create a vibrant local economy and improves the market for new restaurants, cafes, and stores. By increasing the number of people walking or bicycling along neighborhood streets, infill improves public safety. By adding well-designed new buildings plus parks, public spaces, services, and streetscape improvements, infill can improve aesthetics and urban amenities. By adding potential riders, infill makes higher levels of public transit service feasible. And by increasing the tax base of older Bay Area municipalities, infill can help make possible better schools, parks, and public facilities.

In an urban environment like this the services are already there—police, fire, sewers, etc.—for us this makes a lot more sense than putting development out by the freeway.

—Mike Church
Planning and Redevelopment Manager, Redwood City

Endangered farmland near Livermore.

Stephen Wheeler

Inefficient use of infrastructure

Sprawl development requires that new roads, water mains, sewer pipes, and other infrastructure be extended into greenfield areas. In contrast, infill development often requires only small upgrades to existing infrastructure. The exact amount of savings to municipalities is a subject of debate and depends partly on the condition of current infrastructure. However, one authoritative 1992 study by Rutgers professor Robert Burchell and others found that sprawl in some parts of the U.S. increased road costs 23.9 percent and water and sewer costs 7.6 percent compared with more compact development at the urban edge. Savings from infill development near the center of cities are probably greater still.

About one-third of Americans want to live in places that embody new community design with a focus on real neighborhoods, a strong sense of community, walkable streets, and less dependence on cars, but less than one percent of housing offers such mixed-use places.

—Joel Hirschhorn
National Governors' Association

Top to bottom:

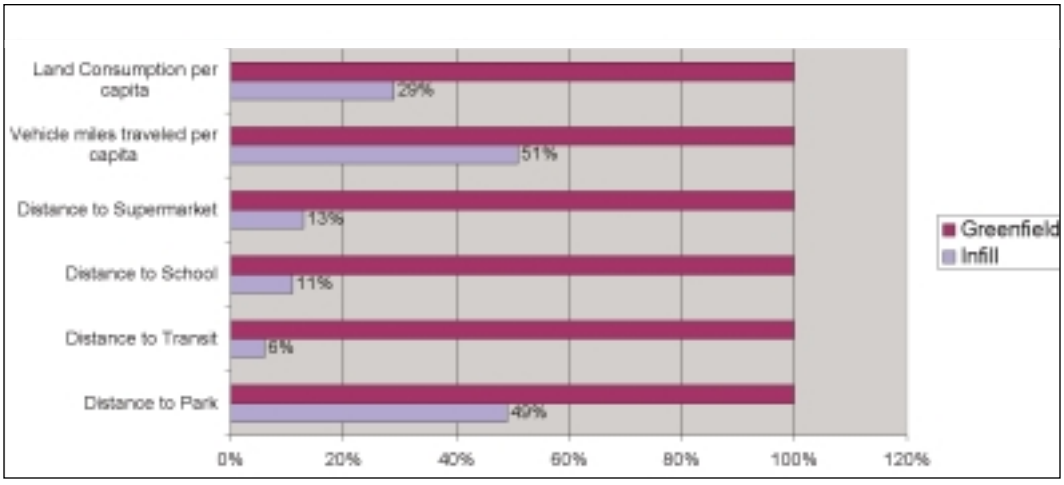
The Classics of Mountain View provides small lot single family homes located close to the downtown. Density is 14 units per acre, including the private rear alley that serves the garages and the public pedestrian mews that serve as entry path to the units.

Duplexes in Agua Caliente, Sonoma County, at a density of more than 14 units per acre.

Foster City's Metro Center Senior Apartments, adjacent to shops and offices, share a plaza with townhomes. Overall density: 30 units per acre.

Metro Center residential—view of courtyard and parking.

All photos Tom Jones

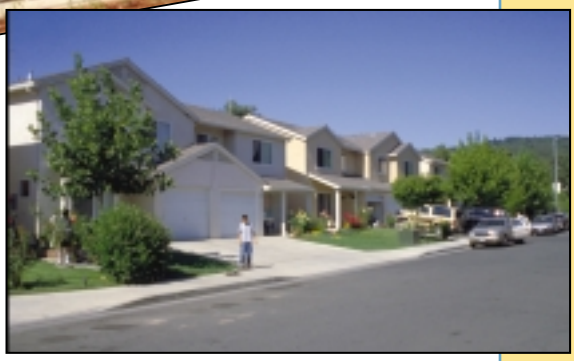


Infill vs. Greenfield. A 2000 study by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency of an infill subdivision in Sacramento vs. a greenfield counterpart found that the infill neighborhood substantially reduced driving and travel distances.

VARIETIES OF INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Infill development can take many forms tailored to the needs of particular communities.

Compact infill development can be achieved with many different housing forms, most of which still allow yards, patios, and/or a substantial amount of shared open space.



Residential infill can range from single family detached homes to large multifamily developments. Mixed-use infill can vary from modest one- or two-story buildings on single lots to mid-sized complexes housing hundreds of residents to entire master-planned developments with housing, office, and commercial development.

On the following pages are a number of images that illustrate the variety of residential and mixed-use infill.

Confronting the "D-word"

For local residents, "density" is often a four-letter word. Many associate residential density with large, impersonal apartment buildings, public housing projects, or physical environments like downtown San Francisco. Yet few people can actually envision what a particular development density will look like, and have trouble, for example, distinguishing 15 units per acre from 30.

One response by local planners and elected officials is to talk instead about "compact development," "smart growth," or "livable, walkable neighborhoods." Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown has used the phrase "elegant density."

Another approach used around the country, pioneered by Rutgers professor Anton Nelessen, has been to conduct a "visual preference survey" of local residents. People are shown images of typical low-density suburban development and other types of higher-density development, such as turn-of-the-century streetcar suburbs and well-designed urban infill projects. Most residents find they prefer somewhat higher density than found in recent suburbia because these include more attractive streetscapes, local shops and restaurants, and a greater diversity of housing choices. Nelessen and his colleagues have administered this survey for over 25 years to approximately 50,000 people nationwide, with fairly unanimous results in all geographic regions.

Along with visual preference surveys, public workshops and design charettes are useful tools to help citizens see that increasing densities can be desirable. Again, when asked to choose among many housing and land use patterns, residents often select traditional town forms with higher densities and mixtures of land uses than typical suburban sprawl.

WHAT DENSITIES ARE APPROPRIATE?

Infill development often increases residential densities. Although "density" is often viewed as a negative, adding residents, jobs, and businesses to a community provides many advantages in terms of improving safety, increasing the viability of local businesses, cafes, and restaurants, providing sufficient ridership for transit, and enhancing community interaction.

Recent Bay Area suburban densities have been relatively low, often 6–8 dwelling units per net acre before local roads and public facilities are factored in (gross densities are even lower). By contrast, densities in many older Bay Area suburbs built around the turn of the century are often 10 to 16 units per acre. Densities for apartment buildings in downtown locations can range above 200 units per acre—yet such densities can often fit well along existing streets. For example, a five-story, 50-unit apartment building on a quarter-acre, 100 by 100-foot lot represents a density of 200 units per acre, and still can have an attractive courtyard, entry plaza, and rooftop deck.

It's getting easier to build the kind of projects I build. Density's come out of the closet.

—Patrick Kennedy
Owner, Panoramic Interests

Upper Left: Open Doors in Los Gatos, designed to respect large single family homes nearby and preserve mature trees, provides affordable garden apartments around a shared common space. Density: 25 units per acre.

Middle: Open Doors in Los Gatos—view of a common space area.

Tom Jones

Bottom: The Gaia provides 91 apartments—with 20 percent affordable to low-income residents—one block from Berkeley BART. Even with a density of 250 units per acre, it includes 11,000 square feet of open space.

Panoramic Interests

To make efficient use of well-located sites, infill development should be relatively dense but should also include amenities such as parks, shops, restaurants, attractive streetscapes, and child care centers. In most Bay Area downtowns, infill apartment buildings of at least three to five stories with ground floor shops can help create livable downtowns and neighborhood centers while adding significant amounts of housing. These buildings represent net densities of 30–200 units per acre. In less central locations, townhouses, duplexes, small apartment buildings, and even small-lot detached houses can provide attractive housing choices at 12 to 30 units per acre, a level that can support public transit. In existing single family neighborhoods, a very simple step that can double residential density with little or no change to neighborhood character is to allow homeowners to add second units behind or within existing houses.

MAKING INFILL AFFORDABLE

The strategies in this guidebook can help well-designed infill development take place within cities. This development can provide a range of housing units of different sizes and prices. However, infill development alone will not solve housing affordability problems. Cities will need to take additional steps to ensure that affordable housing is available to residents in all income categories.

One main strategy to increase affordable housing is to adopt inclusionary zoning requirements. These mandate that developers make a certain percentage of units in each project affordable to residents in specified income categories. Typically, inclusionary requirements only apply to developments of more than a certain size, often 10 units, and require that 10 or 20 percent of units be affordable to households making 80 percent or less of the county median income. Some municipalities specify that some units be affordable to very low-income households making 50 percent or less of the median.

Many Bay Area cities allow developers to pay an in-lieu fee instead of actually creating affordable inclusionary units. However, such fees may be less effective in creating affordable housing, as the amount of the fee is often relatively low compared to the cost of constructing a unit.

In-lieu fees also don't have the advantage of integrating affordable units into each new project that gets built.

Other financing strategies for affordable housing include charging fees to new commercial development to support housing for less affluent residents, increasing the level of funding set aside for affordable housing within redevelopment programs, and bond financing measures to fund municipal affordable housing programs.

Municipalities frequently provide low-interest loans or

Berkeley's Gaia building features an attractive streetfront with space for a cultural center, as well as a large rooftop deck and shared electric cars for residents.

These infill townhouses two blocks from downtown San Mateo resemble older Peninsula homes, but include second units off an internal lane. Overall density: 30 units per acre.

Panoramic Interests

Top to bottom:

The Carroll Street Inn in Sunnyvale is an attractive affordable single-room occupancy development a block from the city's main street. Density: 120 units per acre.

Mountain View Performing Arts Center, public park and a new city hall in downtown Mountain View shows how cities can locate public facilities so as to revitalize existing neighborhoods.

Tom Jones

Centrally located new housing, convenient to BART and services, has been encouraged by the City of Hayward.

New townhomes are being constructed adjacent to Hayward City Hall.

Greenbelt Alliance

grants to nonprofit housing providers to ensure that affordable units get created. A number of Bay Area cities have established Affordable Housing Trust Funds for this purpose, and many use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) monies from the federal government to support affordable housing.

Such direct financial commitments are necessary to close the gap between what residents can afford and what housing costs to build in the Bay Area. Other initiatives to be discussed later—such as permit streamlining, zoning changes, and reductions in parking standards—can also help make infill housing affordable.

The state's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) works together with the Association of Bay Area Governments to determine appropriate housing goals for each city within the region. These targets—including housing production goals for different income levels—were updated in 2000. The state required each city to adopt a General Plan Housing Element in 2001 that specifies how these goals are to be met. These Elements must be updated every five years.

Greenbelt Alliance and the Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition have launched a Regional Housing Needs Campaign to help Bay Area cities provide enough housing to meet the needs of moderate, low, and very low income residents. For more information, contact Janet Stone at 415-398-3730.

Most Bay Area cities don't come close to meeting their "fair share" goals for affordable housing. Many older cities also don't meet their overall targets for housing. In most places, meeting fair share goals will require extensive infill development and very active municipal efforts to facilitate the creation of new housing.

Top to bottom:

Park Place II is a new mixed-use development located on busy Castro Street in Mountain View. These upscale apartments, at a density of 75 units per acre, blend in with an office building next door and the retail below.

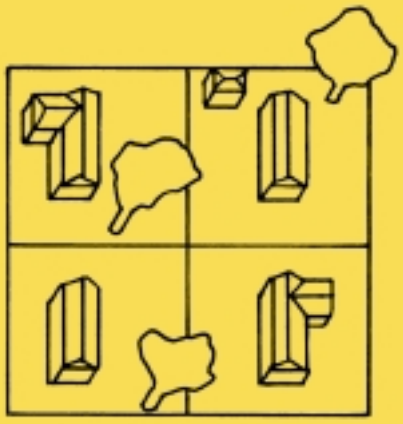
Oakland's revitalized City Center has become a bustling area with shops, restaurants, offices, and a BART station.

This downtown street corner "pocket park" in Hayward replaced an abandoned building on the site.

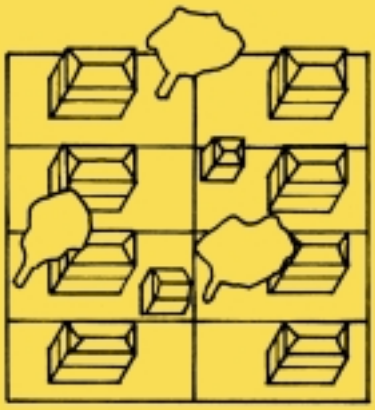
Greenbelt Alliance

Infill development encourages community interaction by providing interesting and safe public spaces—a downtown Oakland park hosts a pumpkin-carving festival.

HOUSING TYPES AND DENSITIES



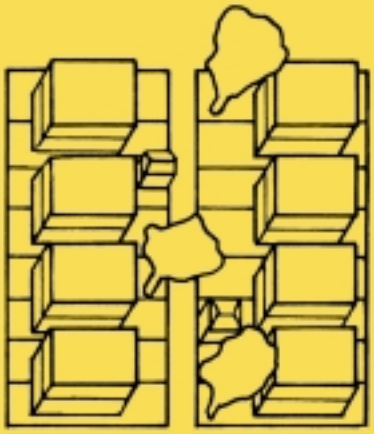
Suburban Ranch Houses
4-6 units/acre



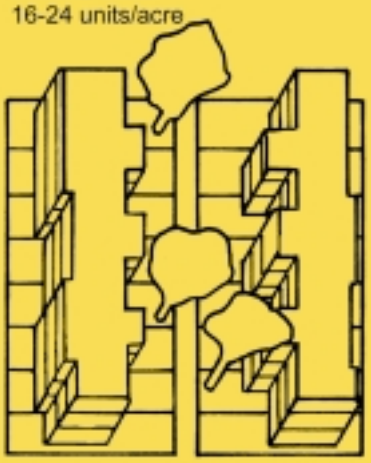
Single Family Detached
8-12 units/acre

Small-Lot Single Family With
Second Units
16-24 units/acre

Cottage Courts
16-24 units/acre



Duplexes/Fourplexes
16-32 units/acre



Townhouses
12-48 units/acre

Cohousing Block
20-50 units/acre

Garden Apartments
20-60 units/acre

Mid-Rise Apartments
40-200 units/acre

Stephen M. Wheeler

AVOIDING DISPLACEMENT

One major risk of infill development is that it will gentrify neighborhoods and displace existing low-income communities in favor of affluent white residents. Already many members of such communities are being forced to leave the area because of high housing costs. Often these individuals and families must leave the region altogether to find affordable housing. Many members of lower-income groups are moving as far as Stockton, Modesto, and Sacramento. Others are being pushed out of central city neighborhoods to outlying communities in the region.

Infill development—especially of affordable housing units—can help fight such displacement by providing housing for existing lower-income Bay Area residents. Creation of new jobs at infill locations can also give central city residents much-needed economic opportunities. Addition of stores and services can provide older urban neighborhoods with desperately needed amenities. (Often these neighborhoods lack basic services such as nearby supermarkets and banks.) In these ways, well-planned infill development can reduce displacement, and not simply promote gentrification of older neighborhoods as investment returns to them and they gain popularity.

Municipalities can reduce displacement through a number of steps. They can adopt controls on conversion of rental properties to condominiums, a step that tends to decrease the supply of affordable rental housing. They can require that developers renovating or tearing down older housing replace any affordable units that would be lost on a one-for-one basis. They can support the construction of new affordable housing in infill neighborhoods. And they can provide assistance directly to existing low-income residents to fix up their properties or to purchase new homes. Rent controls are a potential though controversial strategy as well.

A number of cities have adopted or are considering various other means to stabilize and preserve existing affordable housing, such as emergency rental assistance funds, mobile home park preservation programs, and landlord-tenant mediation requirements.

To help reduce displacement and meet the needs of existing residents, cities can make a strong commitment to public involvement in planning new infill development. Special outreach efforts may be needed to ensure that current residents are made aware of infill planning, and are invited to help decide the nature and design of new development.

San Francisco's Larkin Pine Senior Housing helps counter displacement by providing 63 affordable housing units, two courtyards, and community space on top of a U.S. Post Office. It demonstrates use of air rights above otherwise low-rise buildings to add housing for community residents.

Greenbelt Alliance

strategies for producing bay area infill

How do we increase the amount and quality of infill development in the Bay Area? Most parts of the region have seen only modest levels of infill to date. The Bay Area's track record at encouraging infill has been mixed at best:

- Older downtowns still often suffer from a lack of investment, with vacant lots, empty storefronts, surface parking lots, and undersized, one-story buildings offering prime redevelopment opportunities.
- Vast surface parking lots still surround most BART stations where higher density housing and transit-accessible shops and offices might flourish in addition to parking garages for commuters.
- Older commercial corridors remain dominated by wasteful strip development. These corridors could be retrofitted as pedestrian-friendly boulevards with additional transit, housing, and shops.
- Many closed military bases still sit vacant or underutilized.
- Declining shopping malls and industrial districts offer further opportunities for infill.

What really becomes vacant land? It's old gas stations, hamburger stands, car washes.... We've found sites that are on their second or third use.

—Dan Sawislak
Executive Director
Resources for Community Development

Infill development is inherently more complex than greenfield building. Developers must often deal with high land costs, difficulties in assembling small parcels, long approvals processes, opposition from neighbors, toxics cleanup issues, financing uncertainties, and complicated zoning and parking requirements. Cities must also exert strong leadership if infill is to include affordable housing as well as three- and four-bedroom housing units to accommodate families.

Yet many current impediments to infill can be eased by local government action. Cities can't solve all the problems, but they can do many things that create a favorable climate for reinvestment in existing urban areas. For infill to meet its potential in the Bay Area, it will be important to systematically identify key obstacles hindering it currently and to work out solutions.

The following pages describe a number of strategies that Bay Area cities and counties can apply in a dozen key areas:

1. Ensuring Land Availability
2. Reducing Fiscal Disincentives
3. Preparing Specific Plans
4. Revising Zoning Codes
5. Rethinking Parking Standards
6. Improving Financing Options
7. Establishing Urban Design Guidelines
8. Streamlining Permitting Processes
9. Working Constructively With Neighbors
10. Cleaning Up Brownfields
11. Improving Consistency and Completeness
12. Revitalizing Communities and Adding Amenities

1. ENSURING LAND AVAILABILITY

THE PROBLEM

One main challenge is ensuring that enough land exists to accommodate Bay Area population growth in infill locations. Although there are still many vacant parcels within Bay Area cities, these are slowly disappearing as developers build new infill projects. Remaining vacant lots are often challenging in terms of size, location, or toxic contamination.

SOLUTIONS

Although the supply of vacant infill parcels is diminishing, another large pool of infill land exists: underused parcels that can be redeveloped. These "refill" sites include surface parking lots, declining shopping centers, under-used motels, decaying industrial districts, and low-intensity commercial land uses along arterial strips. Old factories, sports stadiums, and office parks can also be redeveloped into compact, livable mixed-use neighborhoods. In addition, many older buildings can be rehabilitated or expanded to create new infill housing, shops, or offices.

Also numerous are "brownfield" sites where toxic cleanup problems have so far prevented redevelopment. A variety of local, state and federal programs can help clean up and recycle these sites for new building (see Strategy 10 below).

Most of the Bay Area's former military bases have great potential for reuse, despite political arguments over their redevelopment.

Many Bay Area cities have also zoned excessively for commercial development, on the theory that it will bring them greater tax revenue. Rezoning some of these areas for housing can help accommodate new residents within the existing urban footprint. Lastly, infill housing and stores could be added to many existing office parks and corporate campuses.

A 2000 study by U.C. Berkeley researchers Juan Onesimo Sandoval and John Landis found that the Bay Area has plenty of land available for infill development, although most of it is redevelopable rather than vacant land. The study found that 58,173 acres could be profitably developed as multifamily housing—enough for hundreds of thousands of homes. This estimate is probably low, since it depends on conservative assumptions about the densities and uses for which land will be zoned, and about the economic feasibility of redevelopment. Nevertheless, Sandoval and Landis conclude that the biggest constraints to infill in the Bay Area are economic and political, not the physical amount of land.

A second study in 1999 by Greenbelt Alliance and the Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group found that room exists in Silicon Valley for 74,300 homes, primarily in infill locations, based on current policy and market conditions. About 60 percent of these units would be built on vacant parcels while 40 percent would be on reused or intensified sites.

Local governments can ensure that sufficient land is available for infill development by taking the following steps:

1. Do land surveys to identify potential infill opportunities. Likely infill parcels include those for which the assessed property tax valuation of the land exceeds that of buildings, those where buildings only cover a small fraction of the site, and downtown buildings that are one-story or have low floor-area ratios.

2. Check to be sure that these sites are zoned properly for infill development (see Strategy 4), and work with developers to address cleanup problems. Developing Specific Plans is particularly helpful for larger-scale efforts (see Strategy 3).

3. Examine land zoned for commercial or industrial development to see whether this can be rezoned for housing or mixed-use development. Currently many Bay Area local governments have over-zoned for commercial development—which

> *A lot of cities have tons and tons of land lying around, but it's zoned commercial.*
>
> *—Doug Shoemaker, Policy and Program Director, Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California*

produces higher tax revenues—while seriously under-producing housing.

4. Use redevelopment agencies—planning authorities established under state law to help renovate blighted areas—to assist in assembling infill parcels, creating necessary infrastructure, and coordinating infill development.

5. Take action to discourage speculative holding of infill sites. Such speculators can stymie city efforts to revitalize a large area through redevelopment, as in parts of uptown Oakland. One solution would be for cities to institute an "anti-speculation tax" raising assessments on vacant urban land as an incentive for owners to develop the land. Another strategy is for cities or their redevelopment agencies to use eminent domain to acquire land and resell or lease it to developers.

6. Explore air rights leases for infill development. Under these agreements, housing or other uses can be constructed over roads, parking lots, and low-rise facilities.

7. Offer financial incentives for developers to redevelop infill sites, such as fee waivers or tax reductions.

8. Adopt Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) to discourage greenfield development. Infill is unlikely if large amounts of greenfield land continue to be available. In that case developers will usually find it cheaper and easier to build at the suburban fringe—even if this imposes huge costs on society in the long run. So, along with steps to reuse existing urban land, it is important for local governments to limit sprawl.

We feel we can accommodate thousands and thousands of units—it's true of almost all cities—through the recycling of land. We just don't believe cities are built-out. We think there are creative ways that cities can plan for more housing.

—Laurel Prevetti
Principal Planner
City of San Jose

EXAMPLES

- The City of Emeryville's One Stop Shop provides online information about available infill parcels throughout the entire city, including available sites and environmental data. For more information, see the case study on page 50.

- To provide land for infill, the City of Mountain View rezoned 40 acres of a former industrial site owned by GTE for the new 525-unit Whisman station development. For more information, see the case study on page 51.

- The City of San Jose is in the midst of a citywide mapping project to locate available infill sites. For more information, see the case study on page 48.

- To make possible new downtown infill, Redwood City's Redevelopment Agency actively assembled a developable site from seven parcels, and assisted developers in cleaning up contamination produced by a former gas station. For more information, see the case study on page 50.

- The U.S. Postal Service negotiated an air rights agreement with the Chinatown Community Development Center in San Francisco through which the developer constructed 63 affordable housing units, common facilities, and two outdoor courtyards with roof gardens on top of a U.S. Post Office. The resulting Larkin-Pine Senior Housing project illustrates how air rights can be used in urban areas to provide sites for infill. See photo on page 21.

RESOURCES

Sandoval, Juan Onesimo and John Landis. 2000. *Estimating the Housing Infill Capacity of the Bay Area.* Berkeley: Institute for Urban and Regional Development Working Paper 2000–06.

Greenbelt Alliance and Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group. 1999. *Housing Solutions for Silicon Valley: Housing Solutions Report, 1999. Available at http://www.svmg.org.*

For strategies on creating a context for infill development without inequitable displacement of existing residents, see PolicyLink's Beyond Gentrification Toolkit, *available at http://www.policylink.org/publications.html.*

EXAMPLE: INFILL POSSIBILITIES IN DOWNTOWN LIVERMORE

Like many older Bay Area communities, the city of Livermore features a compact downtown based on a nineteenth century street grid. Although this city center has great infill development potential—and possesses a new ACE commuter train station and regional bus facility—it is currently full of vacant lots, parking lots, and suburban-style one-story buildings. The photos and map below show major vacant or near-vacant parcels. All sites shown are within easy walking distance of the regional transit station.

2. REDUCING FISCAL DISINCENTIVES

THE PROBLEM

One of the main reasons that many Bay Area cities don't promote residential or mixed-use infill currently—or housing in general—is that there is very little economic reason for them to do so. Jurisdictions have little to gain from such development in terms of tax revenue, and much to lose in that they will need to provide services for residents ranging from fire protection to special education.

The downtown vision helped a great deal. People wanted a more vital downtown and understood that that came with a residential component. Doing the upfront master planning has been incredibly valuable.

—Bob Brown
Community Development Director
City of San Rafael

Much of this situation results from the state's fiscal landscape following the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. That ballot initiative capped property tax rates and made new local tax measures difficult to pass. Cash-strapped municipalities now depend heavily on attracting the forms of development that will generate additional sales and property tax revenue without much need for government services. Strip development, automobile dealerships, regional malls, and office parks are much sought after; housing, especially affordable housing, is not. In effect the state's fiscal system encourages sprawl and works against infill residential or mixed-use development.

SOLUTIONS

Action at the state level is most needed. Legislation could be passed to put measures on the ballot repealing many elements of Proposition 13. Or the legislature could reform the tax system by apportioning revenues from new sales tax dollars between jurisdictions based on population rather than point of origin. Such "tax-base sharing" could also be done regionally within the Bay Area, and would lessen the fiscal incentives for sprawl.

But local governments can do some things themselves:

1. Refrain from zoning for sprawl development, and instead look for ways to maximize tax base through infill, for example by promoting downtown revitalization and mixed-use development near transit stations.

2. Adopt a differential fee structure, in which city development fees in sprawl locations are substantially higher than for infill sites, as a way of changing fiscal incentives to developers without altering overall city revenues.

3. Join with other Bay Area local governments to work for regional or subregional tax sharing that would place income from new commercial development into a regional pool, thus reducing pressure for fiscal zoning and providing funds for municipalities building infill housing instead.

4. Join with other California cities to lobby for repeal of Proposition 13's limits on property tax rates, its provision preventing property of pre-1978 homeowners from being reassessed, and its requirement of a 2/3 vote to pass any local tax measure.

EXAMPLES

- The City of Millbrae expects to double its general fund budget through new revenue from infill development under its Millbrae BART Station Specific Plan. In the early 1990s the city recognized an opportunity to coordinate future development around the new BART station. This transit-oriented infill will greatly add to the city's coffers. (See case study, page 60).

- The City of Oakland is seeking to build its long-term tax base and urban vitality through intensive infill development in downtown Oakland, and has also sought to assist high sales tax-producing automobile dealerships through intensive urban design improvements and marketing of "Broadway Auto Row" along its Broadway Avenue near downtown.

RESOURCES

For recommendations on statewide action, see *Restoring the Balance: Managing Fiscal Issues and Land Use Planning Decisions in California*, California Planning Roundtable, 1997, available at *www.cmcaplans.com/cprwww/docs/fiscal.htm*.

3. PREPARING SPECIFIC PLANS

THE PROBLEM

Often infill development may not occur in a particular area unless the municipality takes a lead in promoting it, working with neighbors, and providing needed infrastructure and amenities. Or infill may take place in a poorly designed and uncoordinated fashion, failing to help create an attractive, livable new neighborhood.

SOLUTIONS

Specific Plans (also known as Area Plans or Precise Plans) help establish a framework for coordinating infill development and involving existing residents and businesses in developing a vision. Essentially a city or other authority undertakes a planning process for a particular district or neighborhood. Workshops are held and public input solicited. Professional consultants may be hired to coordinate public involvement, prepare urban design guidelines, and produce an Environmental Impact Report. The final Plan is then approved by the City Council as the framework for future development.

One particularly important element of Specific Plans is the creation of urban design guidelines that specify ways to ensure attractive streetscapes and public spaces, appropriate building scale and design, connected and walkable street networks, and amenities such as neighborhood parks and community gardens. Care should be taken, however, to make sure design guidelines do not inadvertently add costs that will reduce housing affordability.

Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs), prepared along with Specific Plans, can take environmental review burdens off individual projects. State law allows such "tiered EIRs" under a 1979 amendment to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Developers then do not have to prepare time-consuming environmental documents and face a reduced threat of CEQA litigation.

If zoning changes are also made at the time of plan approval, Specific Plans can help reduce the development permitting process by 6–12 months. Involving residents in developing a vision for a particular neighborhood can also minimize neighbor opposition, avoid lawsuits, and ensure that community needs are met.

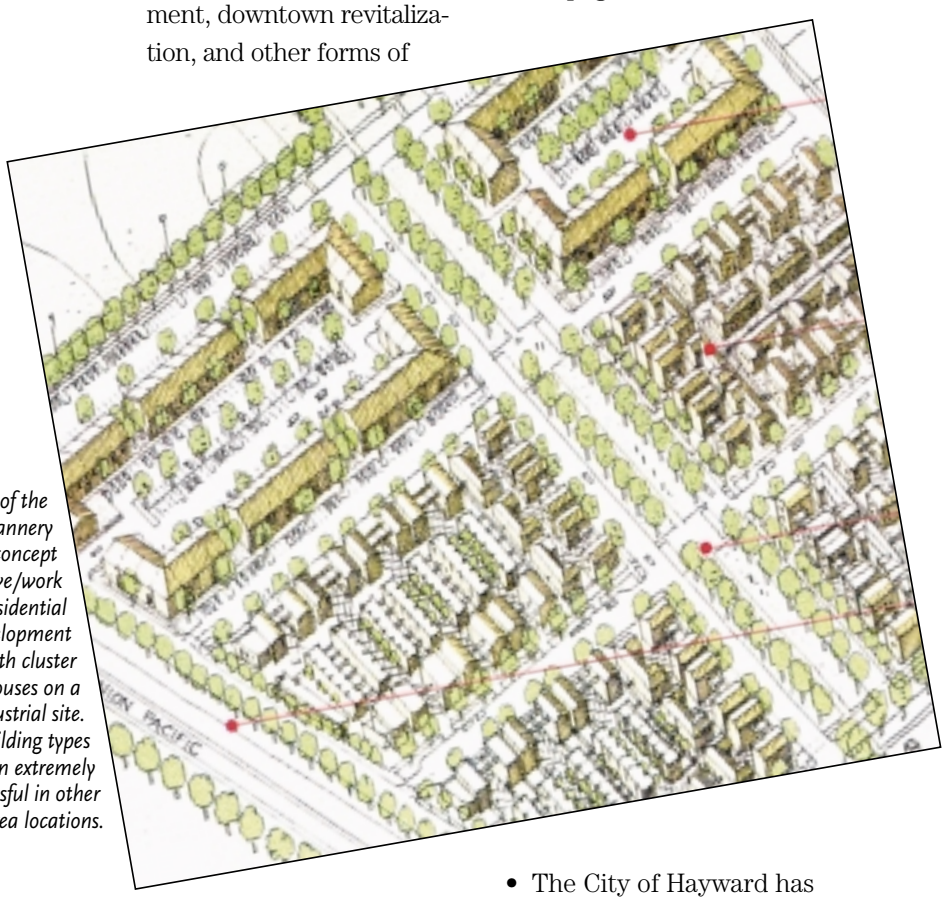
To use Specific Plans effectively, local governments can:

1. Identify areas within the city of substantial infill potential well in advance of development.
2. Hire design and process consultants and initiate a Specific Plan process for this area.
3. Identify key stakeholders and hold public workshops and design charettes to involve the public in establishing a vision for the area.
4. Formally adopt the Specific Plan as a General Plan amendment, including zoning changes and urban design guidelines to ensure that development within the designated area produces a highly livable, attractive urban environment.
5. If appropriate, use redevelopment powers to acquire land, improve infrastructure, and add amenities to the designated area.
6. Actively recruit and assist developers to bring this infill vision into reality.

> *The city had a vision for what it wanted to see there, near the Richmond BART Station. We wanted a mixed use development that would integrate with the community and with transit. We went out looking for a developer that could meet those goals.*
>
> *—Alan Wolken*
> *Project Manager*
> *Richmond*
> *Redevelopment Agency*

EXAMPLES

- The City of Mountain View has used Specific Plans—which it calls Precise Plans—very extensively to promote transit-oriented development, downtown revitalization, and other forms of infill development. The city has prepared approximately 30 Precise Plans, many paid for in part by developers. See the case study on page 51.
- The City of San Jose has likewise created seven Specific Plans designed to accommodate some 10,831 units of housing in infill locations. See the case study on page 48.
- Under its Better Neighborhoods 2002 program, San Francisco is working with residents to develop Specific Plans for three areas of the city. See the case study on page 53.



A portion of the Hayward Cannery Area design concept calls for live/work residential development along with cluster townhouses on a former industrial site. These building types have been extremely successful in other Bay Area locations.

- The City of Hayward has prepared a Cannery Area Design Plan that establishes a framework for transforming an older, industrial area in the heart of the city into a new mixed-use neighborhood. See the case study on page 57.

RESOURCES

White, Kate. 2000. *Specific Area Plans: Building Consensus for Infill Housing*. San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR). Available at *www.spur.org/infill.html*.

4. REVISING ZONING CODES

THE PROBLEM

Like communities across the country, Bay Area cities and towns have zoning codes in place that often work against affordable, compact, and mixed-use infill development. Particularly counterproductive are zoning rules limiting urban residential densities, prohibiting mixed-use development, setting one- or two-story height limitations, and prohibiting or limiting secondary units in existing single family home districts.

In Santa Rosa, for example, the city's 1998 General Plan designates 92 percent of available residential land (5,235 acres) for very low, low, or medium low densities, with only 15 acres for "medium-high" urban densities. In Fairfield, maximum downtown residential densities are only 32 units per acre. Meanwhile in Oakland, the city's zoning code requires that downtown developments provide 150 square feet of open space per unit—working against the sort of intensive infill development that other Oakland policies are trying to promote.

SOLUTIONS

Bay Area cities should review their zoning codes to be sure they allow appropriate land uses, densities, building setbacks, heights, and floor-area-ratios in infill locations.

Specific zoning changes which encourage infill and a greater range of housing choices include the following:

1. Make sure General Plans and subsequent zoning codes allow appropriate densities within downtown or neighborhood center development. In many cases maximum dwelling-unit-per-acre or floor-acre-ratio (FAR) density figures should be eliminated in favor of height or design regulations which get more directly at basic project impacts. Minimum, rather than maximum, densities and heights should be established.

2. Move away from allowing low-density residential development. Net densities of less than eight units per acre are inappropriate in most places given the region's need for new housing. Minimum density of eight units per acre still allows sizable lots of up to 50 by 100 feet.

3. Reduce minimum lot sizes for residential development. For example, San Jose still requires single family detached home lots to be at least 6,000 square feet. Zoning in urban areas should allow duplex or single family detached home lots of as little as 3,000 square feet and townhouse lots of as little as 2,000 square feet. These lot sizes use space efficiently and are still large enough to allow for a small yard or outdoor space.

4. Instead of requiring only single-family detached housing, allow other housing types if they fit in with the character of the neighborhood. Small pockets of beautiful townhome developments, for example, have been blended into single-family neighborhoods near downtown Palo Alto and Mountain View without negatively changing neighborhood character.

5. Review height restrictions. Many Bay Area jurisdictions restrict downtown development to 36–45 feet without special permits, and buildings in residential districts to 24–30 feet (two stories). Limits of 50–70 feet in suburban downtowns (up to five or six stories) and 35–40 feet in residential areas (three stories) can allow more effective and economical infill. These heights have been common in many traditional American towns.

We need a framework where if zoning and design meet local standards, projects can move ahead by right. That would save so much time and money.

—Betty Padgett
Director of Education and Advocacy
Ecumenical Association for Housing

Inconsistent codes are a problem. Even though zoning allows [building heights] up to 50 feet, if you're over 40 feet you have to get a conditional use permit in San Francisco, which means many extra hearings.

—Kate White
Co-founder
San Francisco Housing Action Coalition

6. Zone and provide incentives for mixed-use buildings in many locations in downtowns, neighborhood centers, and along arterial corridors. Such buildings can add shops, restaurants, and offices to neighborhoods, and increase the flexibility of developers to make infill development work financially.

7. Establish special zoning districts for transit station areas and other areas where more intensive infill development is appropriate.

8. Zone to allow second units on existing single-family properties. Such units are one of the easiest ways to provide additional housing in already-built areas. Municipal zoning currently often restricts such units to 16

ZONING CHANGES TO PROMOTE INFILL DEVELOPMENT

	Typical current practice	*Smart growth alternative*
Minimum lot sizes	6,000 sq. ft. or more	2,000–4,000 sq. ft., if any
Maximum lot sizes	Rarely regulated	5,000 sq ft. or less for single-family homes in many infill locations
Dwelling units allowed per lot	Most urban land zoned for single family detached housing (one unit per lot)	Allow second units on existing lots; allow multiple units on vacant lots in single family districts if building design conforms to neighborhood context
Allowable densities, downtown areas	Many suburban cities specify maximum residential densities of 20–40 dwelling units per acre even in high-density zoning districts	Eliminate maximum densities; rely on height, bulk, and/or design restrictions instead. Institute minimum densities of 20–30 dwelling units/acre.
Allowable densities, residential areas	Many suburban cities have maximum residential densities of as little as 1–4 units per acre in low-density zoning districts	Establish minimum residential densities of 8-10 units per acre for new single family development and 20 units per acre for multifamily development; allow residential infill at this level
Height restrictions, downtown areas	Often 2–3 stories even in town centers; no minimum	At least 3–5 stories in downtowns and neighborhood centers; a 2–3 story minimum
Height restrictions, residential areas	2 1/2 stories or 30 feet	At least 3 1/2 stories or 40 feet
Lot coverage	Often less than 50 percent of the site	No maximum if parks and other public open spaces are nearby; encourage use of rooftops for open space
Floor area ratio	Often .50–.80 maximum in downtown locations	At least 1.0–2.0 maximum, 0.5 minimum in downtowns, or use height limits instead.
Front setbacks	Often 20–40 feet minimum except in downtown areas; no maximum	No minimum necessary in many areas; consider adding maximum
Side setbacks	Often 5–15 feet	Allow zero-lot-line construction with appropriate design
Lot widths	Some cities require minimum widths of at least 50 feet for single family housing, 70 feet for duplexes	No minimum necessary
Mixture of land uses	Only homes, stores, or workplaces allowed across large areas of cities	Allow a finer mix of land uses to reduce driving and enhance community vitality; allow housing and shops to be added to office parks, offices and shops to housing districts
Mixed use buildings	Not permitted most places	Allow mixed-use buildings within neighborhood centers and along arterial strips; provide incentives for these
Secondary units	Prohibited or subject to conditional use permits	Allowed as of right in single family residential districts

feet (one story). At least two-story secondary units should be allowed.

9. Rethink the concept of suburban office parks, and zone for housing and shops to be mixed with workplaces in such areas. Codes should allow housing to be added to existing office parks. Rezoning some commercial or light industrial land for infill housing can help improve the balance of jobs and housing at local and regional levels.

10. Change zoning codes to require that parking be placed behind or beneath buildings rather than in front, and to require streetfront retail in downtown locations. Putting shops and restaurants at sidewalk level helps make streets vibrant and pedestrian-friendly, while having offices and housing above supports local businesses, ensures that people are on the streets at all hours, and improves safety.

11. Remove other zoning obstacles to infill such as unnecessarily low limits on lot coverage and floor-area-ratio (FAR), as well as unnecessarily high requirements for setbacks, lot area per unit, and open space (see chart).

12. Allow builders to construct infill housing projects "by right"—without having to obtain a conditional use permit—if these developments meet zoning constraints. Under state law cities that don't meet their fair share housing allocations for all income groups are required to do this to provide sufficient multifamily housing to meet the fair share needs. However, there is little enforcement of this provision.

13. Award "density bonuses"—under which a builder is allowed to exceed zoned height or density—to developers who provide affordable housing or public amenities in infill areas. State law requires bonuses of 25 percent above zoned densities for projects with at least 20 percent affordable units or 50 percent senior units, but additional bonuses are possible.

14. Institute "transfer of development rights" (TDR) frameworks under which developers receive rights to build above zoned densities in infill locations by buying those rights from landowners in urban fringe areas that the city has targeted for open space preservation.

EXAMPLES

- The City of Pleasanton is considering revising its zoning to allow additional housing in Hacienda Business Park and other office parks. Originally zoned only for business uses, starting in 1993 the city allowed housing on the Hacienda site, and has issued permits for approximately 1,500 units.
- The City of Gilroy has established a new "Neighborhood District" land use designation for new development that mixes housing types and densities. The zoning establishes target and minimum densities, and calls for public spaces and pedestrian and bicycle planning.
- Oakland is beginning a comprehensive revision of its zoning code to bring it in line with a new General Plan emphasizing infill development.

Cities need to start working on zoning minimum densities for land—the inverse of what is usually done.

—Alex Amoroso
Senior Regional Planner
Association of Bay Area Governments

RESOURCES

Association for Bay Area Governments et al. 2001. *Blueprint 2001: Housing Elements Ideas and Solutions for a Sustainable and Affordable Future*. Oakland.

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5. RETHINKING PARKING STANDARDS

THE PROBLEM

Overly high parking standards for commercial or residential development waste valuable land, discourage transit use, reduce housing affordability, and diminish the comfort and safety of pedestrians by fostering high rates of automobile use in neighborhoods. Excessive parking requirements add enormous costs to infill development. Surface parking frequently costs developers $5,000 or more per space; underground or structured parking can range between $20,000 and $50,000 per space. These costs require developers to charge higher prices for housing and may make entire developments economically infeasible.

You can't stop sprawl and not make some adjustments for development in downtown core locations. Cities have got to look at lower parking ratios near transit—otherwise you're not going to get the density you need to make projects pencil.

—Carol Galante
President and CEO
BRIDGE Housing

Suburban Bay Area jurisdictions—which, paradoxically have the most on- and off-street space for parking—also usually have the toughest parking requirements. Many suburbs require two spaces per unit or more, even if new homes are centrally located and near transit. Commercial requirements are often three to five spaces per 1,000 square feet, with certain uses such as restaurants required to provide much higher levels of parking.

A recent study by the Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California points out the great parking code disparities between jurisdictions in the region. Residential requirements range from an average of 2.5 spaces per unit in Los Gatos to 1.0 space per unit in San Francisco and Berkeley.

Residents of affordable housing projects and senior housing in particular often don't use all the parking that developers are required to provide. BRIDGE Housing—the region's largest nonprofit builder—recently surveyed residents of two of its suburban projects in Santa Rosa. Although the city had required BRIDGE to include two and a half spaces per unit, actual vehicle ownership was approximately one car per unit at one development and .8 cars per unit at the other (a senior housing project). Thus the builder had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for parking that was not being used.

SOLUTIONS

Cities should review parking requirements, reduce them where possible, allow develop-

PARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR SELECTED BAY AREA CITIES
(for a hypothetical 100 unit development)

City	*Total Spaces Required*	*Spaces per Unit*
Los Gatos	250	2.50
Dublin	230	2.30
San Leandro	225	2.25
Mountain View	215	2.15
Milpitas	210	2.10
Santa Rosa	200	2.00
Vallejo	195	1.95
San Mateo	189	1.89
Hayward	188	1.88
San Jose	167	1.67
Livermore	163	1.63
Petaluma	160	1.60
Oakland	150	1.50
Emeryville	145	1.45
Benicia	125	1.25
San Francisco	100	1.00
Berkeley	100	1.00

Source: Ryan Russo, 2001. *Planning for Residential Parking: A Guide for Housing Developers and Planners*. San Francisco: Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California.

ers to adopt space-efficient methods such as tandem parking and stacked parking, and use market pricing to reduce parking need.

By encouraging projects that attract a pedestrian-oriented market, cities can increase housing and provide better retail amenities for both new and existing residents with smaller increases in automobile traffic and wasteful parking lots.

More specifically, cities can take the following actions:

1. Reduce parking requirements to one space per unit maximum in infill locations well-served by transit. For larger unit sizes, allow residents to rent a second space if needed in an overflow lot.
2. Reduce parking requirements for special needs populations who will be less likely to own cars, such as students, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.
3. Encourage or require infill developers, building management companies, and condominium associations to charge residents for each parking space, reducing demand while allowing those who really need multiple spaces to purchase them.
4. Support "car-sharing" organizations and encourage developers of large infill projects to provide shared cars that residents or workers can reserve and use for an hourly fee.
5. Allow infill developers to use stacked parking and tandem parking spaces to save space.
6. For mixed-use development, allow parking to be shared where appropriate, with residents using it at night and office workers or shoppers during the day.
7. Allow or require more on-street parking, and institute permit or metered parking limiting visitors to two or three hours in order to help keep on-street spaces available to residents. In new infill neighborhoods, limiting curb-cuts along the street and placing resident parking off alleys behind houses can help increase the number of on-street spaces.
8. "Unbundle" parking from units, developing strategies to ensure that sufficient parking is available in the neighborhood generally rather than requiring that a certain number of spaces be next to each unit.

Won't Reducing Parking Requirements Increase Traffic and Nuisance to Neighbors?

Reducing parking requirements can actually reduce traffic. Parking spaces at both retail and residential locations are magnets for cars. According to a study by John Edwards of the National Main Street Center, a 100-unit apartment building with one parking space per unit generates 500 car trips a day, while a 100-unit building with two spaces per unit generates 800 car trips.

Competition for street parking is a different question. Inadequate parking throughout a neighborhood or poor management of existing parking can indeed lead to spillover into adjacent neighborhoods or drivers circling blocks looking for spaces.

Many solutions exist. Attracting pedestrian-oriented consumers to infill housing and stores—and designing for such consumers—can help. Permit parking can guarantee street parking for existing neighborhood residents. Better public information about available parking in local garages can help reduce the number of drivers circling. Steps to encourage local employees to take transit, carpool, bike, or walk can free up spaces for shoppers or residents. Cities can actively develop "transportation demand management" programs to implement such policies.

Cities are not flexible on parking requirements. We have built 4,500 units of housing, and so have a good database on actual parking needs. But you almost never get a break on parking requirements.

—Fran Wagstaff
Executive Director
Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition

9. Allow "car-free" housing in infill locations near transit. Residents would not be provided parking and would not be issued on-street parking permits by cities (assuming a permit parking system exists).

EXAMPLES

- In San Francisco's Mission Bay development, the city has set maximum parking standards of one space per unit (many individual projects may build less than this). Coupled with good transit and plentiful neighborhood amenities, these standards are expected to produce low rates of automobile ownership among residents.
- Unlike most suburban projects, the Classics development at McNear Landing in Petaluma, built by Masma Construction Inc., has only single car garages but has sold well. Smaller garages also allow front porches on many units.
- Palo Alto allows its planning director discretion to defer up to 50 percent of the parking requirement if there is reason to believe it might not be needed and could be added later. At the city's California Park Apartments, adjacent to a Caltrain station, a reduction of 22 parking spaces allowed a playground, lawn, and barbeque area to be created.
- Developer Patrick Kennedy has provided several Berkeley projects with stacked parking using German-made hydraulic lifts. Cars are stored in two or three levels, and can be retrieved within a few moments by pushing a button. At his Gaia Building Kennedy also charges $150 per month for each parking space. The result has been few applications for parking despite healthy demand for the building's rental units.

PARKING STANDARD CHANGES TO PROMOTE INFILL DEVELOPMENT

	Typical current practice	*Smart growth alternative*
Downtown or transit-oriented locations	1–2 spaces per unit minimum	1 space per unit maximum; car-free housing allowed in certain transit-oriented locations; car-sharing encouraged in large projects
Residential neighborhood locations	2 off-street spaces per unit minimum	1 off-street space per unit minimum; 1 additional on-street space required for larger unit sizes; consider parking maximums
Parking charges	None mandated	Mandate a monthly fee per space for rental and condo units to reduce demand
Retail	3–4 spaces per 1000 square feet minimum	1 space per 1000 square feet minimum in downtown, transit-oriented, or neighborhood center locations; businesses allowed to contribute in-lieu fee instead of providing parking on-site; 2–3 spaces per 1000 square feet in other locations
Office	3 spaces per 1000 square feet minimum	No minimum in downtown, transit-oriented, or neighborhood center locations; 1–2 spaces per 1000 square feet in other locations; employers required to charge for parking and provide incentives for alternate travel modes; local hiring policies encouraged

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6. IMPROVING FINANCING OPTIONS

THE PROBLEM

At certain times financing has been the biggest obstacle to infill development—in particular for affordable housing or mixed-use projects. Sources interviewed for this report indicate that financing problems have eased somewhat in recent years. Yet it is still challenging for nonprofit builders to find subsidy financing allowing them to create affordable infill housing. Bankers are also still wary of mixed-use projects and tend to finance them conservatively.

SOLUTIONS

Cities can help address financing problems through the following means:

1. Create or expand a Housing Trust Fund to provide loans for predevelopment, site acquisition, or construction of infill projects with an affordable housing component.
2. Initiate or expand project lending for infill projects with an affordable housing component, using Community Development Block Grant funds or other resources.
3. Lower fees for infill as opposed to greenfield development, and create a two-tiered fee structure or a sliding scale based on proximity to the downtown or transit.
4. Convene a roundtable of infill developers and local lenders to identify problems and opportunities around financing infill development.
5. Pressure banks to increase their lending to inner cites, under the Community Reinvestment Act or other legislation.

State, federal, and regional action is also needed to improve financing options for infill. One of the main financing sources for affordable infill housing is the state's tax credit program. Although recently increased this funding pool is still oversubscribed and needs to be expanded further on a permanent basis.

EXAMPLES

- In 1996 voters in San Francisco passed a $100 million bond measure to provide funds for affordable housing and loans for low-income homebuyers. The money is intended to help build 3,000 housing units in infill locations.
- A consortium of public and private organizations established the Housing Trust of Santa Clara County in 1997 to provide low interest loans to first time homebuyers, gap financing for affordable rental housing projects, and funds for homeless assistance. The Trust raised some $20 million in initial funding.
- To make possible the Del Norte Place development at the El Cerrito Del Norte BART station, the city's Redevelopment agency made $3 million in bond funds available for land acquisition, and Contra Costa County contributed $11 million in permanent financing.
- A team from several departments in the City of Vacaville worked with Vacaville Community Housing to rehabilitate housing units and add amenities to the city's Acacia neighborhood, combining funding from redevelopment set-aside funds, bond monies, HOME program funds, community development block grant funds, and private sources.

It has been hard just getting financiers to look at new areas without a lot of market comparables. It's still difficult.

—Patrick Lane
Project Manager
10K Initiative
City of Oakland

RESOURCES

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7. ESTABLISHING URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

THE PROBLEM

In the past infill development has frequently not been designed in ways that enhance overall neighborhood or community quality. New buildings have at times ignored the local architectural and historical context, blocked sun and views, or featured boring, monotonous facades. Landscaping has sometimes been poor or nonexistent. Inwardly facing apartment or office complexes have turned their backs on the street, reducing the quality of the pedestrian environment. Too often little effort has been made to provide streetfront retail, restaurants, or pocket parks that could meet neighborhood needs.

Design really starts to matter as density goes up. Some of it is as simple as using lots of colors and paints, breaking up the massing, pushing certain building elements forward and backwards. Landscaping is also incredibly important."

—Tom Jones
Executive Director
California Futures Network

The quality of infill has definitely gotten better. Designers have gotten better at making difficult sites work; contractors have figured out how to mobilize on difficult sites."

—Joshua Simon
Senior Project Manager
East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation

SOLUTIONS

The past decade or two have seen a revolution in knowledge about how to design successful infill development. National movements such as the New Urbanism have also developed useful guidelines for designing livable, walkable communities.

Municipalities can adopt urban design guidelines for infill development in particular areas or citywide. It is possible to require good design without necessarily increasing costs to developers, especially those providing more affordable housing. These guidelines can clarify for developers, planners, and design review committees characteristics that the city would like to see in infill development. Cities should include easy-to-understand graphics and photographs showing desirable building types and site planning goals.

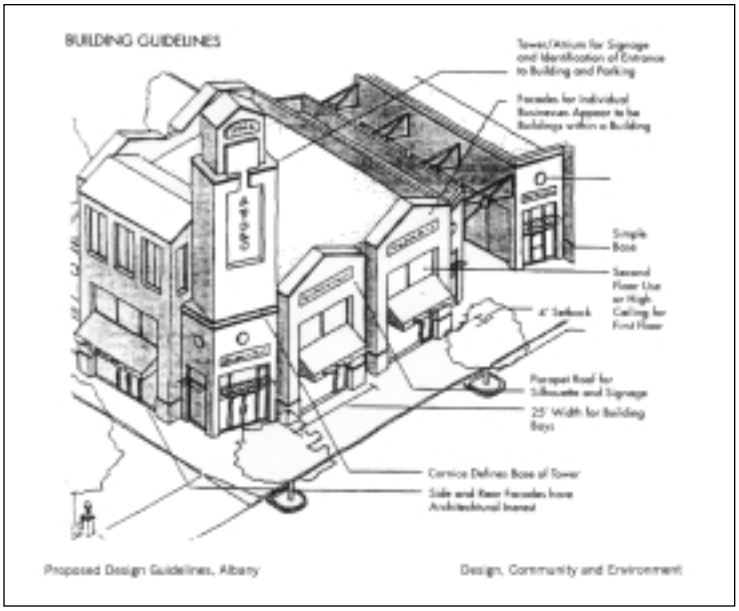
Design principles might include the following:

1. Relate buildings to the street. Infill projects should try to create an attractive street frontage that will be pleasant for pedestrians and neighbors. Having entrances directly on the street is one main strategy. Having restaurants, cafes, or shops along the street is another, for locations that can support this kind of commercial activity. Infill development in residential areas should place porches and entrances in front rather than large garages.
2. Keep front setbacks small and building fronts close to the street to create a pedestrian-oriented street environment. Downtown infill buildings should help create a solid streetfront.
3. Ensure that building facades have variety and interest. Avoid blank walls or long, uniform building fronts. Even if projects are large, break up the facades so that they give the impression of smaller-scaled buildings.
4. Place parking out of sight, behind or underneath infill buildings, not in front.
5. Require infill developers to add wide sidewalks, street trees, benches, mini-parks, or plazas to help create a pedestrian-friendly environment.
6. Provide a range of outdoor spaces for residents of higher-density infill housing. Some areas should be entirely private, such as small patios or balconies. Other spaces should be semi-private, such as courtyards, gardens, pools, or rooftop decks. And still other outdoor spaces can be public, such as pocket parks, plazas, playgrounds, or community gardens.
7. Fit the building to the neighborhood context. New buildings don't need to exactly match neighboring buildings in terms of size or design. But they can include design details that help link them to the pre-existing context, and their height can be "stepped down" to match lower surrounding development at one side of a lot.

8. Strive for flexible designs that can eventually accommodate other uses. If storefront retail is not possible initially in downtown locations, buildings can be designed with flexible space so that it can be added later. Office buildings can be designed to facilitate conversion into lofts or other housing.

EXAMPLES

- The City of Albany hired the consulting firm of Design, Community, and Environment to develop urban design guidelines for infill development along Solano Avenue. The consultants developed easy-to-understand graphics to illustrate these guidelines.



9. Preserve and restore nature where possible. Often there are opportunities to restore nature in conjunction with infill development. Creeks can be restored, heritage trees preserved, and native vegetation used in landscaping. Doing such things helps connect urban residents with the native California landscape.

Such guidelines can speed up the review process and create greater certainty for developers about what is expected.

- The City of Mountain View's Precise Plans contain design guidelines on a block-by-block basis. These include recommended ground-floor treatments, facade treatments, windows, building materials, and building massing.

RESOURCES

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Design, Community, and Environment

A high-amenity infill strategy

Part of the reason more Americans aren't attracted to city living is a lack of amenities for residents. Residents often have not had porches, yards, or garden space. Streets have been pedestrian-unfriendly and dominated by automobile traffic. Restaurants, cafes, and shops have been lacking. Too often unattractive apartment buildings have been constructed without landscaping or common areas. Schools, playgrounds, parks, and child care facilities have been poor or nonexistent. (Suburban areas also share many of these problems.)

One lesson learned in the last 50 years is how much the right amenities can add to life in a city or town. Courtyards, private patios, porches, balconies, garden space, rooftop decks, and neighborhood parks can all give residents access to the outdoors in safe, pleasant surroundings. Child care facilities and playgrounds can help make families feel at home. Better schools can help meet the needs of parents. Laundry and storage facilities can help meet the needs of daily life. Shops, restaurants, and cafes along streetfronts can help add convenience and pleasure in ways never experienced by suburbanites in monotonous tracts of single-family homes.

Cities can take steps to add or require many of these elements in conjunction with infill development. Design review guidelines can help. In other cases, regional, state, or federal action will be needed to provide resources for urban jurisdictions to improve schools and other services, or to equalize revenue across metropolitan areas so that similar levels of services can be provided by different cities.

8. STREAMLINING PERMITTING PROCESSES

THE PROBLEM

Lengthy and often difficult permitting processes can work against infill development. These procedures can require expensive studies or project redesign, and related delays can increase finance costs for developers. Further, developers often face additional risk and cost associated with unclear approval requirements. Timelines of a year and a half or more are common for Bay Area infill development permitting. One study of Silicon Valley communities by the Housing Leadership Council of Silicon Valley found that approvals and construction often took up to three to four years for typical 200–400 unit apartment developments.

It is important for local residents to have opportunity for input on infill development projects. However, lengthy permitting processes help political opposition emerge and give neighbors numerous opportunities to derail projects. Meanwhile, the need to attend repeated hearings makes it difficult for advocates to support good infill development.

SOLUTIONS

Cities can take a number of actions to reduce permitting delays and establish clear and reasonable requirements for developers:

1. Set a time limit on permit processing, requiring staffs to process applications within a set period of time.
2. Assign specific staff to shepherd each infill project through the approvals process. Conduct staff and commissioner training to be sure everyone is up-to-date on guidelines, requirements, and procedures.
3. Carry out pre-application reviews with developers concerning potential projects.
4. Adopt clear procedures for review, to eliminate uncertainty about what both the city and developers should expect.
5. Establish "as-of-right" zoning under which developers that meet zoning requirements are allowed to build without lengthy hearings to obtain a conditional use permit or a general plan amendment.
6. Reduce environmental review requirements for individual infill projects by preparing EIRs on Specific Plans for infill areas.
7. Reduce design review uncertainties by establishing clear urban design guidelines, again often in conjunction with Specific Plans, that can let developers, neighbors, planners, and design review committees know what features are expected.

EXAMPLES

- The City of San Jose has established a Special Handling Process, which aims to approve important development projects in less than 180 days. For more information, see the San Jose case study on page 48.
- Cities such as Cupertino, Fremont, Gilroy, Milpitas, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, and San Carlos carry out pre-application reviews of development projects to determine potential obstacles and identify important stakeholders in the community to be consulted.
- Long a leader in permit streamlining, Sunnyvale instituted a One-Stop Permitting center in 1984, and has adopted an expedited permitting process under which the city gives builders a firm schedule and assurance of complete review, including Planning Commission and City Council hearings, within about two months. The city has also pioneered "e-permitting" for many minor building permits.

RESOURCES

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9. WORKING CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH NEIGHBORS

THE PROBLEM

One of the preeminent obstacles to infill development—and the single biggest concern of many developers—is community opposition, which in its worst forms is often known as NIMBYism (the acronym stands for "Not-In-My-Backyard"). Neighbor opposition can kill projects directly by turning zoning adjustments boards or city councils against them. Or neighbors can drag the permitting process out so long that developers lose money and projects no longer make financial sense.

Although neighbors may have legitimate concerns, they may also exhibit knee-jerk opposition to development that meets important municipal or regional needs. Neighbors in particular often worry that affordable housing projects will lower their property values (many studies have shown they do not), that new development will create parking and congestion problems (these can be mitigated in various ways), or that new development will be out of context with the existing neighborhood (this can often be addressed through design review and negotiation with the developer).

SOLUTIONS

Cities can adopt a number of strategies to reduce NIMBY opposition:

1. Require developers to meet with neighbors before submitting plans for a project. Often designs can be changed to meet neighbor concerns, and neighbors later do not feel like they've been "blindsided" with the development proposal.
2. Prepare Specific Plans in which residents have an opportunity to prepare a vision for their community and influence design guidelines for infill development.
3. Organize small meetings between developers and key neighborhood leaders to develop buy-in before holding general public meetings or workshops.
4. Encourage community development corporations (CDCs), which have a strong neighborhood base, to undertake infill development.
5. Promote intensive infill development on sites with few neighbors nearby, such as former industrial areas, downtown parcels, or along arterial strips.
6. Ensure that infill development provides attractive new amenities for a neighborhood, such as shops, cafes, restaurants, dry cleaners, child care centers, parks, community gardens, restored ecological features, pedestrian-friendly street designs, and attractive public spaces. Neighbors may then be less likely to oppose infill.

EXAMPLES

- In developing the award-winning Hismen Hin-Nu ("Sun Gate") Terrace development on Oakland's International Boulevard, architects Pyatok Associates worked extensively with local residents and two local community development corporations to develop agreement on project design.
- The City of Oakland has worked with one of the city's largest CDCs, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council, to facilitate the Fruitvale Transit Village development, which will place 67 affordable housing units, office space, stores, a clinic, a library branch, and a parking garage adjacent to the Fruitvale BART station.
- To cement ties with the local community, Rubicon Programs formed a Neighborhood Advisory group while constructing its conversion of a former motel on San Pablo Avenue in El Cerrito into 29 supportive housing units for homeless individuals.
- Residents of the Doyle Street CoHousing project on an infill site in Emeryville overcame neighborhood opposition by talking

personally with all neighbors and convincing 84 neighbors to sign a petition supporting the project.

- After two years of acrimonious debate, the City of Berkeley appointed a mediator who was able to achieve a compromise between neighbors opposing development of a new synagogue on a vacant creekside parcel and the synagogue congregation.
- The City of San Francisco has worked extensively with neighbors in the Octavia and Market neighborhood to determine new uses for lands where the Central Freeway was taken down.
- The City of San Jose's Strong Neighborhoods Initiative is a process through which city planners work with neighborhoods to develop Improvement Plans for enhancing quality of life.

Citizens in a public workshop look at alternative design proposals.

RESOURCES

Hester, Randolph T. 1990. *Community Design Primer.* Mendocino: Ridge Times Press.

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10. CLEANING UP BROWNFIELDS

THE PROBLEM

"Brownfields" problems—having to do with toxic contamination of previously used sites—are common in most older Bay Area cities. Environmental contamination can be caused by industrial facilities, utility substations, paint shops, or leaky tanks at gas stations. At their worst, such problems require expensive cleanups and site restoration before development, making infill projects financially infeasible. Brownfield problems also raise litigation risks for developers, since under federal law, liability for these sites remains "strict, joint, and several"—meaning that any past or present owner of the site can be compelled to pay for cleanup.

SOLUTIONS

In recent years a variety of programs has been put in place at state and federal levels to assist with brownfields cleanup. For example, the Brownfields National Partnership sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and other agencies offers financial and technical assistance to agencies or developers doing brownfields cleanup. Also, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has funded cities to run pilot programs demonstrating creative brownfields solutions.

Cities can take a number of steps to remove obstacles to infill associated with brownfields cleanup:

1. Set up a central office to coordinate brownfields cleanup. Direct staff to map toxics problems within the city, provide information to developers, help them deal with regulatory agencies, help them obtain cleanup funding, and interface with other city departments.
2. Provide low-interest loans to developers for site assessment and for toxic cleanup on key infill sites that might not be developed otherwise.
3. Conduct cleanup activities directly, especially in cases where city groundwater is threatened.

Programs to assist infill developers with brownfields problems are beginning to make a difference in the Bay Area. Contamination issues are no longer as big a stumbling block to infill development as a few years ago. As developers gain experience with brownfield sites and amass a track record of successful projects on them, banks and other financial institutions gain confidence in lending for future projects. One nonprofit developer interviewed for this report was building housing projects on three former gas station sites simultaneously, all of which had required cleanup.

EXAMPLES

- Emeryville has set up a "one-stop shop" to provide information on contamination at all sites within the city. The city also acts as an intermediary between developers and regulatory agencies, maintains an environmental Geographic Information Systems (GIS) map of the city, and handles some groundwater cleanup tasks itself.

***Before**: This brownfield site was a former Chevron tank farm and Westinghouse transformer manufacturing facility that had been vacant for over 15 years. It is now Emery Station, a mixed-use transit-oriented development adjacent to the Emeryville Amtrak Station.*

***After**: Emery Station North, an 80,000 sq. ft. office building, was completed in 2001. The Terraces, a 100–unit residential project under construction, is also part of the development, and more housing is planned for the area. A pedestrian bridge connects the development to the retail and entertainment center across the tracks.*

City of Emeryville

RESOURCES

California Center for Land Recycling. 2000. *Brownfield Redevelopment Case Studies.* San Francisco.

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11. IMPROVING CONSISTENCY AND COMPLETENESS

THE PROBLEM

Often local plans, codes, and processes are not internally consistent regarding infill. Some support infill, while others work against it. This occurs despite state requirements that local General Plans be internally consistent, and that zoning, Specific Plans, and other initiatives be consistent with the General Plan.

For example, even though housing and land use elements of a city's General Plan may call for infill development, density and height limits in the downtown may be too low for infill to make economic sense. Or height limits in the building code may conflict with those in the zoning code. Or high parking standards may make dense infill and affordable housing impossible. Or the city's planning and public works departments may not have been directed to give priority to infill, and may move slowly to schedule permitting processes or provide needed infrastructure.

A particular problem is that individual decisions or recommendations of planning commissions, design review committees, and even city councils are sometimes not consistent with policies in General Plans regarding infill. Often this is the result of pressure exerted upon these bodies by segments of the community. Sometimes the members of these bodies are reflecting their own preferences rather than the intention of the General Plan or city policies.

SOLUTIONS

To make sure their plans, codes, policies, and actions consistently support infill, cities can:

1. Direct planning staff to review municipal plans, zoning codes, and building codes to ensure that policies related to infill are consistent with one another and to propose an Infill Development Initiative to improve the consistency of codes and processes.

2. Provide clear direction to their staffs as well as appointed and election commissions regarding the need to carry out adopted city policies.

3. Periodically assess whether planning commissions, zoning boards, design review commissions, and other review bodies are acting consistently with the General Plan and other city regulations and policies on infill development.

4. Convene a roundtable of local infill developers, planners, public works staff, and others to determine obstacles to infill development and strategize about ways to improve the consistency of city policies relating to infill.

5. Create an Infill Zoning Overlay or District for areas of the city where high infill development potential exists and a Specific Plan has been prepared. These districts might relax certain zoning requirements related to lot coverage, FAR, setbacks, density, or other subjects, and replace them with urban design guidelines prepared under Specific Plans. Planning and public works staff would be required to give special attention to development proposals located there. Streamlined permitting processes might be adopted. Loans might be provided to developers. Parking standards might be reduced for buildings well-served by transit. The effect would be a consistent and mutually reinforcing set of policies to make infill happen in these districts.

EXAMPLES

- The City of San Rafael has worked hard to ensure the consistency and completeness of its commitment to affordable housing, primarily in infill locations. The city has streamlined permit procedures for housing, provided financial support for affordable housing, facilitated community involvement, and reduced parking requirements for downtown units. An inclusionary zoning policy requires that developers of residential projects with more than 10 units make at

least 10 percent of those units affordable to moderate income households for at least 40 years. Projects with at least 15 percent of their units affordable to low income residents receive density bonuses. These inclusionary zoning policies have produced a total of 596 below-market rental units and 127 for-sale units throughout the city.

- The City of Oakland recently began a major initiative to revise its planning and zoning regulations to make them consistent with the General Plan the City adopted in 1998. Previous zoning was a patchwork of codes, many of which had not been updated in 35 years.

RESOURCES

Blueprint 2001: Housing Elements Ideas and Solutions for a Sustainable and Affordable Future, prepared by the Association for Bay Area Governments and other organizations, is an excellent resource to improve the consistency of city General Plans and other codes regarding infill and affordable housing. To obtain copies, contact Alex Amoroso, ABAG Senior Planner, at (510) 464-7955, or visit *www.abag.ca.gov*.

12. REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES AND ADDING AMENITIES

THE PROBLEM

Infill development doesn't take place in many Bay Area locations because of systemic problems with community decline. These cities have lost residents, businesses, and tax base to newer suburbs in recent decades, and have accumulated a host of problems including poor schools, crime, unemployment, pollution, and deteriorated infrastructure. Neighborhoods offer few amenities to new residents. Racial and class bias frequently works against new investment in these communities. The region's African-American neighborhoods in particular have been isolated in a spiral of community decline.

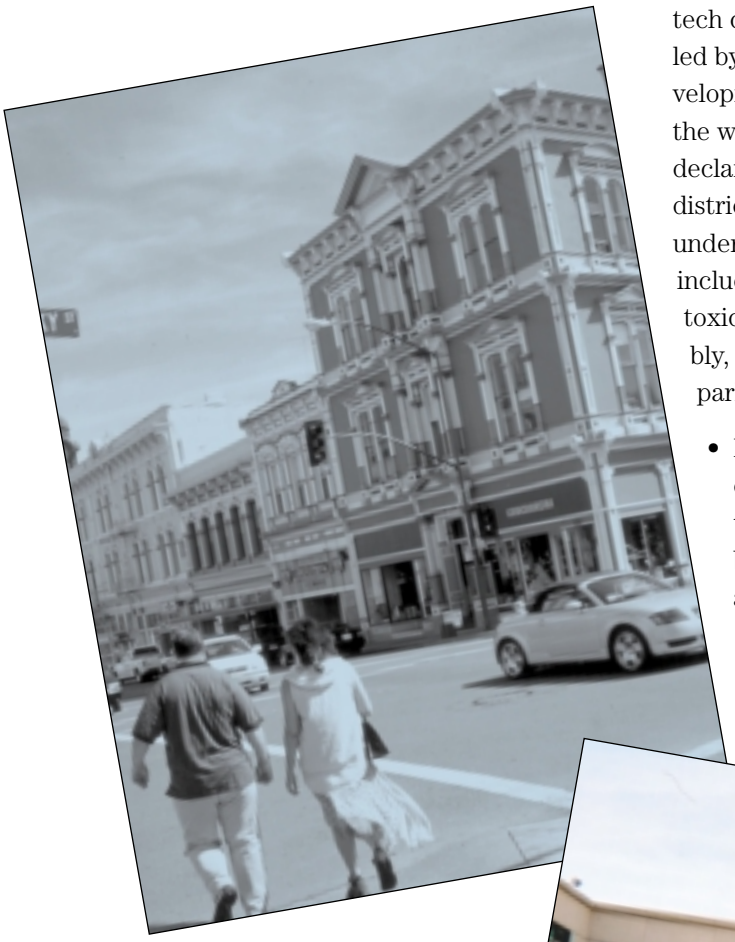
SOLUTIONS

Systemic problems of community decline are not easy to fix. However, a number of approaches can help municipalities address these issues in ways that can remove barriers to infill development:

1. Focus attention on specific neighborhoods with high infill potential where the city can add a broad range of amenities along with new development.
2. Target initial infill projects at groups most likely to thrive in an upcoming central city environment—young professionals, singles, artists, and couples without children—while also providing new affordable housing for existing residents.
3. Use redevelopment power actively to leverage community revitalization. Redevelopment law allows cities to raise money up front for improvements based on the expected future increase in tax revenues from a particular area. It is one of the most powerful mechanisms to turn around distressed districts.
4. Locate public buildings within infill opportunity areas to catalyze other development, and target other public investments in these areas as well.

> *One of the issues around infill is reinvigorating entire inner ring communities. You might witness many infill development opportunities in Richmond, but in order to have those developed we need to address a host of community development concerns within the city.*
>
> *—Stephanie Forbes*
> *Program Director*
> *Local Initiative Support Corporation*

5. Get together with similar cities to work for tax sharing that can spread the benefits of new commercial development throughout the region, providing resources to improve declining communities.



Historic building preservation, along with other public and private efforts, has helped revitalize downtown Petaluma.

Downtown Oakland has blossomed with new office, commercial and residential development and public amenities.

Greenbelt Alliance

Meanwhile, state assistance or intervention by the courts may be required to ensure that less well-off Bay Area cities have school funding equal to more affluent suburbs. State action to promote tax base sharing may also be necessary to provide funding to revitalize older Bay Area cities.

EXAMPLES

- Emeryville's transformation from a decaying industrial enclave into a leading high-tech community has been led by a very active Redevelopment Agency. Virtually the whole city has been declared a redevelopment district. Improvements undertaken by this agency include street redesign, toxic cleanup, land assembly, and development of parks and infrastructure.

- Revitalization and infill development in downtown Oakland has been catalyzed by the addition of public buildings and urban amenities. New buildings include the Federal Buildings, city office buildings, Jack London Square, and a host of smaller projects. New amenities include an "urban living room" plaza in front of City Hall, a redesign of Washington Park, and extensive improvements at Jack London Square and along the waterfront.

RESOURCES

Gratz, Roberta Brandes with Norman Mintz. 1998. *Cities Back from the Edge: New Life for Downtown.* New York: Wiley.

Gratz, Roberta Brandes. 1994. *The Living City: How America's Cities are being Revitalized by Thinking Small in a Big Way.* Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press.

OTHER PROBLEM AREAS AND POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

Several additional sets of problems frequently hamper infill development. Strategies to address them will be important at local, regional, and state levels.

Building Codes

Building codes are adopted by the state based on a national set of standards known as the Uniform Building Code (UBC). Local jurisdictions inspect buildings and enforce the state codes with minor modifications, often related to local geography and seismic safety.

Unfortunately the UBC has become increasingly voluminous and unwieldy in recent decades, and local building inspectors are often unwilling to exercise the flexibility the code gives them out of fear of litigation. Rigid adherence to code standards can increase project costs and make some infill developments less financially viable.

For example, the code contains a 50' height limit for wood frame construction (five floors). However, if the wood frame is erected on top of one or two floors of concrete platform (often used for parking), the height limit still applies from the ground rather than from the platform. The result is that only three or four floors of housing are possible, meaning fewer units and a less viable project economically. The city of Seattle has revised its code enforcement procedures to measure frame height from the platform, but city building inspectors in California do not have that flexibility.

Solutions: The UBC does allow developers to make an Alternative Methods Request for a municipality to approve a different, usually cheaper construction technology. But building inspectors are often reluctant to approve such requests. Cities can instruct their building inspectors to facilitate Alternative Methods Requests and to work with infill developers to identify cost-effective alternative construction methods whenever appropriate.

The State Building Code Commission should also review California's building code to determine whether it discourages infill development, discriminates against alternative methods, and unnecessarily raises building costs. The state should revise the building code to specifically encourage "performance codes" in which building construction has to meet certain performance specifications as certified by a trained engineer, rather than follow a rigid prescription of building components. City engineers have some flexibility to follow performance specifications currently, but usually take a conservative approach of requiring projects to meet rigid code specifications.

Market Development

Whether infill development makes financial sense for developers depends in large part on whether a market exists or whether they and city governments working together can create one. In the early 1990s recession, demand was sluggish for both infill and greenfield development in the Bay Area. However, since about 1996 the market for infill housing in particular has been very strong. The Bay Area's pent-up need for housing seems likely to sustain infill demand even in the face of mild economic slowdowns.

> *A lot of things said by neighbors that are completely outrageous or not in context aren't challenged. Decision-makers have an obligation to put them in context. For example, that affordable housing reduces property values. Dozens of studies show otherwise.*
>
> *—Tim Iglesias*
> *Deputy Director*
> *Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California*

Solutions: The market for infill will be enhanced further as more municipalities adopt Urban Growth Boundaries—constraining greenfield development—and as cities work with developers to add urban amenities that make downtowns, transit corridors, and other infill opportunity sites more attractive to a wider range of potential residents. Singles, young people, empty nesters, the elderly, and couples without children form large demographic blocks likely to favor urban, high-amenity living. Developers who can take advantage of these markets are likely to do well with infill. Cities that aggressively improve and

market infill districts can help build interest among potential residents and businesses.

Litigation

One problem with infill development frequently cited by for-profit builders but also affecting nonprofits is construction defect litigation. Under state legislation passed in the 1990s, property owners in multifamily condominium buildings can sue builders and architects for damages for up to 10 years. Says Carol Galante, President of BRIDGE Housing, "Some of our great architects and contractors will not touch condominiums because there's a 100 percent chance of being sued."

> *Many for-profit developers shy away from inner-city housing development because they do not perceive a market there. In fact markets often do exist and may even be stronger than in outlying areas. Or a market can be created.*
>
> *—Diane R. Suchman*
> Developing Infill Housing in Inner-City Neighborhoods
> *Urban Land Institute*

Solutions: Action by the state legislature will be required to address this problem. According to Tom Jones, Executive Director of the California Futures Network, "The ultimate approach is something like an automobile warrantee: no fault, if something goes wrong within five years we come in and fix it."

CEQA

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires Environmental Impact Reports to be prepared on public- and private-sector projects with significant effects on the environment. Many affordable infill housing projects are also subject to the National Environmental Quality Act (NEPA) because they use federal money in the form of federal or state tax credits.

Environmental review is important but isn't appropriate when used solely to delay a project that isn't causing undue environmental impact. NIMBY opponents often use these pieces of environmental legislation to slow or stop development. For example, neighbors sued BRIDGE Housing over the adequacy of environmental review for its award-winning Strobridge Court project at the Castro Valley BART station. The court backed BRIDGE, and then the opponents appealed to the State Supreme Court, where BRIDGE also won. However, the delay had raised costs greatly for the developer.

Solutions: There has been much talk of amending CEQA to make infill development easier. Many observers believe that the law should contain a presumption of environmental benefit for infill projects, since these help reduce traffic and improve air quality throughout the region. However, CEQA exists for a good reason—to help protect the environment—and if used well does not need to impede infill development projects. One way cities can help defuse the risk of CEQA lawsuits is to prepare "tiered EIRs" on Specific Area Plans. Such an EIR anticipates the problems that would result from certain types and intensities of development, lifts the burden of environmental review from individual projects, and helps address the cumulative effects of multiple projects in geographic proximity.

Historic Preservation Issues

Since the 1970s there has been a much-needed emphasis throughout the U.S. on preserving historic buildings, along with federal legislation protecting buildings in certain cases. However, not all old buildings are of sufficient quality to be worth preserving. Unfortunately, NIMBY groups have often used historic preservation processes as a way to block good infill projects. For example, for its affordable Church Street Apartments near the old U.S. Mint in San Francisco, BRIDGE eventually had to go to Washington to get a ruling

from the Secretary of the Interior that a pre-existing building had no historic significance. This step delayed the project for a year.

Any building over 45 years old is potentially eligible for the national register of historic buildings. Any infill project using federal funds—such as most affordable housing projects—faces a range of historic preservation requirements.

Solutions: Local landmarks commissions, city councils, and courts all should be sensitive to the need to balance historic preservation with infill development. In the long run, federal standards for evaluating historic resources need to be altered, with shortened periods for review, streamlined processes, and better standards for evaluation of marginal historic resources.

Production Costs

One significant problem with any sort of development in the Bay Area in recent years has been high construction costs. Great demand for construction of all sorts has swamped contractors, raised labor wages, and increased per-square-foot building costs. This means that market-rate developers have often only been able to build for the high end of the market. It has also caused enormous headaches for affordable housing providers who must find ever larger subsidies to keep rents low.

Solutions: There is no magic way to reduce to high construction costs. However, zoning and building code changes can help eliminate unnecessary expenses, while providing builders with more flexibility to configure the form and unit count of their project to make it "pencil out." Meanwhile, expanded subsidies for affordable housing providers can help reduce the gap between what units cost to build and what many people can afford.

Virtually all Bay Area municipalities charge high permitting fees to new development as a way of funding needed infrastructure and public services. These fees typically range from $20,000 to $40,000 per unit. Partly the result of cities' need for revenue in the post-Proposition 13 environment, such fees combine with high land and construction costs to drive up housing prices for Bay Area residents. Since local governments depend on these fees to fund daily operations, the main way to reduce this impediment to housing development would be through state fiscal reform that makes it possible for cities to raise the money through more usual taxes. Also, cities could set higher fees for greenfield development than infill construction as a way to discourage sprawl and promote reinvestment in existing areas.

Political Resistance

One of the biggest single obstacles to infill development that includes housing, particularly affordable housing, is the unwillingness of local city governments to accept it. Many Bay Area cities actively resist efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing on the mistaken belief that lower income residents will lower property values and won't support local businesses.

The City of Alameda, for example, fought vigorously against proposals for affordable housing at the former Alameda Naval Air Station, and wanted to tear down 600 units of existing housing that could have been made available to low-income residents. The City wanted to see a market-rate project built instead. Only through litigation against the city was the affordable housing preserved.

Solutions: Strategies for overcoming political resistance are hard to come by. A state mandate that cities accept affordable housing is one potential approach. Tying state infrastructure funding to a local commitment to housing, as envisioned by a bill introduced in 2001, S.B. 910 (Dunn), is another strategy. Strong federal, state, or regional incentives for cities to accept housing offer a third method.

examples of bay area infill

In recent years many cities throughout the Bay Area have taken steps to more actively coordinate infill development. Most of these efforts are in the early stages, but momentum is growing.

The following pages profile some leading examples of local government action. Each of these examples is a work in progress. But all promise to bear fruit in the long run in terms of creating dynamic infill neighborhoods that can offer an alternative to suburban sprawl.

1. San Jose: A City-Wide Strategy Bears Results

The poster child of Bay Area sprawl in the middle of the 20th century, by the 1990s San Jose had come full circle to embrace a set of policies designed to promote infill development instead. A limit to outward expansion was the first step—the city council first adopted an Urban Service Area Boundary in 1970—and a subsequent version of this greenline was reaffirmed by an astounding 81 percent of the city's voters in the 2000 election. Meanwhile, the city has taken a remarkable number of steps to promote infill, including General Plan policies, Specific Plans, zoning changes, permit streamlining, and financial incentives to developers. These measures helped facilitate the construction of nearly 30,000 dwelling units between 1990 and 1999.

For their continuing efforts to manage growth and revitalize existing neighborhoods, San Jose's planners have received a Distinguished Leadership Award from the American Planning Association's Northern California Chapter.

San Jose's infill initiatives include:

The 2020 General Plan: The city's 1994 General Plan lays out goals of supporting compact, infill, and transit-oriented development. The city has changed its zoning to help implement these strategies, and in some cases has adopted minimum rather than maximum zoned densities for infill development. For example, areas near transit stations are zoned for a minimum density of 25 units per acre and often have no maximum density.

Ryland Mews is a 131–unit condominium project downtown at 57 units per acre, with underground parking.

Specific Plans: The city has completed seven Specific Plans designed to accommodate some 10,831 units of housing primarily in infill locations.

"Discretionary Alternate Use" Policies: Thirteen "Discretionary Alternate Use" policies allow increased densities for infill development under certain circumstances, such as for small sites, sites near transit stations, or affordable housing. For example, any parcel of less than two acres with a nonresidential designation can be developed residentially if that is compatible with the neighborhood.

The Housing Opportunities Study: Launched in 1999, this three-year study identifies vacant or underutilized sites along transit corridors.

Permit Streamlining: San Jose has taken a number of steps to reduce the time it takes to get a development permitted, and like a number of other Bay Area cities has put zoning information and permit application forms on the city's web site. Important development projects benefit from a Special Handling Process that aims to process 80 percent of Planned Development applications in less than 180 days.

Loans to Nonprofit Developers: The City provides loans to nonprofit housing developers for predevelopment, site acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation. San Jose's redevelopment agency has been very active in assembling sites for developers of all sorts.

Tax Exemptions: To encourage infill projects in certain areas, San Jose has also offered exemptions from construction taxes. These exemptions have been available for infill housing in the city's Central Incentive Zone program, and any type of building in the city's Expanded Enterprise Zone (including downtown) and three redevelopment areas. Since taxes amount to 4.5 percent of construction costs, this financial incentive for reuse of urban land is very significant.

San Jose still has a long way to go to leave its suburban roots behind and become a more vibrant, urban place. However, its progress shows that a large city can do a 180-degree turnaround in its attitude toward development, moving away from greenfield sprawl to become a pioneer of infill.

For more information, visit the San Jose Planning Department website at *www.ci.san-jose.ca.us/planning/sjplan/*, or contact Laurel Prevetti, Principal Planner, at (408) 277-4576.

Ohlone-Chynoweth Commons, developed in partnership with the Valley Transportation Authority, created an affordable mixed-use living environment. Designed to make better use of underutilized land at park-and-ride lots and rail stations, the development features 192 affordable townhouse apartments at a density of 27 units per acre, 4,400 sq. ft. of retail, and a childcare center.

2. Emeryville: Large Scale Use of Redevelopment Powers

The City of Emeryville offers one of the Bay Area's most dramatic examples of how a municipality can transform itself through infill development. Although sometimes criticized for embracing "big box" retail, Emeryville's entrepreneurial approach has helped turn a city of decaying industrial buildings into one of the Bay Area's redevelopment success stories.

Above: *Reconstruction of the Emeryville Warehouse building, built in the 1930s for a fruit-drying company, created 141 residential and commercial lofts in 2000. Holliday Development worked with the City of Emeryville and North Bay Ecumenical Housing to make some of the units affordable.*

Holliday Development

Right: *The Avalon redevelopment project on San Pablo Avenue created 60 senior units above retail.*

City of Emeryville

The city's infill development has mixed new stores and office buildings with housing. Some 561 apartments, lofts, townhouses, and condos were built between 1995 and 2000 alone, of which 224 are affordable to those with low and moderate incomes. The city has also adopted inclusionary zoning requiring that 20 percent of units in new projects of 30 units or more be affordable.

Emeryville also illustrates the extensive use of redevelopment powers—granted by the state to help cities rebuild blighted areas—to clean up and rebuild on urban land. Emeryville is lucky in that about 95 percent of the city is included in its redevelopment areas (other cities have not been able to designate their downtowns or other areas for redevelopment, since these are not considered "blighted"). Following the original Emeryville Redevelopment Plan adopted in 1976, the Emeryville Redevelopment Agency has had power to buy small properties and assemble larger buildable lots, using the device of tax-increment financing to raise money. Special to the redevelopment process, this tool allows agencies to raise capital by issuing bonds based on the expected increase in property tax receipts, which for Emeryville is about $5.4 million per year.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has also selected Emeryville to participate in a pilot program for brownfields cleanup. This program has helped create an on-line "One Stop Shop" that allows landowners, developers, residents, and other interested parties to access land use zoning, property ownership, and environmental information on any parcel within the city.

Recent projects in the city include 66 units of affordable rental apartments for seniors at 3850 San Pablo Avenue, a 17-unit live/work and townhouse project at 4800 San Pablo Avenue, and 138 units of loft housing in the old Emeryville Warehouse Company Building at the corner of Park Avenue and Huggard Street. The latter building also provides 7,000 square feet of retail space and a 4,500-square-foot landscaped courtyard. An additional 3.6 million square feet of office space, 488 hotel rooms, and 830,000 square feet of retail space are permitted or under construction. These projects are expected to add more than 8,400 jobs over 20 years.

For more information or to visit the city's One-Stop Shop with online environmental data for city parcels, visit the city's website at *www.ci.emeryville.ca.us/*.

3. Redwood City: Adding Housing and Amenities to an Historic Downtown

Like many cities on the Peninsula and throughout the Bay Area, Redwood City has an historic downtown with a compact street grid and many late 19th century and early 20th century buildings. This central area has declined in recent decades, but offers enormous potential for infill development, especially near the city's Caltrain station.

Redwood City has taken the first steps toward downtown revitalization and infill by completing a new city hall in 1997, coordinating development of affordable housing next door, brokering a deal to bring a new cinema and retail complex downtown, and preparing a Franklin Street Specific Plan that established a framework for 500 apartment and condominium units now under construction nearby. Seventy-five of these units will be affordable to low and moderate income residents. A neighborhood park is included in the plan.

For the 81–unit affordable housing project next to City Hall, the City's Redevelopment Agency assembled seven different parcels into one large site. In the process the City and its partners, the Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition and the Raiser Organization, cleaned up contamination from an old gas station. The development includes 20,000 square feet of retail space, a child care center, a computer education facility, college classrooms, and an attractive mid-block pedestrian plaza. If a little more funding had been available, the City would probably have purchased a run-down hotel next door, relocated existing tenants, and created a small downtown park. However, the city did not have sufficient resources and this project had to be left for another day.

According to former mayor Diane Howard, developers originally wanted to build office space downtown. But the City recognized the need for housing, and put in place an "urgency ordinance" increasing the allowed floor-area-ratio for projects that included housing. Builders then scrapped their original plans and came back in with residential proposals. Says Howard, "We were being reactive instead of proactive because it had been quiet for so long.... it's turning out to be the smartest thing we ever did."

For more information, contact Mike Church, Planning and Redevelopment Manager, at (650) 780-7235.

Above: *City Center Plaza required assembling seven different parcels next to the new City Hall. It includes 81 units of affordable housing over shops and a community college extension.*

Greenbelt Alliance

4. Mountain View: Transit-Oriented Development

Mountain View has been a leader in locating new infill development near public transportation, in particular the Caltrain line. The city's main tool to facilitate infill has been the creation of 30 Specific Plans, which the city calls Precise Plans. Sometimes prepared by city staff and sometimes by consultants, these documents have created a vision for development at specific areas within the city, and have often included EIRs paid for by developers.

Below: *Townhouses help create a compact, walkable new neighborhood at The Crossings in Mountain View.*

Among the best-known of Mountain View's infill projects are The Crossings and Whisman Station. At the Crossings, the urban design firm of Calthorpe Associates turned a defunct 1960s shopping center into a new neighborhood with 359 townhouses, condominiums, and single family detached homes on 18 acres near a Caltrain station. At the Whisman Station neighborhood, developers Kaufman & Broad, Shea Homes, and the Castle Group built 363 townhouses and 213 single family detached homes on a 45-acre site which had been part of a GTE office park. A second phase includes 73 units on four acres.

Completed in 1998, The Crossings in Mountain View placed 359 housing units next to a Caltrain station on a 18 acre site formerly occupied by a defunct 1960s shopping center. The new neighborhood includes townhouses, apartments, cottages, and single family detached homes. The City of Mountain View has worked aggressively with several developers to make such transit-oriented infill development happen.

Stephen Wheeler

Park Place, in downtown Mountain View, is close to City Hall and the Performing Arts Center.

Tom Jones

The city has a TOD rezoning program to add additional housing near transit. The city has increased densities to at least 30 units per acre in many areas, with a maximum of 53 units per acre near transit facilities. In addition, Mountain View has engaged in award-winning ecological restoration programs, including restoration of Charleston Slough and Stevens Creek.

A remaining challenge for the city is to put more infill housing in its downtown. Revitalization of downtown Mountain View began with an award-winning streetscape project in the early 1990s, and continues with creation of a multi-modal transit center for Caltrain, buses, and Santa Clara Light Rail's new Tasman line. Following completion of a Downtown Precise Plan, seven residential projects totaling 200 units have been approved or are under construction. Other challenges include reusing industrial land for housing, and potentially helping to convert Moffitt airfield into mixed-use development.

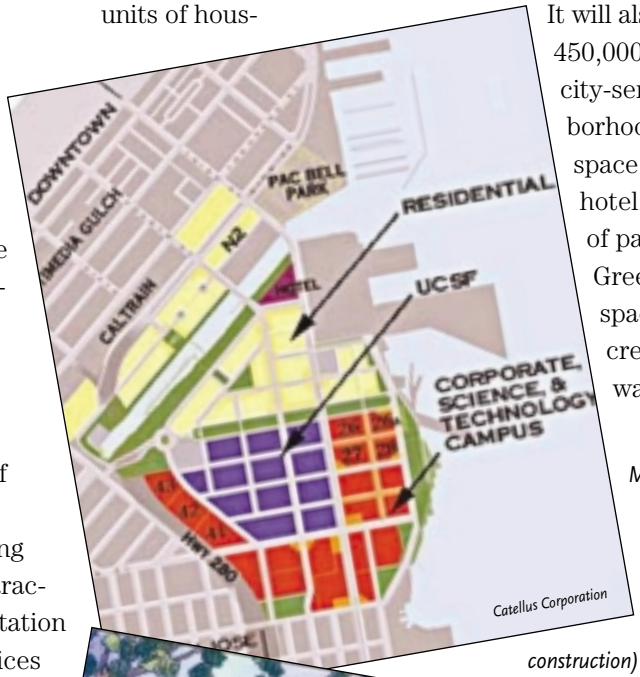
A number of Mountain View's Precise Plans are available online at *www.ci.mtnview.ca.us/*. The city website also includes other planning and code information.

5. San Francisco: The Better Neighborhoods 2002 Program and Mission Bay

In response to citizen activism seeking more housing in San Francisco, the City of San Francisco launched its Better Neighborhoods Program 2002 to prepare plans for three neighborhoods with substantial infill potential. This program emphasizes neighborhood livability—in particular the creation of safe streets, local shops, attractive public gathering places, architectural character, a variety of transportation modes, and housing choices for residents. Like area planning elsewhere in the Bay Area, the program aims to promote infill by developing neighborhood consensus around development directions.

In 2000 the city began work on neighborhood plans for the Balboa Park BART station area, the Central Waterfront south of Mission Bay, and the Market and Octavia neighborhood where the Central Freeway was taken down. The City Council has allocated a budget of $1.3 million to complete each specific plan and EIR, with outside consultants assisting city staff. Reducing automobile usage is a major goal, as is adding a broad range of housing options.

Meanwhile, the single largest infill project in the Bay Area is San Francisco's Mission Bay development. The result of decades of planning, Mission Bay will provide about 6,000 units of housing—including more than 25 percent affordable to low-income families, seniors, and others—as well as over five million square feet of space for office, research and development, multimedia, and other uses, including a UCSF research campus.



Map of Mission Bay.

Located one block from the Giant's ballpark, Orland Cepeda Place (under construction) will provide affordable apartment units and ground floor retail.

Mission Housing Development Corp.

This enormous redevelopment of Southern Pacific's former San Francisco railyards is a coordinated effort between the City, Catellus Corporation, and other landowners. It will also include up to 450,000 square feet of city-serving and neighborhood-serving retail space, a 500-room hotel, and 45 acres of parks. A Marina Green-style open space will be created along the waterfront.

For more information on the Better Neighborhoods 2002 program, contact David Alumbaugh, Plan Manager, at (415) 558-6601.

6. Oakland: The 10K Initiative Adds to Downtown Infill

Under Mayor Jerry Brown, the City of Oakland has pursued a campaign to bring 10,000 new residents to the downtown.

Lively public spaces along with infill housing, offices and restaurants, have all contributed to the revitalization of downtown Oakland.

Greenbelt Alliance

But downtown infill and revitalization efforts were underway well before his administration. Taken together, Oakland's downtown initiatives illustrate the strategy of focusing infill and amenities within a specific district to end a cycle of decline.

Even before Brown's 10K Initiative a wide variety of infill projects and new amenities had begun to revive Oakland's moribund center. The 12th Street City Center BART plaza and Jack London Square redevelopment projects in the 1980s began to create a "*there* there" in the city's downtown. The distinctive towers of the federal building brought hundreds of office workers to the area in the early 1990s. The mid-1990s City Hall renovation restored a landmark architectural jewel and created an attractive public plaza in the heart of downtown.

Recent infill developments in downtown Oakland include Swan's Market, a mixed-use project which transformed an 80-year-old Italian market building into a block containing 20 "cohousing" condominiums, 18 subsidized apartments, 42,000 square feet of retail and office space, and the Museum of Children's Art. This $20 million project was supported by a variety of federal, state, city, and private funding sources. A nearby Housewives Market project will soon offer another 200 market-rate and affordable apartments. Some 53 units are to be created in a former Sears building. A number of other projects are on the drawing board, including a potential Uptown development of up to 3,000 housing units.

For more information, visit the city's Community & Economic Development Agency website at *www.ci.oakland.ca.us/government/ceda/,* or contact Patrick Lane, Project Manager, 10K Project, (510) 238-7362.

Much more needs to be done to revitalize downtown Oakland. In particular, the 10K program has been sharply criticized for not emphasizing affordable housing sufficiently, and additional efforts are needed to ensure that current low-income residents are not displaced. Nevertheless, recent infill development efforts in this long-struggling urban center are beginning to create a critical mass of downtown residents and cultural facilities.

Oakland's Tribune Tower, visible in the distance, has recently been renovated as loft housing.

Greenbelt Alliance.

Swan's Market was transformed into cohousing condominiums, subsidized apartments, retail and offices, and a children's art museum.

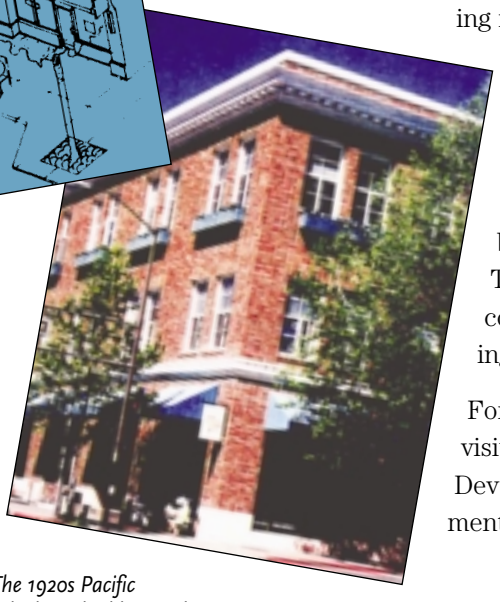
Credit: Russell Abraham

7. San Rafael: A Downtown Strategy

Blessed with the largest historic downtown in Marin County, San Rafael is using infill development to add housing and otherwise enhance this important resource. The city has used a Specific Plan, zoning changes, reduced parking requirements, redevelopment, and extensive public involvement to help infill come about. Municipal efforts have helped add 800 residential units in the last six years, about two-thirds of them in the downtown area.

The City of San Rafael Downtown Community Plan helped generate consensus on design concepts such as this sidewalk seating.

A 1993 Downtown Community Plan helped facilitate much of San Rafael's downtown revitalization. For this plan city staff coordinated three community workshops with 250 participants and nine children's sessions with 270 children and their parents. Participants agreed they wanted to upgrade the downtown's image and identity, make it a more interesting and exciting place, and have it be more walkable with varied architecture and cultural activities. Citizens recognized that bringing more housing to the downtown was one strategy to meet these goals. The Downtown Plan also contains specific recommendations on streetscape and pedestrian improvements, locations for different types of developments, and height transitions to surrounding neighborhoods.



The 1920s Pacific Telephone building in downtown San Rafael was converted in 1994 into 38 residential apartments and 4,740 square feet of retail space. In addition to relaxing parking requirements, the city granted builders a 45 percent density bonus since 20 units are affordable to those making 50–80 percent of area median income.

Greenbelt Alliance

Most of the downtown has been designated a redevelopment district, and the city's Redevelopment Agency actively coordinates infill development and helps fund affordable housing projects. To help infill development happen in the downtown, the city reduced the amount of parking required for most projects by about one-third. It also adopted a density bonus for affordable housing over downtown commercial projects, and exempted such housing from floor-area-ratio limits. To increase the supply of affordable units, San Rafael adopted an inclusionary zoning requirement that 10 to 15 percent of units in any sizeable residential project be below–market–rate. The city is currently considering increasing that level.

For more information, visit the Community Development Department website at *www.cityofsanrafael.org/commdev/,* or contact Bob Brown, Community Development Director, at (415) 485–3090.

8. Hayward: Planning for Infill and a New Civic Center

The City of Hayward has begun to add new housing, retail, and civic facilities near its BART station, and through its new General Plan process is involving the public in deciding how additional infill housing can be built citywide.

Like many Bay Area cities, Hayward has a huge housing challenge ahead of it. Between 2000 and 2020, jobs in Hayward are projected to increase by 21,810, and housing units by only 4,180. If the city is to avoid a growing imbalance between jobs and housing, it must act quickly to promote infill housing development.

In 2000 and 2001 Hayward held at least nine public workshops in which several hundred citizens turned out to contribute to preparation of a new General Plan. Much discussion focused on placing new housing along major arterials and within mixed–use developments in existing neighborhoods. The overwhelming majority of participants at a June 2001 summary workshop supported requiring affordable housing to be integrated into each new development. A strong majority also supported opening school district lands for mixed–use development. This new General Plan is likely to set the stage for more systematic infill development citywide.

Many specific infill initiatives are also underway in Hayward. In 1998 the municipality completed an attractive new city hall after swapping land with BART to acquire the present site. The Olsen Company is constructing 77 townhouses across the street. The city has required a new parking garage nearby to be built with retail on the ground floor to promote a pedestrian–friendly streetfront.

New transit-oriented development next to City Hall and the BART station in Hayward.

Greenbelt Alliance

Albertson's has built a new supermarket on Watkins between A and B Streets in the downtown to serve downtown residents. To save space, much of the parking for this supermarket is on the store's roof. And the city has drawn up a Cannery Area Design Plan intended to facilitate mixed-use infill on a 120-acre older industrial area just west of downtown. Zoning, General Plan designations, and other standards are being changed in conjunction with this Plan.

For more information, contact the Hayward Community and Economic Development Department at (510) 583–4200.

9. Berkeley: Incremental Additions Add Up

The City of Berkeley provides an example of how an older, first-ring Bay Area suburb can gradually improve its downtown and key corridors through incremental infill. To make infill happen, the city has used strategies such as reduced parking requirements, density bonuses, Specific Plans, financial assistance to developers, and public addition of urban amenities.

Left: *Shattuck Senior Homes provides affordable and convenient living in downtown Berkeley for low and very-low income seniors.*

Cesar Rubio

Top Right: *University Lofts, on University Avenue, provides 29 loft condominiums, a café, retail space, off-street parking, and an attractive 4,000-square-foot above-ground patio space for residents.*

Panoramic Interests

Lower: *Manville Hall, located in the downtown area near UC Berkeley, features a studio residence hall arranged around an inner courtyard, with retail on the ground floor.*

David Baker Architects

Largely built in the early 20th century along streetcar lines, the city's downtown declined after World War II and the University Avenue corridor became a haven for seedy motels and liquor stores. However, in the past decade infill development projects have helped revitalize both areas. In the downtown at least ten major new mixed–use buildings have added housing, cafes, restaurants, shops, and offices. Existing buildings have been retrofitted or had façade improvements. Between Shattuck and Kittredge Streets, Trumpetvine Court has created an attractive mid–block courtyard and walkway with outdoor seating for the Jupiter pub. New theatre buildings are creating an arts district along Addison Street.

The city has added urban amenities to help leverage downtown infill. With a grant of federal transportation enhancement funds the city widened sidewalks along Center Street in the mid 1990s to create an attractive outdoor seating area for restaurants. A comprehensive streetscape improvement plan is now being implemented to make the entire downtown more pedestrian-friendly.

Several Specific Plans, a Downtown Plan in the early 1990s, a University Avenue plan in the mid 1990s, and a South Shattuck Specific Plan in the late 1990s have helped coordinate infill in these key areas. The city has assisted many affordable housing infill projects through its housing trust fund, established in 1990. Berkeley also has some of the lowest parking requirements in the Bay Area, one space per unit in many locations.

For more information, contact Steve Barton, Housing Director, at (510) 981-5400.

10. Pleasant Hill: A Transit Village Takes Shape

Although infill development has been underway near the Pleasant Hill BART station for twenty years, a new planning process aims at creating a community-based Specific Plan for a more pedestrian-oriented district immediately around the station itself.

Over two decades the Bay Area's largest assortment of transit-oriented infill housing and office development has gradually grown up around Pleasant Hill BART. Planning consultants Sedway Cooke created a Station Area Plan in the early 1980s for a consortium of the cities of Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek, Contra Costa County, and BART. The Contra Costa Redevelopment Agency then assembled irregular parcels into developable land, invested in infrastructure, and issued tax-exempt bonds to fund improvements. By the mid 1990s private developers had built 1,600 housing units and 1.5 million square feet of Class A office space within a quarter mile of the station. Contra Costa County supervisor Sunne McPeak was a driving force behind these developments.

However, until recently the Pleasant Hill BART station development lacked a core. Large parking lots and pedestrian-unfriendly arterial streets dominated the area.

This situation is being addressed by a second major planning exercise, aimed at producing a more urban vision for the core area. As this vision is pursued over the coming years, the Pleasant Hill BART Transit Village should begin to reach its potential.

For more information, contact Jim Kennedy, Redevelopment Director, Contra Costa County, (925) 335-1275.

Top to bottom:

The Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Community plan envisions five distinct blocks, forming a network of pedestrian streets that connect the district with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Map of Station Square.

A drawing of townhomes overlooking a median within the boulevard connecting the station to the Iron Horse Trail.

Contra Costa County Redevelopment Brochure

Near Pleasant Hill BART: Treat Boulevard now and as envisioned afterward

Existing conditions along Treat Boulevard are bleak and unfriendly to pedestrians. Adding street trees, planters, broad sidewalks and street-level retail helps to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agency

11. Millbrae: Proactive Station Area Planning

When BART was first beginning to plan its extension down the Peninsula to the area around San Francisco International Airport, the City of Millbrae didn't like what it saw. BART was not thinking at all about development possibilities around a future Millbrae BART station. Instead of passively sitting by, Millbrae went out and hired the ROMA urban design firm to put together a visionary station area concept, completed in 1994. This plan forced BART to make a number of changes, such as moving the station closer to downtown and reorienting the parking garage to improve development opportunities.

Along with this initial concept and a subsequent 1998 Station Specific Plan, Millbrae rezoned 116 acres of commercial and industrial land for high-density residential, office, and hotel development. The city kept the amount of retail in the zoning scheme small so as not to compete with stores in the existing downtown next door. An EIR on the Station Plan means that individual projects do not have to undergo extensive environmental review. The city has been actively marketing 14 sites near the station to developers, and envisions 400–600 new housing units, one million square feet of new office space, and one or two new hotels.

Through Specific Plans, rezoning, and an aggressive economic development strategy, Millbrae is poised to see intensive transit-oriented infill development that can improve the city's tax base as well as its urban vitality.

For more information, contact Ralph Petty, Community Development Director, (650) 259-2341.

ALSO NOTEWORTHY:

A number of other notable infill projects are underway in the Bay Area. In many cases these are still in the early stages:

Fruitvale Transit Village. For several years the Spanish Speaking Unity Council, a large community-based non-profit organization based in Oakland's Fruitvale neighborhood, has been developing plans for intensive development around the Fruitvale BART station. The transit village is to include 67 units of affordable family housing, a child care center, a public library branch, a health clinic serving Latinos, retail space, a cultural center, and a public plaza near the transit facility. Construction on the project began in 2001.

Illustration of townhomes proposed for The Richmond Transit Village.

Calthorpe Associates

El Cerrito Transit-Oriented Development. One of the early pioneers of transit-oriented development in the Bay Area was Del Norte Place at the El Cerrito Del Norte BART station. This project provided 135 units of housing and 21,000 square feet of retail space. Unfortunately, due to neighbor opposition further development plans at this BART station were put on hold. Attempts to bring about mixed-use development at a declining shopping center at El Cerrito's other BART station did not receive municipal backing, and traditional shopping mall development is taking place.

Walnut Creek Downtown Retail. While many cities have allowed large retailers to build traffic-generating "big box" outlets off freeway exits in suburban locations, Walnut Creek has channeled retail development downtown. Upscale stores such as Macy's and Nordstrom's anchor a pedestrian mall next to the city's restaurant-lined main street. Now the city's challenge is to get additional housing downtown as well. One new project is adding 116 apartments and 46 condominiums with a small city park. Forty of these units will be affordable to low-income residents. The City supplied a $1.6 million loan for this project, issued bonds, and purchased two land parcels included in the site.

Richmond Transit Village. The City of Richmond's Redevelopment Agency has been coordinating development of a transit village around the Richmond BART station, where AMTRAK and BART stations join. In an area now covered by parking lots and vacant property, the new infill community will include 231 affordable townhomes and small-lot single family detached homes at a density of 22 units per acre, facing onto new small parks at the center of each neighborhood. The project will also include some 25,000 square feet of retail, a pedestrian plaza, and a new station building. Calthorpe Associates won a city-sponsored competition for the site design, and the Olsen Company will build the housing.

recommendations for regional and state action

Leadership at regional and state levels as well as by local governments is necessary to help bring about increased amounts of better-designed infill. The following initiatives are particularly important given current challenges and opportunities:

AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

Establish a regional Smart Growth Planning Fund to provide incentives for infill development planning. One of the most effective actions regional agencies could take to promote infill would be to establish a regional Smart Growth Planning Grant Fund, similar to the MTC's existing Transportation for Livable Communities program but offering larger grants to local public agencies for area planning in designated infill or smart growth zones. Existing state and federal transportation money could be used for this purpose.

Another related idea is suggested by Gary Binger of the Urban Land Institute. He suggests amending Proposition 13 to keep residential tax rates the same but to increase commercial property tax rates by a small fraction, maybe .25 percent, and devoting that revenue to a Smart Growth fund. Such a process might raise on the order of $50–100 million in the first few years for Smart Growth planning and incentive grants.

Provide incentive funding for infill housing. Along with a planning grant fund, a second incentive pool should be established to provide incentives for infill housing near downtowns and transit. Such a fund would expand MTC's existing HIP program, providing larger incentives of $5,000 to $10,000 per bedroom for transit-accessible infill. Local governments could use the money to help developers make the units more affordable or to provide amenities for infill development, such as neighborhood parks, streetscape improvements, or child care centers.

Create a regional revolving loan fund to get infill projects moving. A revolving loan fund would be extremely useful at the regional level as well as the state level in assisting public agencies and infill developers with site acquisition and pre-development costs. Often these developers and agencies must move quickly to secure desirable sites but lack the capital with which to do it.

Build infrastructure that supports infill. Regional agencies and utilities should channel investments, particularly for transportation, water, and sewer infrastructure, into existing urban areas as opposed to greenfield locations.

Tie infrastructure investment to local efforts to promote infill development and accommodate a fair share of regional affordable housing. It makes no sense for the region to invest its transportation dollars in those jurisdictions whose poor land use planning will just create more regional congestion. Part or all of regionally allocated infrastructure funding should be withheld from cities that fail to develop and implement a state-approved housing element and engage in smart growth planning.

Keep regional statistics on the amount of infill development. The Association of Bay Area Governments should develop information necessary to track infill development and guide local and regional policy. This information would include vacant land (on a parcel-by-parcel basis), redevelopable land, actual built densities, and annual percentages of infill versus greenfield development.

AT THE STATE LEVEL

Adopt a statewide land use planning goal of promoting infill development. Leadership from the state government is essential. The state should adopt broad planning goals promoting infill development, compact urban form, transportation and land use coordination, and affordable housing production. It should then develop incentives and mandates for regional and local governments to implement these goals, including mandates that cities approve affordable infill housing projects that meet local zoning and planning goals, or that cities provide density bonuses for affordable infill housing.

The state should say, if you have crucial transit corridors with more than 45,000 cars a day, you get an automatic five stories as of right within 100 feet. The state should require cities to create a dense core next to transit.

—Patrick Kennedy
Owner
Panoramic Interests

Provide incentive funding. The state should provide specific incentives for regional planning, development of area plans by local governments, and approval of new infill housing by local governments. One bill introduced in the legislature in 2001, AB 291 (Corbett), proposed to provide $10 million statewide for such planning grants. Additional infrastructure or general use funding for municipalities adopting good infill or affordable housing plans would be a strong incentive.

Reduce the "fiscalization of land use" by reforming the state tax structure. The single most important and difficult step to support infill development and smart growth in California would be to revise the tax framework established by Proposition 13, which promotes the fiscalization of land use by limiting the ability of local governments to raise money through traditional means of taxation. Most local officials acknowledge that Proposition 13 has been a disaster for cities. While it may not be possible to repeal this measure directly, other state actions can help lessen the ongoing harm. Steps in this direction include equalizing funding for schools and infrastructure across jurisdictions, replacing locally levied sales taxes with other forms of revenue, allowing local governments to share tax revenue, mandating revenue sharing at a county or regional level, and repealing limits on property tax rates or tax increases in general.

Enforce current mandates that cities accept affordable housing. If local governments refuse to accept their fair share of regional housing needs by adopting state-approved Housing Elements and implementing them, the state should withhold funding for infrastructure. One bill to this effect, SB 910 (Dunn), was introduced in the legislature in 2001. Another bill, AB 369 (Dutra), sought to authorize courts to order local governments to approve affordable housing projects if the local Housing Element had not been approved by the state Department of Housing and Community Development.

Increase funding for affordable housing. State tax credits have been extremely useful to support the creation of affordable infill housing, and the supply of these should be increased. A revolving loan fund to assist affordable infill developers with site acquisition and predevelopment costs would also be extremely useful, since these builders must move rapidly to acquire sites in a hot real estate market.

Expand flexibility of local redevelopment agencies and increase housing requirements. Redevelopment agencies have been the vehicle most often used by Bay Area local governments to promote infill development. These agencies acquire sites, assemble developable parcels, put infrastructure in place, and sell or lease lots to infill developers. But recent changes in state law have restricted the extent to which redevelopment areas can be created or expanded. Allowing redevelopment to be used not just in "blighted" areas, but in station areas and wherever else infill opportunities exist would greatly increase local flexibility to promote infill. One bill introduced in 2001, SB 600 (Torlakson) attempts to expand redevelopment powers to implement transit village plans. Increasing the percentage of funds that redevelopment agencies spend on

affordable housing from 20 to 25 percent would also help ensure that a substantial supply of infill housing is created.

Review the building code. The state code committee should review the state's version of the Uniform Building Code to simplify it and ensure that it provides maximum flexibility to builders and does not work against infill development.

Require "as-of-right" approval for infill housing that meets planning and zoning requirements. If projects meet carefully established municipal policy, code standards, and design review guidelines, the state should require that cities approve them quickly through an administrative process, without extensive hearings for a conditional use permit.

Require infill development to be considered an environmental benefit within CEQA-related environmental analysis. In CEQA analysis, currently infill projects are compared with a "no project" alternative, which naturally has less impacts. In reality, the likely alternative is sprawl development somewhere else. In comparison with this, infill produces many environmental advantages.

Recent State and Regional Initiatives

- The State of California's Multifamily Housing Program received $188 million in the 2001 budget to provide low-interest loans to developers of rental apartment buildings who agree to reserve units for low-income households. However, the future of this pilot program is in doubt.
- AB 2864, authored by Rep. Tom Torlakson, established a statewide incentive pool of $100 million in 2001, giving unrestricted grants to communities that in any given year approve 112 percent or more of average development in the last three years.
- San Mateo County's Housing Incentive Program provides $1,000 to $2,000 per bedroom to local governments as an incentive for housing near transit.
- The MTC's Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) program provides planning grants of up to $50,000 and construction grants of up to $1,000,000 for land use projects that promote transportation alternatives.
- The MTC's Housing Incentive Program (HIP) program, modeled on San Mateo's, provides incentive grants to local governments of $1,000 to $2,000 per bedroom for housing projects near transit.
- The state's Transit Village Planning Development Act of 1994 encourages cities and counties to concentrate development around rail stations, but provides no funds or land use authority for local agencies to do this.
- State law also requires that cities give density bonuses of up to 25 percent for projects providing affordable housing or more than 50 percent of units for seniors.

The state could provide cover for local jurisdictions, for example by requiring density bonuses for affordable infill housing .... you need to have big sticks as well as big carrots.

—Vivian Kahn
Principal
Kahn/Mortimer and Associates

recommendations for citizen action

In the past couple of decades citizens and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have played a crucial role in promoting infill development in the Bay Area. Nonprofit housing developers, for example, have stepped in to build affordable housing in infill locations when the for-profit housing sector was unable to do this. Individual citizens have also stepped forward to support many local projects, often despite opposition from other neighbors.

Such efforts can be expanded much further in coming years. Given the NIMBY opposition that often emerges in response to infill projects, constructive collaboration between local residents, community groups, planners, developers, and elected leaders is particularly important to proactively establish a context in which infill can occur.

Main opportunities for citizen action include the following:

Review of project designs. Infill housing developers often seek to meet with neighbors and other citizens groups while developing plans for new projects, and cities and towns increasingly require them to do so. Local residents can respond by suggesting constructive modifications to project designs that will meet neighborhood concerns without making projects economically infeasible. For example, stepping down the heights of infill buildings where they adjoin lower-density existing homes can help reduce visual impacts and ensure light to existing residences. To compensate, increased height might be appropriate along the sides of buildings facing commercial streets.

Participation in planning processes. Citizens and NGOs can advocate for Specific Plans to be prepared for neighborhoods with infill potential, and then can actively participate in those planning processes. Instead of rejecting any increase of housing in the neighborhoods, citizens can work with planners and elected leaders to envision how new infill development could add needed amenities and improve quality of life for everyone.

Support for good projects. A continuing problem is that opponents of infill attend public hearings far more often than advocates. It is crucially important that citizens let local officials and planners know of their support for infill development by sending letters, emails, and faxes as well as attending hearings of relevant decision-making bodies, which may include City Councils, Zoning Boards, Planning Commissions, and Design Review Boards.

Advocacy of affordable housing. Although neighbors often fear that affordable infill housing will bring undesirable new residents to their neighborhood, such units in fact create housing opportunities for teachers, nurses, firefighters, and many other existing members of the community. It is crucially important that local leaders, planners, residents, and community groups actively support affordable infill housing by attending approval hearings, writing letters, and working constructively with developers to ensure that projects are well-designed and respond to community concerns.

Organizing for long-term improvement. Ultimately, many of the Bay Area's urban growth problems are systemic in nature and will require long-term, strategic action. Adding needed services and amenities within a city or town may require changes to the General Plan, new Specific Plans, zoning and parking code changes, and many other actions. Regional actions such as new investment in transportation infrastructure or regional tax-sharing may be necessary as well. Even while focusing many efforts on near-term local projects, citizens and local leaders can keep the big picture in mind and work for longer-term municipal or regional improvements that can help infill development succeed.

interviewees

The following individuals were interviewed for this report:

David Alumbaugh, *Plan Manager, City of San Francisco*

Alex Amoroso, *Senior Regional Planner, Association of Bay Area Governments*

Shiloh Ballard, *Associate Director, Transportation and Land Use, Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group*

Steve Barton, *Housing Director, City of Berkeley*

Gary Binger, *Director of California Smart Growth Initiative, Urban Land Institute*

Bob Brown, *Community Development Director, City of San Rafael*

John Chapman, *President, East Bay Community Foundation*

Mike Church, *Planning and Redevelopment Manager, Redwood City*

Judy Corbett, *Executive Director, Local Government Commission*

Ignacio Dayrit, *Projects Coordinator, City of Emeryville Redevelopment Agency*

Stephanie Forbes, *Program Director, Local Initiative Support Corporation*

Karen Frick, *Project Manager, Metropolitan Transportation Commission*

Carol Galante, *President and CEO, BRIDGE Housing Corporation*

Bonnie Gaebler, *Housing Administrator, City of Petaluma*

Sean Herron, *Executive Director, East Bay Housing Organizations*

Diane Howard, *City Council Member and Former Mayor, Redwood City*

Tim Iglesias, *Deputy Director, Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California*

Tom Jones, *Executive Director, California Futures Network*

Debbi M. Jones-Thomas, *Housing Coordinator, Redwood City*

Vivian Kahn, *Principal, Kahn/Mortimer and Associates*

Patrick Kennedy, *Owner, Panoramic Interests*

Mark Kroll, *President, Sares-Regis Group of Northern California*

Steven Kuklin, *Senior Project Manager, A.F. Evans Company*

John Landis, *Professor, Department of City and Regional Planning, University of California at Berkeley*

Patrick Lane, *Project Manager, 10K Initiative, City of Oakland*

Dan Marks, *Planning Manager, City of Fremont*

Jim Mather, *Vice President, Community Development Lending, Bank of America*

Lynnie Melena, *Senior Planner, City of Mountain View*

Val Menotti, *Senior Planner, Station Area Planning, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)*

Betty Padgett, *Director of Education and Advocacy, Ecumenical Housing Associates*

Alison Pernell, *Land Use Coordinator, Local Government Commission*

Ralph Petty, *Community Development Director, City of Millbrae*

Laurel Prevetti, *Principal Planner, City of San Jose*

Kevin Roberts, *Community Development Director, City of Walnut Creek*

Dan Sawislak, *Executive Director, Resources for Community Development*

Matthew Schwartz, *Senior Development Specialist, City of San Francisco Redevelopment Agency*

Stephanie Shakofsky, *Executive Director, California Center for Land Recycling*

Doug Shoemaker, *Policy and Program Director, Nonprofit Housing of Northern California*

Joshua Simon, *Senior Project Manager, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation*

Fran Wagstaff, *Executive Director, Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition*

Alan Wolken, *Project Manager, City of Richmond Redevelopment Agency*

Kate White, *Co-founder, San Francisco Housing Action Coalition*

organizational resources

The following organizations can provide information related to infill development, housing, and community design, especially in the Bay Area:

The Affordable Housing Network of Santa Clara County. (408) 265-1554.

The American Planning Association. 122 South Michigan Ave., Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60603. (312) 431-9100. *www.planning.org*.

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). 101 8th Street, Oakland, CA 94607. (510) 464-7900. *www.abag.ca.gov.*

The Bay Area Council. 200 Pine Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, CA 94104. (415) 981-6600. *www.bayareacouncil.org*.

Bay Area Rapid Transit Station Area Planning Division and Real Estate Division. (510) 464-7502. *www.bart.gov/about/planning/stationArea.asp.*

The Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition (BATLUC). 414 13th Street, 5th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612. (510) 740-3150. *www.transcoalition.org*.

Bridge Housing Corporation. One Hawthorne Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94105. (415) 989-1111. *www.bridgehousing.com*.

The Brownfields Non-Profits Network. *www.brownfieldsnet.org*.

California Affordable Housing Law Project. (510) 891-9794 ext. 145.

The California Center for Land Recycling (CCLR). 455 Market Street, Suite 1100, San Francisco, CA 94105. (415) 820-2080. *www.cclr.org*.

California Chapter American Planning Association. 1333 36th Street, Sacramento, CA 95816. (916) 736-2434. *www.calapa.org/.*

California Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD). *www.hcd.ca.gov/.*

The California Futures Network. 1414 "K" Street, Suite 305, Sacramento, CA 95814. (916) 325-2533 ext. 313. *www.calfutures.org.*

California Housing Finance Authority (CHFA). (916) 322-3991. *www.chfa.ca.gov/.*

California Main Street Program. (916) 322-3236. *www.commerce.ca.gov/mainstreet.*

The California Planning Roundtable. *www.cmcaplans.com/cpr.html.*

Center for Community Change. (415) 982-0346. *www.communitychange.org.*

The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU). 5 Third Street, Suite 725, San Francisco, CA 94103. (415) 495-2255. *www.cnu.org.*

California Futures Network (CFN). 1414 K Street, Suite 305, Sacramento, CA 95814. (916) 325-2533 ext. 313. *www.calfutures.org.*

California Housing Partnership Corporation. (415) 433-6804. *www.chpc.net.*

East Bay Community Foundation Livable Communities Initiative. 200 Frank Ogawa Plaza, Oakland, CA 94612. (510) 836-3223.

Affordable housing developments, such as Pickering Place in Fremeont, have provided compact infill housing for working families.

Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition

East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO). (510) 663-3830.

Fair Housing of Marin. (415) 457-5025.

Greenbelt Alliance. 530 Bush Street, Suite 303, San Francisco, CA 94108. (415) 398-3730. *www.greenbelt.org.*

Housing California. (916) 447-0503. *www.housingca.com.*

Housing and Community Development Department, State of California. (916) 445-4782. *www.hcd.ca.gov.*

The International City/County Management Association. *www.icma.org/.*

The Local Government Commission (LGC). 1414 K St, Suite 600, Sacramento, CA 95814. (916) 448-1198. *www.lgc.org.*

The Low Income Housing Fund (LIHF). 1330 Broadway, Suite 600, Oakland, CA 94612. (510) 893-3811. *www.lihf.org.*

The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). 369 Pine Street, Suite 350, San Francisco, CA 94104. (415) 397-7322. *www.liscnet.org.*

Marin Housing Council. 2169 E. Francisco Blvd., Suite B, San Rafael, CA 94901. (415) 258-1800 x30. *www.housingcouncil.marin.org/.*

National Trust for Historic Preservation. (800) 944-6847. *www.nationaltrust.org.*

Nonprofit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH). 369 Pine Street, Suite 350, San Francisco, CA 94104. (415) 989-8160. *www.nonprofithousing.org.*

Northern California Community Loan Fund. 870 Market Street, Suite 677, San Francisco, CA 94102. (415) 392-8215. *www.ncclf.org*.

San Francisco Coalition for Low-Income Housing. (415) 487-3933.

The Silicon Valley Manufacturing Group (SVMG)/ Santa Clara Housing Action Coalition. 226 Airport Parkway, Suite 190, San Jose CA 95110. (408) 501-7864. *www.svmg.org.*

Spanish Speaking Unity Council. 1900 Fruitvale Ave., Suite 2A, Oakland, CA 94601. (510) 535-6900. *www.unitycouncil.org.*

The Smart Growth Network. *www.smartgrowth.org.*

Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) Program, Metropolitan Transportation Commission. 101 Eighth Street, Oakland, CA 94607. (510) 464-7700. *www.mtc.ca.gov/projects/livable_communities/lcindex.htm.*

Urban Ecology (UE). 414 13th St., Suite 500, Oakland CA 94612. (510) 251-6330. *www.urbanecology.org.*

The Urban Land Institute. (800) 321-5011. *www.uli.org.*

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), San Francisco office. (415) 436-6550. *www.hud.gov/local/sfc/.*

U.S. HUD Affordable Housing Design Advisory Service. *www.designadvisor.org.*

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields Program. *www.epa.gov/brownfields.*

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