

Opening Remarks

Good morning. My name is Ron Sundergill, and I serve as the President of the Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy.

It is a pleasure to welcome all of you to the North Bay Symposium on Smart Growth. We have an interesting agenda planned for you today. You will hear and see a number of informative presentations from people who have many years of experience in the field of planning and development. And they are experts on smart growth, pedestrian oriented development, transit oriented development, smart codes, and the like.

Let me first say a little about the Leadership Institute. The mission of the Institute is to:

“Educate leaders to create public policy that is environmentally friendly and socially equitable for a health economy and a sustainable community.”

Our core program is our Leadership Training for a Sustainable Future class. It’s a class of 30 people meeting once a month, designed to educate citizens to become more effective in working on sustainable public policy. This year we graduated our fifth class. In addition to the class we encourage the graduates from the program, called Fellows, to participate in an informal network for ongoing sharing and collaboration.

We are not a lobby group. However, the Institute does provide assistance to elected and appointed public officials, helping them identify public policies that encourage sustainability, such as policies that support smart growth.

And last, but not least, we hold public education events, such as this one, to highlight sustainable policies and to increase discussion and learning.

I would like to introduce some of the key people with the Institute. First, I will introduce our Board. Rick Theis co-founder and Board Chair of the

Institute. Steve Rabinowitsh, Claudia Haskel, and Jake Mackenzie --- all board members. Thank you for your service on the Board!

From the staff we have our newly hired Program Director, Tanya Narath, our senior intern, Mike Chevalier from Sonoma State, and our newest intern, who just started today, Rebecca Woodbury from New Anglo-American College in Prague.

Next I want to introduce the Planning Committee for the event. In addition to myself and Tanya Narath, the committee included: Steve Benjamin (Fellow), Susan Gorin (Fellow and with the League of Women Voters), Gary Howell (Windsor Chamber of Commerce), Anne Hudgins (Fellow), Beth Martinez (Fellow), Eric Moes (Fellow), Rick Theis (co-Founder) and Jack Dupre (Website assistant). Thank you Planning Committee.

So why are we here today? We are here because we care about the future of the North Bay region and how we will grow over the next 50 to 100 years, because we care about maintaining open space, about providing decent and affordable housing for people, about maintaining a quality of life and preserving one of the most beautiful regions of the this country, and in fact, the world. And we care about maintaining a vibrant economy with a business community that has healthy profits and reliable workers who are compensated fairly and who live near their place of employment.

We could blow it by allowing unfettered growth such as what occurred in the San Jose/Santa Clara County region. Or we could embrace good and solid planning and continue to live in a land of pleasant living.

When I told a friend that we were working on a smart growth symposium he jokingly said, "Well, if there is smart growth than there must be dumb growth. What would dumb growth look like?"

So, I pulled out this picture. This is all I had to do to make my point.

No comment. This, by the way, is a light rail station in Santa Clara County on the Tasman Light Rail Line.



So, I have used the term smart growth a few times. At this symposium today you will see a number of good examples of smart growth.

Some of the basic concepts of smart growth are:

1. Smart Growth gives us more choices, including the choice to live better, healthier lives in vibrant communities.
2. It makes it easier for us to walk and take public transit from home to work, shopping, school, and entertainment.

3. It enables public transit to operate more productively, decreasing auto costs for people who use it and increasing disposable income for other necessities of life or just to have more fun.
4. It creates lively downtowns, thriving businesses and bustling neighborhoods where all of us can enjoy living, working, shopping and playing.
5. It accommodates population growth while preserving our agricultural land and protecting our watershed and natural habitat by curbing sprawl.
6. It provides a variety of housing types to accommodate all income groups.
7. It reduces governments' cost of providing infrastructure, police and fire protection.
8. It results in more efficient use of energy and other natural resources.

You will be learning more about these concepts throughout the day, and for those that have signed up for the Windsor Town Green tour, you will see it on the ground a few blocks from here.

So, now let us move forward and begin the Symposium. There are few municipal leaders who can measure up to the “can-do, roll-up-your-sleeves” attitude of the person I am about to introduce. She is one of the leaders of Windsor who has made smart growth happen here. She moved to Windsor in 1990. She works as the Senior Environmental Specialist at the regional office of PG&E in Santa Rosa. She is the former chair of the Windsor Planning Commission and a three time Mayor of Windsor and currently serves on the Town Council ---- Deborah Fudge will welcome us to her town.

Thank you, Deborah.

I would next like to introduce the person who will act as our MC for the Symposium. He is another innovative leader, who also happens to be from Sonoma County, but who has a national reputation as a leader in the field of smart growth. He is the chair of the highly regarded Local Government Commission, he serves on the Board of the Greenbelt Alliance, Vice chair of the Russian River Watershed Association, and he also happens to be the Mayor of Rohnert Park. Mayor Jake Mackenzie. Jake will introduce our keynote speaker.

