

## The Quest for Cloverdale's Urban Growth Boundary

One of the defining issues for Conservation Action over the past decade has been the adoption of Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) in the county. While Cloverdale is the only city in Sonoma County without a UGB, there has been significant movement in recent months toward anti-sprawl legislation. During their recent City General Plan Update, a Cloverdale Citizen's Advisory Committee made a strong recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council to place a UGB before the voters of Cloverdale.

Conservation Action canvassers influenced this citizen's directive by generating more than 380 postcards from concerned residents in Cloverdale, calling for an UGB. Partnering with Greenbelt Alliance, SCCA set out to finish the job of securing Sonoma County's fastest growing city with an UGB. We found overwhelming support at the door on the issue, as residents expressed concern about hillside development, rapid growth in recent years, and a desire to see the home-town feel of Cloverdale preserved for future generations.

An Urban Growth Boundary protects surrounding hillsides, working farms and natural areas from poorly-planned development. It would help to revitalize Cloverdale's historic downtown by redirecting growth into the existing city. It would also help ensure that the city does not grow beyond its ability to provide adequate police and fire protection, or water and sewer services.

UGB's are a key tool when moving towards a vision of city centered, transit oriented development. With the inevitable and eventual passage of SMART, Sonoma County is truly defining the smart growth movement on a national scale. By adopting policies like UGB's, we create an atmosphere that makes it easy for local elected officials to make land use choices that protect the environment.

Because it cannot be changed except by a vote of the people, a voter approved Urban Growth Boundary is the best way to protect surrounding hillsides, reinvest in the historic downtown, and promote responsible growth for Cloverdale. ♦

## SMART on Track: Rail Realities in North Bay

The SMART transportation project is just the first step of a visionary plan to restore a robust passenger and freight rail service on the historic Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way *and* to create a 70 mile bike-pedestrian pathway between Cloverdale and the Larkspur Ferry Terminal. For over a dozen years, environmentalists and planners have refined the plans and clarified the steps to save the rural character of Sonoma and Marin Counties while enabling the cities to become more walkable centers of activity.

Attention has focused on the transportation corridor that is now occupied by congested Highway 101. Because it is well known that the mere addition of lanes to a freeway is not a long-term solution to traffic problems, the rail right of way has been preserved and is now controlled by the SMART District. In the case of Highway 101, one set of train tracks is comparable to building two new lanes for 101, in much less time and for a far lower cost.

As a first step in a longer road toward resumption of truly comprehensive rail service, the SMART District has decided to refurbish the tracks and to run commuter trains on the 70 mile rail line, starting by the year 2010. This would require the modest public support of a quarter cent sales tax, proposed for the fall 2006 ballot.

Over the past several months, a group of rail supporters representing a wide range of community interests, have come together under the name Transportation Alliance. This group encompasses business, labor, environmental, community and neighborhood groups, whose purpose is to promote and build infrastructure for the SMART campaign in Fall of 2006.

As a prerequisite to the vote, the environmental impact study examined the possible *adverse* environmental impacts of rail service. Largely missing from the environmental analysis was anything that supporters could point out as evidence of the *benefits* of the project. For example, we know that passenger rail service encourages Smarter Growth, including infill housing and commercial activity, with more walkable neighborhoods than at



The Draft EIR shows environmental benefits by removing 100,000 pounds of greenhouse gases daily.

present. Rail stations are able to serve a walkable community of about 500 acres within a half-mile walking distance of a station. The community of homes and businesses that can develop in an area of that size can be quite vibrant. It can be a neighborhood in which numerous daily errands can occur without the use of a car.

Also, the availability of passenger rail service enables bus operators in the corridor to optimize their service, using the rail line as the backbone for greatly improved services to riders. Other cities have consistently seen bus ridership rise with the establishment of rail connections for the bus services.

The better growth patterns induced by a train were largely undocumented in the report. Their results would show:

- More open space remaining undeveloped in Sonoma and Marin Counties
- More residents living more sustainable, less auto-dependent lifestyles
- Less vehicle miles traveled with reduced energy consumption and auto emissions
- Less exposure to inevitably high gas prices, less dependence on petroleum
- Better public health, by opening recreation opportunities for walking and biking
- Lower household transportation costs

The report also contained ridership predictions for rail service, based on very conservative assumptions, because there was very little analysis of the benefits flowing from the infill and passenger preference aspects. There is reason to think that ridership, and the accompanying benefits of the project, are much higher than forecast.

Since the conventional environmental impact report is focused primarily on negative impacts such as noise and traffic,

# Hail the Rail! A Celebration of Rail in the North Bay *By Christina Penrose*

Many thanks to all those who attended the *Hail the Rail!* event on December 8<sup>th</sup>. It was a huge success with nearly 100 people in attendance! Funds collected from the event have helped to fuel the upcoming year of intense grassroots organizing.

*Hail the Rail!* began in the early evening with two informative and inspirational presentations and rounded out with some nice jazz music and exciting conversation. *The Train-Supporting Jazz Trio* played every classic train tune under the sun. Rick Brown and Matt Stevens had an informative video presentation for the SMART project available for viewing throughout the evening. The Sonoma County Model Railroad Society allowed attendees to learn how to conduct a rail switch on their traveling model railroad display. There was talk of trains throughout



The Sonoma County Model Railroad Society with their interactive rail and switch display.

the building, and increasing enthusiasm for the year of intense campaigning ahead of us.



Our keynote speaker was Bill Kortum, who spoke on the history of the

rail movement in Sonoma County and important next steps. The history of rail in the county through keen eyes is definitely something to see. Please visit our website for the text of his speech: [conservationaction.org/news/opinion.html#kortum](http://www.conservationaction.org/news/opinion.html#kortum). Bill Kortum is

President of SCCA and a founding board member. He has been a prominent figure in the work to preserve the California Coast. Bill is also a former South County Supervisor.

Dr. Rick Brown, public outreach consultant for SMART, spoke about the SMART project. His presentation was dynamic and energetic and his enthusiasm carried into the evening's events. Rick has been a Managing Partner with The Results Group since 1994 and an organizational, management, and planning consultant and facilitator since 1980. Rick has also worked as a consultant to a wide variety of public sector, non-profit and business organizations, including the SMART Board.

The *Hail the Rail!* event provided some of the extra momentum SCCA needs to get canvassers to both Marin and Sonoma counties this year. Our canvassers will be busy informing the public and getting out the vote until November when the Rail measure will be on the ballot. Our canvass crew has doubled in size since last year and we'll be visiting more neighborhoods than ever before.



Thanks again to all of our supporters! Look for information on future fundraising and educational events on the web at [www.conservationaction.org](http://www.conservationaction.org) ◇

## University Threatens Urban Growth Boundary

Conservation Action is very concerned about the county's leading institution, Sonoma State University, setting a bad civic precedent by violating Rohnert Park's voter controlled Urban Growth Boundary.

The University has been for years trying to find land on which to build subsidized faculty housing. New faculty positions are not being filled because applicants run up against inflated housing costs. The University was able to purchase land at a reasonable price on Petaluma Hill Road be-

cause the land is outside the Urban Growth Boundary. It is therefore not developable except that the University, a state institution, is not bound by city and county regulations. Next they want the Rohnert Park Council to provide sewer and water to the University project that disregards the city's voter mandated Urban Growth Boundary.

As an alternative, the developer of Sonoma Mountain Village on the old Agilent site, has offered to build faculty housing. As a second alternative, SCCA is working with Greenbelt Alliance to see if faculty housing can be accommodated in the giant 1400

home development proposal north of the campus.

SCCA has invested years of canvass activity in passing voter controlled Urban Growth Boundaries in eight of our nine cities. We were the grassroots backbone of the six year project and we will speak out at any attempt to violate this very potent tool against urban sprawl. Cities will return to their voters for renewal of each UGB twenty years after their initial approval, and SCCA will be there to organize a "Yes" vote. ◇

*By Bill Kortum  
SCCA President/Founder*

## Living Wage Campaign Comes to Petaluma

The Living Wage Coalition (LWC) is a project of New Economy Working Solutions (NEWS), a public policy research and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting greater equity and fairness in the regional economy through policy research, public education, leadership training, and community organizing. The initial round of the Petaluma Living Wage campaign began in 2000 with the formation of a core group which explored the economic and political feasibility of passing a living wage ordinance.

The LWC sponsored a survey of Petaluma residents conducted by Citizens for a Better Sonoma County in 2002 which demonstrated broad support for a living wage ordinance. The Petaluma LWC began meeting monthly by mid-year of 2004, and is now moving forward to pass a city-wide living wage ordinance. The first step in this process was the council's approval of the fiscal impact study in December of 2004, prepared by the UC Center for Labor Research & Education.

The Petaluma Living Wage campaign is an important foundation for the ultimate objective: a county-wide Living Wage ordinance. This is part of a broader Bay Area campaign to establish a regional wage norm and introduce the Community Impact Report (CIR) as a policy tool for local governments. The CIR requires that

the municipality conduct an economic and social impact study for all new commercial development, similar to the EIR (Environmental Impact Report) that is now a standard feature in the development approval process. The Living Wage ordinance will cover up to 2,500 jobs in the huge redevelopment district.

The LWC is developing an extensive grassroots community-labor organizing project targeting workers and communities likely to be most impacted by the Petaluma Living Wage ordinance. Central Petaluma will be the primary focus for 2006. We will also conduct house meetings to generate grass-roots support for the Living Wage ordinance in the low-income neighborhoods in the central Petaluma district, which will be most impacted by the proposed law.

We will initiate a training program for local residents to serve as community leaders in building support for the Living Wage campaign. The LWC will partner with Sonoma County Conservation Action to coordinate a public education effort with precinct captains in conjunction with a city-wide canvassing campaign.

With our committed efforts and the support of our allies, we will prevail in Petaluma, and lay the groundwork for establishing a county-wide living-wage norm and make Petaluma a place where our children can work and live. ◇

*By Ben Boyce  
Living Wage Campaign Coordinator*

*Rail Realities (Continued from page 1)*

it is easy to miss the most important benefits of passenger rail service. While often ignored in the report, the benefits of passenger rail service are many.



An example of a possible SMART locomotive.

Many people support passenger rail because it would create transportation and land use patterns that counteract the effects of sprawl. For environmentalists, the fundamental purpose of the project is to provide the transportation infrastructure needed to make possible transit-oriented pedestrian-friendly mixed use development in station areas, thereby enabling a significant number of future North Bay residents to access many of their daily needs without the use of the automobile.

It is in this light that Friends of SMART, Conservation Action, and the recently formed Transportation Alliance will approach the voters of Sonoma and Marin Counties in the Fall of 2006. ◇

*By Steve Birdlebough  
Chairman, Friends of SMART*

## THE SCCA NEWS SCOOP

*By Denny Rosatti*

### Gravel Mining in our Drinking Water



Syar Industries is applying for an extension of their terrace mining gravel permit in the middle reach of the Russian River. SCCA will watch-dog this process, and actively work to permanently phase gravel mining out of the river. After all, this year was to be the fixed date for ending terrace mining in the Russian River, a policy adopted ten years ago by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.

\*Stay informed on upcoming meetings at [conservationaction.org/events/calendar/](http://conservationaction.org/events/calendar/)

### Grassroots Democracy for Saggio Hills

The citizens of Healdsburg stood proud and made a strong showing at a recent city council meeting, where the new Saggio Hills developer presented his proposal for the council. SCCA generated over 50 letters from our membership, calling for smart growth and housing that is affordable to a range of income levels to be included in the project. Based on the new proposal, the public input is paying off! There is a 12 acre increase in the amount of land dedicated for affordable housing, the plans include a public trail system, and a much needed multi-use park with playing fields and wetlands for all to enjoy.

\*See our "News and Views" webpage at [conservationaction.org/NewsandViews/](http://conservationaction.org/NewsandViews/)

### County General Plan DEIR Released

The Sonoma County General Plan DEIR has been released. You can see the document at: [www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/](http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/)

\*For updates, send an email with "Gen Plan Update" in the title to, [SCCA@ConservationAction.org](mailto:SCCA@ConservationAction.org)

### Accountable Development Coalition

Conservation Action has been an active partner in the Sonoma County Accountable Development Coalition, a coalition of labor, housing, environmental and neighborhood groups. The SMART project at Railroad Square in Santa Rosa has shown that groups with a different focus can come together for a common good.

The recently released Request for Proposals issued by the SMART Board for Railroad Square is an example of what we're looking for in a smart development— green design of buildings, with a mix of housing for different income levels, built with good jobs and social equity over time. After multiple lobbying visits with developers, SMART Board members and staff, and other stakeholder groups, SCCA feels that the environment has made a step in the right direction. We'll continue to participate in this very important Coalition building process.

\*See our "News and Views" webpage at [conservationaction.org/NewsandViews/](http://conservationaction.org/NewsandViews/)



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**Canvass Report: A 2005 Retrospective** *By Andrew Goodman*

**2005** was a very busy year for all of us here at Conservation Action. Our staff experienced a move into a **new office** and a complete makeover of our **website**, allowing us more flexibility to expand our resources for political organizing. We started off in **Petaluma** collecting letters to the City Manager and City Council, calling for **open space protection** of the areas north and south of the **outlet mall**. We generated over **120 letters** to the decision-makers in only a few weeks.

Steps were taken for increased protection of our valuable water resources. The canvass has generated over **900 letters** to the Planning Commission, County Board of Supervisors, and the State Water Resource Control Board, calling for a **comprehensive water management plan** as part of the County General Plan Update. We also worked to inform the residents of the **Larkfield/Wikiup** area about the benefits of buying back control of their privatized municipal water supplier.

**Protection of our county's forests** from speculative vineyard development has been a key campaign over the past several years. Our canvass has sent over **800 letters** to the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission in support of the strictest protections for our County's timber forests.

At special election time, Conservation Action got the vote out by organizing neighborhoods for **No on 74/75/76**, furthering our coalition with labor interests. During the months prior to the election, SCCA took the lead on what one consultant called, "the largest grassroots, door to door campaign the county has ever seen"

for the **GE Free Sonoma County** campaign.

This past year saw the fruition of the Sonoma County **Accountable Development** Coalition; a coalition of environmental, labor, housing, and community groups. The Coalition's first project has been centered on the development of Railroad Square in downtown Santa Rosa. SCCA will continue to advocate for **green building** principles, **solar design**, **affordable housing** strategies, and sound **labor practices**.

Currently, the canvass is riding the calm before the **2006** storm. **Cloverdale** is in hot pursuit of their **urban growth** boundary and we are working with Greenbelt Alliance by informing the local voters to make that UGB a reality. The Board of Supervisors is going to make a decision on whether or not to violate the Aggregate Resource Management Plan for continued **gravel mining** in the Russian River.

Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (**SMART**) is placing a regional measure on the ballot in the Fall of 2006. Citizens of both counties will be voting on a modest quarter cent sales tax initiative to send a **passenger train** from Cloverdale down to Larkspur landing with a parallel, 70-mile long bike path.

Rest assured, our canvassers will continue their tireless work for countywide **multimodal transportation** solutions. With city council elections this fall, and several local environmental measures, the canvass is looking forward to these challenges and many others as we proudly serve the **grassroots** needs of the environmental community here in Sonoma County. ♦

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