

### 3 Years of Legislative Labor Pay Off!

Just 24 hours after the Bay Area Council's legislative day, Council staff headed back to the Capitol to participate in a press conference on one of the most important pieces of legislation to come out of Sacramento in years. Senate Bill 375 (D-Steinberg) will radically shift, and improve, how regions in California grow in the future. We would argue that no region of the state will be more impacted, nor benefit more from SB 375 than the Bay Area. In recent years, Bay Area leaders have expended herculean efforts to shift momentum on our region's growth from suburban sprawl to a more compact, urban model. For a region that values open spaces, plus clean air and less cars – yet expecting 1.4 million new residents in the next 20 years – it is the only way to go. The passage of the California Global Warming Solutions Act only added further urgency to the charge. Despite best efforts, our region's leaders have lacked a real tool to drive the required change. We have been working for three years – with the bill author and relevant stakeholders – to create that tool. SB 375 is the very tool we needed to change our region's growth model. SB 375 operates at the nexus of transportation, housing and the environment and finally binds the three together. While this connection is intuitive to Bay Area residents, our government structures do not support it. SB 375 is the path to that governmental harmony. SB 375 offers local governments regulatory and other incentives to encourage more compact development and transportation alternatives. The basics of the bill are as follows:

- **Transportation planning:** The California Air Resources Board (CARB) will set regional greenhouse gas reduction targets after consultation with local governments. That target must be incorporated within that region's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the long-term blueprint of a region's transportation system. The resulting model will be called the Sustainable Communities Strategy.
- **Housing planning:** Each region's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) – the state mandated process for local jurisdictions to address their fair share of regional housing needs – will be adjusted to become aligned with the land use plan in that region's Sustainable Communities Strategy in its RTP (which will account for greenhouse gas reduction targets).
- **CEQA reform:** Many housing projects that fit the Sustainable Communities strategies, especially transit priority projects, will be exempted from large portions of California Environmental Quality Act review process. The bill still has some legislative hurdles to cross, but passage looks likely. We will keep you apprised.



Photos taken at Council's Sacramento Day 2008

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