

In This Issue:

CRR's reception

Did you know.....

Smart Growth v Jobs

Eminent Domain
Threatens American
Dream

Grand Prix Auto Race
on Santa Clara Street

Grandpa Tony's
Orchard – A Poem

Links to articles you
should read

An Outstanding Success ~ CRR's Reception

On Friday Sept.17, 2004 CRR hosted a reception for the Ninth Annual Northern California M.O.R.R.Conference in San Jose.

Keith Watt so graciously donated the courtyard of Le Petit Trianon Theatre, and food, beverages and champagne flowed abundantly. The event was well attended by local and far away activists. Guest of honor included Sherry Curtis of CURE (Californians United for Redevelopment Education), Chris Norby (founder and Director of MORR) and Steven Greenhut (Senior Editorial Writer, Orange County Register). Steven brought copies of his latest book "Abuse of Power- How the Government Misuses Eminent Domain. The lone and valiant representative of the San Jose Redevelopment Agency was Harry Mavrogenes. We thank them all for coming!

CRR's poster presentations made their debut on this day. The topics include the Tropicana, Blight, Follow the Money..... We are now ready to travel for neighborhood presentations. Please call if your group would like to have us come.

We also showed the documentary of Poletown. 1,300 homes (4,200 residents), 140 businesses, 6 churches and a hospital taken by eminent domain in Detroit, Michigan in the 1980's to give to General Motors for a Cadillac plant. The decision was recently overturned by the Michigan Supreme court. Twenty years of agony. A very powerful story.

Lastly, to the political candidates who came and spoke... Thank you for so eloquently making your points. You have earned our support! To everyone else that attended~ Thank you for making this a great event. We look forward to seeing you again in the future!

WWW.CRRSJ.COM

Please check out our
new (shorter) website
address.

CRR meets the
second Thursday
in January,
April, July &
October from
7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Want to learn
more?
Please call us for
further
information.

Did you know ???

San Jose's parks department proposes to allow "developer park in lieu fees" diverted from public park development to many kinds of other outdoor projects, including mountain bike trails, equestrian trails, dog runs, and structures to house theater productions and dance recitals. This covers redevelopment agency property as well as other city areas.

Read the rest of the article at <http://www.crrsj.com>

"No properties are off-limits -- working-class communities, ski chalets, and one-tenth of San Jose, California, have all been targets of condemnation proceedings on behalf of enterprises as varied as casinos, Costco, and the New York Times..."

http://www.motherjones.com/news/feature/2005/01/01_407.html

Smart Growth Vs Jobs.

Portland, OR was the first US City to institute Smart Growth planning. San Jose was the second city. Portland is number one in urban joblessness and San Jose is number two. Smart Growth establishes an Urban Growth Boundary/Greenline, which creates a shortage of developable land, greatly increasing land and housing prices. During the last 25 years San Jose housing prices have increased by a factor of nine, more than any other US City. The second part of Smart Growth is light-rail transit where the Valley Transit Authority has wasted hundreds of millions on a failed transportation system, which almost no one rides. Worse yet the VTA 2020 Plan reports on page #9 "congestion ahead" that 90,000 auto trips a day will not be possible because of highway capacity. Roads providing 95% of passenger miles are provided only 15% of transportation funds as busses and light-rail take 80%. The recent Grand Jury reported that VTA should be reorganized with a smaller full time board of directors and to stop BART to San Jose extension. Very high-density housing is being planned for and starting to be built downtown with the hope of finding light-rail riders. The vast majority of new high-rise tenants will still depend on their autos for most trips creating a congested, polluted turmoil. Some councilpersons even believe that congestion is good.

Families demanding a single family home are required to move to Hollister or Stockton and commute providing for more sprawl and a waste of resources.

With sky high housing prices and roads planned for congestion it follows that companies considering moving jobs here or adding jobs have problems attracting employees. Approximately 20% of existing office and industrial buildings are now vacant where their assessed values and resulting property taxes are being reduced.

It should be very clear that Smart Growth policies result in high housing prices, congested roads, environmental degradation and yes joblessness.

Lowell Grattan Los Gatos, CA

Eminent Domain Threatens American Dream

Mr. Choudhury signed a 10-year lease with the building's owner, and now he is stuck, owed nothing, really, except moving expenses, and that is only if he can afford to move to another location, which he can't.

If the city shuts down his restaurant, he will be broke, done, finished, the victim of a cold civics lesson that has stunned him.

You see, Mr. Choudhury knows how government's unchecked power works in so many places all across the globe. He has had to reinvent himself because of it.

He seemingly had it all at one time: social standing, connections, vast wealth and businesses. He once was an adviser to former Bangladeshi President H.M. Ershad and was posted to his nation's embassy here in 1984.

Mr. Choudhury never could accept the authoritative politics of Bangladesh, and his resistance eventually led to his jailing in 1996 and subsequent escape through India after his release.

He lost everything: his dream home, all his businesses and a piece of who he was.

But this is America, Mr. Choudhury says. It is different here. The government is not allowed to seize the private property of its citizens, right? The government is not allowed to disregard leases, right?

That is what totalitarian governments do to their citizens in too many faraway lands. That is what the one-time government of Bangladesh did to Mr. Choudhury.

But not America. Not the land of the free.

Tell that to Mr. Choudhury. That is what he wants to hear.

He wants to embrace the America he came to know at Georgetown University, where he earned a master's degree from the School of Foreign Service.

His vision of America is so different from the one being thrust upon him by Mr. Williams and council members Harold Brazil and Kevin Chavous. Their vision is his nightmare. He already has lived the nightmare.

Mr. Choudhury is not asking much from the city. He just wants to be allowed to make a living along this stretch of asphalt east of the Anacostia River. He has played by the rules. He has paid his taxes. He has taken a chance on a part of the city that tourists and suburbanites never see.

And this is what the city leadership tells Mr. Choudhury: Get out.

His little life and eatery stand in the way of the city's plans to increase tax revenue from the site.

---Excerpt from Washington Times article <http://washingtontimes.com/metro/20040519-102832-5604r.htm>

Grand Prix Auto Race On Santa Clara Street

The City of San Jose recently signed a contract with the Canary Fund to hold a grand prix auto race here. And where will this race be held?

The Champ Car Racing event will have cars reaching speeds of 200 miles per hour on W. Santa Clara Street in front of the HP Pavilion, in the arena parking lot and along Julian, Montgomery, W. St. John and N. Almaden streets.

Following a unanimous vote by the City Council to authorize this event, the council also approved taking \$650,000 from the Redevelopment Agency and the city's Office of Economic Development to help pay the \$3 million which the race will cost.

The Canary Fund, a non-profit run by former Cisco executive Don Listwin, will put up \$1.62 million and the rest will be funded by the San Jose Sports Authority and the owners of the San Jose Sharks. Santa Clara St. will be leveled for the race course. Businesses and homes along the route will not be accessible for the three days of the race, July 29-31. Homeowners were not notified of the plans to barricade their properties until they read it in the newspaper.

Mayor Ron Gonzales said the San Jose Grand Prix will provide... "the opportunity of our downtown skyline being flashed on television screens across the country and the world" If the event is a success, the city will eventually be paid back for its investment over the next ten years.

Everywhere in San Jose there are streets needing repair, parks that are not properly maintained, threats of reduced police and fire services. Couldn't this \$650,000. be better spent taking care of these problems rather than having these cars racing around our city for three days?

"One San Jose agency that has remained relatively silent on the closure [of SJMC] is the San Jose Redevelopment Agency (RDA). In the December 29, 2004 issue of The Wave Magazine, RDA Executive Director Harry Mavrogones stated that "Downtown is the heart of the city." He also stated, "We are pushing real hard to build a lot of housing around downtown to bring more residents and make it more of a 24/7 environment."

With the rapid buildup described, the possibility of having a self sustaining hospital becomes more viable. It could be financed by a charitable foundation *or* with the passage of a "healthcare district" parcel tax (or both). RDA recently helped finance the rebirth of the Horace Mann downtown elementary school (29.8 million total cost of project). **Why won't it do the same for the hospital?** Having a "restored" downtown hospital would be an added incentive for prospective buyers of downtown units."

To read this article in its entirety go to <http://www.crrsj.com>

"If redevelopment has not [been] achieving its stated goal of eliminating blight, what has it been doing? Many people I've talked to since that initial hearing are surprised to learn that efforts of this appointed body are largely dependent on seizing private property. Too often, what the RDA may consider blighted property is an immigrant family's American dream. These families did not ask for a forgivable loan or tax incentives when they invested in a struggling community, all they have is old-fashioned sweat equity."

--Tonia Reyes Uranga *Impact on Minorities* Long Beach Press Telegram December 20, 2004

"A television commercial that was produced by the city government and narrated by the mayor appeared twice during the broadcast [SV Bowl]. Unfortunately, and to the embarrassment of those in the know, the commercial boasted of San Jose's status as one of America's "Most Livable Cities!" But as has been previously reported by La Oferta, the Most Livable Cities designation was a label that the city acquired from an organization that they paid \$10,000 to."

--Pete Campbell *Silicon Valley Mud Bowl* La Oferta Jan 7, 2005
<http://www.laoferta.com/news.php?nid=234&PHPSESSID=fa59a31634f948d0bde39cdfae2d8606>

Grandpa Tony's Orchard **A poem by Lara Gularte**

He sees a snake of yellow surveyor's string
stretch through the green of his pasture.

A man with a badge and hard hat whacks
through brush. In the distance, clusters of
homes bruise the hillside.

The sun climbs down the ladder.
Prune trees, unable to hold their thin ground,
are uprooted.

A blur of bees looks for sweetness among
broken plums on the ground,

In the rings of their years oak stumps track
the crimes against them, as city workers
divide the wood.

Grandpa Tony knows they will come with
wolves on leashes, threaten him with a new
life in town.

Somewhere in the apricot orchard, he hears
his grandchildren their voices tumble in the
wind.

He wonders what they are doing there in a
season that will bring no fruit.

Lara says, "My family was a victim of eminent domain during the 1950's here in San Jose. My maternal grandparents, Antonio and Mary Henriques worked for the Standish ranch near Milpitas. My grandmother was a housekeeper for the Standish family and my grandfather worked as a laborer. In a small worker's cabin they raised five children and managed to save enough money to buy their own ten acre fruit and walnut ranch in the Warm Springs area. My grandfather was proud of his orchards and enjoyed taking long walks among his trees every night after dinner. When the government took my grandparents' ranch from them through eminent domain, they bought a home in the suburbs. No longer able to walk through his orchards, my grandfather complained that the sidewalks were hard on his feet. Soon he gave up walking and instead sat for hours in the fenced in backyard staring at a lone spruce. His health began to decline and just a few years later he died."

<http://www.nvesj.org/Y04/Ed18/Edition18S2.htm#Ed18S8>

"If government remains empowered to take private property for whatever it perceives to be a public benefit, the concept of private property will vanish; the United States will be no different from a communist nation where government decides how all property must be used.

--Henry Lamb

<http://www.newswithviews.com/Lamb/henry56.htm>

If America's governments are allowed to continue to use (or abuse) their power in order to seize the property of American citizens for no other reason than that they can derive political capital from the deal through turning the land over to those with more wealth or political power, our nation, as we know it, will not survive.

--Charles Stone Jr.

http://freedom.orlingrabbe.com/1fetimes/eminent_domain.htm

Links to Articles and Sites You Should See

- **MotherJones.com**
Masters of their Domain
Elizabeth Gettelman. December 20, 2004
http://www.motherjones.com/news/qa/2004/12/12_406.html
- **Washington Post**
Turning a Deaf Ear to the Displaced
Colbert I. King. January 8, 2005 Pg A19
<http://www.crrsj.com/>
- **It's Time to Abolish the VTA.....**
The Gilroy Dispatch
Opinion. December 15, 2004
<http://www.gilroydispatch.com/opinion/contentview.asp?c=135731>
- **Property Rights Foundation of America**
Friend of the Court Brief Submitted
December 2004
<http://www.prfamerica.org/Kelo-v-NewLondonAppealed.html>
- **The Goldwater Institute**
The Growing Threat to Private Property
Jordon R. Rose. December 2003
<http://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/pdf/materials/134.pdf>

Articles and information in this newsletter are either written by or reviewed by CRR's Executive Board before publication.

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