

City of Sausalito: Business Visioning Summit
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Alta Mira
Transcript

F: Facilitator, Tom Skunda

Hi. Yoshi Tome. I've been proud to be in business 23 years [inaudible]. I'm married to my wife 19 years. I have 3 girls. [inaudible] So home away from home but actually I live here, breathe here, only I have a bedroom for my office.

F: Great. Thank you.

My name is Joe. I've lived in Sausalito for about 35 years. I've had a house on Stanford Way for about 20 some years. I'm married. My wife, Joan, is in that house right now and my son is actually out with actually a classmate of his, Tony, [inaudible] Branson [inaudible] lawyer. I'm a lawyer. I had a practice of law for a long time. I do real estate development of one kind or another both here and in the Midwest. The reason I'm here today is because I am one of the owners of the Arquez Shipyard and Marina which is a 25 acre parcel of land and water in the Marinship, in probably the worst condition of any property in Marin County.

That's kind of a --

Next door to you. We three are neighbors.

I'm Mike Stone, run Mollie Stone's Market. I've been in Sausalito since 1988. We have 8 stores, 2 in Marin, 2 in San Francisco, and 1 in [inaudible] Park. I've got 700 employees and I live in Mill Valley.

F: Are you the largest employer in Sausalito?

Yes, I think so.

F: Thank you.

My name's Mike Blatt. I've only been in Sausalito for 10 years. I got married here. I have 2 older children. One son works for me and my daughter, who lives in Las Vegas, married. I have a 7 year old and a 5 year old. I own this facility. I'm a real estate developer. I mostly build apartments and hotels and have a few projects going in Sausalito -- single family houses, and this operation.

F: Orlando?

My name's Orlando Lobo. I bought my first house in Sausalito in '83. I moved back here from Europe, in fact, in the early '90s because my children were getting to be born in that

stage and I just didn't want them to have to be moving from country to country. In any event, so this time around, we've been here 10 years. I have 3 kids, a 12 year old and a pair of 6 year olds, all graduates of [inaudible] Nursery School. I have my own businesses here in Sausalito. I own Marinship waterfront property and I'm also president of the Sausalito Charter School.

F: I imagine you fellows collectively are involved in a lot of volunteer organizations, giving a lot of time to the community, and maybe we'll talk about that as we go. So -- great. Thanks for the introductions. I guess we could start, we'll just lob one up here, right over the net so you can slam it down and talk about strengths of, if you think of Sausalito as a brand, as a product, [inaudible] talk about it, just go around the table, and talk about what we think the strengths of Sausalito might be from a resident's perspective. It sounds like all of you have either lived here or lived here at one point or another, or different times, and if we could, thinking about living here as a homeowner or somebody who rents here, residents here, when you think of Sausalito what do you think to be the things that are talked about that are really strengths of Sausalito?

From a resident's point of view?

F: Yeah, from a resident's point of view, what do you think are the best attributes of Sausalito and capture them here on the white chart.

You mean besides the grocery store?

F: Obviously the grocery store is huge, just a major thing. [laughter] No personal bias involved.

And restaurants.

Yeah, besides the grocery store and restaurants, the various developments, the --

F: And let's go one at a time -- again, if I could remind everybody to go one at a time, that way I can make sure everybody can weigh in on this. Just think about it for about another 30 seconds or a minute and then I'll start collecting your ideas around the table.

Well, let's hear from a resident.

F: You want to take off, Orlando? Okay.

I think some of the best in Sausalito is clearly the views of the waterfront. I think if you're an avid sailor or you enjoy water, then Sausalito is ideal. It's also in very, very close proximity to the City where a lot of our folks work. I think that a lot of our residents here work outside the City. I think it's a bedroom community. I think we have a lot of residents that don't participate in the City that just use it because it's a beautiful place to live, but they work in the City. It's an easy commute.

F: The best view and the location, easy commute --

But that's it, you know. One of the biggest issues, I think, about Sausalito is that it has, it doesn't have a soul. It doesn't have anything that brings the community together as a community because it's very, very fragmented.

F: Okay. Let's park that one. That's going to be in the discussion of negative attributes. So this is --

[inaudible]

F: -- so let's all concentrate on the things that we think are positive attributes as far as residents right now. We've captured that one and parked it over there, Orlando. So we'll come back to it. Any more positives?

Well I had a couple.

F: Okay.

I think it's friendly. The people that live here are friendly and warm and this may be similar to what you said, Orlando, but I think our climate here is very special. I think it's moderated in the Winter and moderated in the Summer. That's nice.

F: Moderate climate, friendly people. Anything else on your list?

No, I think the other one's -- I had views, close to the City, and the waterfront.

F: Okay, now it gets a little harder, we'll go a little deeper. Yoshi, do you want to comment on this? Yoshi's got so much time here.

Right. Let's see. I think the geographic location is fantastic. I mean, across to the city and the mountains.

F: So for city and mountain leisure and things like that.

Right.

F: Convenient.

Right. Very convenient. Location and the climate.

F: Okay. Continue around.

I think that what Orlando said was a very good summary and I would add to it Larry's comment about the climate. I think the, I know there are hundreds and hundreds are very friendly people here who don't know each other and don't have much to do with each other. I don't see the friendliness getting us too far because I don't, but I think what

Orlando said and adding this comment about the climate would be pretty much everything on my list with the additional minor thing that it's a well known city. You can go anywhere in the world pretty much --

F: Sausalito as a brand, it's kind of a worldwide known

If you say, if they say where are you from? And you say, oh, San Francisco. And oh, where in San Francisco? Well, actually Sausalito. Well why didn't you say so? We know Sausalito.

I guess there are very few cities of how many thousand live here? 7,000 or something. That if you went to France or somewhere in Asia or whatever, and you said, where are you from, they'd know the City. So it's a good point.

And I wanted to get the other point you made though, that might be parked in the negative zone, but you were talking about a lot of people who are friendly but they're detached.

I was seconding what both Orlando and Larry said, but that I couldn't join wholeheartedly in the comment about the friendliness because I don't see that demonstrated. I know that it exists. I think the people here are absolutely, perfectly fine people. I don't see the forum because there are no forums where people can demonstrate that very well.

F: Okay, fair enough, okay.

I think the quality of life here is better than anywhere in Marin and a lot of other towns. And I think that's a big attribute.

F: Quality of life's better than, you say, anywhere else in Marin?

Yeah.

F: Why? Just an example.

It's not, I mean, maybe on the weekends in downtown you get the traffic, but basically, you can get anywhere around town and you know, not feel a lot of [inaudible] or a lot of, you know, traffic and you know, you can hike, you can run, you can bike, you can boat. It has a lot of things at your fingertips. The whole yacht harbor is a real attribute that other towns don't have and it brings in maybe 4 or 5 thousand people into town everyday and that's a real [inaudible] don't count. It also nurtures home businesses because of the views, and the settings, and the weather, and the location, that I think it nurtures a lot of home businesses of which the City probably isn't at all aware of how many home businesses there are in Sausalito.

F: So that's kind of a transition comment. It's great. As a resident, you like where you live, so why don't you just stay in your home and make a living.

A bunch of people are doing that. I think transportation is good. It's easy access, you know, to reiterate what other people have already said, you go north or south and the ferry system is good. And Sausalito itself is well known for people with skills, the art community, but the Art Festival itself has made it world known and it's the number one art festival in the world – it's been rated that way for 2 or 3 years in the past 5 years.

F: So for a resident, is it a matter of pride to be part of that? I know there are a lot of volunteers involved, speaking from why this [the Art Festival] is a strength to residents, it's obviously, every Labor Day, something they can contribute to, any other benefits to that?

Yeah, there are a lot of benefits. I think it has a lot of economic benefit to Sausalito.

F: Okay. We'll cover that, cover the business side as well. Any other strengths from a resident's point of view that we have missed?

Yeah, a couple things. I think, to expound on what Larry and Orlando said, most of us have lived in other places. I grew up as an Army brat and I lived in exotic places like Oklahoma, Arkansas, places like that. But then I lived in England and Japan and so lived in a lot of different places in the world. I picked this place not only because it's [inaudible] I grew up in San Francisco and I didn't want to live in San Francisco. I like this place for the same reasons that have already been talked about but to expound on that, everyplace in the United States you go to is subdivisions and everybody lives exactly the same. When you live in a certain area, you have the same socioeconomic environment. Totally opposite in Sausalito. So where you can criticize Sausalito for being not friendly maybe, you've also got to take that as a positive and say, you know, it's an eclectic town where everybody's different. I mean, I live in an area where there's only 2 kids at the other end of the block and my 2 kids. I've got a 78 year old guy that lives next door to me that is a grandfather and lives half the time in Europe. And I've got a guy on this side that's different. So the plus that we have is that, number one, our front yard or our back yard changes every day. When you live in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Stockton, Sacramento, Walnut Creek, your garage looks the same, your tree looks the same, you look out across the cul-de-sac and it looks the same. In Sausalito, in January, it'll be the fishing boats. In September, we have the Art Festival. It's so eclectic that it's not boring.

Changing people, changing visual scenery and environmental scenery --

But you can say that it's a negative about having maybe a non-friendly and eclectic group that you make decisions by committee and you never get anything done. On the other hand, that's a positive because there's so many different people. I've met people in the last 10 years that live in town that are good friends of mine now that I never would have met unless I came here. And it's enriched me because, again, my front yard changes every day and the people are so different that you get a different feel from people. So I think the real plus in Sausalito is the plus that it's 7500 people that are all so different. You know? I mean, I've got people on my street that I would've never met if I lived in Sacramento or Walnut Creek. And so we're tolerant about our neighbors, we're tolerant about the people we meet, we're open to meet new people, and yeah, it's not the

friendliest town in the world. We don't have block parties or cul-de-sacs, you know, like you do in Walnut Creek. But on the other hand, if somebody's sick 3 doors down and you know about it, you're over there helping them with soup and a sandwich. So if you're an outward person and you want to meet your neighbors, then you can have a good relationship. If you're inward, people will let you alone. So that's a positive.

F: Right. Very good perspective. Anything else to add?

Well one of the things that Mike says really strikes a chord with me is one of the reasons we chose to remain in Sausalito for such a long time is we didn't want to live in a community that was outwardly friendly and where everyone knew your business. One of the neat things about Sausalito is that there's a sense of privacy which I think is lacking in so many, especially Marin communities. So it may seem less friendly than it is but once you dig a little deeper, maybe the qualities that I would admire in people are there, they just don't wear them on their sleeves.

F: Sounds like you can make it as private as you wish to make it. If you want to be outgoing and connect with your neighbors and all this diversity, you can. But if you choose to remain more to your own home, that's great too.

I want to add one more thing. I think the people living here are highly educated, professional people living here, probably highest education level. I do not have a figure. I don't know a figure.

F: Good point.

[over-speaking]

-- what I need to and every day I like to see highly educated, high professional, you know, who are the people living in this town.

F: Okay. Good. I want to shift gears now and try the same exercise in terms of giving me the positive attributes of Sausalito from a businessperson's point of view. I would like for you to recap over the next minute or two, things that you think are strengths, strong attributes, of Sausalito, being in this community, working in this community, running a business, owning a business. So everybody's got a little blank paper in front of them. If you want to write a few notes, we'll go around the table in a couple minutes and see what you have to say.

[offer of beverages]

I think this question's a lot tougher.

I got a blank paper.

F: This is one of those things that while I'm saying to you this is an exercise, look at this like you're helping me on a brand project and you look at something from every

possible angle, even things that are probably right under your nose that you've seen every day for a long time, they might be valid here as positives. There's no taking for granted. Just write it down and it'll probably trigger other ideas as we go around the table.

F: How's everybody doing? Do we need another minute? Or shall we start and then and the guys that are a little slower will catch up.

[over-speaking, teasing Orlando]

-- to the nth degree.

What was the question again?

Let's stay clear on the question.

I want to make sure before I go off on a tangent.

F: Oh please, go off. The question is, as a businessperson, what are the positive attributes of Sausalito, of being here, working here, owning a business here, running a business here. Do you want to start?

Sure. Again, it's up to me. You are strategically located in an area where you can get to major airports and into the City [inaudible] environment here, you know? If you need to, if you're working downtown [inaudible] you know, work out of your own bedroom if you had to, with your laptop. So in that respect labor, I think, might even be better than that but I don't know major employers [inaudible] the infrastructure is there. So I don't think there's an infrastructural issue, [inaudible] population [inaudible]. And the proximity is good. Telecommunications infrastructure, all the infrastructure, communications infrastructure, [inaudible]

F: Is it in place? In terms of telecommunications infrastructure, do you think it's here already?

It's what I call lumpy. We had a big issue with having towers [inaudible] reception. I think it was probably dependent on which carrier you used. I don't know if these are things that can be worked out or --

I think it's universal. There is no carrier in Sausalito that gives you cell phone reception. None. Zero.

F: So we're going to get to the negatives later.

I can tell you about that whole issue when you come to --

Well we're all waiting for the negatives.

[laughter]

That was the first question asked. It was easy to answer. What are the qualities you like if they couldn't compare it with other things, right? We compare it with Sacramento. We compare it with San Rafael. But when you ask about the advantage of business, then we have to compare it with, how is your restaurant doing here, if it were in San Francisco, if it were in New York, maybe the same. How is the grocery store doing here compared to where it is in Los Gatos? Maybe the same. So you ask us a question, what are the positives and we want to make it in relationship to what.

F: Okay, in relationship to San Francisco, what are the positives?

I couldn't tell you that.

F: So let's reframe. Does that help the conversation?

Comparison to something.

Yeah.

F: I kind of just assume that. You have to think, well, what are the positives here when I could be doing business somewhere else? I should have been more careful with that, so good point. Let's, would you like to revisit your --

No. The infrastructure is better than the south's. Going north, I think -- do I want to live in Santa Rosa? I don't think so. [inaudible] all those reasons [inaudible]

F: So the quality of life comes into it, some of the points we talked about earlier. It's like you could have the infrastructure and --

-- quality of life and which stage of your life you're in. I think quality of life for a family is a hard sell.

F: Yeah, we'll do that. I had a couple notes here, the parking, no family life.

Before you re-ask the question, I did have one positive from a business owner's standpoint in Sausalito, not necessarily in comparison to other places, which is that the vast majority, of at least in places that I'm aware of, of businesses here and properties here that are owned and managed by local people. So you can actually know who runs your hotel, your grocery store. I think in a lot of communities, those are absentee people. I think we have a high percentage of actually involved people who care about the community, involved in the churches, and the social clubs, and the service clubs, and the schools and so forth here as compared to other places that perhaps, that also just, in my experience, more here than I would have thought. And I like that. And we have the Sausalito, excuse me, we have the Marinship, it's called the Sausalito Waterfront Property Owners Association. The people who come are not the managers. They are the owners. And they all show up. It's kind of amazing.

F: Good. Let's continue on, on this side. Let's, so you could be doing business somewhere else. You could be in San Francisco. You could be up the road in San Rafael. I think you do, realistically, you do have to make a decision, okay? It's like, I'm here; I'm not here. So let's think about positives in that way. And anybody who's ready to talk, if you want to, does anybody want to address this? Anything else? Let's go over here to Mike.

Well, you know, people think it's hard to get a permit and it probably is in different businesses than when you're building a house or other things than relative to what I do. It's pretty tough in other communities. And I think in Sausalito, it's a lot, I wouldn't say, wouldn't rate it the highest as far as efficiency of getting things done, and putting and getting permits, and having somebody come out and work with you than in other communities.

F: So relatively speaking --

-- because of its size, okay? You go to San Mateo, it's a joke, okay? They could care less who you are or how much sales tax base you're going to add to, you know, how much property tax you're going to pay. San Francisco, you can be in the City for a year getting a permit to do a remodel of a grocery store which has taken me 12 months -- it's taken me 12 months.

F: Comparatively, what would it take if you were doing it here?

Maybe 3 to 4.

F: So like when you redid, I think I've been in the store and the wine section's redone and whatever and --

In Sausalito, we just did a major league [inaudible] in a third of the time.

F: Wow. So --

So I know a lot of what other people have found that, you know, and I've heard the comment a lot and you know, it applies to different, I guess you're used to and stuff and everything's just, but that I found very efficient. And you know the people. And it's nice. I think that's a real attribute if you know the business owners because they have a vested interest in an ownership and what they're doing, and care a lot more about their business than other towns that are more corporate, or chains, or whatever.

F: You get lost in some of those bigger places. They don't know you. It's a combination of that, it sounds like what you're saying is, and correct me if I'm getting this wrong, but it sounds like a combination of being known, in a community of this size, people connect with you. And is the red tape less or is it comparable? Red tape meaning all the paperwork and all the hoops you have to jump through.

Well I think it's less. I think the agencies are more intertwined here than they are in a bigger city. If you jump from department to department and it's been on somebody's desk for a month or two you're not getting anything done. I've had a really good experience with the response services from both Fire and Police. You can call Police in San Francisco and in half an hour they might show up. Or you would have a theft and the guy's resisting and you've got to drag him to the back of the store and tie him up before the Police show up.

F: You self-police.

[laughter]

And here the response is a lot quicker. It's a lot smaller town to get those services.

F: You may have come up with a new category, your self-service police work. Not exactly a positive place to be for a business owner.

You know, other services like garbage, we've never had a problem. It's good. There's a lot of negatives, probably, that I'm sure we're all going to get to that could be better but I think from that perspective, and my perspective of use, I think those are positives.

F: Good. Anybody have anything additional to add?

I have. You mentioned the Sausalito name is like a brand. Being in the fish business in Sausalito is a big benefit for me. To, you know, run that fish business in Sausalito. And Sausalito itself, as you mentioned, is a worldwide known city. Having a business in Sausalito, that's a big plus for me.

F: Would it be different if you were in Larkspur, or San Rafael?

Of course. If I wasn't in Sausalito, my business, I would not set up the way it is. It would be different. Definitely different because of the people live here – the businesspeople here, that's why I set up like this. If I'm in San Rafael or somewhere else, I would not set up the way it is. For me, that's one part of it and I believe, like Mike, people talk of negativity of Police Department. But the Police as a positive -- we do have that as people living in Sausalito, late at night you can walk around the downtown Sausalito. It's safe. And a lot of people come to Sausalito, that's one of the reasons.

F: Safety.

Safety city [inaudible]. I agree with you.

F: And people can take it for granted in some places, like public safety issues you feel here, they're well handled.

Right. And for example, I don't want to name names but [inaudible] they call the Police all the time, one of the best friends with the Police Department. But the news is, a lot of

bar has barflies, but they are always in control. That's why people like it -- it's safe to be there. I see them have police activity all the time. I think it is good place because you are safe.

F: Good. Good. Let's continue on. Anybody else with positive attributes?

I'm thinking of your restaurant and the movie theater and all the businesses on Caledonia. I use Caledonia almost daily. I never have a problem trying to get a parking space. I can walk there from my house unless I'm going to be carrying something heavy home, right? Caledonia seems to function pretty well. It's a resident-serving business district. I, actually, if there was something additional you would wish for, but I think that it works pretty well. You used to have parking across the street, a little lot, and now they've built a building there a few years ago. But you found your customers have adequate parking?

Yes and no. I have a negative point waiting.

F: So if we get this right on the flip chart, talking about Caledonia itself as an area of, we talk about business, residents, is it a vibrancy issue? What is it that causes you to single that out as a positive attribute?

Perhaps it's my having grown up in the Midwest where parking's always a big issue. People expect to be able to walk out their door and get in their car and then drive to wherever they want to go and get out and walk into the business. So I have a little bit of that in me from all those years ago. I find that I can drive to Caledonia and park and do whatever I want to do and almost never have difficulty finding a parking space. I think that must be of value to people who have businesses on that street because people like me can go there and readily go to their stores.

Of course, the other side of that is, they wish there were a lot more people going to those stores and those restaurants, or there wouldn't be any parking available.

[laughter]

F: Okay, let's get, any more positives before we shift gears? Any others? All right. So now we're, let's go to what I think you guys want to probably spend time on next is, and your tendency has been to bring out a few negative attributes of Sausalito as a place to do business, so I'd like you to take a minute or two and jot down a couple ideas on your notepaper.

Are you going to ask us what are the negatives of living here as residents?

F: Yes I will.

Okay.

F: But we're kind of on a business stream of thought here and I figured we'd just run with it. So as a businessperson, and owner, anybody here that runs a business or owns a

business here, let's think about positive attributes, or negative attributes, I'm sorry, negative attributes, the down side. And anything you've got to say, we'd love to hear.

We're all in different businesses and in the business I am in, help is a struggle.

F: Finding help?

Finding quality help and people that really want to work. Officially, the younger generation that, you know, wants to start off as baggers or, working the deli or the bakery or whatever, we have a problem. And a lot of our people commute from Santa Rosa and Petaluma, the vast majority, because first of all, they can't afford something down here so there's a lot of commute. And then the parking, we make everybody park off site, so the parking is what you can get. It's not terrible.

F: A challenge.

But its' a challenge. On the weekends it's not fun.

F: So you feel like you don't have the built in supply of qualified workers or eager workers. Parking can be challenging. Anything else? I'll give you guys another, take another 30 seconds or a minute and, if you'd like, unless you're already --

I think we're there.

F: You're there?

Yeah.

F: Let's keep going then. All right, let's start, go over here.

I think there has always been a pervasive attitude in Sausalito that was not business friendly. And it manifests itself in a variety of ways, not least of which is recently, in the last year or so, they put in a parking meter that infuriates every single person that parks and uses a parking meter in this city, every time. 25 cents and that gets you 10 minutes. I mean that is so unfriendly and so stupid that it boggles my imagination.

Where's the parking meter?

F: Is it on Bridgeway, or --

Bridgeway.

Wasn't there a parking meter there before?

Yeah but they weren't 10 minutes.

Half an hour.

Even half an hour. But you can't do anything in 10 minutes.

F: So 10 minute parking at a quarter is just not a good idea.

10 minute parking at anything is not a good idea. You barely, all you have time to do is put the money in, do a pirouette, and then put more money in. That's all the time you've got to go into a retail store, or to shop, or to look around, or go for a walk, you can't do it. I was in San Anselmo the other night, they don't have parking meters. That's the ultimate in friendliness. If we want to let people feel welcomed here, they should at least be an hour.

F: Okay. So you feel your customers can't feel welcome because, for instance, the parking situation is an outward manifestation of not making it right --

It pisses everybody off.

Well that's the first experience in going to your restaurant.

Sorry.

F: Well he said something really interesting. I'd love to follow up with him just for a sec here. You talked about there's various manifestations of maybe of an environment that is not business friendly. So let's talk about some other manifestations if you would.

Well, I mean, I can go down my little laundry list here.

F: Please.

We're on the water. We've acknowledged that one of the great attributes of Sausalito is the waterfront and yet there's no guest docking facilities. You can't bring boat to Sausalito, it is just unbelievable, and park it in a place accessible to downtown. You can't do it. And I don't know where you'd have to go to get an overnight facility.

Schoonmaker.

Sometimes, depending on the size. If it's a larger boat, that doesn't work.

[over-speaking]

As far as larger boats go, Schoonmaker --

Overnight?

Yeah, there's no other places that can handle a big boat.

I used to try to get in there.

You didn't know the right people.

[laughter]

But if it's Schoonmaker, you still aren't going to walk, it's still a real hike

[over peaking]

That's not what it's about.

F: You've only been here 35 years so you can't possibly know the right people.

[laughter]

-- and workmen. It's usually, when I came to town 10 years ago, it was the hill people versus the flatlanders. The flatlanders were the workers and the shop owners and the hill people were the people that lived in the big homes that barely came down once a month to have dinner and went in and out of San Francisco to work. So that's the myth that you're talking about is the commercial people versus the affluent who live on the hill. That's the myth that you're talking about.

Well, maybe that's a part of it too. I mean, there's some specific things. We really have a poor retail environment in terms of shopping.

You mean [inaudible]

And I think part of that reason is that people, whether they're flatlanders or they live on the hill, don't support retail to the extent that they might. On the other hand, in terms of quality, I mean how many times can you buy a t-shirt?

Right.

So there hasn't been much emphasis put on improving that. Having raised 5 kids here, it is difficult to raise children here although, at the end of the day, it worked out great for my kids.

F: What are the challenges?

Well the school system had been, I think it's changing, horrible. I mean, I'm putting it too good. And so you just couldn't use this school system. Then, last on my list is we need additional ferry service back and forth to the City so that people can come here and walk and enjoy the shops here and the restaurants, but be able to go back to the City if they're staying there at some hour that, I think the last one here is 8:20. There ought to be a 9:00, 9:30.

F: I guess that kind of contrasts with the comment from a little earlier about the fact that we've got the proximity, and the connection, but some of what we need --

We do have the proximity. We just don't have the means of, in a, there's a higher tech way of saying it, of communicating, we can't get people from here to there.

You see it over there but you can't get there unless you go by car. And the ferryboat rides from the City, it's an extraordinary opportunity for people. And yet they can't do it. They can go to Tiburon, but they can't come here. And we've got a dock, so --

F: Okay, limited ferry transportation options. Anything else on your list there?

I think that covers.

F: We can come back, okay, let's go down.

The retail business is not that good. I agree with Larry. I'm sitting on the Business Advisory Committee. The City, I agree with Mike, is more open to the business. We get a sales tax report. As far as I've seen, those tax reports, in this City of Sausalito, the tax revenue has been declining the last 10 years or 15 years. The last copy of sales I compared 10 years ago were less. And the only thing that's up are the restaurants and the hotels. If you remove the restaurants and the hotels, it clearly shows how much retail business there is in Sausalito.

F: You say your negative would be that the retail segment is flat, stagnant, down?

Definitely down. Yeah, at my business committee meeting, we talked about this. [inaudible] had a mention about this. They usually have lines coming down to Sausalito. We don't have lines anymore. Where the people are going is everybody is going to shopping malls. Sausalito doesn't need to be a shopping mall, strip mall, however, most of the people going to those places, what is the new attraction for people to come to Sausalito shopping? We have to find that new need to.

F: So you concur that retail could be more varied.

Right. We have to find out what it is. That's one part of it. And second part of it is I do agree the parking issue is really huge for us. I know the City of Sausalito, one-third of, I think almost 30% of city revenue, comes from parking. That's why they [inaudible]. I think that's really negative of [inaudible] Sausalito [inaudible].

F: What percentage?

One-third. I believe 30%, isn't it?

F: Three million dollars a year? [inaudible] and three million comes from parking?

Yes. It's huge. I mean, the City owns the parking lot and [inaudible] everything else.

F: So you think as a business owner, the signal that sends out to whether they're people that live here regionally or people that come in from out of town, is not welcoming, not --

Right. And I also have been talking with [inaudible]. The parking [inaudible] what I have is all the business and residents of busy districts, especially Caledonia area at the movie theater, the hill side of Caledonia Street is a residents' parking only. People get tickets all the time. And the trucks, I get the letters from residents, people take [inaudible] park next to the movie theater, get the ticket, come to my place, have dinner, go to the movies, get out, they get their \$55 ticket. They write the letters to us. I mean, that kind of thing we'll have to fix somehow. Otherwise [inaudible] what kind of message [inaudible]

[over-speaking]

F: So you put your quarter in, you end up with a \$25 ticket.

Right.

No, no, it's worse than that.

If 33% comes from parking, how much comes from sales tax?

Well I'll tell you --

Because 10 million bucks is the dig in.

Yeah, I worked on the general plan, economic elements and general plan for 3 years and at that time, about 67% of the budget was generated by business related activities including parking. I don't know what it is.

So property tax is more like 20, 25%

Comprised of the rest of that. I don't know what the mix is today.

I believe that later to that, property [inaudible] I believe all the business license

[end of side A]

[over-speaking]

F: -- there's a restriction on how far the restaurant can be and you see that as a negative problem.

Here?

In Marinship.

20 feet.

If you can prove a need.

But they send a zone.

[over-speaking]

I don't think that's hard to make money with [laughter] I think it's impossible.

F: I want to go back to this, so based on where you are in the city, there are different restrictions for where you top out, the number of feet you can have in your restaurant. So Marinship is 20 if you can prove that there's a need for it.

About 20 feet, yeah.

F: Somewhere else here it might be 30?

Well you know why that is, is because they have a regulation that says it has to be water- or marine-oriented business to go down there.

It has to be, it cannot be tourist attractive. It has to be, there's this part, one of the things I wanted to make sure we talked about was the Marinship Specific Plan because --

Let's talk about it. Let's make sure Yoshi -- You okay?

That's all right, yeah.

Keep going.

When you talked about what the plusses of Sausalito are, you know, a lot of people talk about the waterfront and how nice all that is, and I remember going to places like Santa Monica years ago and seeing their beautiful waterfront slums there and saying, how can this be? Well of course now it's all been redone. Well I worked in San Francisco when I was first out of law school. I would park on the Embarcadero and pick my way across the drunken bums on the street to get to my office. Now that's all beautiful. There's a tendency to take waterfront areas and make them the primary area of your city. [Showing a map of Sausalito to participants.] This is the map of Sausalito. Look at where the businesses we've been talking about so far are, they're along the street here, and they're along Caledonia here. This is Marinship. This is Marinship. That much of our City is the Marinship.

F: So you see a negative that a high percentage of our waterfront is Marinship and --

No -- the problem is Marinship is an absolutely spectacular opportunity for the City. It is the most underutilized, oppressively regulated, wasted opportunity the city has got. And most people, including me, didn't know anything about it. I live right there. I never set foot in the Marinship other than to go to say Mollie Stone's and those are kind of the edge of Marinship. I never went down there. It's scary. The people who work down there don't want you there. The businesses down there are sort of rough and tumble sort of things. Now, Orlando has put a fair amount of his money into restoring old buildings down there. I bought, 7 years ago, I bought the largest undeveloped parcel down there with the idea of developing it and what you come to realize is, about 20 years ago, in response to the negative feelings of the community toward the building that your office is in, the enacted a Marinship Specific Plan and Draconian regulations were put in place that absolutely choke, stifle, stop development and business uses in the Marinship. Despite that, half, right now, half of the sales tax revenue comes out of the Marinship. Everybody thinks about the downtown. Half comes out, well, Mike's a big piece of that, but half of the revenue in the City sales tax column comes from the Marinship and yet it's a vastly underutilized area. So when you say, what should the city be thinking about on a vision process? I would say, why would you, yes, let's tweak all the things that are already constructed, that are already working, but don't ignore the great big opportunity that this is. People like Orlando have buildings that his property manager has to go down to the city and fight every time -- can I accept this tenant? This tenant is an architect. Oh we have too many of those. This tenant does design work. Can't have any of those. Can only be fine art; can't be applied art. I mean, these kind of debates over height limits, FAR ratios, are all designed to keep in place the kinds of uses that existed, were thought to have existed, 20 years ago. Now, on my property, I'm the way it's been for a long time. I can tell you, those uses don't really exist.

F: I'll tell you what, the headline here, if I had 3 points to put on my flipchart, that the Marinship is in, you believe, it's over regulated, underutilized, and what else do we want to say here? We're going to come back and I'm going to give you an opportunity to really come up with some ideas for overall stimulating economic growth in this city and that might be an area --

-- inappropriately regulated.

F: Inappropriately regulated, okay.

The problem is, you realize you don't own your land.

Well that's right. This guy out here

[over-speaking]

This guy out here that's illegally parked in the Bay Anchor, he's got more say than I do.

[inaudible]

[laughter]

After 3 blocks, the restaurant next door to you has more to say about your house than you, who has a vested interest, the renter next door who could move out tomorrow has just as much say as the use of your property.

F: You feel a renter or somebody anchored out in the bay has more --

Illegally [anchored in the bay]

F: -- illegally.

Let me put a fine point on it. If I appear before the City Council and I make my pitch about what I want to do with my property, I'm treated with suspicion, doubt, anxiety to make sure they don't look too friendly to me. When that anchor person gets out there and starts talking about all the free things [laughter] he's treated royally. Now, now, is that because they're just making a show of paying attention? No. They actually, actually care, for those kind of eccentric, edge, fringe kind of activities. And that's really charming when you live a long long way away from that but when that's what you deal with everyday, when you deal with the fringe people everyday and they come into your store, and they come [inaudible] you don't get quite that charming warm and fuzzy feel about it.

F: Give me the bullet point here. The city is overly interested or favoring what versus what?

I would say a romantic image of how things used to be and things we ought to preserve.

[overspeaking]

Way too much subjective, not enough objective.

F: So overly subjective and romantic attitude about what needs to be done down there, or what --

It's hard for me to put it, I'll say my statement and you put it in a bullet point.

F: Okay.

I've got a space where a guy is building cabinets for a house in San Rafael and he lives in Fairfax. There's nothing to do with Sausalito anywhere at all in this. He's only on my property because it's the cheapest space. And when I walked the City Council people around there, they point at that guy and they say, now, anything you do, you have to make sure that that guy has a place here, not that kind of use, that guy. And I think, well, if he's a good tenant and he wants to rent space from me, I'm delighted to rent space to him. I'm not trying to kick this guy out. But it's looking at the tiny picture instead of the big picture. So I'm looking at, so I believe the city is bogged down and has fettered itself, has tied its own hands by the Marinship Specific Plan and is more interested in observing

that plan to the letter than looking at the big picture and saying, this is what's possible. This is what's possible. What happened in San Francisco? All that got wiped out. Santa Monica, all that got wiped out. Berkeley, wipe out Fourth Street. You're going to see, in the future, Marinship being developed by our children, by our grandchildren, by somebody, to be a beautiful part of this community. It's huge. It's fabulous. It's on the water.

The letter [inaudible] to the letter of the Marinship Plan, you think that's a negative small view when they could have a larger view, so you could have a larger view [inaudible] of the area.

Good point.

F: I want to get more comments and we're going to come back to this.

[over-speaking]

We have more points that we could mention here about as a businessperson, negative attributes of Sausalito. I just want to talk about these. When we talk about parking meters and it's a hassle and stuff. I've got a store now that has 80% parking meters and 20% free. And the volume of the store is my second best store. So, you know, if they really want to make, and desire to be there, you know, I'm not a proponent of parking meters but the reason the parking meters were put in there was because people would park there and stay all day and go to work downtown and come back and pick up their car. We also had a problem with employees parking either in the lot or on the street or whatever and not having available spots for them. So the other, flip side is that the city, let's face it, and to answer your question earlier was that the city needs to look for revenues to meet their budget. The correlation between the quality of life that people have in Sausalito and a vibrant business community is intertwined, that people don't realize, the residents don't really realize, that kind of thing enough. And so we need to find out how we can do that. I think downtown totally needs to be reinvented.

F: You've actually hit on what of our next session points is going to be, that relationship between residents and business and how everybody can happily co-exist and thrive. We're going to spend some time on that as a group, okay?

But the other thing that really effects businesses especially north is the lack of tenants because you go down Bridgeway and you'll see, for lease, for lease, for lease, and it hurts the restaurants, it hurts the gas station, it hurts the laundromat, it hurts the grocery store. It hurts all the service parts of the community, okay, because of that. And there has to be some task force or something put together to address that, for the city to play their part or whatever, however that comes out but that's a different discussion, to work with the landlords and whether it's a use issue or whether it's something else, to entice people to come here. When Autodesk was here, okay, it was no big deal for the City to lose Autodesk because they didn't pay sales tax. But, they brought 2 or 3 hundred people here and had their main headquarters and Autodesk was here and it attracted a lot of other

businesses like them because they wanted to be in that environment. And so they participated and all the services --

Critical mass.

-- and then they left, okay? But they didn't contribute because they produced their products someplace else. So, you know, there's a fine line there. They used to be a guy who was the number one sales tax contributor, an electronic guy, and I don't think he's here anymore. And I don't know but the City needs to nurture people like that, to keep them here, to --

F: So in summation I would say, tweak the statement if you think it's off, you feel there's not a cohesive plan or clear plan on attracting the tenants that are needed to then support the service community around, services around --

I don't think that's accurate. There's a plan in place in [inaudible]. The Director of Economic Prevention, this is the plan. The plan says that if Orlando, I'll use his buildings because [inaudible] usually done his buildings, if he has a space and he has a prospective tenant who wants to rent that space, there's a good chance you can't rent to that tenant because, although that tenant's employees will sit at a computer and look at a screen, what they're typing will make a difference in whether they can get an occupancy permit or not.

F: So rather than saying we don't have a cohesive plan for economic development particularly on the north end, we were talking about Marinship, you're saying we actually have a Department of Economic Discouragement.

Yes.

F: Interesting.

But that's not just in that department. It's a lot of it. If you go in front of a Planning Commission or a City Council and you give economic reasons why you have a valid proposal, the first thing they're going to tell you is we don't care about your economic proposal; we care about the subjective things of whether or not this is okay or this is not okay. I mean, if Mike wants to put palm trees up in his parking lot, he's going to have more people concerned about the palm trees in his lot than he is whether or not he needs 10 more parking places. I mean, it's so subjective it's unbelievable. And he'll spend hours and hours and thousands of dollars getting landscape architects to prove that the palm trees can live. And so it's more than just discourage the tenants from going in. Orlando can't get the tenants and the point is that instead of trying to solve a problem, it's, let's elongate the problem, let's create a problem.

F: There's too much debate and subjective discussion and not enough pragmatic, rational, I mean, give me the bullet point here. What's your --

It's very short term, they take the short term view of everything and they don't see the [inaudible] effect, the long term [inaudible] from rash, emotional decisions.

F: Too much emotion and short term emphasis, not enough planned, longer term view.

Another point that I think is important: every individual property owner or business owner spends most of his time thinking about his or her business. It's very difficult for me to figure out what the guy next door is doing with his property or his business. Someone, however, has to look at the City on a broader perspective. Somebody has to have a vision that is leading the community forward and it's hard to put that on the backs of each individual property owner. There has to be some guidance, in the case of Marinship, almost from a redevelopment agency standpoint. I think, within the City, there needs to be more guidance as to what should be happening and I think that the staff is afraid to go out on a limb because they don't know if they're going to get that limb sawed off by the council. I think the council is afraid to go out on a limb because what's going to happen with the public safety [inaudible]. I don't think there is anybody in a leadership position here who can lead because they don't have the feeling that they will be backed up.

F: People are being overly cautious because they feel like they have to watch their back or be careful.

Yeah.

Yeah.

So the plus thing that we talked about, why we like to live here, the eclectic part and the make decisions by committee is coming back to bite us in the ass. That's what's happened.

Too much of a good thing.

And what we've done is we've said we like to live here because we like this and we like the different environments and the different socioeconomic situations but then, because we are all focused on what we want to do, they come back to bite us because the guy on the boat out here is getting as much attention or more attention than the guy who has his pocketbook on the line.

F: Great discussion. What I'd like to do is I want to do a time check. I want to make sure that we can keep going on with this conversation for a little while yet. Does anybody have to leave in the next half hour? Stay with this. This is really important information. I really am thankful that you're here this morning. Let's pause here for like 5 minutes so people can take a break. If you've got to make a quick phone call or stretch your legs or something, do that. I'm going to hit pause here.

[background conversations as group reconvenes]

F: This has been a good discussion so far. I'm learning a lot. I've lived here 9 years and I hear a lot of this stuff, I live right in back of the hotel actually on Santa Rosa above San Carlos, but I've only been doing business a year now but I was managing at a San Francisco firm before this. So a lot of it's new to me. It's not new to me in some ways. Okay, let's get going. And what I'd like to do at this point, there was one other point, as a businessperson, I think I overheard a conversation a minute ago during coffee break about under representation of businesspeople in certain areas. Would anybody like to elaborate on that quickly, just spend like 2, 3 minutes on it? Then I want to go into another exercise and seek some ideas from this group.

Actually, a few things. Michael mentioned about the task force or program leadership. I don't think the business community, business owners, business point of view is not [inaudible] to be [inaudible] on the City policy making process or [inaudible] impact whatsoever. Even though we provide for half of the City budget by the business [inaudible], in the end we don't have a voice for city politics. The Chamber of Commerce, unfortunately, never become a business leader to impact on the City of Sausalito. And if we can find a way to [inaudible] for the businesses and [inaudible] benefit for the City, I think, again I want to mention about this, [inaudible] of the City budget is less than 10 years ago because of a regulation tendered by the State government and all the governments that they cut, they are more looking for the revenues. That's why those things are happening. Unless thriving retail businesses [inaudible] revenue, business is [inaudible] getting stronger in Sausalito. We cannot find the way it is [inaudible] revenue. That's why they're looking for those avenues -- revenues -- to find it.

F: There needs to be maybe a business-city way of doing work that isn't there right now.

Right. I do believe that this is one of the processes. City Council wants to find out what business owners, property owners want. I think that's why those so called [inaudible] or whatever is here.

F: I believe you're correct.

But it's really almost the opposite. And that is, instead of finding sources of revenue that may make sense, there may be some development, instead, they reduce the time on those meters but they increase, for instance, the hotel tax from 10 to 12%. I mean, that's certainly not going to help anybody's hotel business here. Increase it to 15% or start charging, it's just not, if they put something in front of the voters saying, we can raise a couple million dollars, or actually, it wasn't that much, it was several hundred thousand dollars, by raising the hotel tax from 10 to 12%--

120,000.

Okay. Everybody who lives here says, yeah, that's a good idea. \$120,000 -- that'll go to the Fire Department.

Well it doesn't affect them. I mean, it doesn't affect --

Everybody's going to vote for a tax that doesn't affect them.

Exactly.

But that's not the way to run a city.

F: And if the business view is better represented, you feel that maybe something like that wouldn't occur?

Yeah, I think so.

I think, just tailing onto this, they didn't want to go ask for a 14% increase because then they would have had to get more than 66% of the vote. Wasn't that it?

No. No. The reason that they asked for 10 to 12, because I was in support of it, was if you denote what the funds are going to, then you have to get 66%. If it goes into the general fund, it's a 50%. So if you say, I'm raising the tax from 10 to 12 and I'm taking that as 120,000 and I'm putting it into a 2 position or 1 position [person] to promote something, then it's dedicated funds, it needs 2/3 vote. If it's not dedicated funds and it goes into a general plan, then it's a 50% and it passed 58% to 42%. And they raised 120,000 bucks to do it. I agree though with Larry is that the City sometimes, like government does, says, gosh, we need more money because we have more expenses so let's take our efforts and decide how we can make more money rather than use their efforts and say, what can we do to effectuate cost savings in certain things? We're all here at the table happy with the Police Department and happy with the Fire Department.

Oh, I'm not happy with the Police Department.

Okay.

Not at all.

Okay. I didn't know that.

Yeah, we had a robbery, and lo and behold, there is no investigative detective on our force anymore. That didn't make me happy at all. I was the detective. I was the one who got on a computer trying to find a lost, well, I mean it's ridiculous. I'm not at all happy.

I didn't know that.

But we are so understaffed there it's not even funny.

F: Well I think I'm going to give folks an opportunity to elaborate further on some ideas. I want to do one thing --

I just wanted to tail on to a TOT tax that was passed because I thought if it was over a certain amount it had to have 66% but you're probably more knowledgeable than I am. But if they said, we wanted to go to 14% and that 2% went to business development which in essence would come back to the City --

Yeah, cycle back --

-- cycle back to the City in the way of funds and make the chamber of commerce or the businesspeople in town happy, I think the whole community would have benefited.

[over-speaking]

Unfortunately they couldn't get 66 and 2/3 % to vote for getting everybody a hundred bucks.

Just for the information, [inaudible] this time in order to get the support, they sent line item budget, they would spend up to \$30,000 or something for the [have] strategy promotions and that's City Council. So there's the 2 from City Council and 2 from hotelier, 2 from chamber of commerce. I happen to be, I'm one of them to 6 people to discuss about how we can promote the City of Sausalito. It's the first time ever happening. I'm really in support for that.

But that's not enough.

It's not enough but it's the first time as far as I know that the City budget had let's promote business, the first time ever happening. But I want to make sure the City --

[over-speaking]

Never happened.

F: I want to make sure we capitalize this last comment which was that in terms of actually having part of the City's budget dedicated to economic development or business development, that doesn't exist right now and that's a negative. Yes?

Yes.

Absolutely.

F: Okay. What I'd like to do now, this is totally unscientific, population of 6 here, by show of hands, respond to this statement: The City of Sausalito is pro business development - true. The City of Sausalito is anti business development. 4 to 6. Any neutrals? Or different --

Yeah.

Yeah.

I don't think they're negative but certainly they're not proactive.

F: All right. So if I were, if this was a questionnaire

[over-speaking]

F: I'd say, it would say basically if this were a bigger survey, the question would be something worded like, negative towards business or somewhat negative towards business but not pro business.

See, I think there's more residents that are negative towards business than maybe the City Council, but the City Council listens to the contingent --

[over-speaking]

F: All right. What I'd like to do now is, if you could go back to that little scratch pad you have in front of you, that blank sheet of paper, we've been talking now about stimulating economic growth for Sausalito. We had that [inaudible] rather than helping businesses boom, helping the City improve their economic situation. What I would like for each of you to do is take the next few minutes and on your sheet of paper I'd like for you to jot down at least 2 best ideas for stimulating economic growth in this town. If you want to do more than 2 ideas, these are things that could be programs, just, it could be wild ideas, it could be specific things that you feel would have a dramatic impact and would start to improve the situation. We're wide open on this. This is brain storming right here so at least 2, more if you've got the ideas, and we'll go around and capture them quickly. Any questions about what we're looking for?

Yeah, in fact, I think everybody around the table knows --

F: Well I'd like to hear individually and that's why we're writing them down individually, is I want to find commonalities between what you're saying but they're might be that, you've had some different viewpoints on a number of items and I just want to make sure everybody gets a chance to express their ideas.

F: Specific issues if you could would be great, if you've got an idea for something, as much that you feel we could put down that I could actually, this could be the makings of something you could actually put into an action plan, something to investigate, that would be great. Let's start on this end. What do you think would be an idea or two to stimulate economic development in Sausalito?

I have 3. 2 are specific and can get done and 1 is a little further out. The first is, change the parking meters to be 1 hour for 25 cents, 2 hours for 50.

F: 2 hours for 50 cents, 1 hour for a quarter. Okay.

The second thing is, talk to the ferry people and get a 9:30 ferryboat back to the City.

F: Yeah. Arriving in Sausalito --

No, leaving here to go back.

F: So later ferry service --

Yeah. Yeah. The third thing which has been a dream of mine for a long, long time was to build a city pier and that pier would run horizontal in the cove that exists between the Spinnaker and the Sausalito Yacht Club, to build a pier there horizontally, so people could walk down with fingers, or not, that would accommodate guests' boats coming in on an overnight, or up to a week, that large boats could come in just as they do all over Europe, and as they do in many American cities. I --

F: -- your earlier point of there's nowhere really in the prime district here for somebody to come in with a boat, stay overnight, or stay for a few days --

-- or use Sausalito as their destination port when they're coming from anywhere, as far north as Seattle, or as far south as the Mexican border, they can use Sausalito if they know they're going to have a place to pull their boat in, and stay for a week, and enjoy the City.

F: The horizontal pier idea, it's got access to residents --

Yeah.

F: -- for walking and enjoying the waterfront but yet you accommodate boats who want to use Sausalito as a destination.

And it would be gorgeous, looking eastward, from where we have our Friday jazz. Can you imagine if you had 8 boats backed in there. It would just be beautiful.

F: All right. Good. That's exactly the kind of stuff we're looking for, some specifics and some, maybe more future, vision oriented ideas. Did you have a fourth or --

No, that's it.

F: Okay. Thank you. Keep going around the table.

I happen to live in that area and one of the issues that parking for [inaudible] changes. And one other crazy idea could be city parking lot beside the waterfall beside the ferry landing, what a prime location. What a waste of the land it is. What if we can build for the beautiful businesses or whatever and build somewhere else the parking place.

F: I'm sorry, I missed --

The City parking lot by the ferry landing --

F: Right.

What a beautiful property, what a waste [inaudible] we can build somewhere else for parking and then [inaudible] coming, what a place to have businesses, because you --

Where, though, would you find that much land [inaudible] for parking?

[over-speaking]

-- parking garage.

[laughter]

F: Everybody, in this session, everybody's ideas are great, they're brilliant -- we're not going to dispute the viability or whatever in this particular meeting. Maybe we'll have another meeting and we'll talk about the horizontal pier or using that lot for something else and then we can analyze it from every angle, positive, negative, rational, emotional, and make some headway.

And also, the second part is the waterfront activities, water taxis, and an overnight stay [inaudible]. And also we have probably one of the, I don't know how big it is, how many [inaudible] you know? That's a lot of money [inaudible] Sausalito. They don't cost as residents, they don't cost as [inaudible] businesses. There's huge money sitting there.

F: Your idea is there potential revenue or economic growth --

Yes.

F: By addressing boats who are

[over-speaking]

-- anchored out on the waters. And there are freebies on the bay -- charge for water taxis, whatever it is, that's one part of it. Another one is, I think a business development, we're talking about, we mention is, we need to build somewhere business leadership in this town to be all the business people benefit for. [inaudible] again, more than half of the city's budget is contribution by the businesses and the [inaudible] [ports]. That's one part of it. And for me, for example, Bay Club couldn't come to Sausalito. The City couldn't keep it in Sausalito. I --

F: Who couldn't come here?

Bay Club.

F: The Bay Club.

They didn't want to --

And they [inaudible] I think that's absolutely a crime, Sausalito couldn't keep [inaudible] and I want to [inaudible] that. And I was happy to be joined there. I was really glad [inaudible].

[inaudible]

F: So, specifically, I want to make sure we're getting this last point, we were talking about the water taxis, but you just mentioned --

[over-speaking]

F: -- formalizing, what, the business task force, or --

I don't know, business leadership in this town, supposedly the Chamber of Commerce does it, the chamber hasn't done it. For example, the people, the biggest business employer, business property owner in this town, is not actively in the chamber. I mean you are active with the chamber in many ways but the policy making process for politics, we don't have an impact on. And also, another part of it, like [inaudible], nobody talks about it. We talk about how much impact we have, just let them go, nobody talked about it, chamber, city, or anyone else. I think that kind of thing, that's a crime. We talk about [inaudible] what do we have? We couldn't capture, we have actual opportunities there [inaudible] you know, all properties that are vacant [inaudible] your business, my business, large business [inaudible] people here in Sausalito. We have to find it, you know? [inaudible] and people come to the hotel, they need to go somewhere else to eat. For activities, stay in Sausalito.

F: Good. So an organized approach to business development -- who knows what the organization would be like? We need that concentration [inaudible]. Good. Any others? Good. Continue.

Most of the people who work on our property do eat their lunch at our restaurant everyday. It comes in a stainless steel van, plays *La Cucaracha* and that's where people go have their lunch. I always look at this short term and long term. Short term, there are a lot of things that could be done that could boost businesses immediately, changing the Marinship Specific Plan to allow users to occupy already existing space would be an immediate boost not only to the property owners but to all the businesses that would rely on people occupying those buildings. Long term, which I think is equally if not more important, is that the City needs to develop a long term view of what it wants to look like in 20 years and that is something that you could have, you know, people like us sitting around and give ideas, but there needs to be the mind set of a redevelopment agency, which many cities have, to have the continuing authority and power to do that. You can't make those kinds of decisions based on what the immediate neighbors have got to say today. You've got to have someone looking at that with, the reason we have a representative government rather than just everybody voting on every issue is that

presumably, people who have this at their job will study it, think about it, deal with all the different issues, and come to a reasoned decision about what ought to happen. That's what someone like Avery Development Agency does. Sausalito doesn't have that and doesn't need necessarily to have a redevelopment agency, but it needs to have someone in a leadership position to be working towards that kind of view and making sure that there is a view. I think, now, there isn't any view at all.

F: In terms of other cities that have redevelopment agencies or organizations, who do they report to or how are they held accountable?

The one I know best is San Rafael because I've done a lot of work for San Rafael. And San Rafael, the redevelopment agency is the city council, they just change hats. And the director of the redevelopment agency is the city manager. He changes hats. And then he has an assistant, usually, who is a full time employee who carries out the mission of the, so it's really the City Council acting in a different capacity. But you need to have either a director or assistant to the director who actually works on it on a day to day basis.

F: A staff person.

A staff person. And what they can offer businesses is they, first of all, they can sit down at a table with you and they can work something out and stand behind it. Right now, somebody who wants to do something is told, well, you know what, you spend all your money figuring out what you want to do, you throw it up against the wall, and we'll throw rocks at it, we'll tell you what's wrong with it. That's a very ineffective way to get something done versus sitting at a table and hammering out the details of something knowing that when it gets to the City Council, it's going to be approved because all the problems have been worked out. It's not going to get you railed by somebody walking off the street and saying, oh my God. What you can offer people is, you can offer them tax benefits, you have a lot of new money coming in for that in new taxes, so you can have [TIF] districts where it's partially financed, or infrastructure is financed, with future sales tax dollars. You can put together assessment districts. You have all kinds of tools. And you can condemn property if you have a reluctant property owner who's got, you know, a piece of property right in the middle of what you want to do, you can condemn that property and take it by eminent domain. Not that we want to do that, but that's the kind of authority that they have.

F: You're talking about a dedicated staff, even if it's the same person 3 days a week rather than 5 days a week --

Yeah.

F: -- but a dedicated focus to looking at pros, cons, any circumstances that might trip up review of something over time. And so it allows for thorough evaluation and not just immediately throwing something in the public forum where it can't really be constructive. Is that what you're --

Yes. That's accurate. And I'll explain how it's different from what happens now. Our city manager is a very intelligent, very professional, hard working person. I like her very much. She attends the meetings of, I mean, the group that I belong to most, attend most often, is the Waterfront Property Owners Association which is a subcommittee of the chamber of commerce. We have meetings about once a month and Dana comes fairly often and has been there many times. She listens to our concerns, and she nods, and she says, you're right, and then she goes off and does something else, right? There's no, the next time we have a meeting, we all say the same thing, she nods her head, you know? There's not a mechanism by which this vision is arrived at and carried out. And I think that she would be an excellent person to do it if that were part of her job.

F: Okay, so mechanism, focus, what else do you have on your --

-- couple of good ideas.

F: And you had the, go back to the Marinship plan and you think adjusting that --

Yeah, short term, short term things like changing the uses that can be had in an existing building, making the height limits flexible when it doesn't have any negative impact and has some positives. If a property owner says, well a 32 foot height limit that we could do this really great thing if we could go 35 feet, right now, the answer's no, it's over with. There needs to be some flexibility, some weighing of [inaudible]

F: Weighing individual situations in terms of whether they are --

Yes, yes. The same with [inaudible] ratio, all of the set in stone restrictions that are in Marinship should, and I imagine throughout the rest of the City, should be considered guidelines and not absolute set in stone.

F: Okay. Good. Let's keep moving here.

You know, we're working in a box and most of us are used to not working in a box, because it's the economics that decision makers are making with the amount of money they have, the income that's coming out, and what they can afford to put out. And, you know, all of us can sit here and come up with a million different ideas that would change this community quick. But I think we need a business plan, you know, on how, I mean, if the City really wants to get serious about this, they need a business plan of what it's going to take and what is going to come back --

F: Business plan for the City or a plan for business?

For business, a business plan for business, or the City, if they really want to take this serious, to see if they invest this, or if they change Marinship, or if they change the parking, or whatever, what are they going to get, you know, what's the pluses and minuses of doing that, right? Okay, but they have to get somebody to do that, all right, if they're going to take it seriously and do it, but you know, we need to brand Sausalito in whatever way, whether it's, on this part of town, our community, this part of town, and

the tech community, or this part of, the tourist destination, but it's a whole menagerie of different things in this town that make it tick. So I think we all agree that downtown needs to be reinvented. And then, once you get your arms around that, then you'll be able to intelligently go to the next step and do something, because I don't see anything getting done and he's frustrated as heck at having these meetings down at the waterfront and then, and all these good ideas coming, you know --

F: -- make sure we get. Shall I flip this over?

Used to have a guy who was my boss and I'd go to meetings and he would give me that [inaudible] and I found, after a few years, I was the one that was [inaudible]. He was telling me, I hear you. He wasn't telling me, I agree with you and I'll do something about it. He was telling me, I hear you. And I finally thought to myself, what am I doing here? I think I'm making him do something. I'm not. He's just listening to me.

F: So what I'm hearing here is that there is interest in figuring out a way to direct some specific funding to this type of initiative, something that enables focus, and structure, or methodology, or whatever, for analyzing opportunities for business growth.

Right. And there has to be some sort of cohesiveness between business and the City to be on the same page and not like this but as one team going in the right direction to try to create economic development in the appropriate places, or allowing business, existing businesses, to prosper better by restrictions that are currently put on them.

F: Okay. Any other ideas for growth? Could be quick hits, we have like a parking meter idea, or some other ideas that --

That parking, I'm sorry.

F: Go ahead.

I didn't hear about this parking meter situation until last week when a neighbor of mine who happens to own a gallery downtown said, you know what, they snuck it in at 11:30 when nobody was there. I am embarrassed. It is the most unfriendly, because nobody has, the people that made the decision, don't seem to know the domino effect. If nobody comes, the businesses don't thrive. If businesses don't thrive, they go out of business. Then, I mean, how can you build a firm, long term economic base when you're always trying to kill the goose that lays the egg? Okay? So I'm really embarrassed. I have friends from other communities that say, you know, we used to love to come to Sausalito to shop, to look at the art galleries, and to eat, but you know what, we don't come anymore because you guys are so damned unfriendly. I don't have a leg to stand on. [inaudible]

[laughter]

F: So you concur that parking --

It is not funny.

[over-speaking]

Parking does not affect me. My businesses are in the Marinship, okay? So let me go there for a minute. The zoning is 19th-Century Draconian zoning. I can get somebody in my building if they are sail maker. You see any China clippers here that need sails lately? As it is, the folks that make, listen to this, this is the analogy, the folks that, the people who make sails all the time, they make them for surfboards, they make them for racing yachts, but the sails are made in Brazil, or Mayama, everybody sits in front of a computer designing the sail but guess what, I can't get that guy in my building even though he's a sail maker, because he doesn't stitch. I can get a guy who, an icemaker in my building. Do you see any boats that require ice these days? You know I --

F: -- something in the current century.

Now listen, and again, I downloaded from the City site, I downloaded from the City of Sausalito site, you want to know where the big, look, we can all see this. This is downtown. The green are the businesses that service [inaudible] restaurants, et cetera. Hello! This entire grayed area is the Marinship, under serviced, underdeveloped, underutilized, overtaxed, overburdened, overregulated. And look at this and tell me where the big bucks are going to be in the long term for the City. And they don't get it. I don't know even who they are but they don't get it.

F: Okay, so, you concur again that Marinship is a very important area and --

-- north side of town clearly is where, and the Chamber of Commerce when I was on it, we recognized this. I don't know of any other city that does not support its local chamber of commerce which is the business [development] arm except Sausalito. Most other communities pay out of the [TOT] tax 1 to 2% to the Chamber of Commerce because they promote business. Not Sausalito, it's the other way around. Sausalito got into its budgetary problems that exist today because it's a long term structural issue. It wasn't overnight. And the quick fix is, let's go for a dollar per second on meters and let's have every third policeman jump out of the bushes and give a resident a ticket, and it's --

F: Short term, not long term, penny wise, pound foolish kind of --

Absolutely.

[over-speaking]

And look at that. Look at that space. You know how many acres that is? So a picture is a thousand words, right?

F: Okay. Any other, so noted, next.

Mike made a good comment. We do things in blocks and most of us don't deal in blocks. But it's funny, when I write notes to myself, I put it in a block. One of the things that we who do business in Sausalito have to understand is that this town's only 7500 people. So it's kind of like an Army unit, even of 50 guys having to be run by a general. In other words, the town needs certain facilities and you have to pay for those facilities. A town of 7500 people needs to have a certain amount of budget. So we're not arguing, or we're not going to have a discussion on what the revenue is versus what the expenses are. We have to look at a couple of things that are important. The demographics of this town is: two-thirds of the people that live in this town rent. One-third own. That means that two-thirds of the people that vote, rent, and don't own. If you look at the power structure, the power structure of this town, the power structure isn't the Police Department, the Fire Department. The power structure is the people who make decisions, that all the decisions that are made in this town are use decisions, property decisions, business decisions. The 10 people making those decisions, 5 City Council people, 5 Planning Commission people, none of them do business and own a business in Sausalito. So when you go to a Planning Commission meeting and a restaurateur stands up and says, I'd like to have a few more tables, the 5 people on the planning commission say, that's ridiculous, you don't need that to make a living. They don't know what you need to make a living because they're not in business doing that. So we now have people who are making our business decisions, whether it's trees in the parking lot at Mollie Stone's or whether it's the Marinship situation, we have 10 people, 5 are elected, 5 are appointed by those 10, who make the decisions about land use, the zoning issues, and they actually control your land, my business, and your business. And that control is headed by those people. So for the business community to complain about they're not getting what they want, I want to make a little bit of criticism towards the business community. Why not have somebody, whether it's Mike Monsef, who was going to run for City Council and didn't, or Yoshi, who is irritated about something and wants to run for City Council, two things are going to happen. Number one, he doesn't have the time to do it and number two is, he probably wouldn't get elected because this town is not pro business but not against business. It's not going to put somebody in office that says, I'm running because I think this town needs a voice about the business community. Not going to make it. The people who are elected here are people who live here and who are attorneys who work in San Francisco or out of their home. They're land planners that work out in San Francisco. There's somebody else who works out, nobody has a business where they run the post office store, or they run a restaurant, or they run a bar, or they run a beautiful hotel. Those people either don't have time or won't get elected. So for the business community to complain that they're not being heard, the business community really needs to get together and say, this is who we want elected. If we can't get one of our own people elected, we want a person who really cares about the business community. The last City Council meeting, Kelly was put in from the Planning Commission. He's a businessman. He understands that just because you're a businessman you don't have horns. He understands it's okay to make a profit. And he's accessible. And most of the City Council people are accessible. We have a really good City Council. But I think their hands are tied sometimes because they know they're there for 4 years and they're off and so they will make knee jerk, end of nose decisions instead of decisions that are 20 and 30 years out. Parking meters --

F: -- the business community should be better organized as a group.

The business community is organized, but it's more of a social thing, it's more of a thing about let's survive ourself instead of saying, we need to be power brokers. We need to be the people who support, with our money, the person that we want to be on the City Council who looks at our issues and is accessible. A couple things: the City needs to look at all of their departments as profit centers and that's what Mike said, the City needs to be run like a business. If it costs us so much for police, okay, we don't take any revenue in for pol- oh, maybe we do. Maybe we take in a certain amount of revenue because we have the police and therefore it costs us X. The Library costs us X. The Planning Department costs us X. If the people knew where we're spending our money and knew what it was about, maybe they would have less objections about things.

[inaudible]

[laughter]

But I think we basically have an inherent problem that is hard to solve. It's a good problem because we're small. We're 7500 people, we're not 75,000 people. We're accessible. We can walk in and talk to a department head, or talk to a person. But on the other hand, that comes back to hurt us sometimes because what we like about the town is also something that hurts us.

F: Okay. Let me ask you a quick question here, another unscientific poll here in our big group, is the concept of getting organized about streamlining and facilitating business development in this town and doing it in a way that can be embraced by residents, is that the job of the Chamber of Commerce or is it the job of maybe a different entity, an economic development arm, or staff, or a combination? So does this rest with the Chamber? Show of hands.

[inaudible]

F: The question is, we've been talking a lot about stimulating economic growth [inaudible] speaking on behalf of businesses, being able to facilitate the process of looking at opportunities for growth, doing it in a structured way, in a focused way, that enables proper analysis so that everybody can be happy with what is being proposed. Is that something that chambers do, typically, in cities or is this something another department or another organization does? Any opinions on this?

In other cities, like I said, the Chamber is the business arm of the City. It's supported by the City, so if you don't want more overhead, and staff, and benefits, and things like that, you have to worry about budget constraints, you flip it over to the business community which is the chamber of commerce. It makes the chamber of commerce grow if it is a viable, political voice. Right now, because businesses don't vote, they're not a viable political voice.

F: Okay. Well, other opinions?

The ideal situation might be that way but I feel like if there's really a concerted effort to make a difference at this point, the chamber of commerce, the [inaudible] being made here is that it takes the right people to make this happen and it takes people that have their hands on the pulse and have the businesses that can have the impact to make the decisions and recommendations, you know? Because there's a lot of people that do good things in the chamber of commerce but I'm not sure that the people that are on that chamber currently, and that changes all the time, have a vested interest in the areas or the businesses that we might have or other people have, and they're not owners of their own businesses, all of them. You get attorneys, and accountants, and you get a vast array of people on the chamber of commerce but I think to get it at least to a place, ideally, yes, it would be ideal to have like the chamber of commerce a [inaudible] chamber of commerce maybe have this type of thing but I'm not sure at this point.

F: The reason I ask that question --

I'm sorry. I think [inaudible] because you're giving too much money to chambers [inaudible] and then how chamber operates [inaudible] in many ways, dysfunctional. I'm sitting on the board, [inaudible] wonderful member [inaudible] committee chairs but again, that's what I'm meaning by I agree with the other Mike too, a business leaders [permission] about it, we don't have a [inaudible] voice for not only the City, business community alone, business [inaudible] corporate property owners opinions are, no one else [inaudible]

F: Okay. I'm going to ask you a question --

To answer your question, I don't think another staff has to be put together, I don't think, another committee. The City can work as an economic development committee just like the planning commission is also a design review.

[over speaking]

So I don't think you need another group.

I think what's important to realize is if the bottleneck is the political process, the regulatory process, whatever this is has to have some influence on the bottleneck.
[over-speaking]

-- something whether it's the same staff or not, that has influence on policy, shaping policy.

Don't you guys think that there ought to be a master plan for the City?

It would help.

Oh absolutely.

I mean, that starts at one, Fort Baker, and works its way all the way to the northernmost end of town and let's have a master plan.

[over-speaking]

-- when Orlando says there's no soul, one of the first things he said, we don't have a vision, there's no plan.

Well there's a general plan that's done every 20 years and when I was president of the chamber of commerce, it was no economic part of that, it makes it okay, you're in charge. Three, three and a half years I worked on that economic element to that general plan. Now, things change quick and I'm not even sure what part of that they implemented, but the Marin Specific Plan is a big issue all in itself and needs a vote from, you know, the whole city to be able to change it as I understand it and you know much more than I do. But that exists out there. But I think a business plan, an economic business plan, needs to be done and it needs to be done by the City with good input.

F: Okay. I'm going to ask a question, guys.

[inaudible]

F: You have to take off? Thank you very much.

Thank you.

Thanks a lot.

I've got to go too. I've got an 11:30 that I've got to get to.

F: Can I get a few more minutes from you folks? I know some of you might have to leave. Do you have to leave?

How about 5 more minutes?

F: 5 more minutes, okay, I'm going to ask you guys about, I'm going to ask the group --

[end of tape] [Fast-trak business formation question posed]