

Community Venture Partners, Inc.

A Catalyst for Sustainable Solutions

Annual Report
2014

Community Venture Partners, Inc.

ANNUAL REPORT

2014

Community Venture Partners, Inc.
Annual Report 2014
© 2014

Community Venture Partners, Inc.

A Catalyst for Sustainable Solutions

Mission Statement: Community Venture Partners facilitates and assists community based projects, programs and initiatives that demonstrate the highest principles of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

CVP OFFICERS & DIRECTORS



Bob Silvestri
President
Chairman



Joan Bennett
Board Member



Maurice Bennett
Treasurer
Board Member



William Clements
Board Member



Aniko Kurczinak
Secretary
Board Member

CVP ADVISORS

Isabelle Finney
John Flavin
Rick Harris
Ed Harvey
Victor Grey
Susan Kirsch
Burton Miller

Phil Paisley
Steve Pedersen
Don Ruggles
Glen Bossow
Wendy Willbanks Wiesner
Edward Yates

Community Venture Partners, Inc.

A Catalyst for Sustainable Solutions

2014 CVP ANNUAL REPORT

Letter from the President

November 26, 2014

It has been an incredible year for Community Venture Partners. CVP was incorporated in July of 2013. We received our federal nonprofit 501(c)(3) determination letter in November and began operations in January of 2014. We launched with a number of solutions-based projects and initiatives, including our [Open Government Apps Initiative](#) and our [Complete Communities Project](#), which we continue to work on with the Association of Bay Area Governments and local elected officials.

Most nonprofit start-ups typically take years to get up to speed; CVP hit the ground running and was quickly immersed in the [Larkspur Landing Station Area Plan](#) challenge and working with local community groups on planning and regulatory issues. We provided strategy and support for events and educational outreach to community groups in Marin City, Marinwood, Strawberry, Larkspur, Kentfield, Novato, Ross and Fairfax. Demand for assistance was so great that we started the [CVP Community Fund](#) to raise donations to help cover the costs of legal research and community organizing.

During 2014, we also supported the Flexible Housing Initiative, which is working to allow “junior” second units (small apartments within existing homes), in Marin, and we weighed in [against the use of herbicides in our watershed](#) and [against National Parks Service/Golden Gate National Recreation Area plans to commercialize Muir Woods](#) and build visitor parking lots in our open space.

More recently, CVP launched [The “IMBY” \(In My Back Yard\) Solution](#), which offers a more realistic method to deal with sustainable growth and housing challenges. Public presentations about the concept have been enthusiastically received throughout Marin. During the year, CVP also sponsored [public events and forums](#), including the recent [Citizen Marin Forum](#) at San Rafael City Hall, which was attended by hundreds of residents and dozens of elected officials and local agency heads.

In our continuing effort to empower local community voices, CVP is currently developing a new online news magazine called “The Marin Post.” The Marin Post promises to dramatically increase access to timely information about local issues, by providing an open platform to empower citizen journalism in Marin County.

Last but not least we are now in the midst of our [challenge to the Marin County Housing Element](#). The Marin County Draft Housing Element remains a serious concern. As written, it sets some very disturbing precedents about planning and public process.

For more details and discussion about these and other projects please see our web site and the interactive version of the “CVP Annual Report.”

An Annual Report would not be complete without a request for support. As we enter 2015, the issues and challenges facing our communities have not diminished. But 2014 saw some significant victories for local voices. These included the removal of Planned Development Areas in Strawberry, Tam/Almonte, Marinwood and at the San Rafael Civic Center. We also saw the passage of AB1537, which reclassified Marin County correctly as a “suburban” area. And, of course, the Larkspur Landing Station Area plan was relegated to the dust bin. However, the pressure is increasing in Marin County to grow and develop far beyond its ability to support that growth.

The potential impacts of inappropriate development on our public services, water supply and utilities, roads, traffic, infrastructure and our schools, without even considering the impacts on our quality of life and environment, stand to change Marin County forever. Certainly, we have to address affordable housing needs and shared environmental concerns. But none of the methods presently proposed by government entities does anything at all to solve those problems: they will almost certainly make things worse. Ironically, in response to growing public opposition to misguided plans, local officials and agencies have become even more opaque and obtuse in their dealings with the community.

Many challenges still lay ahead.

In the past months, CVP has noted numerous violations of the Brown Act by elected boards and county agencies such as the Marin Municipal Water District and the Transportation Authority of Marin. We recently filed a [Cease and Desist letter](#) with the Marin County Board of Supervisors to address one of the more egregious of these transgressions. The proposed developments at Marinwood and at the Seminary in Strawberry remain far too large and impactful for those locations. Money is being misspent at an alarming rate (consider the proposal [to spend \\$68 million on a bike lane on the Richmond Bridge](#)). Existing regulations and public process are regularly being ignored in reviewing new development plans. Many of the provisions of the Marin County Draft Housing Element remain too impactful and arguably illegal under the California Environmental Quality Act. Lastly, our only large public housing project in Marin, the Golden Gate Village Apartments in Marin City, home to more than 700 extremely low income residents, remains at risk of demolition and gentrification under proposals being promoted by elected officials and local agencies.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank those of you who have been so generous in donating to CVP throughout the year. I also want to thank and gratefully acknowledge all the leaders and members of all the local community organizations whose incredible dedication and unfailing efforts have really led the way. Without all of you, none of what CVP has accomplished would have been possible.

But the only way CVP can continue to work on your behalf and provide the same high level of oversight, due diligence, legal research and community supporting services -- and in fact increase those efforts to meet the growing need -- is with the support of our donors and

volunteers and those who've provided professional services, pro bono. We're proud to report that in its first year, CVP benefited from the generous support of over 200 individuals from all parts of Marin County. Your ongoing support is essential.

For the foreseeable future, CVP will remain an all-volunteer organization. No officers or board members will be paid a salary, though we try to reimburse them for direct expenses incurred. Our office space is donated free of charge and we anticipate that continuing in 2015.

Our bare bones annual operating expenses are projected to be about \$25,000 in 2015, not including the direct costs related to the projects, programs and initiatives we are presently undertaking and intend to continue in the coming year. Our ongoing expenses include accounting, bookkeeping, secretarial, filing fees, tax prep, copying and printing, equipment and repair, office supplies, insurance, corporate legal, postage, telephone and internet, transportation and parking, and web hosting and maintenance, and other general expenses related to events and services offered. CVP also now needs more assistance with fundraising, communications and social media; expenses that will be in addition to our basic operating budget.

As you evaluate your year-end giving, I hope you will consider supporting CVP. However, if you're unable to support us again at this time, please consider sending this letter and Annual Report to others, urging them to assist our efforts. Please also let us know if you would like to arrange for a private presentation and fundraiser at your home or civic group to acquaint friends, neighbors and colleagues with our work. And in this year where many investments have done well, remember that we accept donations of common stock for which donors receive a deduction on the full appreciated value.

We're all in this together, working for a future for Marin that is economically and environmentally sustainable and socially just. As always, we promise to make every dollar count.

Thank you so much for your confidence and support. [Donate to CVP here](#) (please indicate "General Support" in the purpose box).

Sincerely,



Bob Silvestri
President
Community Venture Partners, Inc.
73 Surrey Avenue
Mill Valley, CA 94941
415.381.3887

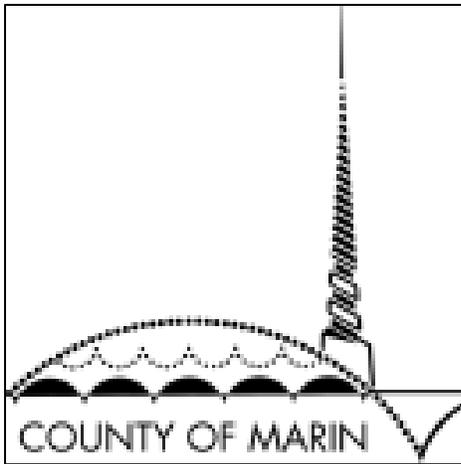
COMMUNITY VENTURE PARTNERS

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

An [interactive report](#) on CVP's activities in the 2014 calendar year

CURRENT PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

The Marin County Housing Element Challenge



UPDATE: The County of Marin is in the process of reviewing and adopting its new Housing Element.

The “Housing Element” (HE) is a planning document that every city and county in the State must regularly update as part of its General Plan, and it must be certified by the Department of Housing and Community Development in Sacramento ([HCD](#)). This is the document that creates the connection between our local government planning and the much discussed Association of Bay Area Governments ([ABAG](#)) Regional Housing Needs Allocation, the so-called “RHNA housing quota.”

[CVP is challenging the County's proposed 2015-2023 Housing Element](#) for unincorporated Marin because we believe it is deeply flawed and proposes to set planning and land use precedents that would have unacceptable negative impacts on the residents of Marin County. This finding led to our filing [two comment letters](#) with the County, protesting its adoption and recommending major revisions.

We also asked the County to address a variety of significant environmental impacts of the HE, and restart the public process to allow more time for public input. Unfortunately, the County has chosen to ignore our requests and those of hundreds of Marin County residents.

We are currently in the process of developing our third comment letter, which will be submitted to the Marin Board of Supervisors prior to their first hearing on the Housing Element, on December 9, 2014. Our letter will address a number of serious shortcomings of the County's HE under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

On October 20th, the Marin County planning department released an [Amendment to the 2012 Environmental Impact Report \(SEIR\)](#) as part of their ongoing process to move toward approving a Final Draft 2015-2023 HE.

In issuing an Amendment the County is inappropriately relying on a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) done for the prior Housing Element planning cycle in order to avoid having to do a thorough evaluation of the real environmental impacts of the proposed HE. The adequacy of that prior SEIR is also currently being challenged in the Courts by the Marin Community Alliance, and so should not be relied upon.

It is our position that under CEQA, the State declared drought and other significant circumstances and potential impacts that were not considered in the prior SEIR must now be properly addressed. We feel that the County is misleading the public on a variety of relevant facts, attempting to exploit legal loopholes to circumvent a fair and reasonable public process, and illegally avoiding a full evaluation of the potential environmental impacts of the Draft HE, as it is written.

This is particularly important now because the County has chosen to propose housing sites and units far in excess of their legal requirement under RHNA. The County's RHNA allocation calls for a total of 185 units in all income categories combined, while [the revised Draft HE proposes 419 units](#). If one accounts for other provisions included in the Draft HE regarding how units are defined and new height limits, and add to that the automatic impacts of the State Density Bonus law (which the County continues to ignore), the potential total developable unit count allowable under this HE could rise to well over 1,000 units. This calculation will be more fully explained in our third comment letter.

Throughout the fast-tracked public hearing process, the County has continued to mislead the public by stating that it is a "statutory" requirement that they adopt the HE by January 31, 2015. This is simply false. The County has until May 31, 2015 to complete their review. This leaves ample time to ensure its analysis and proposals are correct.

The County is maintaining that they cannot delay the approval process because they will be penalized by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission ([MTC](#)), who *might* withhold transportation funding. However, as we pointed out in our legal comment, there is no specific funding at risk. Nor is there any statute granting MTC the power to tie the Housing Element adoption date to the withholding of federal transportation funding if they don't meet MTC's arbitrary January 31st deadline.

In fact, the only reason the [Board of Supervisors](#) may be worried about that date is that they themselves agreed to meet that date or accept penalties. They ceded our local powers to an unelected State agency, voluntarily. This coercive "financial entrapment" approach taken by MTC, in exchange for Federal funds, was also a factor in the Larkspur Landing Station Area Plan.

It is unfortunate that the [County Planning Commission](#) and the County Supervisors continue to ignore public comment that contests their predetermined plan. It's therefore equally important that the community continues to press for a more reasonable response to the State's housing quota demands by lowering the number of so-called "buffer" sites and the number of units and removing other provisions that can allow developers to increase densities far beyond what the HE calls for.

Cease and Desist Filed with Marin County

In its meeting of August 19, 2014, the Marin County Board of Supervisors engaged in an extensive discussion and formal presentation about the Marin County 2015-2023 Housing Element, an item that was not on the agenda and for which no public notice was given.

Government Code § 54954.2(a) (2) states,

“No action or discussion shall be undertaken on any item not appearing on the posted agenda, except that members of a legislative body or its staff may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by persons exercising their public testimony rights under Section 54954.3.”

The actions taken by the Board were not in compliance with the Ralph H. Brown Act because there was no notice to the public on the posted agenda. This violation was of particular concern to CVP because it was clear that the reason the BOS held this un-agendized hearing was in response to [our letter of August 12, 2014 challenging the Housing Element](#). By holding a hearing without public notice, CVP and its supporters were denied their legal right to be notified and attend to explain their opposition.

On September 19, 2014, CVP filed a [cease and desist letter](#) with the County of Marin because of this violation of central provisions of the Brown Act, by the Marin County Board of Supervisors. By law, the County had 30 days (until October 18th) to respond to our cease and desist letter or issue an unconditional promise not to violate the law in the future. However, they have chosen to ignore it.

CVP now has until December 18th to file a complaint in Court.

Corte Madera Public Records Act Requests



CVP is providing advisory services and has funded legal costs to assist the Friends of Corte Madera.

To date this community group has filed two public records act requests with the City of Corte Madera to obtain all records regarding the processing and approval of the [Tamal Ridge](#) (Win Cup) apartments in Corte Madera. Their goal is to determine whether the public process that took place conformed to State law and to investigate if the town’s environmental review was adequate. Questions remain

unanswered as to how this project received approval without any requirement for an environmental impact report. This was in spite of the fact that the previous land use, Styrofoam manufacturing, included the use of and the production of known EPA listed carcinogenic agents.

Corte Madera Cinema Development & the Tamal Vista Blvd. Moratorium



CVP has been [commenting on](#) the proposal to demolish the Century Cinema Theater on Tamal Vista Boulevard and replace it with high density, market rate housing.

In support of the overwhelming public opposition to this proposal, CVP has been talking with city officials and stressing the need for a balance between business uses, future jobs, and housing needs, when considering any change of zoning from commercial to residential.

Overbuilding residential at the expense of commercial development opportunities only works to ensure that Marin becomes more of a “bedroom” community with its residents becoming even more dependent upon long commutes to find employment.

We were thankful to learn that [Corte Madera adopted a moratorium](#) on all development on Tamal Vista until a thorough planning overview is completed. In the coming months, CVP will continue to listen to community voices and bring their concerns forward in conversations with elected officials.

Strawberry Community & the Baptist Seminary Development Proposal



The Baptist Seminary recently completed the sale of its 100 acre plus campus in Strawberry to a Texas oil trust (the Fasken Trust), which intends to develop the property with 300 units of high density housing. Their plan also includes the relocation and expansion of the Branson School in Ross to a new Strawberry campus, and almost tripling its current student population to 1,000 students.

The developer’s proposal ignores the significant impacts on infrastructure, traffic, congestion, parking and quality of life in Strawberry. It appears to violate certain terms and conditions of the existing Community Plan, Seminary Master Plan and the Countywide Plan.

An independent traffic study commissioned by The Seminary Neighborhood Association shows that this proposal would increase traffic throughout the Strawberry community by an additional 4,000 vehicle trips per day. All of that burden would fall on residential streets that are barely one lane wide in each direction.

Once again, a Marin community has been forced to mobilize, do extensive research, and hire legal experts to address faulty proposals by County Planners and the Board of Supervisors in order to ensure that development is appropriate and sustainable.

CVP applauds [Strawberry residents](#) and will continue to provide advisory services and fund raising assistance to help their voices be heard by their elected representatives.

Organized Residents of Marinwood



CVP is currently advising the Organized Residents of Marinwood (ORM) through their representatives, Justin Kai and Raymond Day, regarding the Marinwood Plaza development proposal by Bridge Housing.

It is anticipated that an environmental impact report (EIR) will be issued for that project sometime in the first quarter of 2015. CVP has offered ORM fiscal sponsorship to help raise funds for independent legal and environmental specialist' evaluations of that soon to be released EIR.

Flexible Housing Initiative – Promoting Junior Second Units in Marin



In 2014 CVP formally endorsed the work of Rachel Ginis of [Lilypad Homes](#) in her efforts to educate cities about “junior second units.”

Junior Second Units (JSUs) are smaller versions of second units that are already allowed in California municipalities. The State of California mandates that local governments encourage the development of second units and recognizes their importance as a valuable source of housing for family members, students, the elderly, young adults, care providers, and people who work in our community.

JSUs are created by repurposing an existing bedroom and ancillary spaces in a single-family, owner-occupied home. They are typically limited to no more than 500 square feet, with utility connections sized to preclude future expansion.

JSUs offer many advantages over conventional second units in that they don't actually increase the total occupancy of a residence, do not increase building size or building mass, and do not affect the character of the neighborhood in which they are located.

Junior Second Units have the potential to be an important affordable housing option for low-income renters, for homeowners with unutilized space in their homes, who would benefit from extra income, and for seniors who either need a live-in caregiver or might want to age in place by living in the JSU themselves while renting out the rest of their home.

The IMBY Solution – Educational Outreach



Outreach to the business community and civic leaders is an important part of CVP's work.

Toward that end, we have been presenting [the "IMBY" \(In My Back Yard\) Solution](#). The slides from that presentation can be found on our web site (please contact us for a user password).

The "IMBY" Solution is a new way to look at planning, growth and land use. It incorporates a "bottom up" locally-driven process that enables communities to solve

their growth, affordable housing and planning challenges in more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable ways.

The IMBY Solution proposes that the fastest and most cost effective means available to dramatically decrease our impacts on the planet and promote more economically, environmentally and socially sustainable growth is through "New Suburbanism." This concept calls for preservation, renovation, rehabilitation, retrofit and adaptive reuse of existing structures, and new infill development using low impact design principles. As automobiles transform themselves into one or our greenest technologies, the dynamic that favored urbanism is losing competitiveness, while suburban towns are thriving.

We've continued to present the IMBY Solution to interested groups in Marin and around the Bay Area, stressing that high density development is not a viable way to achieve economic, environmental or socially just solutions for suburban areas.

To date, the audience response has been overwhelmingly positive. Recent presentations have been made to the Marin Realtors Association - Government Affairs Committee, Ross Valley Rotary Club, Golden Gate Breakfast Club of San Francisco, the Marvelous Marin Breakfast Club, Larkspur Rotary, the Second Wednesday Group, and at other private social gatherings.

“The Marin Post”

“I know of no safer depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.” ~ Thomas Jefferson

CVP board members are regular contributors to Marin’s community dialog through published articles, Op-Eds, research reports and letters to the editors in local newspapers and online journals. We are also in the unique position of being copied on an unending flow of documents and works of “citizen journalists” from around Marin County. Upon request, CVP board has been acting as editors and mentors to the growing ranks of citizen journalists in Marin County.

We believe citizen journalism is an area that deserves ongoing support. Toward that end CVP is currently developing a new citizen journalism web magazine called *The Marin Post*.



The Marin Post will be an open blogging, news and notice posting platform with an emphasis on the works of local writers.

The Marin Post will have an editorial board and a list of invited contributing writers. That list will grow over time and any member of the public may submit an article for publication consideration. Readers will be able to comment on and discuss any piece published. The Marin Post will also post and link to news articles, videos and notices of events on other web sites.

Why the Marin Post?

Even in our digital age, good journalism remains one of the most powerful forces

for social and political change. Citizen journalism and communications have been a major catalyst for many of the positive public policy changes we've witnessed to date. Because of this, we feel it's essential to continue to empower community voices to help bring about constructive change. The Marin Post will allow local writers to post articles, research and commentary about

issues of general public interest. Topics might include affordable housing, arts & culture, health & fitness, the local economy and government, emergency preparedness, environmental and wildlife, historic preservation, parks and open space, growth and planning, public services, schools and education, social justice, technology and innovation, transportation and traffic, and more.

The Marin Post publishing platform will be agnostic on point of view and politics. In fact we believe it is only by encouraging differing points of view that we can engage a broad audience in a truly democratic dialog.

Why Now?

The need for an open community news source that supports citizen journalism, on any side of any issue, has become acute in Marin. Citizen journalists are in fact the only ones left doing real investigative journalism about local issues.

“The Patch” was initially a platform for citizen journalists to publish. However, since being acquired by AOL, the ability to publish has been severely restricted, community comments and conversation are no longer easily accessible and the publication has generally turned into just another commercially driven advertising platform showcasing more sensational “news.”

“NextDoor” also initially showed some promise but administrators have begun to notify users that they will not allow the posting of “controversial material” about politics or local government or other things of real importance. And it was never really designed to engage Marin residents in a meaningful way.

Finally, the “Marin Independent Journal” has become less open to controversial positions in its editorials and Op-Eds since being sold to investors several years ago. The paper no longer employs a single investigative reporter and has become an increasingly tight “funnel” for writers to get published through. It also remains decidedly biased toward the status quo and local political power.

A respected venue is needed to publish thoughtful writing and serve as a public forum for meaningful discussions about issues of general public concern. Fortunately, the technology required to operate such a venue has become easily accessible and relatively inexpensive. Principals of CVP and its advisors have considerable experience in web application development.

We are currently seeking a seed funding grant of approximately \$25,000 to build and launch a fully working version of the web/mobile app for the Marin Post. We appreciate any introductions or referrals to potential funders.

CVP intends to incubate The Marin Post after which it will be spun off as a separate entity. We estimate that a soft launch will be possible within 90 days of funding.

[Please contact CVP](#) for technical details and a complete funding prospectus.

The Larkspur Landing Farm and Educational Research Center

“Stay close to nature. It will never let you down.” ~ Frank Lloyd Wright

Following the Larkspur Station Area Plan’s rejection by the Larkspur City Council, CVP approached a Ross Valley Sanitary District (RVSD) Board member and the mayor of the city of Larkspur to discuss the future of the ten acre parcel owned by RVSD, which remained the only viable development site at Larkspur Landing.



Our goal was and is to create an appropriately scaled, local serving development in order to keep the property from being over-developed into a large hotel and the 240 units of high density housing.

CVP envisions a “carbon neutral” development that would include a state of the art “urban farming” operation, affordable housing, high paying jobs and jobs training, and public education.

Our proposal incorporates educational and scientific research facilities and local non-profit and residential uses in one comprehensive plan, achieved through a public / private partnership with the RVSD. The proposal allows RVSD to centralize their operations on the southern end of the site, while land leasing the

remainder of the site, on a long term basis.

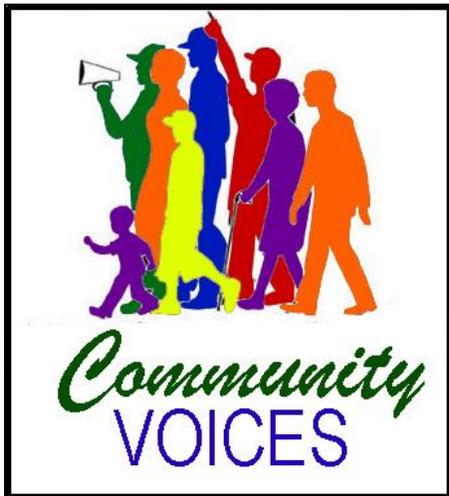
Features of the proposal include full remediation of the known toxic PCB pollution on the site; the development of a fully functioning and profitable hydroponic and aeroponic, organic farming operation, powered solely by wind and solar; a “farm to table – table to soil” closed loop recycling center; freshly grown produce sales; a waste to energy generating facility; affordable worker housing and senior housing; and an Urban Farming Education and Research/Business Incubator, serving small local nonprofits.

Financing would be facilitated through a combination of private grants, government programs and private equity investment. The proposal represents a win-win for all participants. It will preserve the value of RVSD’s equity in the land, while lowering the development cost to help

subsidize affordable housing and educational uses. More importantly, it represents a significant win for Marin's quality of life and community values.

The proposal has been endorsed by local community groups who opposed the Larkspur Landing Station Area Plan. CVP intends to work closely with established commercial hydroponic growers and local food retailers, such as [Whole Foods Markets](#), and local nonprofit organizations such as [Marin Organic](#). Maisie Ganzler, Vice President of Strategy at [Bon Appetit Management Company](#), the country's largest organic, corporate restaurateur and the developer of the organic demonstration farm at AT&T Park in San Francisco, is a key advisor for the project.

The Complete Communities Online Survey Tool



From its inception, CVP has discussed the need for planning methods that encourage a “bottom up” process. As the result of years of discussions with community members, and government officials, CVP is proposing an online, public “Local Needs Survey Tool” to facilitate a public process that better reflects the needs of local communities.

This was the topic of a recent meeting with executives and planners at the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). Several key executives at ABAG are recognizing that a “one size fits all,” top-down planning approach will not succeed in communities such as Marin.

CVP believes a simple online “survey tool” could compile information about local planning needs and that data could be available to everyone on a public web site. We call this [the Complete Communities Initiative](#).

The online surveys are broken down into steps, each seeking input on the specific needs of each community. Participating residents of Marin would be asked to rank lists of items (e.g., types of affordable housing or types of public policy incentives) in the order of their priority and preference.

These prioritized results would then be displayed on graphs and charts, and using web tools such as Google Maps to display the results on color-coded maps. These real time results would represent a visual expression of what each community feels it needs to be a “complete community.”

The information and data would be invaluable to community members and regional and local planners. For the first time they would be able to compare how well regional plans align or don't align with local needs, how different parts of the nine county Bay Area compare to each other in their planning needs, and how the allocation of State and Federal funding could be adjusted to enhance the needs of each community.

CVP is in the process of preparing a seed funding grant proposal for the [Complete Communities Initiative](#) that we intend to present to foundation funders in 2015.

Pipeline Projects Public Database



In the course of discussing the Complete Communities Initiative with Brad Paul, ABAG’s deputy executive director, and Duane Bay, the assistant director of planning and research, Duane commented that ABAG is constantly being asked for information about “pipeline” development projects: a list of future projects in each community around the Bay Area. Interestingly, this is a request that CVP has received many times from community members.

People want to know how much development their city or county currently allows under present zoning, how many development projects are presently being proposed by developers, what stage of the approval process are they in, how many have been approved, and how they can access this information quickly and easily.

The answer to those questions, unfortunately, is that these data are not readily available in any organized, easily accessible format. But it’s something that both top down agencies and bottom up advocates would both like to have.

As a result, CVP began a series of investigations and discussions with local planners and our technology partners and advisors about how we might create a master, online database that could be made available to local planning agencies and the general public.

At first it seemed fairly easy. The enabling technology required was relatively simple and inexpensive. However, after further investigation it became clear that although the cost of developing the database technology was relatively low, the time and cost of implementing and integrating new web-based technology with the myriad of existing, legacy systems currently being used by the 109 San Francisco Bay Area ABAG member municipalities, and the time and cost of staff training at the local level to convert to the new technology, was prohibitive.

So for the foreseeable future or until significant amounts of funding are made available to each local municipality, to cover their costs of converting to a new technology platform, it’s unlikely that a master database of this kind will be feasible to implement.

Open Government Apps Project



The need for public engagement, transparency in government, and public access to timely information has never been greater.

To achieve better ongoing community participation in local planning and development decisions it is no longer sufficient for a city or county to simply have a static web site where notices are published about the activities and meeting schedules of local planning committees and agencies. And with the costs of public outreach and regulatory compliance escalating, interactive, Internet-based technology is the only viable solution.

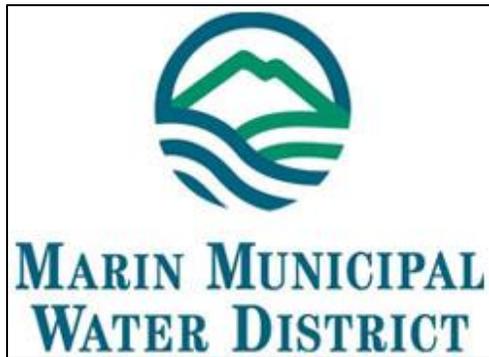
Interactive exchange of information between governments and their constituents needs to be enhanced and made more easily accessible.

As noted by Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor of California, in his new book, *Citizenville*, local government and governmental agencies are falling behind in their implementation of communications technology. This is causing a critical disconnect between government and public participation that can only lead to increasing contentiousness.

To address this need CVP is proposing a suite of [mobile phone apps](#) to help residents communicate with their local governments and promote government transparency. For example, “Reporting Apps” would allow residents to report traffic and public safety incidents to the city, take a photo of what they are noticing, and add their comments. For more information, [please visit our web site](#).

OTHER 2014 PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

MMWD's Herbicide Use in the Marin Watershed



Water and resources management are fundamental to good planning and sound decision making.

The [Marin Municipal Water District](#) Board of Directors is currently pursuing a plan to use toxic, glyphosate herbicides in the watershed to stop the spread of French broom, an invasive species that increases fire hazards. However, as important as it is to reduce fire dangers, CVP believes there are better, more effective and less environmentally destructive alternatives.

On October 20th, CVP published a two part investigative report on our web site commenting on the impacts and dangers of MMWD's plan: [The Marin Municipal Water Districts Deal with the Devil](#).

Larkspur Station Area Plan (LSAP) & Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) Challenge



Challenging the LSAP DEIR was a major undertaking for [CVP's Community Fund](#) in 2014.

In early 2014, the City of Larkspur presented a major planning initiative to develop as much as one million square feet of additional housing, retail, and office and hotel development in the Larkspur Landing / Ferry Building area. This scale of development was unprecedented in Marin and would have been the equivalent of five Win Cup projects (the massive new apartment complex in Corte Madera) plus a shopping

center the size of the Marin City Center.

In order to stop this plan and at the urging of local community groups, CVP rapidly assembled a team of legal experts and consultants to challenge the adequacy of LSAP and the DEIR. CVP filed [a 100 page brief, illuminating the serious flaws and illegalities inherent in the plan](#), on May 28, 2014, prior to the June 2nd comment deadline. Copies of the letters and documents CVP filed are [available on our web site](#).

The CVP Team: Each member of our team reviewed and commented on the LSAP and DEIR in his/her area of expertise. The team included:

- Edward Yates: Lead counsel and specialist in CEQA law (California Environmental Quality Act) and the requirements of the DEIR.
- Richard Grasseti: Specialist in CEQA planning, environmental and land use issues, and general CEQA planning analysis;
- Peter Baye: Biology, habitat and environmental consulting analysis;
- Geoff Hornek: Environmental air quality and pollution consulting and analysis; and
- Pang Ho: PHA Transportation Consultants: transportation, circulation and parking analysis.

We also enjoyed pro bono assistance from the following individuals and we are very grateful for their contributions:

- Michele Janes Hayden: Michele contacted all the Federal, State, regional and local agencies and departments that are responsible for commenting on the significant impacts of LSAP and the adequacy of the DEIR;
- Michael Arnold Ph.D. Economist at Alco Partners. Mike assisted with the analysis of the negative economic and financial impacts of LSAP on city finances, city services, local utility providers, infrastructure and schools; and
- Susan McGuigan: Susan, former Deputy General Counsel for Napa County, assisted with general legal support and final comment document review.

Goals: Our intention was to show that the LSAP and DEIR were unacceptably flawed and failing under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). We also pointed out that Larkspur's only obligation under the terms of its grant agreement with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) was to undertake the LSAP study. There were no penalties for abandoning the plan, contrary to what the City Staff had told the public.

Grassroots Engagement: The energy and commitment of the grassroots community groups that came together to stop LSAP was nothing less than historic. Their blogs, newspaper articles, letters, emails, events, and protest marches really turned the tide. The vociferous public participation by their members at Planning Commission and City Council hearings was essential to achieving the final outcome.

CVP advised and worked closely with all these local community groups and helped sponsor their public education events. **We want to wholeheartedly thank them for their incredible efforts.**

Working with Local Agencies: CVP sent [letters](#) to both the Marin Municipal Water District and the Ross Valley Sanitation District, reminding them of their obligations to comment on the DEIR and assisting them in identifying the relevant State regulations and case law that applied under their jurisdictions. CVP also sent comment letters to the Transportation Authority of Marin

(TAM), Marin Transit, and the Golden Gate Bridge Highway & Transportation District (funders of LSAP) criticizing the inadequacy of their published comments on the LSAP DEIR.

In addition to presenting our legal arguments ([comment letter by Edward Yates](#)) and our planning arguments ([comment letter by CVP](#)), CVP contacted and worked with local, regional, State and Federal agencies to ensure that proper attention was paid to the impacts of LSAP. Other agencies contacted included Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Caltrans, Corte Madera Planning Department, Department of Fish and Game, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, Greenbrae Property Owners Association, Marin County Planning Department, Marin Sanitary Service, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Native American Heritage Commission, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Rafael Community Development Department, Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART), The Office of Marc Levine, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Corps of Engineers, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Working With the City of Larkspur: On June 4, 2014, CVP president, Bob Silvestri, legal counsel, Ed Yates, and community representative, Joan Bennett, met with Larkspur mayor Ann Morrison, vice-mayor, Larry Chu, Dan Schwarz, city manager, and Neal Toft, planning director, to urge the City to set the plan aside because it did not reflect the vision of the Larkspur General Plan or the wishes of the majority of their residents. Recognizing that the City was being pressured by local and regional agencies such as TAM and ABAG and MTC, to build high density development, we even offered to legally defending the City against such pressure.

Litigation: Should all of our attempts have failed, our approach from the outset was to lay the groundwork for legal action in the Courts to ensure that the DEIR was not adopted or certified. Fortunately, that was not necessary.

Final Decision by the City of Larkspur: The City of Larkspur's decision was finalized at a City Council meeting on July 16, 2014. CVP's legal counsel, Edward Yates, provided written comments on the technical wording of the final Resolution, which was adopted by the City and incorporated into the final Resolution to ensure that there was no chance of misinterpretation of the Council's intentions, at a future date.

Acknowledgements: We wish to thank and acknowledge the efforts of elected officials such as Kevin Haroff of the Larkspur City Council, Frank Egger of the Ross Valley Sanitary District Board, Linda Pfeifer of the Sausalito City Council, and columnist Dick Spotswood, who challenged the Larkspur Station Area Plan from the outset.

We also want to again thank all the members of the Larkspur City Council for having the wisdom to hear the voices of the community and support their wishes in the final hour.

Convening Community Leaders from Unincorporated Marin

In August CVP convened a meeting of leaders of prominent community groups from the unincorporated areas of Marin County.

These leaders included Joan Bennett and Mimi Willard of Kentfield / Ross Valley ([Marin Against Density](#)), Justin Kai and Raymond Day of Marinwood / Lucas Valley (Organized Residents of Marinwood), Sharon Rushton and Ann Spake from Tam /Almonte / Manzanita ([Sustainable Tam/Almonte](#)), Rob Martyn and Ray McDevitt of Strawberry ([Strawberry Community Association](#)), and Josh Sale and Sylvia Marino of Strawberry ([Seminary Neighborhood Association](#)).

The purpose of the gathering was to bring community leaders from the unincorporated areas together to explore common ground on issues and discuss solutions to shared concerns.

Golden Gate Village – Marin City



Throughout 2014, CVP continued to meet with community leaders of the [Residents Council](#) at the Golden Gate Village public housing project in Marin City. We provided free consulting and advisory services, helped evaluate future home ownership options, helped create grant proposals, and co-authored a Petition for Relief to the Marin Housing Authority, the project's owner and manager.

Golden Gate Village is a 300 unit project located in Marin City. It sits on 31.4 acres of land and was built in 1960 to offer housing to Southern black families who had come to Sausalito to work at the Marin Shipyards, building Navy ships during WWII and the Korean War. This public housing project, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright protégé, Aaron Green, has both historic and community significance. It was originally developed as a showcase of best practices in affordable housing at that time. It is currently home to approximately 700 very low income residents.

Unfortunately, Golden Gate Village presently has one of the worst HUD maintenance ratings of all public housing projects in the State of California. Despite their efforts, the local housing authority has been unable to secure funding to address tens of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance in order to bring the project into compliance with minimum standards.

At the same time, rising land values and heavily promoted regional development funding programs threaten the existence of this community landmark because current programs will only support demolition of the complex and new development of higher priced, “affordable,” mixed use projects. However, as Royce McLemore, a local community leader, told CVP, “The problem is, we (the residents) can’t afford, ‘affordable’ housing.”

It is estimated that demolition and gentrification of GGCV would displace as many as 90 percent of the project’s longstanding, very low income residents. Most families would be unable to find replacement housing they could afford in Marin, even if they were offered Section 8 vouchers. They would be at risk of having to move out of Marin or even becoming homeless.

CVP will continue to assist with financial planning and general advisory support, as requested, to help evaluate future redevelopment options that benefit the residents.

CVP 2015 Estimated Annual Budget

ITEM	MONTHLY	ANNUAL
Accounting		
Annual Filings	80	\$960
Consulting	50	\$600
Tax Prep	50	\$600
Bank Charges & Fees	5	\$60
Bookkeeping	50	\$600
Consultants	65	\$780
Copying / Printing	25	\$300
Corporate Expenses		
Dues & Fees	15	\$180
Filing Expenses	15	\$180
Equipment		
Equipment Purchase	25	\$300
Equipment Repair	20	\$240
Events	20	\$240
Insurance		
Business Umbrella Coverage	32	\$384
Directors & Officers	60	\$720
Errors & Omissions	70	\$840
General Liability	65	\$780
Health Insurance	295	\$3,540
Liability - Events	50	\$600
Legal (*corporate only)	150	\$1,800
Maintenance	15	\$180
Office Expense	10	\$120
Office Supplies	65	\$780
Postage / Fedex / Shipping	30	\$360
Publications	70	\$840
Secretarial	250	\$3,000
Taxes Paid		
Federal	0	\$0
Sales Tax	15	\$180
State	0	\$0
Telecommunications		
Cable	15	\$180
Internet		
Internet Services	105	\$1,260
Web domains registration	18	\$216
Web hosting - Email	25	\$300
Telephone	100	\$1,200
Travel & Transportation		
Auto Rental	25	\$300
Gas / Parking / Tolls	150	\$1,800
Per Diem	50	\$600
2015 Estimated Annual Budget Total		\$25,020.00