



Business Visioning Summit  
May 10, 2004  
6:00 p.m.— 8:00 p.m.  
Transcription of Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Bradley Inman  
Paul Hawken  
Chris Glennon  
Ryan Phelan  
Marin McDonald  
(left at 7:00 p.m.)

Absent:

Sim Vanderryn

Observers:

Dana Whitson  
Paul Albritton  
Amy Belser  
Babette McDougal  
David Levinson  
(left at 6:30 p.m.)

Meeting Facilitators:

Kare Anderson  
Barbara Galyen

The facilitator invited the group to offer ideas about the town of Sausalito, how each would go about making improvements. This exercise was intended to be as spontaneous as possible and invite top of mind, best practice ideas.

**Eco-friendly Accessibility: Shoreline access and Bike Paths and The Marinship:**

The group said the recent Bridgeway Bike Path project is an excellent example of the town planning for its own future in a positive manner. They said this kind of thinking, that is allowing for maneuvering around town in ways other than via automobile, should be extended to benefit more of the community; now that the main thoroughfare's bike path is handled, the City planners should not rest on their laurels.

The facilitator invited the group to go deeper and choose more specific examples of where and how Sausalito should improve.

The first neighborhood that came to mind is the Marinship area in the vicinity of Gate Five Road and Harbor Drive.

Paul Hawken suggested building new *green* buildings. He offered examples of his own new plans.

The group agreed the town's older buildings within the Marinship, particularly those dating from the 1940s, should be torn down and new ones should be built in their places.

A discussion ensued about the Marinship Plan (drafted 1985). The group noted that while the Plan may have been written at a time when the limitations placed on improvement and development of the neighborhoods were well-intended, the Plan has not proved useful or successful in serving as a *roap map* for keeping the neighborhoods alive – filled to capacity, economically vibrant and prosperous; the Plan should be revisited. In short, the Plan is out of date.

The group acknowledged the political sensitivities within the community and the mix of opinions and strong emotions regarding the Marinship, as well as the Plan's commitment to serving certain specific businesses, such as marine-related, and serving as a haven for artisans. But, the combination of short-sighted planning and certain particularities, such as the region being interspersed with privately owned roadways, privately owned shoreline tracts, etc., makes this a very difficult proposition in terms of easy, short-term

solutions. The group strongly felt the potential of the Marinship is being under-visualized and underutilized. The area has an unfriendly, unwelcoming atmosphere, it gives the impression of not being a safe place. *"It looks dangerous!"*

What's needed is more areas allowing light, more people, more storage that does not suffer from tidal fluctuations (much of the area floods at ultra-high tide). The Marinship area generally suffers from lack of amenities, such as no restaurants, shops, lovely landscaping. The group agreed the area should be redeveloped.

There was broad and enthusiastic support for creating an integrated, people-friendly environment in tune with the area's potential natural ecology and to include continuous shoreline pathways allowing one to walk along the length of Sausalito's waterfront - from north to south. Thus, the new plan's walkways along the waterfront should be easy and direct access to the water. The building structures should be commensurate with the kinds of work-space needs appropriate to the businesses Sausalito is most likely to draw.

### **A Look at the Latest Trends & Implications for Sausalito:**

Enhancing the quality of life is an economic necessity for Sausalito.

In terms of support of Sausalito's annual operating budget, since the recent economic down-turn and tragic events of 9/11, the City's main source of income is property tax. Given the low turn-over of residential (and other) real estate, the greatest financial burden fall to newcomers, who pay higher property taxes. Perhaps an increase in multi-family dwellings would become an economic asset to the City.

The group noted the latest trends are in favor of multi-family developments, and they speculated as to whether the Marinship area could serve as a viable residential neighborhood. The group discussed the success stories found in the East Bay, such as

Berkeley's Fourth Street neighborhood and its successful re-development. Once shabby, run-down and crime-ridden, this district is now flourishing and alive with commerce and foot-traffic. Emeryville is another example.

Infrastructure is important. In terms of attracting new businesses to Sausalito, whether to existing commercial and business neighborhoods or to redeveloped mixed-use neighborhoods, the trend toward increased reliance on all aspects of technology, the increased use of cell phones, etc., requires greater bandwidth. Sausalito must come to terms with the need for more antennae towers, cabling, etc., in order to be competitive in drawing the desired businesses to town.

### **Types of Business that Should Set-up Shop in Sausalito:**

The group said Sausalito's *mantra* should be to "Stay on This Side of the Bridge." The City and Chamber should work closely in developing attraction programs, incentives to draw the kinds of business that are capable of thriving in our town; creative businesses, in particular. The town's natural beauty, the inspiring views from virtually every angle creates an idea environment for such creative businesses as advertising and design, illustrators and graphics.

And, because of the town's many natural assets the group suggested that Sausalito invite developers to offer their own best practice visions for evolving the local infrastructure, and redeveloping for the purpose of attracting appropriate businesses of the future.

Who are the area's largest employers?

The group encouraged the City and Chamber to make a concerted effort to analyze the profile of the largest employers inside Sausalito and within the immediate North Bay region, and to ascertain how these businesses could more direct impact Sausalito's local economy.

(N.B. The North Bay Council, a consortium of the North Bay's largest businesses could be very useful in facilitating this analysis.)

A cursory glance includes:

Fireman's Fund, Novato

Marin Independent Journal  
AutoDesk  
LucasFilm and its many companies  
Various banks  
Various construction and contracting firms  
Various automotive dealerships

***Advice:***

When a business does come to town, the City and Chamber, and the Marin Scope should waste no time in welcoming that business. A newspaper article welcoming the business to town, personal notes, phone calls, emails or even a brief visit makes a big difference in how well a business is likely to integrate and invest for the long-term.

The group said business owners should be offered breaks and incentives, including some kind of "resident's package."

***Ideal Businesses, Thinking Outside the Box:***

Food delivery services in all the town's districts,  
Transportation:

- waterfront taxi services linking one end of town to the other
- jitney/bus service (SALLY shuttle on larger scale); Emeryville's  
*Bus Around* is very successful
- more convenient access to public transit
- easy connections to regional airports

Kinder-care & Partnerships Between City and Places of Work:

- child care programs
- businesses serving the needs of small children
- programs that share costs for child care with employers
- more and improved schools and school programs

Attraction programs/incentives to draw workers to Sausalito.

Projects – look at specific areas

Select criteria for recruitment

Provide a process to expedite appropriate development

What works now?

The Schoonmaker Point on Liberty Ship is a great example of converting an old buildings and introducing new spaces into a workable solutions for housing businesses appropriate to Sausalito:

- great café on premises
- attractive landscaping
- easy walk areas along shoreline

Ryan Phelan said she looked every in Sausalito for a suitable office for setting her newest business venture, and ultimately decided to take a space in San Francisco's Embarcadero (Pier9). She said the factors most important to her decision-making included:

- convenient to ferry systems, she can boat to work
- easy access to public transit
- local housing costs for employees affordable
- great selection and choices of places to eat within the vicinity,  
such as nice restaurants, easy and quick cafes, etc.
- easy access to South Bay/Silicon Valley
- easy access to regional airports

Ryan said the most attractive lures for businesses now is the ability to **"colonize"** an area, that is, the chance for businesses to mesh with other aspects of living and life's daily activities.

She noted the Presidio, with the exception of the Lucas Film experience which is only beginning to materialize, could have been an ideal district to **"colonize,"** but the Presidio for the most part has lost more opportunities for growth than it has gained.

The group discussed the concept of colonizing in more depth and said the concept should include a master plan that encourages small businesses as tenants with the potential to either expand or contract, as needed. If a business moves into a space where it may add square footage as its business expands, then reduce square footage as business contracts, then the likelihood of that business remaining as a tenant over the long-term is significantly increased.

Sausalito examples cited:

- AutoDesk is an example of a company that tried but failed to expand in terms of increasing square footage to keep pace with its own business growth; and ultimately left town for that very reason.
- Schoonmaker Building generally is an example of a place allowing businesses to accumulate additional space as needed, or decrease space accordingly, without having to move offices.

More on thinking outside the box:

Use locally based architects to create "green" buildings, particularly within the Gate Five area, which possesses an excellent reputation for being the place where so many important and successful ventures began, e.g., the Well email/web service, several leading edge companies, such as the ones led by Paul Hawken, Hippocrates magazine, and more.

Gate Five Road is Famous, Fix it Up!

Cultivating and capitalizing on the reputation of locally-born successful businesses would be a selling asset when seeking to draw new businesses. One person said they have often heard techie-types come looking for the famous Gate Five Road, the birthplace of so many extraordinary world-changing ventures only to say with a sigh of disappointment, "What?!? This is Gate Five Road?!?" The point being that the district has a reputation and certain cache value that is unappreciated. Gate Five Road should be improved so that its dynamic qualities become apparent. Avoid the errors committed when AutoDesk expanded in Sausalito by building ugly buildings, which now stand vacant because no one finds them attractive and conducive to high image.

Also of value is the high quality of professional, as well as residential life in Sausalito. Compare the gridlock nightmares of San Francisco and East Bay to the easy-going atmosphere of Sausalito, its inspiring and scenic views.

The City and Chamber should join together in creating a true economic development initiative that would build a business-friendly environment, something not necessarily in place at present. This would include collecting and analyzing data, such as gaining awareness of

- the businesses that were here, but left town,
- the businesses that considered coming here but chose to locate elsewhere,
  - such as Acme Flat Breads, and others,
- the businesses located in Sausalito and elsewhere that are truly successful,
  - such as the town hall restaurant concept at Postrio (San Francisco), FISH,
  - the run-away success located in the old Caruso's location in Sausalito,
- the regulatory processes that either invite or put-off businesses – permits
  - & entitlements, and the City's staff who oversees it all that either goes too far and end up quashing a new venture,
- engineering requirements and "planships," such as what's done in Santa Rosa – paid by applicants, select local ..? (not sure about notes here)
- in short, create ways to fast-track new businesses with the City taking a
  - more hands on approach, becoming more personally invested in the success of the prospective new business.

Above all, implement on-going and consistent advertising programs, such as the "Business by the Bay" campaign.

A recent local campaign, "Sausalito South – Where the View Is" is a terrible mistake. Pitting one neighborhood or district against another in such a small town is divisive and not at all conducive to nurturing a broad-based proactive spirit.

The North end of town, especially the unincorporated areas feel very disconnected from the mainstream of Sausalito. The houseboat communities, and businesses

housed in houseboats all lack amenities and sense of inclusion.

The group generally expressed frustration with the City's arduous processes for getting businesses up and running. The processes and systems should be made easy, with a "Follow the Yellow Brick Road" approach, offering a step by step user-friendly policy and attitude among staffers. Many "war stories" were told about the inordinate number steps one must go through, the do this, then do that, then re-do this, and re-do that. Different standards and an uneven practice creates problems and ill will.

At present, there appears to be no cohesive business development program; rather all appears separate. Locals versus tourists, locals who want nothing to change, locals who feel the town looks like a slum in certain areas (such as Gate Five and Marinship).

What's needed is a Big Plan, one that takes an overall approach to:

- targeting specific infrastructural issues (e.g., DSL)
- defining audiences
- obtaining necessary information on targeted businesses
- creating and launching a dialogue.

### **More on Creating Open and Proactive Dialogues with Businesses:**

Contact with the Chamber of Commerce is critical and should be more proactive. All prospective businesses, as well as existing businesses must be viewed as customers (or, clients). G. Brown is a good example (not sure about meaning of this reference in the notes)

Discuss needs, what's working and what's not working

Offer assistance and establish action plans

Report back

Let actions speak louder than words

Fort Baker is an example of how the City and Chamber could proactively engage developers in creating interesting ideas.

Caledonia Street is an example of what's working well, things are getting better thanks to outside tables/sidewalk dining. Caledonia is now vibrant. Building a more vibrant local economy creates anchor points.

One person in the group quoted the City Manager of Danville, "It's not too complicated..."

The implication being that once must be open to new ideas, open to the needs of modern architecture, such as installing latest technologies.

### **Looking Ahead:**

Progress is possible today.  
Sausalito's best opportunities are at the North End of town.

Unite business people around exciting projects.

Create balanced plans that integrate marine uses, marine engineering and more with broader mix and above all, **creativity**.

Seattle and Portland are both examples of good planning and appropriate integration of marine uses with other kinds of businesses.

Engage the Marinship property owners in a discussion to ascertain their ideas for growth over the long term; ask what they would like. Invite their input for positive change.

Development must be carefully guarded and weighed so ecological integrity and the waterfront.

Sausalito's best assets, its shoreline, its lovely views, its village like qualities should not be sacrificed.

### **Obstacles:**

Obstacles include privately owed roads. Perhaps creation of an assessment district would work.

Other obstacles include a fear that by changing the Marinship Plan that the local artisan community would be driven out by higher rents; harmed by "gentrification."

The absence of a clear understanding, or inventory of all of the business and commercial space in Sausalito is detrimental. Just how much total square-footage of office space exists? We don't actually know.

Getting this data is important and necessary to successful planning for a successful future.

Design review also is very important.

A plan was developed a long time ago to:

- preserve maritime character
- flexibility needed and the Plan needs to be revisited
- still need a plan to drive economic growth

How do we view and work with home-based businesses?

Do we ward off businesses or encourage business? Longer term economic strategy should serve all constituents.

What is the role of City staff?

What purpose do the hearings serve?

Place of rules

Cost of doing business includes:

- parking, adequate supply for workers
- parking tickets, which in the eyes of the community, are handed out too freely
- restaurants and cafes, and places for workers to eat
- business license fees
- taxes
- technology access

Most important question to ask is:

*What would you like to see here in five, 10, 15, 20 years hence?*