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GREENBELT ALLIANCE

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March 9, 2016

Ms. TuongVan Do, Chair
Planning Commission
City of Brisbane
50 Park Place
Brisbane, CA 94005

RE: March 10, 2016 Planning Commission Meeting, Item G.1 Baylands Planning Applications and Staff Report for Brisbane Baylands Deliberations Meeting #3 - Appropriate Mix of Uses within the Baylands, Continued

Dear Ms. Do and Planning Commission,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on future development around the Bayshore Caltrain station (Brisbane Baylands).

Greenbelt Alliance is the champion of the places that make the Bay Area special. On behalf of our more than nine thousand supporters around the region, we ensure the right development happens in the right places. Through land-use policy and planning expertise, and engagement with decision makers and residents, we protect the region's open spaces and make sure our cities and towns grow in a way that creates great neighborhoods for everyone.

We strongly encourage the city to include a significant number of new homes for residents at a range of incomes as part of the redevelopment of underutilized lands around the Bayshore Caltrain station.

Providing new homes as part of a compact, walkable neighborhood is essential for the well-being of our communities. It will help address the region's housing crisis, provide opportunities for healthy transportation choices, support the local economy, relieve development pressure on our region's treasured open spaces, improve our region's water security, and provide other environmental and quality of life benefits.

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Addressing the region's housing crisis

The Bay Area's housing crisis is pressing and severe, with stark impacts on families and businesses across the region. Providing new homes for residents across the income spectrum in a compact development style at the Brisbane Baylands site will be an important step toward meeting the region's significant housing needs. It will also allow more residents to live near where they work rather than face a grueling commute to a home at the edge of the region, thus improving the quality of life for all Bay Area residents.

Providing healthy transportation choices

The land around the Bayshore Caltrain station provides a unique opportunity to allow those who live and work in the area to access an array of transportation choices, including heavy-rail, buses, biking, and walking. Numerous studies demonstrate that access to multiple transportation choices results in high usage of those amenities. For example, according to a recent MTC study, Bay Area residents are ten times more likely to use transit if they live and work within a half mile of a major transit stop ⁽¹⁾. Increasing access to a variety of transportation choices improves community health outcomes, minimizes time stuck in traffic, helps ease the strain on the regional transportation network, and reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Supporting the local economy

Our region's economy is currently doing well. Yet that prosperity is not guaranteed to continue. With some of the highest housing costs in the country, the Bay Area's long-term economic success depends on our ability to provide sufficient homes close to jobs and transit for our workforce. By providing a significant number of new homes within a walkable, compact development pattern near the Bayshore Caltrain station, Brisbane could also tap into a wide array of other well-documented economic benefits ⁽²⁾. For example, studies show developing in a

New Places, New Choices: Transit-Oriented Development in the San Francisco Bay Area, 2006 - Metropolitan Transportation Commission
http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/smart_growth/tod/TOD_Book.pdf

² For examples, see:

Smart Growth America's *Building Better Budgets: A National Examination of Fiscal Benefits of Smart Growth Development* (2013) <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/building-better-budgets>

Center for Clean Air Policy's *Growing Wealthier: Smart Growth, Climate Change and Prosperity* (2011)
<http://www.growingwealthier.info/index.aspx>

American Lung Association in California's *Land Use, Climate Change & Public Health Issue Brief* (2010)
<http://www.lungusa.org/associations/states/california/assets/pdfs/advocacy/land-use-climate-change-and.pdf>



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focused growth pattern, rather than sprawling outward, provides a savings of 9.2% in local lane-miles constructed and 11.8% in local road costs as well as 8.6% reductions in water and sewer infrastructure (³). These savings would benefit the whole region, with more resources available to build our local economies and improve our quality of life.

Relieving development pressure on open space

Greenbelt Alliance's 2012 report *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt* concluded that over 322,000 acres of open space—the equivalent of 10 cities the size of San Francisco—remain at risk of sprawl development in the Bay Area (⁴). To ease development pressure on these vital lands, we must all work together to encourage smart development within our existing cities and towns while we work to increase protections for our natural and agricultural lands.

Improving our water security

Smart decisions about how communities grow and develop are also smart water decisions. First, relieving development pressure on the open spaces that surround our cities and towns also protects our water supply. In the Bay Area, about 30 percent of our water comes from local rivers, streams, and groundwater aquifers. Roughly 1.2 million acres, more than a quarter of all the land in our region, serve as watersheds and groundwater infiltration zones that replenish these local water sources. Local sources will likely be more critical to our water supply in the future than they are today. Paving over water resource lands puts our water supply in jeopardy.

Second, compact infill development in which existing cities and towns are invigorated with a mix of housing types—like apartments, condos, and townhomes—together with shops, restaurants, work places, and parks,

TransForm's *Windfall for All: How Connected, Convenient Neighborhoods Can Protect Our Climate and Safeguard California's Economy* (2009) <http://www.transformca.org/windfall-for-all>

Bartholomew, Winkelman, Walters, and Chen *Growing Cooler: The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change* (2008) <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/growingcoolerCH1.pdf>

³ *TCRP Report 74: Costs of Sprawl*

⁴ <http://www.greenbelt.org/at-risk/>



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is water-wise development. Such development tends to have less water-consuming landscaping. When comparing current Bay Area development trends to a more smart growth scenario for future development, a Greenbelt Alliance study with Calthorpe Associates found that the smart growth scenario would reduce residential water consumption by nine percent.

Third, smart growth development is water-wise because it helps address the "leaky pipe syndrome." A 2014 report from the American Water Works Association found that California leaks about 228 billion gallons of water a year from municipal water infrastructure—the pipes that move water to where we live and work. This is 25 percent of the total water in the system or, to put it another way, the annual water demand for the entire city of Los Angeles. Providing new homes in a compact development pattern within our existing cities and towns rather than sprawling outward creates less opportunities for leaks simply because fewer miles of pipes will be necessary to serve development. Additionally, by redeveloping in cities and towns, old pipes can be replaced to reduce or prevent leakage, and instead water gets where it is supposed to go.

Providing other environmental and quality of life benefits

Conveniently, new homes in a compact, walkable development pattern is consistent with the housing preferences of many Bay Area residents—from millennials to retiring baby boomers—who want to live near transit or in a vibrant, dynamic downtown or neighborhood center rather than on the urban edge. Development that serves this demand can also improve the neighborhood for existing residents, with safer streets, new parks and shops, and other amenities.

And jurisdictions around the Bay Area are increasingly recognizing the significant positive environmental effects of new homes as a key component of compact infill development. For example, in the City of Mountain View, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the city's General Plan 2030 concluded that providing more infill homes within the city would improve commute patterns, reduce overall vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions, and minimize the need for single-occupancy car trips. We expect that a careful environmental assessment of new homes around the Bayshore Caltrain station would find similar results.

Conclusion

Including a significant number of new homes in a compact, walkable development pattern around the Bayshore Caltrain station can provide tremendous environmental, social, and economic benefits to the City of Brisbane



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and the larger Bay Area region. We encourage the city to examine these many benefits as it explores future land uses in this area.

Sincerely,

Matt Vander Sluis

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