

Bulletin Number Sixteen

Campaign for Affordable Housing

This is just a short note, fulfilling our commitment to keep everyone up to date on our progress toward the election campaign. We are in a holding pattern until Karen Vedder gets back in town and expands the draft of the ordinance in conformance with the wishes of the BOCC. Karen has asked for assistance in terminology from Lisa Byers and Sandy Bishop, since much of the law dealing with the working relationship between owners of affordable housing and the housing bank will be similar to that deal with in the Community Land Alliances. Our campaign committee has voted to place the ordinance on the ballot in May, so obtaining permission from the BOCC for this date will be on our agenda for the next meeting with the BOCC as well as an agreement on the language.

For all of you who have religiously kept up with our activities, Rollie has found a small "Christmas Present." Please click on:

http://www.reuters.hu/card_dom/index_content.html

Finally, Allan Smith has a few comments to make about culture and community.

About twenty-five years ago my young family relocated from the Midwest to a tiny overpriced home in West Los Angeles, midway (both geographically and culturally) between the teeming scruffiness of Venice and the mindless opulence of Brentwood. After about two years we decided to sell our little house and move our growing family to one of the suburban valleys, where the same housing budget could buy a large house with a pool. A neighbor in West LA took me aside when we announced our move and sternly told me, "The STYLE of your life may go up when you move there, but the QUALITY of your life will go down." He was right. In West LA we were blessed with an incredible diversity of wealth, cultures, and ideas. In the same local grocery one could run into movie stars and homeless hippies on the same trip. In our new neighborhood all my neighbors looked like me and had jobs like mine; our kids only saw other cultures in their textbooks or during field trips to distant parts of the city we had left. One of the things that attracted us to the Islands was the diversity of the people we found here. Our neighbor is a screenwriter; another neighbor is a well known recording artist. We went to dinner one night with a renowned philosopher and the former CFO of a multi-billion dollar company. Those people can afford to live here, but that diversity permeates every aspect of island life. Our electrician is a published poet. Our house painter is a world class but not-yet-discovered artist. As remarkable as the diversity is the ease with which those people mingle. One of my secret pleasures in the winter is to sit in Darville's and listen to Scott (an OPAL resident who runs the coffee bar there) moderate a discussion among customers of some arcane element of jazz. His customers include people of all economic and social strata. As we struggle to come up with talking points for the housing bank, I would hate to see us lose sight of this diversity. It is easy for this discussion to devolve into an exercise in economic analysis, to talk about rich vs. poor or about the

importance retaining infrastructure workers. All of that maybe true, but I confess that my interest in the housing bank is largely selfish: maintaining the diversity of our island society makes MY life richer, and I don't want to lose that richness. I want us to keep our social environment as diverse as our natural environment.

Allen Smith