

West County Newsletter

MAY 2007



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A message from Supervisor John Gioia



It's hard not to get inspired by the new thinking on building communities that encourage healthy

lifestyles such as less dependency on cars. (See the article on page 2 on a recent workshop I co-sponsored on this topic.)

With increasing rates of obesity, diabetes and asthma, it's critical we design neighborhoods to encourage walking, biking, playing outdoors, fresh air and eating fresh foods.

But in so many of our urban and lower income communities, other issues need to be addressed as part of "healthy planning and design" if we are to be successful.

What good is a park if it's a magnet for drug users and crime? How can you encourage residents to walk or bike after work when there's dangerous traffic, truck and automobile exhaust fumes, or street violence?

It's hard to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables when the nearest store with a good selection of produce is

a long drive away, or what if you don't own a car?

The healthy planning approach offers exciting and important ideas, but we need to acknowledge that there is a double standard in "healthy lifestyle urban accessibility."

Many wealthier and suburban communities have it easier. They can afford higher levels of park and street maintenance and well-appointed bike paths and sports fields. They usually aren't located near heavy industry or major truck routes, and have lower rates of violent crime.

In contrast, urban and lower income communities stretch their budgets to meet basic needs - public safety, necessary infrastructure maintenance, simple economic development.

We need to design "healthy neighborhoods" while addressing the public safety and economic issues that many communities face. I believe both can be done simultaneously as long as we acknowledge that different approaches are necessary, depending on the community.

It won't be easy.

It will take funding, a challenge for any development. It will also take a commitment to turn ideas into realities - to build trails and bike paths, to update park lighting, to attract a full-service grocery store to an older urban neighborhood.

I find hope in the "healthy planning" momentum that's building here in Contra Costa County and across the nation.

The April workshop in San Pablo was packed; people were fired-up and enthusiastic. It's a great start.

As a County Supervisor, I'll do all I can to keep the momentum going on the county level. I welcome partnerships along the way.

- John Gioia

Building healthy communities

“Many of these concepts aren’t new. But turning them into reality is cutting edge stuff in urban planning, and Contra Costa County and the City of Richmond are emerging as leaders.”

City planners, community leaders and health experts from around West County gathered in San Pablo in April to examine urban development that promotes healthy lifestyles.

In a workshop called “Planning Communities: What’s Health Got to Do with It?” the multi-disciplinary group heard speakers and rolled up their sleeves for hands-on planning activities centered on melding public health and urban design.

Event sponsors included Supervisor Gioia, Contra Costa Health Services and the West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee — among others.

Health experts reviewed how current land use planning creates obstacles to outdoor play or easy access to healthy foods and contribute to childhood obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases in Contra Costa.

There were discussions focusing on ways to incorporate health factors as part of good land use planning.

Ideas included building safe, accessible

pedestrian/bicycle paths and parks — linking them to each other and to shopping districts to encourage alternatives to cars.

A related topic was clustering mixed-use housing and retail with centralized public transportation hubs, so people can shop where they live and come and go by train or bus.

People talked about restricting alcohol outlets through zoning, and locating housing on safe, attractive public spaces to inspire community interaction versus isolation.

Many of these concepts aren’t new. But turning them into reality is cutting edge stuff in urban planning, and Contra Costa County and the City of Richmond are emerging as leaders.

Richmond has introduced a “health element”, or a commitment to consider health issues in its general plan, which is currently being updated.

Another example is the County adding health considerations to its update of the El Sobrante

General Plan. A general plan is a blueprint for future development.

Keynote speaker at the event was Dr. Richard Jackson MD, a professor of Health and Urban Planning at UC Berkeley, and author of “Urban Sprawl and Public Health.”

Representatives attended from nearly every West County city and unincorporated community. Funding was provided by the California Kids’ Plates Program, where a portion of the cost of specially designed license plates is donated to projects encouraging safety.

Doctors Hospital gets new management

The reshaping of Doctors Medical Center took significant steps forward in recent months with the establishment of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), which is responsible for the management of the public hospital.

Doctors Hospital, facing a serious budget shortfall nearly closed last year.

The JPA was set up as a means for Contra Costa County and the West Contra Costa Healthcare District to share responsibility for developing a sustainable business plan for the hospital.

Supervisor Gioia serves as chair of the new JPA. Other board members include

Supervisor Gayle B. Uilkema, County Health Director Dr. William Walker, County Health Services CFO Pat Godley; Jim Beaver and Dr. Desmond Carson of the Healthcare District Board and hospital physician Dr. Sharon Drager.

The goal of the JPA is fiscal sustainability, or putting the hospital on solid long term financial footing. To this end, it has hired a management team with expertise in revamping troubled hospitals to analyze Doctors Hospital's operations and make recommendations for restructuring. The management team includes a new interim CEO. Irwin Hanson, Doctors Hospital's former CEO, resigned in April.

The JPA expects to make restructuring decisions based on public input and information provided by the management team within a few months.

Changes in the types of services Doctors Hospital provides are likely to take place. The relationship between the hospital and the County's health services will evolve.

Supervisor Gioia is excited by the commitment and energy behind the efforts to make the hospital viable. Doing nothing would have meant closure of the hospital.

The next JPA meeting is on May17 at 5 p.m. at Doctors Hospital.

"The goal of the JPA is fiscal sustainability, or putting the hospital on solid long term financial footing."

Summer reading program for kids rrrrevs up!

West County families have a new incentive to get kids to their local library during the long days of summer. Free bus passes on AC Transit or WestCAT.

A unique new program hopes to encourage reading by giving kids a week's worth of free bus rides (or ten free rides) back and forth from the library.

Called "Ride to Read," the innovative summer reading project is a double-winner for literacy and air quality. It also aims to get families out of their cars and on public transportation.

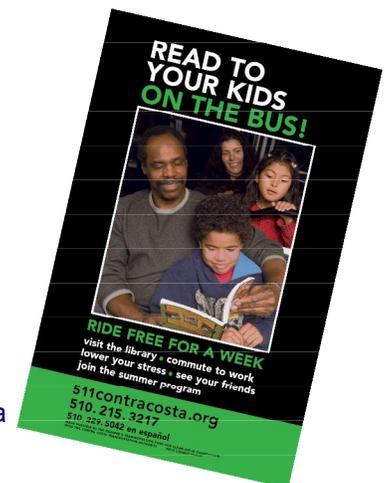
The program is slated to start in late May and run through August. Participants will also be eligible for end-of-summer prizes.

To get the bus passes, families will need to fill out and return a simple application that's available at all West County public libraries, including the City of Richmond Library; by calling 510-215-3217, or online at www.511contracosta.com

Applications can be returned by mail or at drop-boxes at the libraries.

The program is a collaborative effort of the West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee, the Contra Costa County Libraries and West County READS! — a community nonprofit.

It's funded by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and Contra Costa County Measure C.



Regional boards tackle global warming issues

“According to a recent study conducted by the Air District, half of the greenhouse gas emissions in the Bay Area are from transportation.”

The news on global warming is concerning, leaving communities small and large looking for ways to respond. The good news is that practical steps to reduce warming are emerging from the bleak predictions.

Supervisor Gioia sits on two regional boards moving to address climate change, efforts he strongly supports. The San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) have launched new initiatives designed to study the impact of global warming, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

According to a recent study conducted by the Air District, half of the greenhouse gas emissions in the Bay Area are from transportation, one-quarter from industrial/commercial

sources, 11% from residential, 7% from local electricity generation, and 6% from oil refineries.

Against this backdrop, the Air District’s current initiatives include: A \$3 million grant program for climate protection activities in the Bay Area; funding a comprehensive study of greenhouse gas emission control technology which could be used to control emissions from industrial sources; and a green schools program to develop strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of schools, while educating students on climate protection.

BCDC is studying the impacts of climate change on San Francisco Bay and is developing a regional task force to work with local governments and stakeholders regarding the issue. While sea levels in San Francisco Bay have risen 7

inches over the past 150 years, it is estimated they will rise between 12 and 36 inches by 2100. A 12 inch rise would cause the Bay Area to lose important real estate (including most of S.F. and Oakland Airports), public infrastructure, and natural resources, and would make 100-year flood events happen every 10 years.

These regional initiatives are consistent with Californians’ sentiments. In a statewide poll last year, two-thirds of Californians feel global warming is so important that they want the state to address this issue, independently of the federal government, a process that’s begun.

If you are interested in learning more about these efforts, please contact my office at (510) 374-3231 or check out www.bcdc.ca.gov and www.baaqmd.gov.

Supervisor Gioia’s campaign for year-around giving

Winter holidays are when people traditionally donate to organizations helping the needy. But there are year-around needs as well.

In the interest of promoting a more annual view of giving, Supervisor Gioia will publish a rotating list of West County charitable organizations in each newsletter, starting with this issue. These groups can benefit from even small contributions, in effect using the goodness of others to expand their good works.

We know there are many outstanding groups out there, and it

will take time to list them all. We’ll provide a few at a time. You can help too. If you know of a local nonprofit helping people in need call our office at 510-374-3231 or send an email through Supervisor Gioia’s website: www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/dis1/

We’ll post our expanding list on our website.

And remember... Supervisor Gioia encourages anyone visiting his office to bring a food donation for the Contra Costa Food Bank bin in our reception area — all year round.

Charitable Organizations

1. Early Childhood Mental Health in Richmond helps maintain healthy families and foster families. 510-412-9200, www.ecmhp.org
2. Asian Pacific Psychological Services. Offices in Richmond and Oakland. 510-835-2777, www.appsweb.org
3. Shelter Inc., Homeless Services, 925-957-7567, www.shelterincofccc.org
4. Weigh of Life; Richmond-based weight management assistance. 510-323-3052 www.wighoflife.org

Violence prevention discussion looks for common ground

Numerous groups in West Contra Costa are devoted to the cause of violence prevention, using a variety of projects and strategies to bring down the rates of violent crime.

Supervisor Gioia, who has been working on violence prevention issues, recently convened a group of organizations and agencies, in the interest of forming bonds that can strengthen the shared goal.

The group, called the West Contra Costa Violence Prevention Discussion, has had two meetings, with a third planned for May.

Roughly 30 organizations are

represented in the discussion, including nonprofits, government agencies, elected officials, and faith-based and youth groups. So far the talk has focused on identifying existing programs and projects, including comparing notes on successful approaches and ideas.

A major concern among organizations is the competition for scarce grants and donations. The collaboration hopes that working together will identify fundraising strategies that can benefit everyone, while cutting down on service duplication.

The effort is still in the early

stages. But the group has already agreed on the need to identify practical steps it can take, a “next steps” approach that builds credibility and strength.



The RYSE Youth Center Mural seen at the corner of Bissell & 41st Streets. RYSE was one of nearly 30 groups represented at the violence prevention discussion.

Breakfast with John

Supervisor Gioia's monthly community breakfasts continue. These events are an opportunity to join the supervisor over a cup of coffee or tea for an informal conversation on county issues.

Breakfasts are held at rotating locations around West Contra Costa. The schedule for the next two breakfasts is listed here.

They're on Saturday mornings. Complimentary coffee is served.

May 19, 9 to 10:30 am, Maggie's, 11740 San Pablo Avenue, (in the Del Norte Center near Cutting Blvd.), El Cerrito

June 23, 10 to 11:30 am, Future Home of the RYSE Youth Center, 205 41st Street, at Bissell, Richmond

Check Supervisor Gioia's website for additional information on future breakfasts.

www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/dis1/, or call our office at 510-374-3231.

Office Staff

Terrance Cheung
Chief of Staff
 El Sobrante Liaison
 East Richmond Heights Liaison

Cynthia Harvey
Office Manager/Scheduler
 Luz Gomez
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 North Richmond Liaison
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 Office Hours: Monday – Friday
 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon
 1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Our Website:
<http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/dis1>

Other Elected Officials

House of Representatives:

Congressman George Miller, III
 (District 7)
 (510) 262-6500 - Richmond Office
 (925) 602-1880 - District Office

Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher
 (District 10)
 (925) 932-8899 or (925) 757-7187 -
 District Offices

State Senate & Assembly:

Senator Tom Torlakson
 (District 7)
 (925) 602-6593 – District Office

Senator Don Perata
 (District 9)
 (510) 286-1333 - District Office

Assemblywoman Loni Hancock
 (District 14)
 (510) 559-1406 - District Office

Assemblyman Mark DeSaulnier
 (District 11)
 (925) 372-7990 - District Office

Commission & Volunteer Opportunities

Interested in community issues? Want to get involved? The County has numerous citizen boards that advise the Supervisors on a range of issues. For a complete list of openings check the county's website at www.co.contra-costa.ca.us. Click on Board Advisory Body Information. Applications are available online, or through our office. There are current openings on:

Alcohol and Other drugs Advisory Board,
 Fatima Matal Sol 925-313-6311

El Sobrante R-9 Committee
 Advises the board on park and recreation issues in the El Sobrante valley.
 Terrance Cheung 510-374-3231

Human Relations Commission
 Sharon Cottrell 925-646-5514

Youth Commission
 Joan Tomasini 925-646-5940.

Regular Public Meetings

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Meets at 9:30 am every Tuesday at the County Administration Building, 651 Pine St, in Martinez.

El Cerrito City Council

Meets at 7 pm on the first and third Mondays of every month at the El Cerrito Community Center, 7007 Moeser Lane, El Cerrito.

El Sobrante Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 7 pm on the second Wednesday of every month at the El Sobrante Library, 4191 Appian Way, off San Pablo Dam Road.

Kensington Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 7 pm the last Tuesday of every month at the Kensington Community Center, 59 Arlington, in Kensington.

Montalvin Manor Redevelopment Advisory Committee

Meet at 6:30 pm on the second Thursday of every month at the Montalvin Elementary School on Christine Drive.

North Richmond Municipal Advisory Council

Meets at 5 pm the second Tuesday of every month at 515 Silver Avenue in North Richmond

Richmond City Council

Meets at 7 pm every first and third Tuesday at Richmond City Hall, 1401 Marina Way South, Richmond

San Pablo City Council

Meets at 7 pm on the first and third Mondays of every month at City Hall, 13831 San Pablo Avenue, Maple Hall, Building Two, San Pablo.