Housing, Transit & Climate Justice

March 2016 Updates

6 Wins Network Highlights Displacement Solutions at Regional Forum

Some 400 elected officials and community members, including dozens of members of the 6 Wins Network, participated in a first-ever regional forum on displacement on February 20. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) agreed to hold the forum as a way of educating regional board members, in advance of an upcoming vote on incorporating into the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) program anti-displacement policies that Public Advocates and our 6 Wins partners proposed. With strong support from Public Advocates’ David Zisser and Urban Habitat, base-building groups secured a leading role in shaping the agenda and presenting at the forum. Public Advocates and Urban Habitat also provided six trainings across the region to prepare their resident leaders to participate.

Bookended with presentations by Fred Blackwell, CEO of The San Francisco Foundation, the four-hour event was powerfully framed by three women – resident leaders from North Bay Organizing Project, Faith In Action, and East Bay Housing Organizations – who spoke about the impacts of the displacement crisis on their families and communities. In sub-regional breakout discussions about top policy priorities, several of the 6 Wins’ recommendations for the OBAG program set out in this two-page policy paper rose to the top, including incentives for both local tenant protections and affordable housing production. Read the news coverage here and here, and listen to the radio coverage (at min 14:43).

The 6 Wins also continues to work with MTC and ABAG staff to include an Equity, Environment and Jobs (EEJ) scenario for Plan Bay Area. Our advocacy recently got a boost when a group of environmental and conservation groups submitted a letter supporting our ask. We also provided staff with a set of equity policies and strategies for incorporation into one of the scenarios currently under consideration.

California Legislature Scrutinizes MTC and ABAG Merger Study

After a protracted public tussle, the two Bay Area regional agencies charged with adopting the Plan Bay Area update agreed to study the possibility of a merger. Richard Marcantonio, working with Greenbelt Alliance, 6 Wins Network members, and other stakeholders, led the development of a set of principles to guide the discussions, which were submitted to MTC and ABAG as part of a comment letter in January. Building on the experience Richard and Public Advocates CEO Guillermo Mayer had several years ago working with then-Sen. Mark DeSaulnier on regional governance reform, we see the opportunity to begin a broader discussion about what is at stake in regional governance for the public interest. We shared our principles with a broader set of interested parties, including members of the Bay Area Legislative Delegation, who met in January to discuss the merger, and with Assembly member Tony Thurmond, who chairs a new Select Committee on the merger. On February 19, Richard testified at the first hearing of the Select Committee.

Richard also testified in Sacramento on equity in transportation funding, as part of a legislative briefing hosted by ClimatePlan.
Strengthening State Guidance on SB 535 Cap-and-Trade Investments

In our December 2015 update, we reported that Public Advocates and our SB 535 Coalition allies won two amendments at the September Air Resources Board meeting at which final guidelines for Senate Bill 535 (de León, 2012) were adopted. These guidelines govern the requirement that at least 25% of carbon auction revenues are spent to benefit disadvantaged communities. After the September hearing, our coalition provided ARB with language to strengthen staff’s proposed language. Our language now appears in the final guidelines that were published on December 21. First, where staff had inserted wording that required each investment to “address a community need,” the guidelines now require investments to “meaningfully address an important community need” in order to count toward SB 535’s set-aside. Second, the guidelines incorporated Public Advocates’ recommendation to recognize that projects needed to explicitly avoid both “direct and economic displacement,” i.e., not just displacement due to demolition, but also due to rising rents.

Expanding Funding for Affordable Housing in Oakland

As a member of the Oakland Community Investment Alliance (OCIA), Public Advocates continues to advocate for the City to adopt an “impact fee” on new market-rate housing development that would be used to fund affordable housing development. David Zisser has joined other members of OCIA in meetings with a number of City Council members and staff to discuss OCIA’s proposal for a $24,000 per unit fee, in line with many other Bay Area cities. That could result in $58 million collected from active development currently in the pipeline. The City Council’s Community and Economic Development Committee is currently considering its recommendations to the full City Council, which will take up the issue in a future meeting.

In addition, on February 16th, in response to advocacy David Zisser first initiated as part of an Oakland United coalition letter regarding “Coliseum City,” the Oakland City Council removed existing barriers to the building of transitional and supportive housing for people with disabilities from the Oakland Planning Code. Previously, the construction of transitional and supportive housing had been subject to conditional use permits in areas where residential development is permitted by right. In addition, under the previous provisions, transitional and supportive housing could not be located closer than 300 feet from any other such housing. The changes – which remove discrimination against some of Oakland’s most vulnerable residents – go into effect this month.

Leveraging HUD’s New Fair Housing Tool to Fight Displacement

Public Advocates is on the cutting edge nationally in exploring opportunities to leverage the duty of local governments that receive HUD funding to affirmatively further fair housing (“AFFH”) in order to protect vulnerable communities from displacement. Our initiatives include the following: First, Anne Bellows, Sam Tepperman-Gelfant, and Richard Marcantonio are launching a new collaboration with the Mission Economic Development Agency and Relman, Dane & Colfax PLLC that will focus on the duty to affirmatively further fair housing with regard to the Mission District’s Latino population. Additionally, Anne Bellows is exploring opportunities to develop a HUD complaint related to AFFH to support the work of the San Mateo Anti-Displacement Coalition. Finally, David Zisser submitted comments on Oakland’s draft Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, and in October, the City released a new Analysis of Impediments, addressing every one of our recommendations, including identifying displacement as an impediment to fair housing.
Publications

Richard Marcantonio’s article “Social Equity in Transportation Planning: A Community-Based Framework,” just appeared in the new issue of Progressive Planning. The article is based on the keynote address Richard made to the opening plenary of Portland State University’s Transportation and Communities Summit on September 15, 2015.

For more information about our housing, transit and climate justice updates, please contact Richard Marcantonio.