

# Manhattanization - We Deserve Better

by Christopher L. Bowman & Keith Bogdon

**A**s San Franciscans, particularly those of us who live on the Westside, we are witnessing our City bursting at the seams, with over 883,000 people. In just 7.5 years, we have grown by 78,000 residents.

The question we face is: How many more people can we accommodate without adversely affecting our safety, quality of life, the character of our neighborhoods? Our crumbling infrastructure, which is vulnerable to another major earthquake, was built for a city of just 715,000 people.

ABAG, with its Plan Bay Area 2040, calls for 1,100,000 people by 2040. We learned at a recent forum on the future of Transportation in San Francisco, the SF Planning Department projects our City to balloon to over 1,500,000 people by 2065!

Enough is enough!

Almost all the dialogue over housing in San Francisco revolves around the belief that we must significantly accelerate the construction of new housing - half blocks or block-large massive construction of "sky's the limit" condos and apartment buildings. Advocates of denser housing have declared that the era of the single family home is over. They are also dictating what kind of housing will be constructed - very low income, "affordable", market rate, luxury, mini units or 2-3 bedroom units that can accommodate growing families.

Opponents of more housing in SF say that the surrounding Bay Area counties need to do their fair share of adding housing. Even if some communities are not doing their fair share, they suffer the same massive infrastructure problems we have in San Francisco, including crumbling roads, traffic congestion, the need for more schools, fire stations, and more water. They, as we, are challenged by over-burdensome regulatory hurdles and exorbitant building costs.

Both sides are fundamentally wrong. More of the same, while throwing more money at the problem, will not solve the issue of affordability. We must reject the agendas of the special interests who are vested in the tired, failed policies of the status quo, freeing us to think outside the box.

The solution isn't with Supply-Side Economics. Indeed, we can't build ourselves out of this crisis in our small city of not even 47 square miles. The solution is achievable with Demand-Side Economics.

The inflationary pressures on the housing market has been manufactured by bad public policies, e.g., tax breaks for Twitter and other tech companies so they would bring their jobs and employees from outside the City into San Francisco, as well as adverse side effects from Prop.13 and rent control.

Homeowners and renters feel trapped in their current housing. Under current state law, if an empty nester/homeowner over 55 wants to downsize, they may end up paying far more in property taxes than if they stayed put.

The same is true for long-time renters who can't afford to move to a smaller apartment because they will be paying far more in rent.

So we make the following three modest proposals:

When the tax breaks for Twitter and other tech companies expire next year, don't renew them, and don't provide additional tax breaks to the tech industry.

Government should not be in the business of playing favorites or picking winners and losers in the private sector.

Vote Yes on Prop. 5 on November 6<sup>th</sup>. This would allow homeowners who are 55 or older to sell their home in SF and other urban areas, and purchase a less expensive home anywhere else in California without paying more in

property taxes. That will significantly increase the supply of multi-bedroom homes for young, growing families that are currently priced out of the market without having to build one additional unit of family housing here and elsewhere.

Businesses who want to move here or expand operations here should consider decentralizing their operations and setting up satellite offices in college towns in the Central Valley and out-

side our urban core. It would be a win-win-win across the board. Kids graduating from Chico State, UC Davis, Sac State, Stanislaus State, UC Merced, Fresno State, and Bakersfield State who are receiving cutting edge STEM educations could get good-paying entry level jobs in our best and most innovative industries, while the corporations would benefit by employing kids fresh out of college for less salary and benefits than they have to pay in SF or the Bay Area. The costs for land and buildings is far less in the rural counties than here, and the rural counties, which currently have unemployment rates as high as 7.5% would benefit by the financial shot in the arm enabling them to provide housing and services for their homeless populations to keep them there, rather than migrating to SF.

Additionally, if corporations expand outside the Bay Area, it will reduce the Inflationary demand for housing here and in our surrounding communities.

We're not advocating that this is a cure-all, but we hope our proposals will create a fresh dialogue which will move the ball forward.

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