

Facing the Fire...so to speak

A quick glance at the light layer of ash covering the vehicle in our driveway is reminder enough of the challenges facing Monterey County. The fires throughout our state and local area have grabbed the attention of state and national media. Concern over the long term ramifications to the environment and pristine nature of our beautiful coastline move us to consider a reality new to many. For those of us involved in politics, a "pet" source of blame is easily established. Right or wrong, we all have formulated a hypothesis to the current challenges facing our planet, and more specifically, Monterey County. For those of you who are directly impacted by the fires in a way many of us can only imagine, the thoughts and prayers of those of us at MCAR are with you.

A one cent transportation infrastructure improvement tax for Monterey County has received unanimous approval by the Transportation Authority of Monterey County (TAMC). The proposed tax is the crux of a transportation improvement plan aimed at addressing long standing transportation infrastructure deficiencies, and much needed improvements to the county's roads, highways, and other long awaited projects lacking adequate funding. The Monterey County Board of Supervisors will be considering placement of the tax on the important November ballot sometime in July. There was much discussion during the TAMC meeting that timing was critical for successful passage of the tax. High voter turnout is expected with the presidential election, a necessary component for victory. Also discussed was the serious need for public participation in funding the tax campaign. With the current market economics and challenges facing many, this will certainly be a tremendous undertaking given the cost of an effective campaign.

We continue to work with the City of Salinas on their "interpretation" of the Business License Tax Ordinance. Although we can't report a resolution to this challenge today, the outlook for such is certainly stronger today than it was last week. Understanding the time sensitive nature of this matter (with renewals going out last week) we are working expeditiously to find a collaborative approach we all can live with. More to come on this issue in the following weeks.

With the 4th of July holiday on the horizon, I would like to wish you all a safe and enjoyable celebration. As always, feel free to contact me with any questions, comments or concerns you may have. I appreciate the kind words and constructive feedback I've received from many of you.

Kevin Stone
Government and Community Affairs Director

UPDATE...Proposition 90 Feasibility Study & Survey

In an effort to ensure we have the strongest data at our disposal, we are extending the deadline of our Proposition 90 Feasibility Survey for another week.

It has come to our attention that email communication out of MCAR has been intermittent the past few weeks with some of the weekly Stone Reports being lost in cyberspace (thus leading to low survey participation). We believe we have addressed the problem and appreciate your patience as we try and work through this issue.

Note, if you have already completed the survey, there is no need to re-submit your information.

MCAR has begun preliminary discussions to address the feasibility of possibly reimplementing the Proposition 90 Property Tax Transfer Program in Monterey County. In so doing, we are asking our members to assist us in this endeavor of due diligence by participating in a brief survey to track current "potential" PROP 90 buyers.

For those of you unfamiliar with how a PROP 90 program works, the concept is actually quite simple. PROP 90 allows counties to accept transfers of the assessed values for moves from other counties when a primary residence is replaced with a less expensive home. If you are over 55 and move into a county which accepts PROP 90, you may take your old, lower assessed value, regardless of which county you are moving from. For example, using PROP 90, you can sell your \$400,000 home in Roseville [assessed value \$80,000] and move to a new \$300,000 home in San Mateo; the new San Mateo assessed value will be \$80,000. For additional information on specific requirements and conditions of the PROP 90 program, please click [here](#).

If you are ready to participate in the survey, please click [here](#). **Friday, July 4, 2008** will be the survey cutoff date. The results will be shared upon completion of the survey and analysis of the data. Again, thank you for taking the time to assist us in this process.

Green is the New Black

Recently, it seems like every product and company out there is jumping on the "green" bandwagon. With all of the feel-good promotional ads and new green products out there, it can be hard to differentiate between what may be "green plated" and what is truly a sustainable, environmentally - friendly product.

Marketers are smart and understand that "green is the new black." So buyers seeking true environmentally sound products must be smarter.

First off, the expectations of "going green" and the focus of one's efforts on changing lifestyle behaviors and patterns to accommodate this choice need to be reigned in somewhat. There are very few 100% green products available on the market - contrary to what some may want you to believe. Many products are sustainable in some ways, and not so sustainable in others. Chances are, you'll need to decide what green attributes are most important to you. Is it recycled? Is it durable? What is its' carbon footprint all the way down to the production process? These are just some of the choices you have in front of you.

The topic of green building and residential energy efficiency has gone far beyond just the environmental community - becoming not only a relevant issue among mainstream building industry professionals, but an imperative discussion to be had in the real estate business. One of the most common concerns being: the true costs and benefits associated with "going green".

Many California based builders have stated that the costs associated with green building have traditionally been prohibitive - resulting in expenses 10-20 percent more than that of traditional construction. However, many green advocates claim that the costs are negligible when compared to the value recaptured through water and energy savings, health benefits and environmental impacts.

Roundtable discussions are taking place across the state with Realtors® and industry professionals to strategize and conceptualize a reasonable approach to implementing an incentive based energy efficiency methodology in existing residential communities. While the task is certainly daunting, it is somewhat comforting to know that many energy efficient measures can be undertaken on a meager to modest budget with efficiency returns more than making up for the initial investment made.

One such group, "Step Up to Green", is made up of local professionals throughout Monterey County. From municipal staff, sustainability professionals, water experts, local business owners and more, the brain trust behind the "Step Up to Green" program is certainly robust. The incentive based platform focuses on what homeowners can do to achieve energy efficiency. The common-sense approach is attainable, and with adequate public support, a viable program producing tangible results could be seen sometime early next year.

The environmental impacts of residency in Monterey County are being studied, evaluated, researched and tested by both industry advocates and environmental policy groups. As the global climate change debate continues - it will be imperative for our industry to be on the front lines of these discussions. A voluntary, pro-active approach on our behalf will undoubtedly serve as a long

term benefit in this dynamic endeavor. While residential energy efficiency standards certainly aren't the requirement today in most areas, it is understood by most that it will be in the near future. Our efforts to lead the way in research and best practices today will certainly help to achieve realistic, achievable, science derived solutions for the future.

Here at MCAR we are taking both the green movement and the interests of our membership seriously. We will continue to engage you all in the process and elicit response and feedback in our continuing "green endeavors". I look forward to updating you all in the near future.

While the green benefits associated with any given product are certainly noted and appreciated, there are implicit environmental costs directly related to the production of these products and materials that should be taken into consideration when performing a true environmental analysis. I challenge you take a few minutes to do a little research before making up your mind one way or the other on a given green product or energy efficiency strategy.