

# MARTINEZ MESSENGER

*For Martinez Residents – Proud of our town, confident in our future*

February 2004 Vol. 1, No. 1



PHOTO BY SLAVA VEDER

## Measure “M” Threatens Martinez

by Bill Wainwright, Martinez City Council

### Destroys small-town character

Measure “M” threatens the small-town character of Martinez. A Redevelopment Agency would transform our quiet community into a sterile, lowest-common-denominator suburb with high-density apartments. It would tear out the soul of our town, as happened in the “Redeveloped” downtowns of Pittsburg, Antioch, and Concord that are deserts today. Redevelopment ground up their quaint downtowns. The same would happen here.

Homeowners would lose their homes and small business owners their businesses. The

first through eminent domain, which gives the Agency the power to seize property. The second because the rents charged to cover the investment in new construction would be beyond their means. Pleasant Hill shopkeepers are now moving to Martinez to find affordable rents.

### Shifts revenues from services

Measure “M” threatens to undermine our public services, just as it has in every other community where a Redevelopment Agency exists. Redevelopment Agencies divert tax revenues that would normally go

to our entire community, sending them to the Redevelopment Project Area. While favoring the project area, the diversion subtracts tax revenues from City services (police, roads, parks and recreation), as well as our school, fire, water, and sanitation districts. By short-changing these services, it forces their curtailment. (See related articles.)

### Places unchecked power in uncertain hands

Measure “M” threatens to place unchecked power in the hands of the same leaders who right now disguise Redevelopment Agencies as revitalization

tools. In fact, they are nothing of the sort. Again, Pittsburg and Antioch, with their empty storefronts are proof. Most of Concord’s major Redevelopment projects have been economic disasters; many of their local businesses have been destroyed.

These leaders pretend Redevelopment Agencies cost no money. In fact they come with a heavy price tag: borrowing and administrative costs alone are estimated to be at least 20% of the tax revenues they generate, money that would be better spent on City services.

Redevelopment Agencies’ actions are not subject to voter approval. They can expand beyond their original limits, assume powers of eminent domain, and issue bonds — all without voter approval. Without voter control, such leaders cannot be trusted to act in the interests of the people of Martinez.

### Corrupts local government

One of the most harmful effects of Redevelopment Agen-

cies is their attraction of large sums of money into local politics. In our last municipal election, we saw this phenomenon: heavy contributions by developer and downtown property-owner interests to pro-Redevelopment candidates. Money even came from out-of-town developer sources, demonstrating how much they expect to gain from a Martinez Redevelopment Agency.

In reality, the creation of a Redevelopment Agency is a move by a handful of large property-owners downtown to sell their holdings at inflated prices to a “Redevelopment Agency” using taxpayer money for payment. Then, for a symbolic dollar, the Agency would turn around and sell these properties back to the same owners “for Redevelopment.” And the property-owners would partner with outside developers to reap further benefits, all at taxpayer expense.

For all these reasons, Martinez is threatened by the proposed creation of a Redevelopment Agency.

## Property Taxes Diverted to Pay for Redevelopment Agencies

The money Redevelopment Agencies get is not free. It comes from property taxes in the Redevelopment Project Area. In Contra Costa County 2001-2002, over 11 million dollars that would have gone to city general funds to pay for police and city services were diverted to Redevelopment Agencies. And over \$75 million that would have gone to Contra Costa County for fire departments, county government, parks, libraries, community colleges, special districts and schools were diverted to Redevelopment Agencies. The Contra Costa County Auditor-Controller report for 2001/2 details this information. (See page 4.)

This system of diverting property taxes to Redevelopment Agency coffers is called “tax increment financing.” When a Redevelopment Project Area is declared, the property

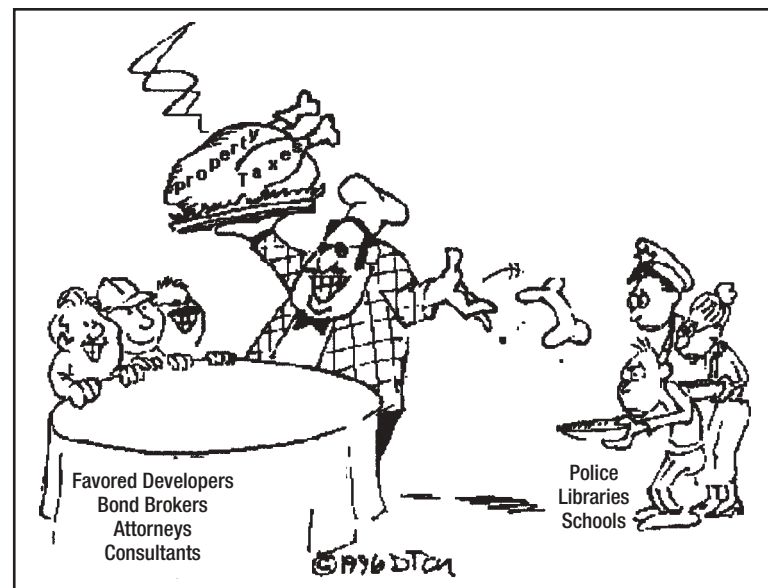
tax base is frozen. As the value of real estate in the Project Area increases because of redevelopment, most of the increase in property taxes goes to the Redevelopment Agency.

Normally, increases in property taxes would be split between the city, county, schools and special districts. Within a Redevelopment Agency Project Area, “tax increment financing” diverts most of the increases to the Redevelopment Agency. This diversion placed such a large burden on City and County services, the State mandated that new Project Areas pass back approximately 20% of the tax diversion to their cities, counties and schools. Property tax revenue sent to the State is earmarked only for public education and is also impacted. Because of Redevelopment Agency tax diversions, less money is sent to the state

to support public education.

Because of the hot real estate market, Martinez has seen property tax revenues increase as property being sold is reassessed to current market value. Property tax revenue to the City of Martinez has increased almost \$1.2 million over the last five years. That revenue helps us balance our City budget. A Redevelopment Agency will divert most of the increase in property tax revenue generated in the Project Area that would go to the City General Fund.

Martinez’s four-year budget forecast projects our general fund budget to hit a \$1 million deficit by 2006. The draining effects of a Redevelopment Agency will only compound the deficit. Martinez citizens need to be concerned that tax diversions to a Redevelopment Agency will undermine our fragile City budget.



**VOTE  
NO  
On Measure M  
on 3/2/04**

## There's a Better Way to Revitalize

by Bill Wainwright  
Martinez City Council

The need for revitalization is undeniable and has been staring us in the face for years. Those who now propose a Redevelopment Agency have themselves done little about it. It's as if they wanted downtown Martinez to deteriorate so badly that they could sell anything (even their fly-by-night, money-making, high-density housing scheme) in the guise of "revitalization."

Martinez deserves better. To start with, it deserves better leaders! Instead of moving forward with revitalization, our Council leadership has sold us on footing the bill for high-priced outside consultants (\$736,000 in just two years: a Downtown Master Plan, close to \$300,000; a Downtown Specific Plan, over \$400,000; and a Redevelopment Feasibility Study, \$36,000 and climbing). The resulting downtown high-density housing "plan" is a decoy. New residents would not revitalize local business. They would shop in freeway off-ramp shopping malls like everyone else.

What have our leaders actually done to revitalize downtown Martinez? What have they done about the downtown-parking problem? What have they done to attract new businesses to town? How have they helped existing businesses do better? What have they done to encourage property-owners of "unreinforced masonry buildings" to reinforce them? What have they done to beef up City code on derelict commercial and residential buildings, and then to enforce that code? What have they done to burnish the town's image and attractiveness as a destination for visitors who would be pleased to enjoy our quaint downtown, our magnificent hills and river setting, and our historic attractions, not to mention our waterfront recreation facilities? What have they done to make a success out of our unique asset on the water, the much maligned, ugly, and badly managed Marina?<sup>1</sup>

These many discrete, tough tasks addressed simultaneously, with the community pulling together, will lead to the revitalization of our downtown. The irony is that compared with that single-minded, pack-'em-in and get-rich-quick high-density housing strategy of the proponents of a Redevelopment Agency, this is a revitalization plan!

City leaders over the past seven years were either powerless or unmoved to do these things. Revitalizing our downtown requires leadership, insight, effort and determination, not a Redevelopment Agency.

1. To give credit where credit is due, we do now have a fine new train station and we have taken a big step in controlling Alhambra Creek's overflow. And we have a godsend in the two Martinez residents who direct the Willows Theatre. They have handed us an opportunity on a silver platter: to create a world-class drama center right here in our midst.

## Citizens Opposed to Measure M Hauled into Court by Downtown Property Owner on Christmas Eve

On December 23, five well-respected citizens who signed the *Argument Against Measure M* were astounded to receive a summons to appear in court on Christmas Eve. Al Turnbaugh, a downtown property owner, aided by Mayor Schroeder, Council member Ross and County Assessor Gus Kramer, hired a lawyer to challenge the citizens' argument against the formation of a Martinez Redevelopment Agency. They

petitioned the Superior Court to remove 6 sentences from the ballot *Argument Against Measure M* calling the statements false and misleading. After hearing the attorneys and citizens, Judge Flinn **refused to delete the six sentences** and requested some **minor changes to wording**, for example: change "required" to "needed", etc. He also **denied** their request to force the defendants to pay their legal fees.

"The plaintiff's lawyer gave us a 37 page lawsuit the day

before the hearing," said Claudia Whitnah, one of the defendants. "The short time frame made it challenging for us to prepare a detailed defense. It was not fun being sued on Christmas Eve but the result was heartening."

"This is the first overt act of the pro-redevelopment agency line-up," said Tim Platt who attended all the hearings. "Are these the type of people to whom we want to give the power of eminent domain, the power to issue public bonds

without a vote and the power to make sweetheart deals with developers and big property owners?"

As may be seen from the revised version below, the *Argument Against Measure M* did not contain "false and misleading statements about redevelopment" as Mayor Schroeder (whose campaign was funded with developer donations) claims in his inflammatory letter sent to all voters in January.

**Decide for yourself!**

## Superior Court Judge Flinn has affirmed the following ballot Argument Against Measure M is truthful and not misleading.

(A line through a word means it was deleted while a word underlined means it was added)

Redevelopment was created to eliminate massive urban blight in large cities, not destroy the historic charm and small town character of single-family neighborhoods like ours.

The A proposed master plan to erect high-density developments, with upwards of up to 3000 new units and 7000 more people, will would permanently change the quality of life in Martinez. But to accomplish this plan a Redevelopment Agency is required needed.

In addition to over-crowded schools, traffic congestion, and ultimately a doubled population downtown, our hills and waterfront parklands are at risk because once a Redevelopment Agency is formed there is no longer any citizen control to limit its boundaries. Redevelopment can include the entire city, as four council members have already proposed.

Moreover, their promises to limit confiscation of private property through eminent domain aren't binding on future councils, not enforceable, and shouldn't be trusted. This is too much power to surrender to any city council.

Worst of all, the economic consequences of redevelopment are unpredictable. Unlike Proposition 13, Redevelopment Agencies issue millions in Bond indebtedness without a vote of the people, let alone a two-thirds majority. Yet the taxpayer will pay when Bonds default. Yet the city's credit rating may be adversely affected by a bond default.

Furthermore, the property taxes within a Redevelopment Area are may be diverted from General Funds, amounting to a direct subsidy. and an indirect tax increase. For example, in 2001/2002, Concord lost \$1,000,000 in property taxes to its Redevelopment Agency. That occurred to the extent of \$1,000,000 in Concord.

In 1974 the same redevelopment scheme was attempted by the council and rejected by the voters. There was no substantive blight then and there is none today. Absent such blight, Redevelopment benefits local land speculators who buy and sell pieces of our town, and outside developers who contribute thousands in campaign contributions to council incumbents, but care nothing for Martinez or its people. Ask yourself before voting: Who benefits and who pays?

Signed by: Bill Wainwright, Carol Youngman, Claudia Whitnah, Ted Radke and John Billecci

## Datebook

2/4/04

### Blight Survey Report

Keyser Marston will present a long-awaited report on the results of the citywide blight survey. Come to City Hall, February 4, 2004 at 5 PM, to find out if your or your neighbors' homes are considered blighted and subject to takeover by a Redevelopment Agency.

2/10/04

### Measure M Debate

The Martinez Branch of the American Association of University Women is sponsoring a Forum on Redevelopment in Martinez. It will be held on Tuesday, February 10, 2004 at 7 PM in the Alhambra High School Performing Arts Center at 250 E Street in Martinez. Mark your calendars. Come to learn about this critical measure for the future of Martinez.

## Why Hide the Redevelopment Feasibility Study?

by Amanda Blalock  
Co-founder of Old Town  
Preservation and  
Beautification Committee<sup>1</sup>

On September 29, the City of Martinez and Keyser Marston, a development consultant, signed a contract for a 90-day Redevelopment Feasibility Study to review the entire City of Martinez. The first of the study's three phases is to provide the City with "a preliminary assessment that would indicate, through the results of a windshield survey (a drive-by), whether there is sufficient evidence of blight to support...the creation of a redevelopment project area."

On December 11, the Old Town Preservation and Beautification Committee wrote the City, formally requesting access to results of the Phase 1 blight survey. This phase, to be completed in November, would have identified specific areas of Martinez that are "blighted." On December 24th, through its attorney, the City turned down

that request in writing.

Ignoring promises of public participation, the City gave many reasons for this denial of what should be public information. None were logical. The city attorney stated that "the interest in withholding such records clearly outweighs the interest in disclosing them" and that disclosure of the results of the windshield survey and the working papers would "result in public confusion" and that "the objectivity and reliability of KM's final report would be called into question as a consequence." The response also stated, "government would be greatly hampered if government agencies were forced to operate in a fishbowl."

What is the big secret? We did not request classified, top-secret information threatening our national security. We simply want to know what the consultants consider "blight!" How can we remedy "blight" if they won't tell us where it is? Tax payers are paying \$36,000 dollars for this study.

Could it be that Keyser Marston is incompetent and lacks respect for contracted time lines, or is the city conveniently deferring K.M.'s report on blight, stonewalling to prevent unfavorable reactions that might DEFEAT THE REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY?

After the expressed outrage of many citizens and repeated requests by Councilman Wainwright, the results of the feasibility study are now scheduled to be presented to the public on February 4 in the Council chambers from 5 to 7 pm, preceding the City Council meeting. The public is invited to this meeting to find out which areas of our city have been designated as "blighted" and hence candidates for a Redevelopment Agency makeover.

1. A downtown Martinez neighborhood association dedicated to preserving and beautifying an historic neighborhood with monthly clean-ups, diligent reporting of code enforcement violations and documentation of the histories of neighborhood homes.

# The "Hows" and "Whys" of a Redevelopment Agency

(Sources for Statistics are the State of California "Community Redevelopment Agencies Annual Report Fiscal Year 2001-02" and the Contra Costa County Auditor Controller report "2001/02 Property Tax Revenue Analysis.")

For more detailed information, visit our website at [www.martinez-camra.org](http://www.martinez-camra.org)

## 1. WHAT IS A REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND WHO RUNS IT?

A Redevelopment Agency is created by a majority vote of the City Council. Once formed, it becomes a local arm of State government, a completely separate and distinct entity from the City. It has its own staff, budget, revenue stream and powers. The City Council usually appoints itself as the governing board of the Redevelopment Agency. The legal purpose of a Redevelopment Agency is to eliminate "blight". One of the first tasks of the Agency is to establish its Project Areas.

## 2. WHAT IS A "PROJECT AREA"?

The Redevelopment Agency must declare which areas of the city are "blighted" and establish the boundaries of the Project Area(s). Project Areas are where the Redevelopment Agency has control. Often the focus of the Agency expands to include major redevelopment projects that will yield the most revenue for the Redevelopment Agency. Once a Project Area is defined, the Agency must prepare a Project Plan for eliminating the "blight."

## 3. HOW IS "BLIGHT" DEFINED AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The determination of "blight" is usually made by a professional consultant. According to Redevelopment Law, for an area to be called blighted, the "blight must be so prevalent and so substantial that it causes a reduction of or lack of proper utilization of the area; constitutes a serious physical and economic burden to the community; and is so severe that it cannot be reversed or alleviated by private enterprise or government action, or both, without a Redevelopment Agency." Blight is an area-wide concept, not a single structure on a block. Every property and building in the Project Area does not need to be blighted to be included.

Redevelopment Agencies actually use much looser standards for declaring an area "blighted." "Blight" can be interpreted to cover the physical conditions, such as substandard design, inadequate size relative to current standards, and lack of parking. "Blight" can also be interpreted to cover economic conditions, such as incompatible adjacent uses, stagnant property values, under-utilized properties, the presence of hazardous waste, abnormally low lease rates or high turnover rates.

A recent "60 Minutes" episode visited a community of well-maintained single-family homes overlooking a stream and ravine. The area was declared "blighted" because the houses did not have two bathrooms, air conditioning and an attached garage. Their city's Redevelopment Agency Project Plan called for replacing the homes with expensive condos and townhouses.

## 4. WHAT IS A PROJECT PLAN?

The Redevelopment Agency must develop a Project Plan for eliminating "blight" in the Project Area. The Project Plan defines the goals, rules, procedures and powers of the Redevelopment Agency and must be adopted by ordinance by the City Council.

## 5. HOW IS A REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY FUNDED?

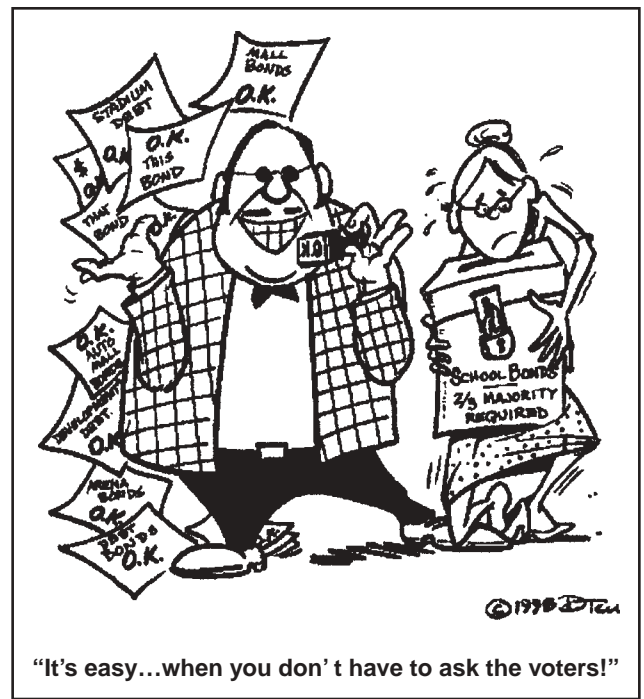
A Redevelopment Agency gets its money from "no-vote" bonds which are repaid by diverting property taxes that would normally go the City, County, Special Districts and Public Schools to pay such services as police, fire, public works, parks, public schools and many more services. The mechanism used to divert these taxes is called "Tax Increment Financing." These tax dollars are for the exclusive use of the Redevelopment Agency and may not be used to pay for police, fire or other routine services.

After a Redevelopment Agency is established, the value of the property taxes in the Project Area is frozen. All tax dollars below this frozen number continue to be shared by the city, county, special districts, and public schools. Any increase above the frozen value goes to the Redevelopment Agency. As new buildings are constructed and homes and commercial properties are bought and sold, they are reassessed upwards and pay more property taxes just like anywhere else. "Tax Increment Financing" takes these increased property taxes within the Project Area that would normally go to local government and gives it to the Redevelopment Agency. In the year 2001/2 in Contra Costa County, approximately \$80,000,000 of property tax income was diverted to Redevelopment Agencies. Schools also lost revenue but this loss has so far been

replaced (back-filled) by the State. The current budget crisis has caused some in Sacramento, however, to lobby for suspending the backfill.

This tax diversion creates a large burden for local government entities and public education. In 1994, the State mandated that all new Project Areas give back (pass-through financing) some of the taxes diverted. Still, about 80% of the increased property tax revenues are diverted to Redevelopment Agencies.

"Tax Increment Financing" begins when a Redevelopment Agency incurs debt in the Project Area. The Redevelopment Agency generally incurs debt by issuing bonds (without a vote of the public) to pay for its projects. In Contra Costa County, the \$80 million of property taxes paid to Redevelopment Agencies in 2001/2 goes to pay over \$796 million in bond debt and other long-term debt owed by the Redevelopment Agencies. (See chart on page 4.)



## 6. WHAT POWER DOES THE PUBLIC HAVE TO CONTROL A REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY?

No exercise of a Redevelopment Agency's unique and powerful authority requires a vote of the public. Public influence, beyond input at public hearings, is limited to the right to take legal action in a court of law and the right to petition through a referendum. Such recourse only applies to a few Redevelopment Agency actions, however. Referendum paperwork and timing are exacting. Petitioners must prepare the paperwork, print the forms and collect verifiable signatures of 10% of registered voters - all within 30 days of adoption by the City Council of the objectionable ordinance. A daunting and complex task.

## 7. WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL POWERS OF A REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY?

### A. POWER OF EMINENT DOMAIN

Eminent domain is the taking of private property by the government against the will of the owner(s) of the private property. Many government bodies use this power to condemn property for the public use, i.e. for highway expansion, etc. A Redevelopment Agency has the unique power to take property through eminent domain and transfer it to another private party for private gain. The "60 Minutes" episode on eminent domain contains several examples of the serious abuse of this power by Redevelopment Agencies.

Sometimes eminent domain is used to buy property that is not achieving its "highest economic purpose." For example, many commercial properties have been bought through eminent domain and turned over to a developer for another commercial purpose. A recent court ruling against the San Jose Redevelopment Agency stopped the takeover by eminent domain of the profitable Tropicana Shopping Plaza. The San Jose Redevelopment Agency declared the Plaza "blighted" so it could redevelop it into a bigger shopping center (a "higher economic purpose").

Sometimes the goal of using eminent domain is to "consolidate" many individually-owned smaller parcels into larger parcels. Infill development, which is tailored to small individual parcels, is much less profitable. "Consolidation" allows a developer to build larger, more profitable projects that are often in the Urban Renewal/cookie-cutter style.

### B. POWER TO ISSUE PUBLIC BONDS WITHOUT A PUBLIC VOTE

A Redevelopment Agency gets the money it needs to buy land and build projects by issuing public bonds. These bonds are issued without a vote of the public and are secured against future "tax increment financing." In almost all other types of public bonds, voter approval is required. Debt burden taken on by Redevelopment Agencies can be extremely large: San Jose = \$3 billion+, Fairfield = \$2 billion+, Contra Costa County Redevelopment Agencies = \$796 million+.

Although the city is not legally responsible for Redevelopment Agency bonds, the city's finances can be seriously affected if the Redevelopment Agency fails. Redevelopment Agencies regularly borrow from their city's and county's coffers - over \$3 billion statewide in 2001/2002. Should the Redevelopment Agency fail, the city's credit rating can also be adversely affected, resulting in higher interest and underwriting fees.

### C. POWER TO CHANGE ZONING RULES

Just like any other developer, the Redevelopment Agencies' large-scale residential and commercial developments must be approved by the City Planning Commission. The Redevelopment Agency is very different from a normal developer, however. The Board of the Redevelopment Agency is generally composed of the City Council members. The City Council appoints the members of the Planning Commission, so the Planning Commission approval may be easy to get. The public can appeal a Planning Commission decision, but the appeal goes to the City Council for final vote, the same City Council that is also the Board of the Redevelopment Agency that requested the original project. (The apparent conflict of interest is perfectly legal.)

### D. POWER TO GRANT 'SWEETHEART' DEALS

A Redevelopment Agency can give public money in the form of cash grants, free land, tax rebates or infrastructure improvements directly to individuals, developers and private businesses. Property taken via eminent domain has often been sold to developers below market value, or simply given to them. A Redevelopment Agency can also pay for a developer's predevelopment costs, such as developer fees and environmental studies. It can use its funds to pay for demolition, site clean up, grading and other site preparation costs that developers would normally pay. Because of Redevelopment's potentially huge subsidies, supporting pro-Redevelopment candidates is often the best investment a developer can make.

### E. POWER TO ADD NEW PROJECT AREAS AND EXPAND EXISTING ONES

A Redevelopment Agency Project Area can be expanded without a vote of the public. The only recourse for the public is either a lawsuit within 60 days or a completed referendum within 30 days. If a legal challenge or a successful referendum campaign isn't mounted within the time limits, Redevelopment's "conclusive presumption of validity" makes the new boundaries unchallengeable in court.

### F. POWER TO CHANGES ITS RULES

A Redevelopment Agency can change its rules, including rules of eminent domain, without a vote of the public. If a change is considered to be a minor amendment, then the only public recourse is legal action. If a change is considered to be a major amendment, then public recourse includes either a lawsuit within 60 days or a completed referendum within 30 days. Sincere promises at the inception of a Redevelopment Agency, such as restricted exercise of eminent domain, are not binding, and can be amended by future City Councils or the Redevelopment Agency.



## Hazardous Masonry Buildings in Martinez

At the January 14, 2004 City Council meeting a speaker complained, "Our downtown is an accident waiting to happen, due to the presence of un-reinforced masonry buildings." He referred to buildings made of brick that have not been retrofitted for earthquake safety, despite the horrific consequences seen in other towns from earthquakes. The man went on to say that, due to the cost of retrofitting, a Redevelopment Agency was needed to fund these projects.

Martinez has allowed owners to retrofit (or not) at will, rather than insist that the work be done for the safety of the public.

A few investors who apparently don't want to pay out of their own deep pockets for work that has been needed since the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989 own the majority of these non-retrofitted buildings in the downtown.

At the same Council meeting, another resident, Hope Savage, said, "while I am sympathetic to a single, aging building owner who may not have the resources to do the right thing, it is difficult to have sympathy for the plight of wealthy building owners. Rather than make a move in 1989 or right now, owners of un-reinforced masonry buildings in Martinez are waiting for their bricks to

## Opponents of Measure M Party at Lively Barn Dance

Despite an attempt to shut down the CAMRA Barn Dance, the fund-raiser turned out to be a truly uplifting evening. Thanks to hard-working volunteers, the dirt-covered riding stable at Dutra Ranch was turned into a dance floor for a festive party, where over 200 people from ages 2 to 90 danced the night away for a worthy cause.

The music, donated by Danny Santos and the Savoys, the Jim Caroompas and Robert Perry Band, Melody Walker and Jeff Journigan, was top notch and everyone had a fun-filled evening, celebrating under the beautiful moon and clear winter sky.

The *Martinez News Gazette* reportedly called the Alcoholic

Beverage Control in a fumbled attempt to shut down the party. The CAMRA Fundraiser complied with every ABC requirement. Despite the paper's blatantly false headline, "CAMRA in violation of ABC Laws", (Jan.13th 2004), there was no such violation.

What was reported as a "dark" and scandalous event, was a actually a well-lit and wholesome coming together of hundreds of people opposed to a Martinez Redevelopment Agency.



fall on our heads or for a Redevelopment Agency, whichever comes sooner, before they'll act."

She went on to say "When I bought my home in the Old Town neighborhood almost sixteen years ago, it was quite an

eyesore. A hundred and five years of no money had run my poor old house down. Did I sit around whining that 'someone' had to do something about it? No. I got busy and did the right thing for my family and me. The result is a beautiful and

beloved arts and crafts style home. Owners of un-reinforced buildings in Martinez need to get busy and fix their investment property WITH THEIR OWN MONEY and they need to do it before a tragedy occurs!!"

**VOTE  
NO  
On Measure M  
on 3/2/04**

## Historic House of the Month

Martinez is blessed with numerous beautiful and historic homes, many of which until now have gone unrecognized. In an effort to share the stories and uniqueness of these homes, the *Martinez Messenger* will be highlighting a different house each issue. If you would like to share the history of your home, please contact the Old Town Preservation and Beautification Committee at 335-9617.

This month's house is in the Old Italian Fishing Village and on a block that, on two separate occasions, has been recommended for redevelopment as condominiums. (See photo.)

If walls could talk, this cheerful yellow house on the corner of Marina Vista and Berrellesa, would have much to say. It is one of the oldest houses in Martinez. In the 1860's it was originally shipped, in frame form, around the horn from New England and assembled in San Jose. In the late 1870s it was brought by barge by Bray Brother's Shipping Company to its current Martinez location. The house has maintained the dormer windows and porch that give it the look of a New England poet's house.

The house eventually became the turn of the century

home of sea captain George Hewitt. Captain Hewitt was very influential in Martinez, and sailed out of San Francisco, hauling hay-scow cargo from the delta to the city. He also worked for Simon Blum, who purchased the Bray Brothers shipping operation and acquired the "Martinez" and the "Melrose" vessels. After the 1906 earthquake Capt. Hewitt spent weeks bringing refugee San Francisco residents to homes in Contra Costa and Solano counties. He helped many of them establish themselves in Martinez. His daughter, Grace, was the girlhood



friend of Sheriff Veale's daughter Leila who, upon her marriage to lawyer and judge, A.F. Bray Sr., became Leila Bray a 'social arbiter' of Martinez for many years.

The house later became home to many of the Italian fishing families, who settled in the neighborhood, including Francesco Ciaramitaro and his wife, Catherine Aiello.

Prentice and Esther Miller purchased the home in the early 1960s. Last summer Mrs.

Miller received a touching letter from 104 year-old Ruth Bucannon, who was the granddaughter of Capt. Hewitt. In the letter she recalled all the happy Christmases she had spent in the home, and thanked Mrs. Miller for taking such loving care of it for the past 40 years. Ruth lives in Pittsburg now, but she said that her niece regularly drives her by to look at the old house and admire all the beautiful flowers that Mrs. Miller has planted.

2001/02 Property Tax Revenue Analysis based on the Equalized Roll (no corrections or supplemental revenues included)				
Fund	Gross Revenue	RDA Increment	Net Revenues before Pass-thrus	Net Revenues After Aud-Adj'd Pass-thrus
377000	2,022,001.00	0.00	2,022,001.00	263,200.00
380300	1,741,682.92	(235,746.84)	1,505,936.08	1,508,915.98
383000	6,825.42	0.00	6,825.42	6,825.42
400100	7,665,707.98	(521,685.60)	7,144,022.38	7,177,048.22
400200	200,642.32	(20,476.86)	180,165.46	181,739.58
400700	5,944,494.44	(913,914.26)	5,030,580.18	5,048,734.24
400900	6,094,866.84	(555,966.93)	5,538,899.91	5,550,818.99
401000	1,776,609.48	(162,094.85)	1,614,514.63	1,615,740.69
402500	27,171,242.86	(2,517,309.96)	24,653,932.90	24,706,600.70
418100	764,979.30	(204,283.21)	560,696.09	560,696.09
420100	2,793,860.64	(356,158.13)	2,437,702.51	2,446,098.89
420400	955,622.22	(648,469.23)	307,152.99	313,134.30
420500	3,920,841.63	(537,491.35)	3,383,350.28	3,426,678.60
420600	7,362,114.91	(130,103.61)	7,232,011.30	7,232,011.30
420700	1,681,819.44	(124,360.60)	1,557,458.84	1,557,458.84

Source: Contra Costa County Auditor-Controller

The table above shows that in 2001/2002, the City of Concord lost \$1,114,340.31 in property tax revenues to its Redevelopment Agency. In the same year, the City of Martinez, without a Redevelopment Agency, suffered no such loss.

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