

Mission

East Sacramento Preservation Task Force, Inc. is a grass roots neighborhood group determined to protect the quality of life and the unique appeal of neighborhoods.

We unite to preserve residential character, to maintain and expand urban tree canopy, to defend the health of our environment and the safety of our streets.

Vision

We want to elect lawmakers who act in accordance with these goals. We want genuine transparency in the municipal process so citizens are informed and heard. Where the process is broken we want it fixed; where it works we want to ensure that it works for everyone.

Values

- Service
- Truthfulness
- Activism
- Teamwork
- Accountability

Working For A Livable Community

ESPTF, Inc.
5714 Folsom Blvd., PMB Box 169
Sacramento, CA 95819
esptfneighbors@aol.com



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No Sunshine at City Hall

Spotlighting “a discouraging and troubling trend for the cause of transparency and open government,” Bee associate editor Foon Rhee recently critiqued “ad hoc” City Council committees. These committees meet privately “with no public debate or dissent.” The potential for abuse here is obvious. Deals can be cut, financing arranged, developers brought on board, —all in the dark. Important city issues from the arena plan to the fate of the K Street mall are presently assigned to such committees, thereby, Rhee says, “robbing the public of true input.”

Mayor Kevin Johnson states that efficiency is the reason for the ad hoc panels and further asserts that if they “circumvented the public process he wouldn’t go along with them.” However, given Johnson’s penchant for instituting a City Hall shadow government filled with “executive interns” (some from his campaign, some from development firms), his protestations are suspect. Stealth ad hoc panels convening in secret do not inspire public confidence. Rhee observes that “while participatory democracy can be unruly and uncomfortable, doing the public’s business behind closed doors only sows suspicion.”

While it is legal to permit city officials and “interested parties to talk candidly outside the glare of public scrutiny,” such conversations short-circuit the common good. “Just because it’s technically legal doesn’t make it the right thing to do,” he says. His observations are well made and deserve serious attention.

SUNSHINE LAW DEFENDS NEIGHBORS’ RIGHTS TO KNOW

Wonder about the campaign donations local politicians received from developers and their associates? The Public Records Act is one instrument that can help allay your curiosity. Part of legislation approved under the Freedom of Information Act, the PRA makes records of deals, meetings, and contributions available to citizens who request it. This access derives from efforts made by Sunshine advocates who insist that government transparency is a vital arm in a functioning democracy. On the national level Attorney General Holder has directed all executive branch departments and agencies to administer FOIA requests with a “presumption of openness.” Holder asserts that such disclosure is at the heart of the Freedom of Information Act and says, “We are restor(ing) the public’s ability to access information in a timely manner.”

Locally, Sunshine advocates include newspapers, broadcasters, neighborhood advocacy groups, environmentalists and civil rights organizations. During the controversial Mercy expansion neighbors were able to discover the donations received from Catholic Healthcare West’s corporate functionaries, including those who did not live in East Sacramento. In the recent council election the same kinds of data were available. Large donors who don’t live in Sacramento are listed. Such information is obviously valuable to citizens who want to assess the performance of their elected representatives.

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RIGHTS TO KNOW *(continued)*

East Sacramentans who want a full and truthful account of City Council dealings can contact Californians Aware: The Center for Public Forum Rights. This nonprofit was originated to assist people who are blocked in their access to public information and to foster open governmental meetings and records. Citizens can also contact the California First Amendment Coalition, California Common Cause and the California Newspaper Publishers Association. All of these groups advocate transparency and accountability.

Is the information you may want on line? Only some of it. Sunshine activists surveyed information about financial disclosures, bridge inspections, consumer complaints, even school performances, and concluded that only Texas "provided all 20 categories of information considered." California offered only 11.

Presently local officials blame "furloughs and budget cuts for delays and denials in public requests for information." (Basofin, Data Surfer, Mar. 2010). But the information is there. Citizens have a right to it and a need for it. It belongs to the public. In order to make officials accountable, citizens have to be informed.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Advocate

I know the Sacramento Sixty are a group of business-owners and developers who supported the Strong Mayor proposal, but I am curious about their motives. Who are they exactly? Are they like the Phoenix Forty, the kitchen cabinet that helped transform that desert city into a polluted, concrete nightmare? Given Kevin Johnson's penchant for stealth volunteers ("executive interns"), how will the Sixty influence city government? How many of the sixty are environmentalists? Neighborhood preservationists? Advocates for government transparency? How many of them work to sustain the parks and trees that make Sacramento unique? How many contribute to our museums, libraries? Finally, how many of the Sacramento Sixty live within Sacramento City limits?

M. Kennedy

Now Playing—Nightmare on H Street



Steve: Stand Up and Vote

Our City Council recently voted to boycott Arizona. Sacramento joined Los Angeles, San Francisco and the U.S. Conference of Mayors in condemning the race-predicated and almost certainly unconstitutional legislation signed by Governor Jan Brewer. Even though polls show that majorities presently support Arizona's actions, our council stood with its soon-to-be victims, stood with the Constitution. There were two exceptions: Steve Cohn and Robbie Waters.

Waters said he didn't think the Arizona issue was city business and voted no. Cohn didn't vote. He left when the debate began, returned when the vote was over. This created the expected impression. Cal Watchdog, a web based journalism site, called it "pathetic cowardice." Others, including the mayor, expressed similar, if less pointed disapprobation. When confronted Cohn said he indeed opposed the Arizona boycott and gave as his reason: "The closest consensus among voters was that this was not something City Council should spend their (sic) time on."

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Alhambra Corridor News

Proposed Walgreen's at Alhambra and L Project is Dead

City Planning staff sent the following email to our Alhambra Corridor representative on April 22, 2010:

Staff received the following message from the applicant: Walgreen's is no longer interested in the site and they referred me to the owner Nancy Cleavinger. She does not want to continue the appeal either. With this information, the file is closed and the denial of the project by the Planning Commission stands as the final action.

At this time, we aren't aware of any other use being proposed for the site. The Mayflower restaurant continues to do a good business there. The former Luis' building remains an eyesore, while Luis Jr. is trying to make a go of it in the Galleria Building at 29th and J St.

Medical Plaza at Stockton and Alhambra

Now called Sutter Medical Plaza, an open house was held on April 15th for the medical plaza and some Sutter medical tenants have moved in. The former Bloodsource building has received major improvements and is a visual improvement to the neighborhood. However, the retail/restaurant portion of this project, to be built at the western end of the project along Alhambra Boulevard, has not been built yet. Sally Friedlander of Separovich/Domich has told us that "they have received the construction permit and are still looking for the right tenant." We will continue to monitor the status of this yet to be constructed cafe.

Two-Way traffic now in place on J Street between 30th and Alhambra

As part of the City's two-way conversion plan, traffic is now two-way from 29th Street to Alhambra on J Street. Hopefully this will alleviate the heavy traffic on Alhambra somewhat as drivers heading west to the I-80 freeway on J Street can access it without getting on Alhambra Blvd.

Martha Paterson-Cohen

Arizona Vote *(continued)*

Cohn needs to be reminded that the job of leadership is to change the consensus, not follow it. He needs to recall that there was a time when the national consensus supported laws outlawing the franchise for women and forbidding interracial marriage. The consensus once supported the noxious notion that separate was equal. The consensus once supported the invasion of Iraq. The consensus has changed on these matters, and that change was brought about by leaders who had the courage to oppose prevailing sentiment. Good leadership does not always follow the crowd and good leadership does not duck out when the tough votes are taken.

Cohn's argument that City Hall should confine itself to municipal issues is not persuasive. Local governments have a responsibility to comment on national politics, especially in times of moral crisis. We are one country. When rights are imperiled in one state they are imperiled everywhere. If local citizens across the Weimar Republic had spoken up in 1933 we would live in a different world today.

Neighbors are divided on this issue. But there is a consensus that comprehensive immigration reform is needed. The constitution tells us this is the responsibility of the Federal Government. This debate merits a vote. City Council District 3 deserves a leader willing to stand up and take that vote.



Money Doesn't Grow on Trees!

We need your membership and donations to continue our work
Helping to preserve the East Sacramento quality of life.

Please give generously so ESPTF can thrive in the future!

Make your tax deductible donation of:

___ \$25.00 ___ \$50.00 ___ \$100 ___ other

Enclosed is my annual membership: ___ \$15.00

Membership assures that you receive the Advocate Newsletter

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to: ESPTF (East Sacramento Preservation Task Force)

5714 Folsom Blvd. PMB 169, Sacramento, CA 95819

T: 731-8101 Fax: 446-7412

Email: esptfneighbors@aol.com

East Sacramento Preservation Task Force, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit charity. Your contributions are tax deductible as to IRS rules. ESPTF's EIN is 26-2071474

Speed and Traffic Issues

When you try to cross J Street, or are tailgated down H, you realize that speed limits are often scoffed at in East Sacramento. As residents we need to work together to get traffic speeds under control.

ESPTF has offered a unique crosswalk solution to the city. We crafted Pedestrian Flag Stations for intersections throughout East Sacramento. The idea is for pedestrians to pick a flag from the station at the crosswalk, use the flag as signal to motorists as they cross in the crosswalk, and then return the flag to the stand on the other side of the street. The flags catch the drivers' attention and bring most drivers to a stop.

World-class cities such as Salt Lake City, Seattle and Washington, D.C. successfully use this technique and now East Sacramento will as well. The city plans to launch the first flag crossing at 33rd and H Street, the McKinley Rose Garden crossing. Call Councilman Cohn's office to encourage expansion of the ESPTF flag crossing effort: 916-808-7003.

In the meantime, make sure to drive at or safely below speed limits. Always check to see if someone is waiting at one of the white crosswalk areas. When you stop, come to a complete stop and let the pedestrians completely clear the crosswalk before continuing. Rolling through a crosswalk before pedestrians have cleared the crossing can result in a \$400+ fine! Pass bicyclists with extreme caution at or under the speed limit. Working together we can slow down the traffic and make these congested streets safer.

Farm Fresh Saturdays/National Night Out

Take time on a Saturday morning to bike or walk over to McKinley Park. In front of the library you'll find a farm stand featuring fresh, seasonal, local, organic vegetables and fruit. Sacramento's Soil Born Farms is selling certified organic produce Saturdays, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. The business will run until October 30, 2010.

Join ESPTF on August 3rd, at 35th and McKinley (Shepard's Garden Center lawn) at 7pm to celebrate National Night Out (a national crime/drug prevention event). SPD will provide information. Bring chairs. Refreshments will be provided.