

## Building the SMART Train Accountably -- A New Model of Transit Development

Sabrina Ross, Accountable Development Coalition

**Railroad Square will be the key northern stop for the Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) train**, a rail system that promises to transform commuter patterns and traffic congestion along the Highway 101 corridor in Marin and Sonoma Counties. SMART, the agency in charge of getting the trains running is also the owner of 5.5 acres of valuable vacant land across from the train station.

In other parts of California, and around the country, where the public is being asked to help fund projects like this with tax money, people are asking questions about the social and economic value of these developments (see box below). Increasingly, environmental, interfaith, labor, and housing organizations and others have realized that development is not just about a narrow plot of land, but about the communities that surround it.

The Accountable Development Coalition of Sonoma County (ADC) is asking just such questions in Railroad Square and around the county. After nearly a year working with the SMART Board of Directors, the Coalition has secured two major victories. The first occurred in January when SMART issued its Request for Proposals (RFP) to the three short listed developer applicants for Railroad Square. The RFP included provisions requiring a living wage for major tenants of the development, 15% affordable housing, green design, as well as a local hire program and the payment of prevailing wage for the construction of the project.

This month the Coalition secured a second major victory when all three prospective developers of the site agreed that, if selected, they would sign a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with the Coalition.

Similar CBA's, legally enforceable agreements between developers and community coalitions, have included provisions for developer funding of community park and recreation needs; standards for responsible contracting and leasing decisions by the developer, a living wage requirement for workers employed in the development, and a variety of other benefits. The Los Angeles Staples Center CBA, for example, negotiated in May 2001, included an unprecedented array of community benefits, such as a commitment of seed money for affordable housing projects.

An underlying principle of accountable development is that by working with governmental agencies and prospective developers early, communities can provide clear guidance to developers on how these public funds will be used to benefit the whole public.

The organizations of ADC, which include Sonoma County Conservation Action, the Housing Advocacy Group, the Living Wage Coalition, New Economy/Working Solutions (NEWS), the North Bay Labor Council, the Progressive Student Movement, and other organizations, came together to support good development and improve problematic projects.

"I got tired of seeing a lot of our local construction work end up with the low bidder from the central valley or out of state. I got tired of seeing our tax dollars leave our local economy and of watching our local decision makers sell us down the river for the sake of enriching their developer friends," said Steve Benjamin, former business manager of IBEW 551,

(Continued on page 2)

## Union Contract Negotiations to Begin at the Petaluma Sheraton

Eileen Morris, North Bay Progressive



Petaluma Sheraton housekeeper

**January 2006 - After a long and hard-fought battle**, workers at the Petaluma Sheraton voted to join the UNITEHERE Local 2850 (a merger of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union) last month-a first for the Sonoma County hotel industry. But will the 95 employees get a contract? Nationally, some 30 percent of successful union elections never result in a contract because negotiations break down.

Those in the know say that the Sheraton employees have a greater chance than most. "You aren't alone in this," Stephanie Ruby, Organizing Director for HERE, told workers as they sat down December 15 for their first discussion of contract negotiations. "You've got yourselves-the strong bonds and the great relationships you developed in this campaign. You've got the strength of this great union structure. And you've got the support of the community. That's a lot of people who have your back."

Community support for a union work

**INSIDE . . .**

(Continued on page 3)

<b>Transit Oriented Development</b>	... 2
<b>Cotati City Council Votes to Link Houses With Jobs</b>	... 3
<b>A High-Road Economy</b>	... 4
<b>Petaluma Living Wage Campaign</b>	... 5
<b>Film Review: Waging A Living</b>	... 6
<b>New Housing Paradigm Needed</b>	... 6
<b>Membership Form</b>	... 7
<b>International Human Rights Day</b>	... 7
<b>Meetings and Event Calendar</b>	... 8

### Four Questions To Ask Developers

1. How will this development benefit the whole community?
2. What kinds of jobs will it provide?
3. Will it contribute to the limited supply of affordable housing in the community?
4. What will the effect be on existing neighborhoods and small businesses?

# What Is Transit Oriented Development?

By Robert Piper, Reprinted with permission from the Friends of SMART newsletter.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a mix of residential and commercial land uses close enough to one another that all can easily be reached on foot. Most trips can be made without recourse to a vehicle. While automobiles are not precluded, the need for their use is diminished, with longer journeys accommodated by the transit stop or station.

*Reduce Vehicle Trips, Increase Foot Traffic:* Properly implemented, TOD increases the fraction of trips on foot and by bicycle. Since 70% of trips are non-commute, TOD can be effective in reducing overall levels of driving, as well as each household's need to own multiple vehicles. TOD also fosters sustainable communities in ways not associated with transportation. Those who choose to live in them consume fewer resources and generate less pollution than others.

TODs can reduce environmental degradation, lower energy consumption for heating and cooling, and lessen sprawl development elsewhere. TOD must be functionally and aesthetically attractive to those who live, work, and do business there. To achieve those goals, each TOD must include enough people and activities

and they must all be concentrated closely at the station entrance(s).

*What Does Walkable Really Mean?* Conventional wisdom bases TOD on a circular catchment area of one-half-mile radius around rail transit stations. A one-quarter-mile radius is similarly used for local bus stops. Both rules of thumb originated in measurements of how far transit passengers actually walk. Half of rail transit passengers walk less than five minutes, about a quarter mile. Many purported and proposed TODs fall shy of their potential because of flawed designs. Activities are not concentrated enough and there are too few residents to support viable commercial enterprises. Another conclusion is that parking for both transit passengers and the TOD should be located outside the inner core. At the least, space for parking there should be minimized. ■

**Robert R. Piper, Ph.D.** has been a transportation consultant for 30 years. He serves as Co-Chair of the Transportation and Compact Growth Committee of the Sierra Club San Francisco Bay Chapter. The views expressed here are his own.

**Editors note:** This article is an excellent summary of Transit Oriented Development. The Living Wage Coalition believes the relationship between transportation equity, social equity and TOD should be included in this analysis. We also believe there is a consensus on the SMART board in regards to this issue based upon the RFP for the Santa Rosa train station which requires substantial affordable housing on the SMART properties and a living wage of \$11.50 an hour plus benefits for SMART contractors and lessees.

Living Wage Ordinances and Community Benefits Agreements can improve job quality and promote higher wages in traditionally low-wage industries like retail or hospitality located inside a TOD core area. If workers employed by firms within a TOD core area earn a living wage, housing near transit becomes more affordable, and even more so if, as is the case with the Santa Rosa SMART train station, substantial affordable housing is mandated nearby the station..

Moreover, improving job quality and providing a living wage to workers inside a TOD core area will increase the consumer market for retail firms serving the area as low-wage workers spend increased income on food, clothing, and other necessities. ■

## SMART Train Accountably

*(Continued from page 1)*

field representative for Assembly member Noreen Evans, and participant in ADC. In Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland, and around the state, advocates and officials are discovering that such early involvement reduces conflict, and increases the overall stability of good projects.

In Sonoma County, ADC works to ensure that developments uphold basic labor standards, include local hiring provisions, and insist on responsible employers. "The living wage ensures that large SMART contractors and lessees pay a living wage plus benefits; it also aids in establishing a regional wage norm and is calculated by an average of the four ordinances in place in Marin and Sonoma County," said Living Wage Coalition Coordinator Ben Boyce.

The Coalition also addresses affordable housing. "Santa Rosa alone currently lacks over 1,000 units of affordable housing,

according to basic requirements published by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG)," says David Grabill, lawyer for the Housing Advocacy Group. "That's 1,000 families who lack safe, decent housing, or have to commute long distances to more affordable areas. In Railroad Square, this well-designed, high-density housing will also be vital in fostering the ridership that a successful rail system needs."

Another critical component of the Railroad Square effort is the development's effect on air and water quality. Developers will use active and passive energy conservation measures and enhance Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) with "green" building products which meet the standards of the California Integrated Waste Management Board. Many see the train itself as a cost effective means of conserving energy. "Trains are more energy efficient than autos and buses," added Steve Birdleough, chairman of Friends of SMART, "Trains operate on a much narrower right-of-way,

saving valuable land, especially in urban areas; and they encourage compact, efficient infill projects in city centers that benefit the community and individual residents."

Funding is one of the next major challenges. SMART is gearing up to place a 1/4-cent sales tax on the ballot in November 2006 to fund the creation and operation of the rail service. The measure will require a 2/3 majority from the two-county region and is expected to raise \$660 million over its 20-year life (\$470 from Sonoma County and \$190 million from Marin County). If the measure is successful, SMART expects to begin construction in 2007 and conclude in 2009.

**Editors:** Ben Boyce and Barbara Giordano

**Layout:** Portia Sinnott/MS+

**Contributors:** Sabrina Ross, Ben Boyce, Eileen Morris. Syndicated Contributors: Holly Sklar, Jeannette Catsoulis, Robert Piper, and Carl Pope.

**Labor & materials donated by SEIU 707. ■**

(Continued from page 1)

### **Union Contract Negotiations to Begin at the Petaluma Sheraton**

force at the Sheraton first took shape in late 1999 when the hotel's developers approached the city of Petaluma for financial assistance to help them meet construction and on-going operating expenses.

It was Marty Bennett, Co-Chair of the Sonoma County Living Wage Coalition and Executive Director of the North Bay think tank New Economy Working Solutions who first pointed out to the Council that a Sheraton could also result in additional and unintended public sector subsidies to the hotel owners. He described the low wages workers could expect to receive and those wages' inevitable corollary in expensive Sonoma County: Sheraton workers would have to access a variety of assistance programs—a truth since born out. In the three years' they've been working without a union contract, many Sheraton employees have been forced to use the Healthy Families Program, affordable housing programs, food stamps and other programs for the poor said Ruby. "This hotel's on welfare. We want to stop that. And that's not outrageous," Ruby told workers.

Numerous voices from labor and the religious community—most notably, parishioners from St. Vincent's Catholic Church in Petaluma—joined the Living Wage Coalition's initial call for accountable development.

The council in 2000 agreed that it was unfair to support low-wage employment with public funds. They agreed (6-1) to loan the hotel up to \$2.75 million, but a condition of the loan was that union labor would play an important role in the hotel's construction, and that the hotel management would remain neutral in any election among hotel employees.

Workers' advocates in the community and in city government remained firmly supportive throughout the last three years. When the hotel changed hands and management in 2003, continuation of the financial agreement with the city, loan repayment and labor neutrality seemed in peril, with the new owners declaring they didn't have to abide by provisions worked out by the previous owners. But after public outcry and negotiations with the

city, new management agreed to both abide by the labor neutrality provision and shoulder the financial agreement.

However, in 2004, an arbitrator determined that the hotel had not remained neutral in an election campaign and ordered a new election. (Workers in the first election voted for the union, but many ballots were challenged, prompting the arbitrator to call for the new election).

By all accounts management did remain neutral for the current election. "This time around the process was as good as it could have been," said Ruby.

Petaluma City Councilmember Mike Healy, the only remaining Councilmember who voted for the Sheraton deal, concurs: "This was about as positive as we could have hoped for," he said about the election this week. "It could very well set a precedent for the rest of the county. I've told the union folks this is their opportunity to show that a union can be a benefit to management. If they do that, others in the future might not be so resistant."

Bennett agrees. "Our preferred alternative is to make this a win-win situation for everyone. Arriving at a contract and having a union workforce is going to make the Sheraton a very attractive venue for large labor and progressive organizations. We really want to make that happen." At the same time, he said, "Our base is stronger than ever now, and our infrastructure is much more developed. We are willing to bring moral suasion to bear to make sure the hotel does the right thing and negotiates a fair contract."

**Eileen Morris** is a member of the Sonoma County Living Wage Coalition. ■

(Continued from page 2) **SMART**

The SMART Board's leadership in building transit with equity has been critical in finding developers who are both experienced in transit-oriented mixed use development and committed to working closely with communities. "This is a flagship project. We're setting precedent here," said Bob Jehn, SMART board chair and Cloverdale City Council member.

**For more information visit** [www.sonomamarintrain.org](http://www.sonomamarintrain.org) or attend the next Accountable Development meeting, Monday, June 19th, at 5:30 pm at the SEIU 707 building on 600 B St. in Santa Rosa. ■

### **Houses are for people: Cotati City Council Votes 4-1 To Link Houses With Jobs**

**Sabrina Ross**, Accountable Development Coalition, published in North Bay Progressive, 12/05, updated 04/06

At their April 12 meeting, the Cotati City Council voted 4-1 to adopt a jobs-housing linkage program, a citywide requirement that commercial developers participate in Cotati's affordable housing program. Other jurisdictions which have implemented the linkage fee in Sonoma County include Petaluma, Sebastopol, Sonoma, and the County of Sonoma.

"I lived in a rent controlled apartment for a long time," said Councilmember Lisa Moore, "Affordable housing keeps the cream of the crop here. I'm very much in favor of this ordinance... it's just another tool in the toolbox."

Cotati's program provides commercial developers with an array of options for participating in the City's affordable housing requirement: developers may choose to construct workforce housing on-site or at another location, dedicate land, pay a workforce housing linkage fee, or identify other alternatives such as providing an employer-sponsored mortgage assistance program.

Councilmember Patty Minnis was the dissenting vote, citing concerns about driving businesses away.

Like Cotati, Rohnert Park received an October 2005 letter signed by 9 concerned organizations, encouraging the city to pursue a jobs-housing policy. Rohnert Park will likely consider the linkage fee in May. The letter, from the Sonoma County group of the Sierra Club, Greenbelt Alliance, the Housing Advocacy Group, the North Bay Labor Council, the Sonoma County Transit and Land Use Coalition, the Santa Rosa Junior College Progressive Student Movement, New Economy/Working Solutions, Sonoma County Conservation Action, and the Living Wage Coalition, said "Communities have an obligation to their residents and existing businesses to keep their jobs and their available housing in balance. A healthy jobs-housing balance is essential to the quality of life of everyone in the community." ■

# Wanted: A High-Road Economy

Holly Sklar, Co-Author of *"Just Minimum Wage: Good for Workers, Business and Our Future"* and *"Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work for All Of Us."*

**March 17, 2006 - Waving the banner of "global competitiveness,"** corporate and government policymakers are running the U.S. economy into the ground. We are becoming a nation of Scrooge-Marts and outsourcers—with an increasingly low-wage workforce instead of a growing middle class.

**We are living the American Dream in reverse.**

The minimum wage buys less today than it did when Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton opened his first Walton's 5 & 10 in Bentonville, Arkansas in 1951. It would take more than \$9 in 2006 to match the federal minimum wage peak reached in 1968, adjusting for inflation. At today's \$5.15 an hour, it takes nearly two minimum wage workers to earn what one made 38 years ago. The minimum wage sets the wage floor. When the minimum wage is stuck in quicksand, it drags down wages for workers up the pay scale as well. Hourly wages for average workers are 11 percent lower than they were in 1973, despite rising worker productivity. It wasn't always like this. Between 1947 and 1973, worker productivity rose 104 percent while the minimum wage rose 101 percent, adjusting for inflation.

**The United States has become a downwardly mobile society. The American Dream is the American Pipe Dream for more and more people.** The downward shift in wages is moving higher up the career ladder. The inflation-adjusted earnings of college-educated workers have fallen since 2000.

We are breaking records we don't want to break. Record numbers of people have no health insurance.

The share of national income going to wages and salaries is at the lowest level since 1929—the year that kicked off the Great Depression. The share going to after corporate profits, which heavily benefit corporate executives and other wealthy Americans through increased dividends and capital gains, is at the highest level since 1929. "In 2005, for the first time since the Great Depression, Americans

borrowed more than they earned," Parade magazine reports in "What People Earn."

Fueled by obscene wage inequality and tax cuts, income and wealth are piling up at the very top. More and more jobs are keeping people in poverty instead of out of poverty. Middle-class households are a medical crisis, outsourced job or busted pension away from bankruptcy.

**Contrary to myth, the United States is not becoming more competitive in the global economy by taking the low road.** We are in record-breaking debt to other countries. We have a record trade deficit, hollowed-out manufacturing base and deteriorating research and development. The infrastructure built by earlier generations of tax payers has eroded greatly, undermining the economy as well as health and safety.

Households have propped themselves up in the face of falling real wages by maxing out work hours, credit cards and home equity loans. This is not a sustainable course. The low road is like a "shortcut" that leads to a cliff.

**We will not prosper in the 21st century global economy by relying on 1920s corporate greed, 1950s tax revenues, downwardly mobile wages and global-warming energy policies.** We will not prosper relying on disinvestment in place of reinvestment. We can't succeed that way any more than farmers can "compete" by eating their seed corn.

Contrary to myth, many European countries are better positioned for the future than the United States, with healthier economies and longer healthy life expectancies, greater math and science literacy, free or affordable education from preschool through college, universal health care, less poverty and inequality and more corporations combining social responsibility with world-class innovation.



Memorial Hospital worker and children at the Santa Rosa Vigil for the Right to Organize February 16, 2006

In the book *"How We Compete: What Companies Around the World Are Doing To Make It In Today's Global Economy"*, Suzanne Berger reports the findings of MIT's Industrial Performance Center study of more than 500 international companies. She observes, "Contrary to the widely held belief of many managers, we conclude that solutions that depend on driving down costs by reducing wages and social benefits—in advanced countries or in emerging economies—are always dead ends. . ."

"Strategies based on exploiting low-wage labor end up in competitive jungles, where victories are vanishingly thin and each day brings a new competitor. . . As low-end firms that compete on price move from one overcrowded segment of the market to the net, there is virtually no chance of gaining any durable advantage. The activities that succeed over time are, in contrast, those that build on continuous learning and innovation." Instead of pretending the problem is overpaid workers and accelerating offshoring, we need to shore up our economy from below and invest in smart, sustainable development. Raising the minimum wage is a vital step. ■

**Ms. Sklar** can be reached at [hsklar@aol.com](mailto:hsklar@aol.com).

# Petaluma Living Wage Campaign Underway

Ben Boyce, Living Wage Coalition Coordinator

The Living Wage Coalition (LWC) is a project of New Economy Working Solutions (NEWS), a public policy research and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting greater equity and fairness in the regional economy through policy research, public education, leadership training, and community organizing. The LWC believes that implementation of living wage ordinances is one tool for improving the wages and benefits of a limited number of low-income workers. We have passed ordinances in Sebastopol (2003) and Sonoma (2004) which mandate that the City, City contractors, and firms receiving substantial economic assistance from the City pay their workers at least \$11.70 an hour with benefits.

The initial round of the Petaluma Living Wage Coalition campaign began in 2000 with the formation of a core group which explored the economic and political feasibility of passing a Living Wage ordinance. That core group, which is still largely intact, focused on outreach and public education efforts and played a key role in the negotiation of a public subsidy agreement in 2001 for the proposed new Petaluma Sheraton hotel. The LWC sponsored a survey of Petaluma residents conducted by Citizens for a Better Sonoma County in 2004 which demonstrated broad support for a Living Wage ordinance.

The Petaluma LWC began meeting monthly by mid-year of 2004, and is now moving forward to passage of a city-wide Living Wage Ordinance. The first step in this process was the council's approval of the fiscal impact study in December, 2004, which has been prepared by the UC Center for Labor Research and Education. We plan to introduce the ordinance in late summer of 2006, and in coordination with our community and faith allies, we intend to make the Living Wage ordinance a key campaign issue. We believe that we have a majority on the city council for the ordinance.

The Petaluma Living Wage campaign is an important foundation for the ultimate objective, which is to pass a county-wide Living Wage ordinance, as part of a Bay

Area campaign to establish a regional wage norm. The ordinance will cover up to 2,500 jobs in the Petaluma redevelopment district, and could help shape the economic development of the City of Petaluma towards a high road, equitable growth path. Implementation of living wage legislation in Petaluma, the county's second largest city, will unquestionably impact other City Councils as well as the Board of Supervisors.

The LWC is conducting an extensive grassroots community-labor organizing project targeting workers and neighborhoods likely to be most impacted by the Petaluma Living Wage ordinance. Central Petaluma, the poorest neighborhood in the city, will be the primary focus. We will conduct house meetings to generate grass-roots support for the Living Wage ordinance in the low-income neighborhoods in the central Petaluma district, which will be most impacted by the proposed law. The LWC will partner with other labor, faith, and environmental organizations to coordinate several community educational events and a city-wide precinct canvassing campaign.

The Living Wage Coalition campaign has been endorsed by the North Bay Labor Council, Sonoma County Housing Advocacy Group, the Sierra Club, Sonoma County Democratic Party Central Committee, Sonoma County Peace and Justice Center, Sonoma-Lake-Mendocino Building Trades Council, Petaluma Progressives, and Petaluma Tomorrow. We have completed extensive outreach to important community organizations such as the Committee on the Shelterless (COTS), the League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women (AAUW), and the Petaluma Chamber of Commerce. In the course of the campaign, we anticipate joining forces with neighborhood groups and civic associations concerned about the intrusion of low-wage big box stores into Petaluma.

The LWC is an active supporter of the SMART (Sonoma-Marin Area Rapid Transit) train initiative, which will result in a key transportation hub in Petaluma. We will partner with various environmental

organizations to canvass this summer and fall for both the Living Wage and for approval of a quarter cent sales tax to fund the SMART train.

We are endorsed by a broad-based interfaith social justice alliance, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (Sonoma CLUE), which represents six major religious denominations, Pax Christi of Sonoma, and three Catholic lay social justice ministries in the county.

Finally, The LWC is committed to public subsidy accountability and to protecting the right to organize a union as a proven means of raising the living standards for working people. In 2000, the LWC played an essential role in negotiations between the Hotel and Restaurant Employees, Local 2850, the City of Petaluma, and the developers of the Petaluma Sheraton to draft a public subsidy agreement in 2001, hitherto unknown in this county. In return for \$2.75 million in public subsidies, the owners pledged that hotel workers could decide on unionization free from management interference through a 'card check/neutrality' agreement.

In September 2003, the Coalition relied upon its community support base to defend this agreement when new owners demanded that the City scrap the labor provisions. This outpouring of public support was instrumental in stiffening the resolve of the city council to hold the new ownership to the original terms. Further, in 2006 the workers at the Sheraton voted to affiliate with UNITEHERE. Moreover, the LWC was instrumental in the council's decision in 2005 to terminate the city's contract with Empire Waste, who had refused to bargain a labor contract with the Operating Engineers Local 3, and to award the contract to a labor friendly firm, Greenwaste Inc.

The LWC plans on conducting an extended petition gathering campaign, aiming for 5,000 signatures, to build community support for the ordinance. We are waging a major media campaign to form public opinion on the Living Wage movement. The media campaign will

*(Continued on page 6)*

# Tales of the Poor, Working to Survive in America

## Review of documentary film

Jeannette Catsoulis, New York Times June 22, 2005

For most of the readers of this newspaper a 25-cent increase in hourly wage would hardly be cause for celebration. But for at least one of the subjects of "Waging a Living" - an eye-opening, often heartbreaking documentary about America's working poor - that pittance could mean the difference between disaster and survival.

Filmed over a three-year period in the Northeast and California, "Waging a Living" tracks four ethnically diverse, low-wage workers as they struggle to bridge the gap between paycheck and expenses. "There's no American dream anymore," sighs Jean Reynolds, 51, a certified nursing assistant supporting three children and four grandchildren on \$1,200 a month. In common with 78 percent of low-wage workers, Jean has no health insurance and faces eviction when she must choose between paying her rent and purchasing medication for her terminally ill daughter.

Middle-aged divorcee Mary Venittelli works as a waitress for \$2.13 an hour and feeds her three children from a food pantry

in a neighboring county to avoid the shame. Applying for yet another credit card to pay the bills, Mary is resigned: "What do I have to worry about, someone stealing my identity? Please!"

We have all heard the appalling statistics. More than 30 million Americans work low-wage jobs, and more than half the people who began the last decade in poverty are still there. Many are single mothers, battling a system intent on getting people off welfare without lifting them out of poverty. The documentary reveals a country rife with income inequality, short-term political thinking and ineffective tracking of deadbeat dads, a country in which filling a simple prescription for a child's asthma medication can put a family in the street.

Barbara Brooks, a mother of five and a recreational counselor, is bewildered. "I tell everyone I'm hustling backwards," she says, her faith in the golden ring of

**Waging a Living**  
Free movie and discussion  
June 14, 6:30– 8:30 pm  
Petaluma Public Library  
Refreshments will be served.

education severely dented when a sorely won associate's degree yields a raise of \$450 in income a month and - shockingly - \$600 less in public assistance.

The Academy Award nominated director Roger Weisberg has used almost all of his dozens of previous films to illuminate the struggles of the poor, and "Waging a Living" is presented with customary empathy and willingness to allow his indefatigable subjects to speak for themselves. Neither hectoring nor sanctimonious, the film plays like an illustrated version of Barbara Ehrenreich's recent best-seller "Nickel and Dimed," and has an editing style that's brisk and unexploitative. ■

New Economy Working Solutions and the Living Wage Coalition will hold a free public screening of "Waging a Living" on Wednesday, June 14<sup>th</sup> at the Petaluma Library Community Room at 6:30 pm, followed by a moderated discussion. ■

## New Paradigm Needed to Solve Housing Crisis

Ben Boyce, Living Wage Coalition Coordinator

The recent Press Democrat article by staff writer Marty Espinoza on the flight of the 30-somethings from Sonoma County in search of affordable housing adds more fuel to the discussion on the housing crisis. The exodus of young families from the county in search of nests in which to nurture their children is a troubling demographic indicator. Left unchecked, this trend will result in a polarized community, populated by wealthy Anglo retirees and a largely Latino underclass. Most of us agree that we want a vibrant community with a broad mix of ages, income levels, and ethnic backgrounds. Why are we not achieving that outcome?

What we are witnessing in the housing crisis is what economists describe as a market failure. Contrary to the prevailing doctrine of free market fundamentalism, the market system is not applicable to all economic problems. A new movement, which we could call the "shared prosperity

model" recognizes that a healthy economy requires a mix of market solutions with governmental incentives and regulatory guidelines.

A few simple public policy initiatives in the Shared Prosperity/ Smart Growth toolbox would make a substantial contribution to easing the housing crisis. Inclusionary housing ordinances encourage new residential developments to include a percentage of homes that are affordable to residents making less than the median income. Offering developers density bonuses for building projects with well-designed urban in-fill will preserve open space and put a brake on sprawl. A jobs-housing linkage program through which commercial developers pay a small fee towards an affordable housing fund is a proven method for increasing affordable housing stocks.

Progress has been made: the County of Sonoma, and the cities of Petaluma, Sonoma, and Sebastopol have already

adopted a jobs/housing program and the cities of Rohnert Park and Cotati currently have it under consideration. All of these measures represent real solutions to the housing crisis. ■

### Living Wage Campaign Underway

*(Continued from page 5)*

include op-ed pieces, letters to the editor, radio and TV guest spots. We will make presentations to faith communities and citizen advocacy groups to develop a base of community support for the Living Wage campaign. With our committed efforts and the support of our allies, we will prevail in Petaluma, and lay the groundwork for establishing a county-wide living-wage norm and making Petaluma a place where our children can work and live. ■

Contact Ben Boyce at 707 545-7349 x220 or [ben.boyce@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ben.boyce@sbcglobal.net)

## Join the Living Wage Coalition !!



## Annual Membership Rates

<b>Name</b>	Individual Family	\$30 \$50
<b>Organization</b>	Supporter Sustainer	\$100 \$250 and up
<b>Address</b>	Benefactor Student/Low Income	\$500 and up \$10
<b>City/State/Zip</b>	<b>Phone /Email</b>	

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_.

Check here if you do not want your name distributed (very infrequently) to other progressive organizations

Please make checks payable to: **Living Wage Coalition of Sonoma County.**

The Coalition is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit; Contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowable by law.

## International Human Rights Day: Protecting workers' rights also safeguards environment

Carl Pope, December 9, 2005, San Francisco Chronicle Open Forum

**Saturday marks the 55th anniversary of International Human Rights Day,** designated by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1950 to commemorate the 1948 signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration is a bold statement concerning the values, freedoms and rights that open societies champion and protect -- among which the declaration includes the right to freedom of association and to form and join unions.

At first glance, the ability of workers to exercise freely their democratic right to form or join a union may seem disconnected from the work of the nation's oldest and largest environmental organization. But protecting workers' freedom of association is intrinsically linked to the Sierra Club's efforts to protect the environment and our communities.

Historically, environmentalists and union members worked together to pass such landmark protections as the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Clean Air Act. More recently, the United Steelworkers and the Service Employees International Union worked with the Sierra Club to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We find common cause with unions such as Unite Here to address the dangers posed by chemicals used in the industrial laundry business, and the United Farm Workers to defend workers and communities against the misuse of pesticides.

Similarly, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers is championing new investments in solar power and other renewable energy technologies, and many building and trade unions are leading the charge locally for responsible development centered on public transportation hubs and other smart-growth solutions for communities.

Those important efforts, however, are being compromised by a growing injustice against America's workers. According to a study commissioned by American Rights at Work, a labor advocacy organization, when workers tried to organize, 30 percent of employers surveyed fired pro-union workers, 51 percent coerced employees into opposing unions with bribes or special favors, and 49 percent threatened to close a workplace if employees tried to form a union.

These findings by the University of Illinois at Chicago's Center for Urban Economic Development confirm what workers have known for years -- that employer interference, through both legal and illegal means -- is off the charts. In 91 percent of the organizing drives surveyed for the report, a majority of workers indicated that they wanted a union before the union-representation election process began.

After workers were exposed to the kind of union-busting activity listed above, just 31 percent of the campaigns resulted in union-

represented workers. Such elections are administered by the National Labor Relations Board, the government agency charged with enforcing labor law. But porous guidelines, nonexistent penalties and broad-based institutional delay in the grievance process render the agency ineffectual at best.

The erosion of American labor standards, contrary to so many of the stated goals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, urgently signals that it's time to bring labor law into the 21st century. The Employee Free Choice Act, sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Arlen Specter, R-Pa., along with Reps. George Miller, D-Martinez, and Peter King, R-N.Y., would make it easier for workers to form unions without employer interference and would strengthen penalties for workers'-rights violations.

International Human Rights Day provides a valuable pause for reflection upon the values we share and promote as a society. Tolerating abuse of workers' rights shouldn't be one of them. Congress must act so that a workers' right to a free choice and fair chance to form a union is protected. Ultimately, the environment will benefit, too. ■

**Carl Pope** is executive director of Sierra Club and a board member of American Rights at Work, a national workers'-rights advocacy organization in Washington.



Please consider becoming a member today. Use the enclosed form or visit [www.livingwagesonoma.org](http://www.livingwagesonoma.org)

PO Box 427  
Santa Rosa, CA  
95402

### Living Wage Coalition of Sonoma County

#### How Else Can We Help?

*Speakers  
Resource Materials  
Inter-Denominational Events  
Forums*

**For planning help or more info please contact:**

**Ben Boyce**, 707 545-7349 x 220 or [ben.boyce@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ben.boyce@sbcglobal.net)



*Would you like a copy of*

### **The Limits of Prosperity Report?**

Visit [www.neweconomynorthbay.org](http://www.neweconomynorthbay.org)

Or send \$12 to:  
PO Box 6298, Santa Rosa, CA 95406

#### Events

### **The Moral Case for the Living Wage Movement**

Founding Convocation of Sonoma Clergy and Laity United (CLUE)  
May 31, 7- 9 pm, Elim Lutheran Church, 504 Baker St., Petaluma

### **Waging a Living**

Movie followed by public discussion  
June 14, 6:30 – 8:30 pm, Petaluma Library

### **Petaluma Needs a Living Wage**

Public Forum - Keynote speaker, panel discussion, worker testimony  
June 28, 6:30 – 8:30 pm, Petaluma Library

#### Committees

**Research and Legal**, Marty Bennett  
707 939-8933, [mbennett@vom.com](mailto:mbennett@vom.com)

**Sonoma Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE)**, Ben Boyce,  
707 935-1642, [ben.boyce@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ben.boyce@sbcglobal.net)

**Newsletter Production**, Barbara Giordano

#### Meetings

### **Living Wage Coalition**

**5/16, 6/20, 7/18**

**Third Tuesday** of every month  
6:30 - 8 pm, SEIU Local 707  
600 B St. at 10th St., Santa Rosa

### **LWC - Petaluma**

**5/3, 6/7, 7/5**

**First Wednesday** of the month  
7- 9 pm, Bank of the West Building  
20 Petaluma Blvd., Petaluma

### **Accountable Development Coalition**

**5/22, 6/26, 7/17**

**Third Monday** of the month  
6:30 - 8 pm, SEIU Local 707  
600 B St. at 10th St., Santa Rosa  
[sabrina.ross@gmail.com](mailto:sabrina.ross@gmail.com)

**LWC: 707 545-7349 x 220**  
**NEWS: 707 545-7349 x 221**