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## *Saltworks Plan Is A Friend To The Environment*

**BY TIM FRANK**

The Redwood City Saltworks project, which calls for the restoration and redevelopment of a 1,436-acre industrial salt-making refinery, is a true champion of the environment and the environmental review process.

It was the developer who steadfastly called on Redwood City's City Council to do what has been done: Proceed with a full environmental analysis of the plan. This shouldn't surprise anyone. The developer, DMB Associates, has conducted an open process around the site since the beginning, looking to the community for input and looking beyond the borders of the property to create a plan that acknowledges the environmental needs of the whole region.

I've worked as a sustainability consultant on the Saltworks plan for a state-of-the-art, transit-oriented community that represents a far more comprehensive contribution toward the cause of sustainability and en-

vironmental improvement than any proposed alternative for the site. It will result in re-creation of 440 acres of wetlands at no cost to taxpayers. And it is especially compelling as a response to traffic, pollution and global warming, the three biggest challenges facing the Bay Area environment.

To reduce Bay Area greenhouse gas emissions, the largest contributor to global warming, we need to reduce the number and distance of commutes necessitated by the massive housing shortage on the jobs-rich Peninsula. In the nine county Bay Area, only the three Peninsula counties have significant housing shortages. The rest have a jobs-housing balance or a surplus. Yet the shortage on the Peninsula is so severe that it overwhelms the surplus in the adjoining counties to the point that large numbers of commuters have to commute from as far away as the Central Valley. Redwood City alone imports 42,000 commuters a day.

The answer is to locate new homes in walkable, transit-oriented communities near the jobs. The scale of the challenge is such that the full build-out of downtown Redwood City (which critics of the 50/50 plan have suggested as an alternative) is important, but with a planned capacity of only 3,000 homes, nowhere near adequate. The combined contribution of new downtown homes and the 12,000 homes to be built under the Saltworks plan would make significant progress in addressing such an acute need.

The Saltworks also occupies a gap between a proposed ferry terminal at the port and the Caltrain station in downtown Redwood City. The restoration and redevelopment plan proposes a developer financed trolley that would provide the missing link between the two regional transit systems, serve the development and link major employment corridors in the city and downtown.

All of the homes in the new community would be highly

efficient townhomes, apartments and condos with the form and feel of San Francisco's North Beach, but with modern green-building technology and on-site renewable-energy generation. Fifteen percent of these super-efficient homes would be affordable to lower-income residents. All of the homes would be within walking distance of shopping and basic services as well as transit.

If reducing carbon emissions is an urgent priority, the Saltworks plan is a compelling answer.

Developing this site would mean less global warming and less sea level rise. That is an outcome any sober-minded environmentalist should get excited about — and a reason to support the transparent and objective environmental review analysis now under way.

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**TimFrank** is a LEED-accredited professional for neighborhood development. he wrote this article for this newspaper.