

BRISBANE

:: *City of Stars* ::

— 50th Anniversary —

The Second Twenty-Five Years
1986-2011



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1986-2011

by Adrian Kinnane

Front cover photo by Kevin Fryer | Back cover photo by Lee Panza

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Preface

Brisbane's keen sense of history has already produced two books. This is the third. The first, *A Spirit of Independence* (1986), covered the years prior to the City's incorporation in 1961. The second, *Brisbane, City of Stars* (1989), chronicled the first twenty-five years following incorporation. This history brings the story up to 2012 and Brisbane's fiftieth anniversary as an incorporated city.

It is not unusual for a city to tell its story by cherry-picking points of pride, accenting notable accomplishments, and generally putting its best foot forward. It is far less common to do what Brisbane has done: undertake thoroughgoing research in service of a history that is accurate, balanced, and comprehensive.

Two years ago the Brisbane City Council authorized this project and established a History Subcommittee to carry it forward. Ray Miller, Clarke Conway, Fred Smith, Steve Waldo, and Clay Holstine comprised the subcommittee, while Maria C. Saquisag-Sid coordinated its efforts and served as liaison to the Council. Subcommittee members set out an ambitious agenda, identifying nearly fifty citizens for interviews and close to a hundred important topics to be covered.

In March 2011, I began the interview process with present and former City staff and officials; community businesspersons; artists, dancers, and musicians; educators and environmentalists; and citizen volunteers representing a range of activities and interests. Brisbane's rich document archives, including transcribed Council Meeting Minutes, provided an additional and vital artery of information. My thanks to City Clerk Sheri Spediacci for guiding my searches, to Wendy Ricks for helping with photos, and to Ray Miller, whose foresight led to the inclusion in storage of many valuable records that might otherwise have been lost or discarded.

As the chapters unfolded, History Subcommittee members managed, with great sensitivity, to offer valuable clarifications, corrections, suggestions, and perspective without compromising their commitment to balance or their respect for facts. And at History Associates in Rockville, Maryland, History Division director Kenneth Durr carefully edited and improved the entire text, as did expert copy editor Gail Mathews. An author could not wish for better support.

As author, I had the pleasure of discovering Brisbane—as a city and a community—and of meeting many of its citizens, as well as the responsibility to listen attentively and write faithfully. It is no small matter to tell someone else's story. Through their City Council, the citizens of Brisbane extended a great trust to History Associates and to me. We took that trust very seriously and hope that this history reflects the honesty and courage that commissioned it.

Adrian Kinnane
June 15, 2013



The City of Brisbane dedicates this 25 year history book in memory of Steve Waldo (1948-2013). Steve served on the Brisbane City Council from 1989 to 2001 and again from 2005 to 2011. During his 18 years of service, Steve's fellow Council Members selected him to serve as Brisbane Mayor four times (1991, 1996, 2000 & 2007). Steve played an integral role in ushering in a new era of civility to local politics. His rapier wit and keen scholarly insight notably characterized his work on our City Council.

Steve Waldo championed the development of and ultimate voter approval for the 1994 General Plan. He never shied away from difficult public issues and always helped craft reasonable compromises. For these reasons and many more, we, the Brisbane City Council, dedicate this second 25 year history book to one of the most influential participants of this time period. In the words of Steve Waldo, "at the risk of moving this along" we present to you the second 25 years of Brisbane History.

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CHAPTER ONE

A Stormy Passage

1986-1989

City officials looking to enhance Brisbane's appearance in 1986 figured they might as well start with the town's main entryway at Old County Road and Bayshore Boulevard. The job would require more than cosmetic work, though. Crews had to hammer through the boulevard's original twelve-inch concrete slab foundation, long since paved over, to install plantings, an irrigation system, and rock groupings in the formerly concrete median strips and traffic islands. Leaving the road alone would be cheaper, as resident and former City Manager Walter Bednar reminded the City Council. And former Brisbane Mayor Anja Miller objected to the eight-foot-tall rock groupings, as originally designed, because they conjured images of the Guadalupe Valley Quarry, widely regarded as a nuisance to the City's residents. The Council reduced the size of the rock elements but resisted any plain or penny-pinching vision of Brisbane's improvement, viewing the groupings in the entryway's design as reflecting the rock outcroppings of San Bruno Mountain rather

than representing the quarry. Mayor Fred Smith declared, "We're only going to do it once, so let's do it right." Council member Lewis Graham agreed, noting that "the quality will be remembered long after the cost is forgotten."

Branching west from Bayshore Boulevard, Old County Road rounded up to the north, paralleling Bayshore and passing Brisbane Village shopping center on the right before veering west and terminating at Visitacion Avenue, the four-block-long commercial artery in the heart of the City. There, too, beautification involved some heavy digging. In June 1987, as crews completed the Bayshore traffic island work, including installation of more efficient traffic signals and a dedicated left-turn lane out of town, workers from Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) were burying, or "undergrounding," Visitacion Avenue's utility wires. PG&E's undergrounding fund covered the bulk of the project's costs, while Brisbane provided new trees and bricks for crosswalks. With the old wooden poles gone, and with new street lighting and sidewalk improvements,



The City's "Welcome to Brisbane" sign was first located close to Brisbane Village Shopping Center. After Parks and Recreation Director Jim Skeels arrived in 1999, this sign was refurbished and relocated next to the post office. Visitors find it useful in orienting themselves to Brisbane's winding streets. Picture depicts original sign and location.



Central Brisbane, with San Bruno Mountain County Park to the south and west, the Brisbane Lagoon and San Francisco Bay to the east, and Crocker Industrial Park, the Northeast Ridge, and the Baylands fanning out across the north.

Visitacion Avenue would sport an appearance in tune with Brisbane’s evolving civic pride.

Some merchants groused about the project’s disruption of their businesses, particularly as the work proceeded through the winter holiday season. And they worried about the potential loss of parking if some landscaping ideas were to be implemented. Other citizens, including newly appointed Mayor Ray Miller, raised concerns about the cost and maintenance problems of items such as brick crosswalks. The Council made some modifications to the project but by and large shared the confidence expressed once more by Council Member Smith, who observed

that it was a once-in-a-lifetime undertaking and should be done “first-class.”

But it was neither at Bayshore Boulevard nor on Visitacion Avenue that Brisbane’s passage from its first to its second quarter-century of incorporation turned stormy. Instead, it was at a 2.9-acre site located between them, a prime area occupied for fifty-six years by a motel and trailer court, known for the last few years as the Cozy Cove. Some in Brisbane had fond memories of bygone days when the town’s Mozzetti family operated the motel. However, most agreed that the Cozy Cove had declined to the level of an embarrassing eyesore. “The word ‘fleabag motel’



Courtesy: Ray Miller_Credit: Artist Jim Brown 1987

Artist Jim Brown sketched the Visitacion Avenue improvements in 1987. Mayor Ray Miller used the sketch in his successful re-election campaign for a council seat that fall.

doesn't do it justice," recalled Fred Smith. Easily tagged as "urban blight," it qualified as a project for the Brisbane Redevelopment Agency, which purchased it for \$1.7 million on December 31, 1985, in order to tear it down and build a new Civic Center to replace the cramped and inadequate City offices at 44 Visitacion Avenue as well as provide new quarters for the Public Safety Department.

Ever the conservator of its past, the City tried but failed to save the old Mozzetti family home, which also had served as Brisbane's first school in the 1930s. Eventually the structure was torn down. In accordance with state redevelopment law, Brisbane gave financial and other relocation assistance to the Cozy Cove's lingering cadre of permanent tenants. "They wanted us to do right by the people who were living there," recalled Robin Leiter, who became Brisbane's city manager in April 1985. "That was the hard part, relocating people who had been living there for a long time and finding some other place for them to live."

On Saturday, December 6, at a ceremony complete with balloons, refreshments, and a Dixieland band, Dolores Gomez, Brisbane's librarian and a former resident at the Mozzetti trailer court, reminded attendees that the Mozzettis had helped organize the Brisbane Improvement Club in 1930 and had hosted the club's meetings in their home. Now, history seemed to have come full circle as Brisbane anticipated a new symbol of improvement rising on the site of the old motel. Two days later, on



Twenty-five years after the improvements, Visitacion Avenue retains its draw as Brisbane's "Main Street."

Monday morning, eight fire department recruits from various San Mateo County agencies showed up to practice their fire suppression skills under the supervision of Daly City fire captain Don Ciucci. As portions of the motel were deliberately torched, a demolition crew stood by with bulldozers waiting for the end of the training exercise.

Before long, the old motel was flattened, its charred timbers of solid redwood testifying to construction methods and materials more than half a century past. The site was seeded with grass to keep appearances up and dust down as Brisbane residents turned their attention to the specifics of design and function in what was supposed to become their new Civic Center. The dust from the Cozy Cove had barely settled, however, when the complexities of change and conflict that had always characterized Brisbane's civic life caught up with the forward-looking movement for improvement carrying the City into the latter 1980s.

Proposition 13 and Sources of Discontent

One current of ongoing discontent stemmed from a City Council decision in 1978, under the financial constraints imposed by the passage of Proposition 13, to merge Brisbane's separate police and fire departments into a single Department of Public Safety. The merger had rankled some residents, many of whom had close ties to the old fire department and felt

it had especially compromised the effectiveness of the fire service. They formed a Committee for a Separate Fire Department, presented a petition to that effect signed by hundreds of City residents and, through the winter of 1986-1987, kept up the pressure at City Council meetings. The tone of those meetings often turned antagonistic, with fire department proponents challenging the accuracy of council meeting minutes. Resident Jan Magdalik complained that money spent on beautifying the City should instead be directed toward a separate fire department. More substantively, volunteer firefighter Lee Panza questioned the Council's emphasis on cost factors rather than on providing the best services.

City officials wrestled to balance expenses against effectiveness, morale, and respect for the community's wishes. In the summer of 1986 the City hired Jim Cost, a former captain in Marin County's Twin Cities Police Department, as Brisbane's director of public safety and asked him to prepare a report on reorganizing the department. By the end of 1986, Cost finished his study, which summarized various models for providing fire and police services, including some that established separate services with shared dispatch facilities.

Leiter summarized the comparative costs of various models at a council meeting on January 26, 1987. Brisbane's current model consumed 43 percent of the City's General Fund revenues annually, while completely separate services—each with its own dispatch facility—would require 70 percent of those funds. The next month, the Council decided on separate services, with combined administration and dispatch operations, some limited cross-training, and five new positions including a fire chief and a fire marshal to direct prevention and inspection services. In June, Mayor Ray Miller announced in his "State of the City" address to Brisbane's Chamber of Commerce that Cy Bologoff would be Brisbane's new fire chief and that the City would soon purchase a new \$155,000 fire engine. The newly reorganized Public Safety Department would take 52 percent of the City's operating budget, said Miller, "by far the largest percentage of any department."

The Council's decision in February 1987 to

re-separate police and fire services but retain the single umbrella department dampened some of the discontent, but the issue continued to smolder in Brisbane's civic life. Walter Bednar, a retired Internal Revenue Service official and former Brisbane city manager who had criticized outlays for landscaping the median strips on Old County Road, supported the Committee for a Separate Fire Department, notwithstanding the higher costs of that option. Curtis Richards and John Bell, the latter a past council member whose son Pete was a Brisbane firefighter and fire captain, also were key figures in the drive to restore the old system. John Bell would soon run for the City Council, in part to accomplish that goal.

Taxpayer resentment as expressed in Proposition 13 had originally driven the police and fire merger that proved so upsetting in Brisbane. That resentment, which drew strength from the ongoing fire service problems, returned in July 1987 when Walter Bednar launched a barrage of "We the People" missives at City Hall. Issued over several months, Bednar's pamphlets accused the City of not refunding excess taxes to citizens as required by state Proposition 4, the Gann initiative, which California voters had passed in 1979 on the heels of Proposition 13. By Bednar's calculations, Brisbane had collected \$653,856 in excess taxes and therefore owed "\$210 for every man, woman, and child living in Brisbane on July 1, 1986." The City did not dispute the numbers but opted to make good to residents through reductions in water and sewer fees rather than refund checks, a decision that City Attorney Robert Logan, Finance Director Roger Kalil, and other city officials regarded as an entirely proper—as well as the most equitable—means of distributing the overage.

However, Bednar's critique expanded beyond matters of accounting to include attacks on the integrity of salaried City officials, whom he dubbed "masters of deceit" and "fat cats lapping at the public trough." Bednar viewed them as a featherbedding "army of occupation" whose purpose was to reinforce and protect actions taken by elected and mostly self-serving officials. "Giving money to City Hall," Bednar fumed, "is like giving liquor to an alcoholic. The City staff is running wild and squandering public funds." Council member Fred Smith tried to

isolate Bednar, quipping that “We the People” would more appropriately have been titled “I the People.” But Bednar sustained his assault through the campaign months preceding the November 1987 City Council elections, where his seed of resentment took some root in Brisbane’s widening field of discontent. That field, quite literally, turned out to be the acreage where the Mozzettis’ modest cottages had once sheltered Peninsula travelers, and where almost everyone in Brisbane expected imminent construction of a new Civic Center to mark its coming of age after a quarter century of incorporation.

Southwest Diversified Brings Lawsuits

To be sure, Brisbane was still engaged in tough battles with the nearby San Francisco airport over jet noise and departure paths, and with the nearby Guadalupe Valley Quarry over trucks, noise, dust, and damaged streets. And its biggest struggle—with developer Southwest Diversified Incorporated (SDI)—was far from finished. SDI had sued the City and three council members personally—Ray Miller, Jeannine Hodge, and Fred Smith—in federal court over a provision in the new housing element of the City’s General Plan that the developers claimed would block a planned 1,250-unit condo complex on 230 acres of San Bruno Mountain’s Northeast Ridge. The three council members who were being sued, and their attorneys, strongly disagreed with this contention. SDI had taken over the project from a Canadian company, Cadillac Fairview, in July 1984 believing that Cadillac Fairview had promulgated an agreement with Brisbane and the county that would permit the construction of 1,250 units. But by 1985, Brisbane had elected a new City Council, and Miller, Hodge, and Smith asserted that no binding agreement had ever been made. Representatives from SDI met with Ray Miller and Fred Smith in 1985 and threatened them with legal action, but the two stood their ground. Miller told them, “Well, we’ve got lawyers, too.”

Intimidation as a tactic did not work well in Brisbane, but SDI was prepared to give it a try. The company claimed breach of contract and sought \$120 million in damages from the City, as well as \$100,000 in punitive damages

each from Miller, Hodge, and Smith. The latter element of the suit was unsettling and completely unexpected by the three council members. “We didn’t know from day to day whether we’d ever have any financial resources, because they were looking for a lot of money,” Ray Miller recalled.

The suit against the City, however, was not a surprise. The Council had polled citizens in 1985 about how much risk they were willing to undertake to stop or reduce the planned Northeast Ridge development. Brisbane citizens expressed support for the Council’s decision to reject SDI’s assumption of a prior agreement with the City, but they did not wish to push the conflict so far as to place Brisbane’s recent annexation of Crocker Industrial Park in jeopardy. As it turned out, SDI was battling Brisbane not only in court, where it knew its case was weak, but also in the state legislature, especially the assembly, where it had a stronger hand to play.

As Ray Miller recounted, Frank Pacelli, a former Daly City mayor and now lobbyist for SDI in Sacramento, urged assemblyman Lou Papan, chair of the assembly’s powerful Rules Committee, to ask assemblyman Dominic Cortese to introduce legislation that could de-annex revenue-rich Crocker Industrial Park and the Northeast Ridge from Brisbane and attach it to Daly City. Cortese had his doubts, but Papan pressed him and Cortese went ahead. The bill posed a major threat, as SDI and the City Council both knew that Brisbane’s citizens had drawn the line on their resistance to SDI at the point where it risked the loss of Crocker Park.

Soon, though, SDI’s political effort collapsed under heavy protest from many quarters. Miller and Smith won the support of state Senator Quentin Kopp, who recently had defeated Papan in a race for the state’s 8th Senate District seat. And local governments and newspaper editors from across the state rose up in support of Brisbane’s resistance to SDI’s political maneuver. The League of California Cities, as well as editors at the Sacramento Bee, San Francisco Chronicle, and The Examiner, recognized that if a developer could succeed in enlisting the state government to override well-established processes of annexation and de-annexation, then the threat to Brisbane was also a threat to every city in the state.

Later, Cortese, who was well known as a champion of local governments, expressed his regrets to Miller, acknowledging that the legislation had been a bad idea. Meanwhile, the developer's lawsuit against Brisbane had been dismissed from federal court and remanded to the state court as a state matter. Facing an uphill climb in state court, SDI's attorneys put aggressive litigation on the back burner and agreed to mediation. But mediation did not mean settlement, and the uncertain outcome continued to weigh heavily on Miller, Hodge, and Smith.

Controversy over the Civic Center

Despite these ongoing battles, for many residents and City Council members the mid-1980s was not just a time for the City to take a bold leap forward in style—it was the time to do so. “There was a feeling that we didn't have a lot of time,” Fred Smith remembered. “There was some urgency to things. The City had been through so many crises and under such attack from developers, with the Northeast Ridge, and garbage battles of the 60s, and near bankruptcy after Prop 13. There wasn't a sense that you had an unlimited amount of time to ponder things. It was more of an action-oriented culture.”

In that context, it seemed not at all outlandish to imagine that an internationally acclaimed architect might design Brisbane's new Civic Center. Fred Smith was familiar with Princeton University's Michael Graves, who, Smith later said, “had a reputation for pioneering excellence of design, whose projects had consistently come in under budget [and] whose philosophies seemed to match the community's, or what I perceived as the community's, desires for a civic center.” Smith had been unsatisfied with some public projects on the Peninsula, particularly the Daly City Civic Center. He thought they looked “monumental and very inhuman—sort of an industrial look.” And if there was any city that Brisbane decidedly did not want to look like, it was neighboring Daly City, whose rows of “ticky-tacky” box houses across the now-scarred northern face of San Bruno Mountain had become a national symbol of poor taste. Smith asked Robin Leiter to contact Graves's office to sound out the architect's interest. Graves

responded positively.

On May 12, 1986, Fred Smith, now Brisbane's mayor in accordance with the Council's informal system of annual rotation, introduced Graves to the Council. It unanimously voted to direct the mayor and city manager to negotiate an agreement with the architect for design of the Civic Center. That structure also would house Brisbane's fire service. An announcement to that effect went out to all residences with the next water bill, but not before Ray Miller clarified the wording to state that contractual requirements had not yet been finalized with Graves's office. Miller wanted to wait until final cost figures were available and to make sure that the City had a “bail-out” clause in the event that Graves's eventual designs proved unacceptable. The Council agreed, and the water bill enclosure was mailed.

On December 8, 1986, the Council—Smith, Miller, Hodge, Lew Graham, and Tony Attard—voted unanimously to authorize staff to enter into a contract with Graves. Graves came with a risk. Like many cutting-edge architects, he tended to draw extremes of either enthusiasm or repulsion. But Brisbane officials intended to make sure that citizens had input throughout the design process and that Graves would be responsive to their thoughts and reactions. New Mayor Ray Miller invited citizens to contact Assistant to the City Manager Rosemary Cameron, who would be coordinating workshops to gather their thoughts about what sort of a civic center they would like. Four citizens—Dolores Gomez, Anna Lou Martin, Helen Sullivan, and Dutch Moritz—were named as facilitators for the continuing public input process. Later, Mary Jo Diecke joined that group.

Nearly seventy-five residents attended the first workshop on February 21, 1987. So did Michael Graves, who, reported the *Brisbane Star*, “got a good first-hand introduction to the independent thinking of Brisbane residents.” They let Graves know that they wanted him to incorporate Brisbane's emblematic five-pointed star into the design; to make City offices easily accessible; to keep parking out of sight; to consider the outdoor space as important as the interior; and to create spaces that could be used for multiple purposes.

At the March 23, 1987, council meeting the formal execution of a contract with Graves was on the agenda, along with a resolution to refund



Disagreement about the suitability of architect Michael Graves's designs for a new Civic Center contributed to several ongoing tensions in Brisbane that eventually came together in a divisive recall directed at four City Council members. The Civic Center was never built, but the acrimony it generated had a lasting effect on the way the City approached future controversial decisions

excess taxes via water and sewer bill deductions. Former Council Member and Mayor Anja Miller, the spouse of current Council Member and Mayor Ray Miller, read into the record a letter she had sent to the Council and the city manager objecting to the process whereby Graves had been selected. She asked why it had been necessary to go outside California or the Bay Area to find an architect, and why no bidding or design competition had been conducted. "In my opinion," said Anja Miller, "the City Council and particularly former Mayor Fred Smith owe the citizenry a public explanation and answer."

At the second workshop, held on April 4 at the Lipman Intermediate School, attendees enjoyed a free box lunch as they reviewed three design alternatives that Graves had brought for their consideration. Lee Panza sat at a table with Dolores Gomez, Marian Vickery, and Anna Lou Martin—"some of the old-timers, the movers and shakers in the community in the past," as he later described them. "They were just shaking their heads and saying, 'Well, it isn't Brisbane, but there's nothing we can do about it. If they want it, they're going to do it.' That didn't sit right with me," said Panza. He rose to voice their opinion to Graves, who invited him to "Please come up and tell us what you would like to see." But Panza, who confessed to being shy about speaking in public, especially to "this celebrity architect," could not remember what he had said, other than his objection.

The designs also were put on display at City Hall, where citizens could view them and

offer comments and suggestions. As they came in over the next several weeks, reviews were decidedly mixed, ranging from "All three were excellent, and I would welcome any of them to my neighborhood," to the biting "an Assyrian monstrosity—I came prepared to see how a renowned architect manipulated his vast talents to address a community's dreams; I came away feeling the community was manipulated to promote an architect's dreams."

Perhaps comments in the middle were more damaging. "I am an admirer of Michael Graves. I even own the tea kettle which he designed several years ago. But I think we must put aside our infatuation with the 'famous' Michael Graves and admit that he is not the architect for Brisbane." Describing Brisbane as a "small, country village," this writer thought Graves's designs conjured up ill-fitting images of the Italian Renaissance. Lorna Groundwater noted wryly that "if we are trying to achieve architectural consistency in Brisbane, God help us. Look around town and you'll see would-be Spanish mission adobes with red tile roofs, barns, fishing cabins right off the coast of Maine, Lake Tahoe A-frames, log cabins, Nantucket beach houses, an odd number of Swiss chalets, and a number of apartment buildings of '40s, '50s, and '60s vintage."

Groundwater, a member of Brisbane's Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission, made a clear statement of the design challenges Graves faced in independent-minded Brisbane, but she also was direct about the challenge she thought Brisbane faced. Disturbed by some residents' comments to the effect that "a world-class architect has no place in Brisbane," she asked



This conceptual study of the proposed Civic Center bore little resemblance to Graves's final design but helped fuel criticism of the project as the schematics took shape.

the City Council, “Just who do we think we are as the City of Brisbane, and why do we think we aren’t good enough for a world-class architect?” Groundwater believed the City’s self-esteem still suffered from having been San Francisco’s garbage dump for decades—a feeling that “we should know our proper place and keep it.”

It was possible, of course, to regard Graves’s designs as inappropriate without rejecting the notion of hiring a world-class architect and without having low civic self-esteem. But Groundwater had tapped into some social and class tensions in Brisbane that Graves’s selection had inadvertently exposed. Dolores Gomez, one of the design workshop facilitators, summarized in a letter to the Council the reactions of some citizens after the April 4 session with Graves. All of the comments were negative, some on aesthetic grounds (“it looks like a Babylonian Garden, surely not for here”), some practical (“far too expensive”), and some procedural (“Will this be voted on by the town residents?”).

But other reactions reflected Brisbane’s relatively recent transformation from a blue-collar town where people had built their own modest homes, often with their own hands, to an increasingly affluent suburb of San Francisco, with white-collar professionals purchasing custom homes with expensive views on Brisbane’s higher streets. And if some of Brisbane’s affluent professionals also felt Graves’s design options did “not reflect the character of our little town,” as offered by one of Gomez’s commentators, that did not much reassure a resident of “the flatlands” who worried, “If these are ‘designs of future Brisbane,’ what will happen with future Councils? With this monumental civic center, will they decide to keep the expensive hillside homes and have urban renewal with our little funky houses below?”

On April 28, Gomez sent a letter to Mayor Miller and the City Council, as well as to the editor of the *Peninsula Progress*, which printed it on May 1. Gomez stated that residents should have been involved in the selection of an architect. Citizens at the February 27 workshop had told Graves they wanted a “functional, low-key, informal style,” yet at the second workshop, on April 4, Graves had instead presented them with “Dixie cups and smokestacks.” Graves had

admitted to being “devastated” by attendees’ disapproval of his designs, Gomez revealed, and proclaimed that he wanted a building “touching the heart of the people who work in it.” But Gomez was not sympathetic, nor was she concerned with touching the heart of City employees, who “move on to other jobs.” Instead, she said, “my concern is with those of us who make our homes here, plan to stay here, and care a great deal what happens with our small town.” She reminded citizens that they did not have to accept any of Graves’s designs, and he could then resign and the project be put out for bidding.

A Community in Conflict

A groundswell of objections was building in town, both to Graves’s designs and to the process whereby he had been selected, though support for the concept of an architecturally impressive structure as well as for Graves remained strong. On May 4 a new resident, Pat Waldo, offered some pragmatic advice to the Council on behalf of her husband Steve and their four children.



Longtime resident, librarian, and City historian Dolores Gomez helped facilitate citizen discussions of Michael Graves’s Civic Center designs in February and March 1987. By April she had resigned from that role and was advocating that the Council submit the matter to the voters for a final say.

“We understand there is a movement afoot to get rid of the present architect. . . . While we don’t know Michael Graves, it would seem foolish to scrap the present plans and change architects at this point. With proper input I’m sure he can come up with something that will please most people. You’ve obviously put a lot of thought (and money) into your present plans and direction. Don’t throw it away.”

Two weeks later, at an overflowing meeting in City Hall on May 18, 1987, residents voiced a full range of opinions, with three of the workshop facilitators—Gomez, Sullivan, and Martin—objecting both to Graves’s designs and to the selection process. However, a large majority of the attendees still wished to move ahead. Of the forty-eight citizens who offered an opinion at the meeting, thirty-seven spoke in favor of Graves and felt positively that his designs were either laudable as they stood or could be readily modified to suit residents’ needs. But despite such support, the Civic Center—and Michael Graves in particular—were becoming a locus and a proxy for several other contentious matters in Brisbane.

Those ardently seeking a separate fire department distrusted the Council, even as they favored space in a new Civic Center to house such a department. For them, opposing Graves became a way to express unhappiness with their elected officials on a matter of widespread public interest. Others, like Ed Schwenderlauf and a group of other “Former Mayors of Brisbane,” believed that the former Cozy Cove site should become a “Village Green” and pushed for a smaller City Hall somewhere downtown. Still others believed that the present Council had reneged on a development agreement with Southwest Diversified over the Northeast Ridge, and they grafted that grudge onto the budding controversy around Graves. Residents who had opposed recent expenditures or projects to “beautify” Brisbane’s downtown found new grounds to oppose what seemed to be a major extension of the Council’s vision of an “improved” City.

Suffusing all of these currents was the powerful issue of self-determination, expressed as a desire to let citizens more substantively decide the matter of design and not just modify

Graves’s ideas—and indeed to decide the whole matter of whether Brisbane should have a new Civic Center in the first place. That had been a council decision, based on council members’ understanding of what the community wanted to do with the Cozy Cove site. But now the ground was shifting and community consensus was fracturing. As Mayor Ray Miller observed in a June 23 speech, the whole matter of Civic Center design had become “a plebiscite on Michael Graves.” At the same time, Miller observed, “the public comment, both oral and written, clearly favored going ahead with Michael Graves.”

Graves was to present a final design in September 1987, but by August there were already signs of doubt among council members. Miller wanted assurance that the City could terminate Graves’s contract without paying the costs of the entire design phase. Jeannine Hodge, who after thirteen years of council service had decided not to seek re-election in November, considered



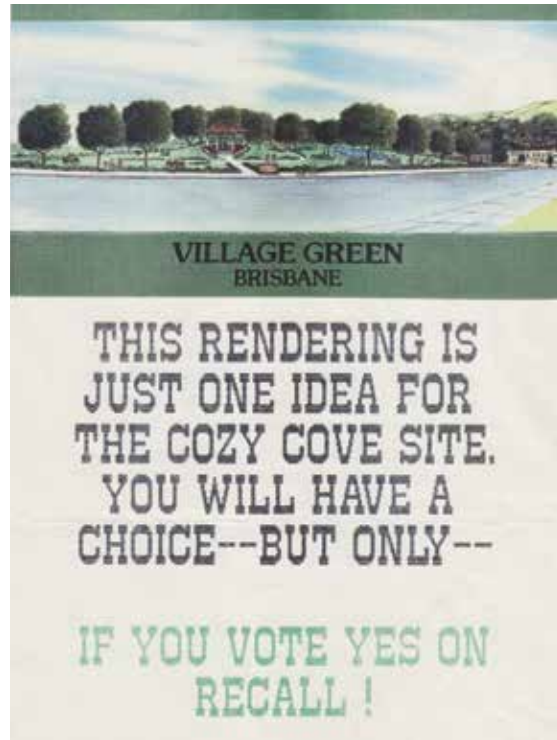
Former Brisbane Mayor Ed Schwenderlauf (1966-1967) led the “Former Mayors” group that organized in December 1987 to try to reverse the Council’s decision on building a Civic Center. Schwenderlauf proposed a Village Green concept for the former Cozy Cove Motel site. Several agendas—political, social, and aesthetic—mixed in the Civic Center turbulence, and the Village Green idea became part of the 1989 council recall campaign.

putting Graves's final design up to a public vote. But Mayor pro-tem Lewis Graham, Fred Smith, and Tony Attard felt that sufficient public input had already been gathered. As it turned out, Graves was several months late with his design, and in the meantime Brisbane experienced one of the most divisive City Council elections in its history. Incumbent Ray Miller, a twenty-one-year Brisbane resident and a professor of social science and international relations at San Francisco State University, stood for re-election, while Susan Nielsen and John Bell contended for Jeannine Hodge's seat.

A Council Election Reflects Community Divisions

The contrast between Nielsen and Bell was stark. Nielsen, thirty-three, had moved to Brisbane in 1982 and had quickly become involved in civic life, serving on the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission and then on the Planning Commission. Her listed occupation was "television actress and spokeswoman." She had been instrumental in leading a citizen protest that helped stop night hauling through Brisbane by quarry trucks, and she supported Brisbane's current lawsuit against the Federal Aviation Administration over increased flyover noise that Brisbane asserted was caused by changes in airplane departure rules. Nielsen also supported the Council's effort to bring SDI's development plans for the Northeast Ridge back to the drawing table and shared Miller's qualified support for Michael Graves. Bell, seventy-eight, was a retired Southern Pacific Railroad foreman and former owner of Bell's Corner Market in Brisbane who had lived in the City for forty-three years and had served one term on the City Council (1966-1970), including a year as mayor. One of Bell's children, Pete, was a fire captain in Brisbane's Public Safety Department.

Bell declined to file a statement of his views for inclusion on the ballot. "I didn't think it was necessary," he said. "This is a small town." Gruff and blunt-spoken, Bell ran as the "anti-City Hall" candidate. He believed strongly in a separate fire department and was sharply critical of Michael Graves ("a fancy architect from back East; we don't need a Taj Mahal") as well as the architect selection process. Bell agreed



with Walter Bednar's criticisms of City Manager Leiter and other Brisbane employees and circulated Bednar's "We the People" pamphlets door-to-door during the campaign, provoking Council Member Lewis Graham to publish at his own expense a rejoinder to the pamphlets, which Graham termed "garbage" and "a political hit piece." Ray Miller also weighed in, calling Bednar's charges "offensive and totally unwarranted." Bell, however, thought Bednar "didn't go far enough. That's only the cap of the iceberg." For his part, Bednar denied backing any particular candidate. "I'm trying to stay neutral," he explained.

All three candidates participated in a debate in Brisbane's Community Center, beneath the library on Visitacion Avenue, on October 14. One of the questions put to the candidates concerned any conflict of interest they might have if elected to the Council. All three answered that they had no such conflicts. The moderator then moved to a question about handling the City's general fund surplus. But when Nielsen stood to answer, she began by returning to the previous question, pointing out that John Bell had a son "who was promoted to fire captain after the split of the



Former mayor (1968-1969) and longtime resident John Bell ran for a seat on the Council in a bitterly divisive 1987 race. Bell's loss by a wide margin did not settle the political turmoil in Brisbane, which continued through 1988 and led to a recall election in August 1989.

Public Safety Department into fire and police.” This, Nielsen said, made candidate Bell’s “ability, without conflict of interest, to vote on any public safety issue, illegal.” Bell did not reply.

Two nights later, the campaign took an ugly turn when all eight tires on Nielsen’s cars were slashed. In addition, police received anonymous calls reporting a yellow van going through town tearing down campaign posters. Bell distanced himself from the violence and vandalism and did not view the tire slashing as politically motivated. “That could be something else personal,” he suggested. No witnesses came forward, and though a yellow van was followed to a Brisbane home, no evidence was found linking the van to the destruction of campaign signs and no one was ever arrested.

Miller (531 votes) and Nielsen (517) won handily over Bell (428) in the November 3 election, although the results also reflected some division in the City between newer hillside residents and those in the “flatlands,” where Nielsen’s margin over Bell was a slim 6

votes. Bell knew he had been an underdog and concluded “You can’t beat City Hall,” but he also maintained that it was the people who lost, not him. “I want Brisbane to be like it used to be,” he said. “It’s getting too crowded.”

Former Mayors Group Forms, Steps In

With Nielsen, the Council that convened a few weeks later and elected Lew Graham mayor was relatively young and strongly pro-environment. There appeared to be no notable divisions in its ranks concerning any of the major issues facing Brisbane. On December 7, 1987, one month after the council election and nearly one year to the day after the Council’s selection of architect Michael Graves, members received a letter from nine former Brisbane mayors announcing that they had formed a new “civic organization.” Chaired by Jim Williams, the group stood on an “accumulated 77 years of service to our City” and a “combined total of 356 years of LIVING in Brisbane” as the basis for offering their pooled advice to the City’s current leadership.

Claiming no political ambition and having “only the welfare and the goodwill of our City foremost in our thoughts,” the Former Mayors of Brisbane believed that they “must take more interest and participate in the direction our City is taking.” The group consisted of Williams John Bell, Don Bradshaw, Bill Lawrence, Jess Salmon, Dale With, Anja Miller, Jeannine Hodge, and, as its most vocal member, Ed Schwenderlauf. In the coming months, as conflict sharpened in Brisbane, Hodge and Miller withdrew from the Former Mayors group. But the initial idea



of elders offering sage advice to a young City Council seemed to hold some appeal across a spectrum of opinion among the City's longer-term residents.

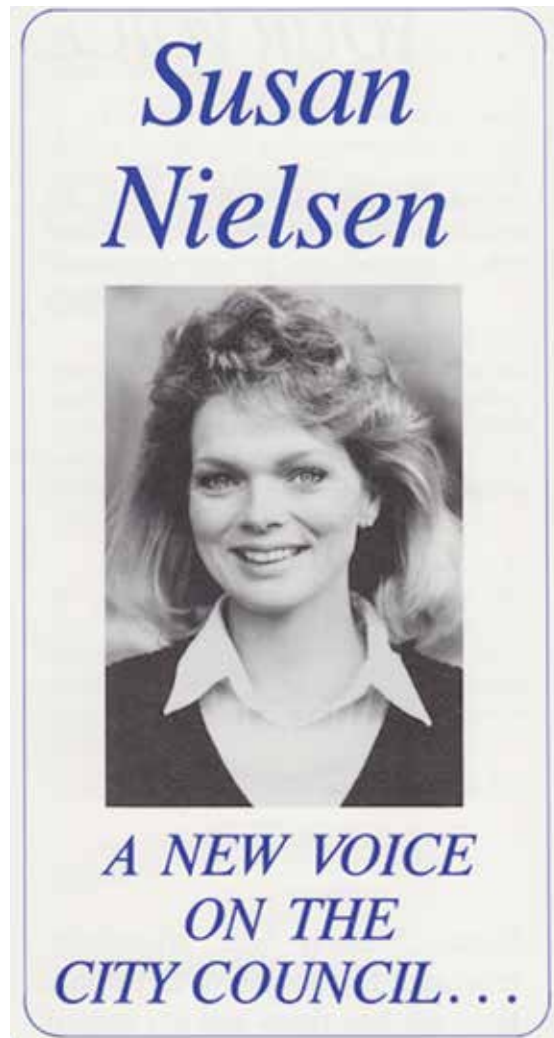
In mid-January 1988, Susan Nielsen called police to report that her tires had once again been slashed. She and Lew Graham also had received numerous phone calls at all hours from someone who simply hung up. Graham got twenty-five such calls on the night Nielsen's tires were damaged. Once again, no culprit was ever identified, and such incidents added an element of fear to the City's mounting political strife. "It gets kinda scary," Nielsen allowed. "I mean, what next?"

The Council Moves Ahead

On February 8, 1988, the Council authorized the issuance of \$5.5 million in "Certificates of Participation" (COPs) toward financing the Civic Center. By using COP financing, Brisbane would in effect "sell" the Civic Center to a trustee (investor) who would then lease it back to the City. When the lease payments were completed, the City would have "bought back" the facility and be its official owner. In the meantime, the trustee could issue tax-exempt bonds to the public to be paid back by the lease payments made by Brisbane. In this case, the trustee was the Brisbane Financing Authority. The pros and cons of this financing approach, including whether any financing approach was premature at this point, would soon become part of the larger argument over the Civic Center project.

The next month, on March 28, 1988, the Council held a special meeting in the Community Center to unveil Graves's final conceptual plan and to give residents another chance to offer reactions and suggestions. Those heading to the meeting could see signs posted around town urging them to "Just Say No to the Civic Center." Susan Nielsen countered with a letter to residents urging support for the project and describing opponents as a "small but vocal group."

Those attending the meeting were likely to have received two letters from the Former Mayors. The first, dated March 18, proposed that the planned Civic Center site, now a grass field, be turned into a City park "for this and future generations of Brisbane citizens to enjoy." The letter also suggested providing a separate facility



Though Susan Nielsen, John Bell, and Council Member and Mayor Ray Miller were contending for two open seats on the Council in the fall of 1987, Miller's re-election seemed secure. The contest between Nielsen and Bell, however, highlighted some of the tensions surrounding demographic and social changes in Brisbane in the 1980s.

for police and fire services, which would reduce the size and scope of the Civic Center and allow it to be placed in a smaller, existing structure that could be renovated. A building known as the Panasonic Building that fronted Old County Road was often mentioned as suitable. The Former Mayors encouraged citizens to attend the March 28 meeting and to demand a vote on any Civic Center design proposal.

The second letter, on March 23, was decidedly more confrontational. To their previously stated

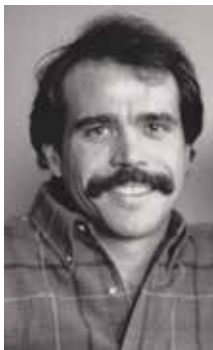
demands, the Former Mayors now added the threat of a recall petition, a tactic that some of them had experienced as elected officials and that had proven unfailingly painful in Brisbane's body politic. They also exposed the "insider-outsider" undercurrent in Brisbane by impugning current council members' and City staff's long-term commitment to the community. "Five people plus a majority of staff, some of whom might be gone by the time the project is completed, cannot tell the people of Brisbane what is best for them," warned the Former Mayors. It was a theme that John Bell had punched hard in the candidates' debate the previous fall, when he had expressed outrage that most City employees did not live in town and therefore were "outsiders" who he believed did not have the citizens' interests at heart. When asked about his vision for Brisbane's future at the end of that evening, Bell simply shot back, "I want a City Council that listens to the people!"

At the March 28 council meeting, Ed Schwenderlauf read the Former Mayors' letter into the council record. The ensuing discussion of the Civic Center gave expression to the range of opinions already afloat in Brisbane, though one resident, Darlene Peterson, observed aptly that the letter from the Former Mayors had "muddied the waters," and that even if the Council voted to turn the site into a park, there "would be an argument as to whether it should be used for active or passive recreation."

Council Approves Final Design: The "2 A.M. Meeting"

Over the next two weeks, tension mounted in Brisbane, culminating in a dramatic and lengthy council meeting on the night of April 11 that became known as "the 2 a.m. meeting." On the agenda was the Council's final approval of Michael Graves's design. Graves, who flew in for the meeting, heard little that had not already been talked about for many weeks, though the level of acrimony had risen sharply. "You can cut the tension in this room with a knife," observed attendee Mark Griffin, a one-year Brisbane resident who favored Graves's design. Diane Harris, who had lived in town just nine months and also supported the design, declared, "What I've heard here tonight is 'Let's keep things the way they used to be.' I don't see why having a building that some people don't like means that the town is losing its character. This City cannot remain static, much as some of us would like."

Marc Salmon, a thirty-six-year resident and son of Jess Salmon, one of the Former Mayors, departed from his father's views on the matter, as did his wife Camille. "Our City is more complex than when I grew up here with wooden sidewalks," Mark noted. "Our needs are changing, toward the direction of a new City Hall." Others, like Jim Williams and fellow members of the Former Mayors group, David



Lewis Graham



Susan Nielsen



Tony Attard



Fred Smith



Ray Miller

The 1988 Brisbane City Council believed there was a long-standing consensus among the people of Brisbane to build a new Civic Center. But for a variety of reasons that coalesced in 1988 on the selection of architect Michael Graves, any consensus that once had existed dissolved in controversy. Mayor Lewis Graham led the fight to preserve the Civic Center plan against what he thought was a disruptive minority of opponents. As months passed, the controversy consumed public dialogue. Of the five council members pictured here, four were subject to a recall election: Lewis Graham, Susan Nielsen, Tony Attard, and Fred Smith. The recall effort spared Ray Miller, who had expressed doubts about proceeding with the project.

Schooley of the environmental organization San Bruno Mountain Watch, and volunteer firefighter Lee Panza, registered opposition to the project. At the May 18, 1987, meeting, thirty-seven of forty-eight people who offered an opinion had generally supported Graves and the Civic Center. Now, nearly a year later, exactly forty-eight people spoke again, and Graves's supporters numbered twenty-three.

Mayor Graham noted that eleven written communications had been mailed in for the April 11 meeting, but rather than take time away from those who had shown up in person to speak, he asked City Clerk Lynne Bowman-Jones to summarize how many of the letters had been in favor and how many opposed to the Civic Center. Only one letter-writer had been opposed, replied Bowman-Jones. After months of controversy, it appeared that a slight majority of residents registering an opinion still favored the Civic Center project with Graves as its architect. John Burr, a lifelong resident, an attorney, and an environmental activist who was seated in the rear of the room and had chosen not to speak during the time for oral communications, now demanded that his letter—the sole opposing letter—be read. Graham refused on the grounds that if he read Burr's letter, he would have to read all the others, too.

Fred Smith, who with Tony Attard had comprised a council subcommittee on the Civic Center design process and whose initiative had helped marshal council support for selecting Graves, voiced his disappointment that an apparent consensus about a new Civic Center in Brisbane had deteriorated into such severe discord—and at what seemed like the eleventh hour. “That totally disregards the efforts, not only of the Council and the City, but also of dozens and dozens of citizens that have put their time, their efforts, their sweat, and their desires into this project,” Smith contended. To brush that aside was “a slap in the face to all those people, and sort of saying, well, your efforts don't count for anything.” Despite his frustration, Smith maintained that Graves's design was, pending some modification, “of very good quality and is something I think the community will be very proud of.”

Attard then pointed out that in 1965, during

the tenure of Mayor Jim Williams and two council members who were now among the Former Mayors—Ed Schwenderlauf and Jess Salmon, the City's General Plan had called for the construction of a Civic Center on the site of the old motel. Since the Former Mayors were now pushing for a Community Park there, Attard's comment was construed as a charge of hypocrisy and sparked shouts of protest from the rear of the room where the elders were seated. Current Mayor Graham gaveled for quiet, remarking that it was “too late in the game” for a public vote on the Civic Center.

Council Member Ray Miller Demurs

Ray Miller, like Fred Smith, confessed to feeling “a little overwhelmed” by the intensely differing opinions expressed at the meeting. But unlike Smith, who was willing to forge ahead, Miller was reluctant to make a decision that evening. The idea had been around for a long time, he said, so no harm would come from waiting a little longer. Perhaps a survey would help to assess public opinion more accurately. Besides, Miller had some remaining uncertainty about the wisdom of having committed to Certificates of Participation for project financing without a more secure community consensus about the Civic Center's final design.

Late in the evening, which was in fact early the next day, the Council voted 4-1 to accept Graves's design. Ray Miller broke ranks with his colleagues, an outcome he did not relish given the importance of unity on the Council—especially between himself and Fred Smith—in facing down the ongoing legal intimidation from SDI as well as conflicts over the quarry and airplane noise. But Smith, Graham, Attard, and Nielsen were convinced that the construction of a Civic Center on the old Cozy Cove site had been a long-standing civic goal and that the public had been given ample time and opportunity for input—“27 public hearings, meetings, and workshops resulting in 5 new designs and countless modifications to the Civic and Community Center design over the last 2 years,” Smith noted in a report to Brisbane voters. Moreover, they insisted that the financing mechanisms already set in place had been well chosen and, in any event, could not readily be

undone. Delaying the project any further would likely cause it to unravel. And, perhaps most importantly, failing to act decisively now would stall and perhaps reverse Brisbane's progress into a new era of pride and self-improvement.

The four were disheartened, if not outright angry, at Miller's dissenting vote. A unanimous Council would have shown strong support for the Civic Center, and Miller was a highly regarded member of the community. For his part, Miller maintained that his vote did not mean he was opposed to the Civic Center or even to its design, but simply that the decision-making process required more time in the face of such vehement opposition from deeply rooted elements of the small community. Unlike larger entities such as counties and states, little Brisbane could ill afford the rancor that sometimes followed when a straightforward majority decision terminated debate on major issues before opponents felt they had had sufficient "say" in the matter.

In subsequent weeks, Miller's position took the form of a detailed examination of several aspects of the project, including the number of parking spaces available, the accuracy of design cost projections, the plantings to go in the area's open spaces and how that space would be drained, the location of a planned gym, and the choice of stucco as a building material. An exasperated Lew Graham, who compiled answers to all of Miller's questions, wrote to his colleague, "As you know, the truth is that the Council has devoted considerable time and energy to such major project issues over the last two years."

Continued Conflict: Recall Petitions Submitted

The discord spread. Workshop facilitators Anna Martin and Dolores Gomez resigned their positions in protest after the April 11 council vote. And resident Nancy Birnbaum wrote to the Council the day after the meeting, "Yes, we did have a majority come out in favor of the City Center plans, but is that enough?" and then answered her own question: "No, I do not believe so. We must concern ourselves, myself included, with this terrible mistrust and anger felt by too many citizens."

Apart from the Council's vote, the major

development of the April 11 "2 a.m. meeting" was the hardening of lines on the options that participants perceived as available. If nothing else, Miller had sought to keep all options open; instead, they now narrowed. City attorney Robert Logan had advised attendees that the Civic Center project was not subject to a referendum because the thirty-day limit on any legislative decision had already passed. Though Graves's final design had not been up for approval until the April 11 meeting, the larger project had already been approved through a series of steps, including the financing, over the past several months. With the window of opportunity closed for a referendum, the matter could not constitutionally be raised as a voter initiative. However, it could be placed on a ballot for an "advisory vote" that would not be binding on the Council. From the dissenters' vantage point, that left only two options—either accept Graves's Civic Center as the result of a legitimate, democratic process in which their side had lost, or recall the four council members and try again.

On May 4, Calvin Webster, an electrical contractor and six-year Brisbane resident, started the Committee for a Choice to draw up four recall petitions, have them approved, and then gather the required 403 signatures, or 25 percent of Brisbane's registered voters. Webster said he was not opposed to the Civic Center as such but was firmly against all "postmodern" architecture and, therefore, all of Graves's work in general. The Civic Center, Webster declared, "must not be a temple where the all-knowing gods and their priests hold sway." Five weeks later, Webster strode into City Hall and served recall notices to Council Members Graham, Smith, Attard, and Nielsen. Barring any problem with the petition's wording, Webster and others leading the recall movement would gather the signatures and have them certified by the city clerk; then the Council would set a date for the recall election.

City Carries on Daily Business

Meanwhile, despite the enormous presence of the Civic Center controversy in Brisbane, the City's life and business carried on. On February 8, 1987, the day the Council approved the Civic



Chief Cy Bologoff (1987-1991) and Council Member Fred Smith in front of the old fire station, late 1980s. Since 1932, Brisbane's volunteer fire department had been at the center of the City's social and political life. After the City's incorporation in 1961, the department became more professionalized. The Firemen's Social Club disbanded in 1973, but the strong volunteer tradition continued.

Center financing, Brisbane's Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission handed out Star Awards to fifty-one citizens and fifteen organizations for their contributions to the community over the previous year. Susan Nielsen had helped inaugurate the awards in 1985 while she was serving on the commission. Awardees spanned the spectrum of opinions on Graves and the Civic Center, demonstrating the unifying potential of community service. Street improvements, including the beautification of Visitacion Avenue, continued through the summer, as did the City's ongoing upgrade of its water and sewer infrastructure. Tom Hitchcock, who had recently joined Brisbane's Public Safety Department from Menlo Park as a police sergeant, proved a valuable addition. Not long after his arrival, he was promoted to lieutenant and acting chief on the same day, and he soon became the City's new police chief.

The Council budgeted funds for constructing a new water storage tank to replace two aging

wooden tanks, as well as for purchasing a site high on Margaret Avenue on which to build it, though the actual purchase and construction would take place several years later, in 1992. Residents found themselves under mandated water use restrictions as the City of San Francisco, which supplied Brisbane's water, experienced shortages. And on August 29, just in time for the new school year, Anne Ladd went to work as the Brisbane School District's new superintendent, replacing twenty-eight-year veteran Robert Lloyd.

City Manager Robin Leiter struggled to help longtime resident and new Fire Chief Cy Bologoff resolve some of the fire department's problems—a challenge made no easier by a series of sexual harassment charges within that service that were, Leiter told the Council in October 1988, "part of a now repetitious history." Further training and education were necessary, she said, not only because it was the responsible thing to



Citizens Against Recall printed “Common Sense” in spring 1989 to counter “We The People” and other pro-recall and anti-City Hall publications.

do but also because “such incidences which are not corrected can lead to enormous liability.”

The Japan-based Hitachi America Ltd. purchased a newly constructed, twelve-story office building near the Brisbane Marina on Sierra Point in the summer of 1988 and began the consolidation of its five Bay Area sales offices there. In June, Brisbane agreed to dismiss its May 1987 lawsuit against the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) when that agency agreed to an environmental impact review, as well as a review by the region’s Airport/Community Roundtable, before making any final decisions on departure paths from San Francisco airport. Once required to climb for four miles prior to turning, jets had been allowed to turn after reaching 2,000 feet, leading many of them to cross over Brisbane, where the City’s bowl shape reverberated engine noise through the town. And in July, Susan Nielsen led a drive to include free curbside recycling in the City’s waste collection contract with the South San Francisco Scavenger Company. It was the first such program in San Mateo County. At the July 25 council meeting, Mayor Graham called a recess so that those present could step outside and see the recycling truck that Scavengers had sent by for the occasion.

The Recall Campaign and Aftermath

During July and August 1988, recall proponents collected signatures on the petition that Lynne Bowman-Jones, after consultation with attorney Robert Logan, had approved, while another group, Citizens Against Recall, mounted a door-to-door campaign to defeat the recall effort. On August 24, recall proponents turned in more than seven hundred signatures. After a month of examining them, Bowman-Jones rejected more than half because of an apparent irregularity in the petition gatherers’ required verification of signature dates. Recall advocates countered that this was just a minor technicality that City Hall was using to derail the recall, and they went to San Mateo County Superior Court to have the city clerk’s decision overturned.

On December 21, Judge John Schwartz ruled in favor of the recall proponents. After some consideration, the four City Council members facing recall decided against an appeal of Judge Schwartz’s decision. “Too much has been spent already!” declared Fred Smith, then Brisbane’s mayor. At a meeting on January 30, 1989, the Council set May 9 as the date for the recall election. But even as grading proceeded on the Civic Center site, the project was showing signs of strain behind the scenes. In February 1989 City attorney Logan informed Michael Graves that Brisbane formally considered his firm in breach of contract for services that were “consistently late, incomplete, and for some time seemingly

From Recycling to Sustainability

By the 1980s, increasing use of disposable containers and packaging had strained the capacity of landfills to absorb waste. Brisbane was the first city in San Mateo County to initiate a recycling program after Council Member Susan Nielsen led her colleagues in passing a recycling ordinance in 1988. The program called on the South San Francisco Scavenger Company, Brisbane's contracted waste management company, to provide trucks specially equipped to handle newspapers, plastics, glass, metal, and motor oil. Residents were provided with stackable plastic bins in which to separate and store the recyclables for curbside pickup. Commercial customers also could use the program.

In its first five months, Brisbane's program diverted approximately forty-five tons of material from landfill disposal—an average of about twenty pounds of recyclables per household per month. But participation required a new awareness about things that previously had just been tossed into the trash can. Glass bottles and plastic soda containers could be recycled, for example, but broken dishes or plastic milk jugs could not. Continued education and improved recycling technology have since increased Brisbane's recyclers' options. But citizens in the early 1990s were on a learning curve, and some fell off—or just didn't get on. Two years into the program, only 25 percent of Brisbane households were participating.

At that time, however, a new state law (California Integrated Waste Management Act, AB 939) mandated a 25 percent reduction by 1995 in the amount of waste going to landfills, and a 50 percent reduction by the year 2000. Cities were required to develop plans for meeting these goals. Brisbane already had a plan, but the new state requirement added impetus to the City's drive to continue educating and motivating residents.

Over time, that effort paid off. Reductions in consumption, as well as greater participation in recycling and composting, became part and parcel of Brisbane citizens' ever-increasing appreciation of their ecological responsibilities. What began as a curbside recycling program gradually merged into a broader awareness of the importance of sustainable practices in every aspect of life, and of Brisbane's connections with other communities in the Bay Area—and around the world.





Walt Bednar's campaign against City Hall predated the recall campaign, but his "We The People" broadsides quickly became the sharp edge of the recall effort.

made with reference to a project well in excess of the scope of the project described in the contract documents, both in size and estimated cost." While Brisbane was not seeking to terminate the contract, said Logan, the City was "reserving all the other legal and equitable rights it may have."

Though the recall election campaign frothed with personal attacks on the four targeted council members, its substance jelled around ideals of democracy and the people's right to have a say, specifically about the Civic Center. Both sides staked a claim on this issue. The pro-recall Committee for a Choice asserted that the council majority had "consistently rejected all calls for input from the people in the form of a vote or a survey" and charged that the council members had "done nothing to establish a consensus of public opinion by asking the people what they really want." Citizens Against Recall, on the other hand, accused recall proponents of using disruptive tactics and misinformation to hijack a democratic process of decision-making that had, through numerous meetings over the past two years, accurately expressed the will of a majority of the people as favoring a Graves-designed Civic Center.

The May 9 recall vote was very close, splitting Brisbane voters nearly down the middle. Lewis Graham was recalled by 16 votes (597-581) and Tony Attard by 6 (593-587). Fred Smith, whose term was up in November, held onto his seat by 14 votes, while Susan Nielsen, who appeared

to have been recalled by just 3 votes, asked for a recount. City Clerk Bowman-Jones conducted the recount, which included some irregular absentee ballots and resulted in Nielsen's reinstatement by a single vote. The Committee for a Choice challenged Bowman-Jones's decision in San Mateo County Superior Court, and on July 21 Judge Harlan K. Veal invalidated that decision and restored the recall outcome that, after further examination of disputed ballots, now rested on a single vote.

Having been recalled, then reinstated, Susan Nielsen now stood recalled again, by one vote. Judge Veal, however, ordered a thirty-day stay on Nielsen's recall to allow the Council a quorum while Brisbane awaited the August 8 election of two council members to replace Graham and Attard. Nielsen's replacement would result from a separate election, as it was now too late to fill that seat on August 8. Things got even more complicated for Brisbane voters: those elected to the Council on August 8 would have to run again during the regularly scheduled election in November, just three months later.

Among seven candidates who entered the August 8 race, voters selected former City Manager Brad Kerwin. Now a financial advisor, Kerwin had differed sharply with Ray Miller and Fred Smith over their challenge to the 1,250-unit condo project on the Northeast Ridge and had resigned as city manager in June 1984. They also selected Steve Waldo, an attorney

who had moved to Brisbane with his family in 1986. Waldo was a newcomer to Brisbane who had endorsed Citizens Against Recall but was not otherwise disposed to enter Brisbane's political arena. During the recall campaign furor, however, he and his wife had been at home watching *The Sound of Music* with their children. "There's a bit in there about the onslaught of Nazism in Austria," Waldo recounted, "and my oldest daughter (age 6) said, 'Is that what's going on in this recall?' My wife turned to me and said, 'Well, one of us has to run, and probably you.'" In his campaign statement, Waldo expressed his disappointment that the recall had taken place but stressed that his greater concern was "the vandalism, harassment, intimidation, and open vulgarity that accompanied the campaign." He asked voters to "help me keep Brisbane progressive, fun, and civil." Also on the ballot were four options concerning the Civic Center. Voters could choose to continue with the project as planned; to construct only a police and fire station; to hire a new architect and start over; or to select any number of eight possible site uses such as a recreation facility or a park. The vote was advisory only, but it would be almost impossible politically to proceed contrary to its direction. At the end of the day, 60 percent of voters rejected continuing with the Civic Center project, while even more rejected the next two options. Among possible uses for the site, the park proposal proved the most popular.

To advocates of the new Civic Center, the vote marked the end of their dream. City Manager Leiter soon was on the phone to Michael Graves to negotiate the termination of his contract and the resolution of several disputed invoices. While most of the funds from Certificates of Participation were eventually redirected to other municipal projects, Brisbane's \$600,000 payment to Michael Graves proved a loss. The Civic Center project was finished. Leiter informed the City Council that public works employees were watering the old Cozy Cove site daily to keep the dust from blowing through town.

After the August 8 vote, recall bitterness permeated council meetings. Since Susan Nielsen had undertaken an appeal of Judge Veal's ruling, her recall was considered not finalized and she

therefore continued to take her seat at council meetings, an act that incensed political rival John Bell. On August 30, Bell walked out of a meeting, thereby avoiding ejection by Police Chief Tom Hitchcock for refusing to stop shouting protests about Nielsen's presence on the council dais.

But faced with mounting legal expenses when the City decided that her appeal was not part of her official duties and therefore did not warrant continued payment of her legal fees, and after months of personal attacks, vandalism, and threats, an exhausted Nielsen abandoned her appeal and resigned from the Council, effective October 17, 1989. "If my resignation will stop this ongoing political battle and senseless disruption," she said in a formal statement, "and allow the community to unify and work together to solve its real problems, then that is the best service I can offer." She soon moved out of Brisbane, as did Lew Graham, whose property also had been vandalized during the rough months of recall.

Three weeks later, in the November 7 general election, voters reaffirmed their recent choices of Waldo and Kerwin and added Lee Panza, who



Former City Manager Brad Kerwin (1977-1984) was active in the pro-recall group. He decided to run for one of the Council positions opened-up by the recall and was elected.



Steve Waldo and his family were watching *The Sound of Music* in 1989 when a violent scene moved his six-year-old daughter Amanda to ask him, “Is that what’s going on in this recall?” Waldo looked at his wife, Pat, who said, “One of us has to run.” Steve did, launching a long and successful political career in Brisbane.

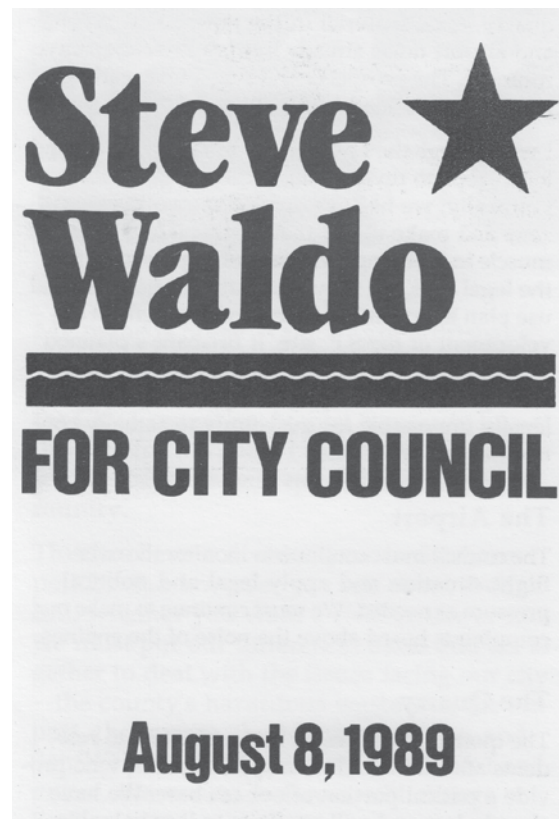
had finished third in the August 8 election, to replace the retiring Fred Smith. The new Council selected Ray Miller to serve as mayor. Nielsen’s resignation had not come in time for candidates for her seat to be on the November ballot, so the Council set February 6, 1990, as the date for a special election for that purpose.

New Council Turns Back County’s Hazardous Waste Proposal, Accepts Reduced Northeast Ridge Development Plan by SDI

While Brisbane’s distracting internal politics had consumed much of the City’s attention and energy, the Council, city manager, and staff had successfully managed several major challenges, including one that conjured up threats that most thought of as long-gone. At the end of March 1989, San Mateo County had released a Draft Hazardous Waste Management Plan that would have placed 40 percent of the county’s designated toxic waste disposal area in the Baylands—within Brisbane’s City limits—where the City was already working with property owners to clean up and restore areas for commercial and light industrial use. “You’re perpetuating the very thing we’re trying to escape,” Ray Miller complained to county authorities. “Is this a joke?” asked Fred Smith when the county’s plan came before the Council for “approval” in August.

Brisbane protested vigorously, but Robin Leiter cautioned that new state legislation allowed an appeals board to overrule local restrictions on locating toxic waste facilities. A better strategy, she argued, would be to make requirements so difficult to overcome that anyone looking to dispose of toxic waste in Brisbane would choose to look elsewhere. Toward that end, the Council undertook to amend the City’s General Plan and change the zoning of the Baylands area in question to “commercial–mixed use,” a category that technically would allow some residential housing to be built, but not without extensive review and permitting processes that would effectively give Brisbane control over the decision.

In February 1989 Southwest Diversified submitted to the Council a plan for 631 homes on the Northeast Ridge. Subsequent planning and negotiating by the City’s Planning Commission and City staff was far more complicated and difficult than most citizens appreciated. The process involved technicalities such as “vesting tentative maps,” numerous permits and rezoning considerations, an “addendum environmental



Brisbane Remembers Byron Jensen, Artist and Civic Leader

In 1988 Brisbane found a way to honor the rich natural heritage of San Bruno Mountain as well as one of its cherished residents, Byron Jensen, who passed away in 1986. Jensen had served on the City's Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission for several years and was president of the Garden Club. She was also an artist who deeply appreciated San Bruno Mountain's varied habitat. With her husband Milt and their children, she enjoyed the raccoons and opossums that often visited the Jensen home on Kings Road.

In remembrance of Jensen's many contributions to Brisbane over the years, former Mayor Anja Miller formed a committee to raise funds for a bronze statue of a raccoon that would be placed in Costanos Canyon. The sculpture, executed by renowned local artist Spero Anargyros, was intended also to inspire young people by giving them a public monument that reflected their love of local wildlife.

On September 15, 1989, Anja Miller and Council Member Ray Miller gathered with Jensen family members, Byron Jensen Memorial Fund Committee members, sculptor Anargyros, Brisbane children's groups, and many Brisbane residents to dedicate the life-size memorial. An inscription read, "For the Children of Brisbane. Dedicated to the Memory of Byron Pierson Jensen 1908-86 and Her Love of San Bruno Mountain, Its Canyons, Native Plants & Wildlife. A Gift From Her Friends & Family, 1988."

Sadly, in February 2008 the statue was discovered missing and has never been recovered. Its loss has only fortified Brisbane's commitment to the live raccoons and other denizens of San Bruno Mountain who depend on human vigilance for protection against harmful intrusions.





Lee Panza, an active volunteer with the Brisbane Fire Department, also had views on Brisbane's political future and ran in the August 8, 1989, special recall election. Though he lost that race to Kerwin and Waldo, Panza won a council seat a few months later during the regular November election.



City Manager Robin Leiter rallied city employees to maintain morale and keep delivering services through one of the most trying periods in Brisbane's history

impact report,” and an application to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an extension of the Habitat Conservation Plan established in 1982 to protect the mountain’s endangered butterfly species while also acknowledging property owners’ development rights. The brunt of the work fell on Brisbane’s oft-maligned employees and City Manager Leiter, who noted that Brisbane’s strained politics—including harassment and attacks on City employees—had made for a “tumultuous” year. Nevertheless, the staff had “stayed focused on the issues.”

On November 6, 1989, the day before the General Election that would continue Waldo and Kerwin on the Council and bring Lee Panza in to replace Fred Smith, the City Council voted unanimously to accept a much-reduced plan it had negotiated with the developer for 579 residences in three neighborhoods, one containing 268 townhouses, another with 97 single-family detached houses, and a third with 224 condo units. The decision, passed as Ordinance 351, was a disappointment for some, including members of San Bruno Mountain Watch, who would have preferred Brisbane to purchase the property from SDI and preserve it as open space. But doing so would have required the City to raise \$35 million to \$40 million, or approximately \$40,000 from every household in town.

All things considered, the agreement with

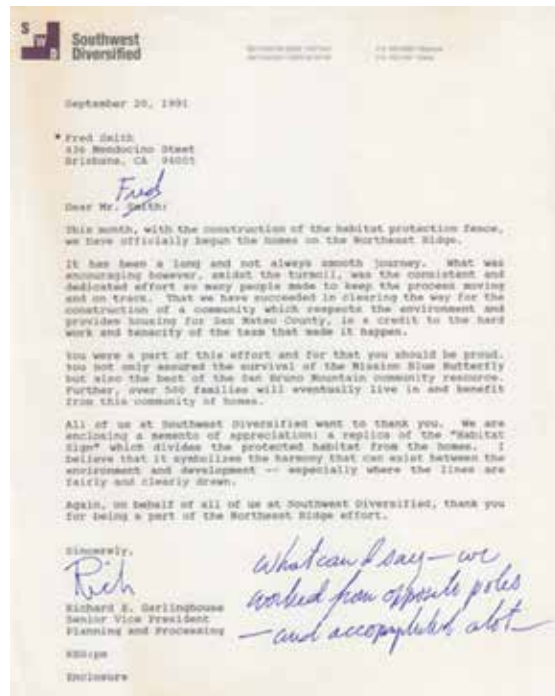
SDI represented a major victory for the City, which had fought successfully in San Mateo County courts as well as in the state legislature in Sacramento to channel SDI’s grand development ambitions into a course more proportional to Brisbane’s dimensions and identity. The number of residential units to be built would be reduced by more than half from the number originally planned. The agreement also changed the type of residences, which had been solely high-rise condominiums when first proposed in the early 1980s, and brought to Brisbane several developer-paid offerings totaling \$10.2 million. Included were new police and fire facilities; an alternate truck route that would remove quarry trucks from Brisbane’s residential streets; a swimming pool; a recreation facility that would eventually open as the Mission Blue Center; a six-acre park with tennis courts, ball field, lighting, and parking; several drainage, utility, and landscaping improvements; and a contribution toward a new Civic Center.

None of this, Fred Smith emphasized, would have occurred had not he, Ray Miller, and Jeannine Hodge put their homes and assets on the line by challenging the original development plans in 1984 and fighting for a smaller project. The agreement also officially ended SDI’s lawsuits. Rich Garlinghouse, a former Cadillac Fairview executive who had become an SDI senior vice president and

the company's principal contact with Brisbane, mailed his congratulations all around. "Dear Ray," he wrote Miller, "Well, the shouting is over and the smoke has cleared. . . . Thank you for putting hard feelings aside and fairly hearing our project on its merits." In person, Garlinghouse told Miller that, thanks to Brisbane's resistance, the Northeast Ridge had turned out to be a much better project. "After he put us through all that stuff for five years," Miller exclaimed, "why didn't we start there in the first place?" Now, the main remaining obstacle to the start of construction was approval by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of an amended Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

The Northeast Ridge settlement and its HCP could be seen either as a reasonable victory for the environment, which is how the City Council viewed it, or as a sell-out to developers, which is how Bay Area Mountain Watch saw it. But everyone celebrated the acquisition of Owl and Buckeye Canyons on San Bruno Mountain's north slope in November 1989 for perpetual use as an ecological preserve. The land belonged to the quarry owners, Ralph and Marie Johnson, who sold it to the Trust for Public Land. Rosemary Cameron, assistant to City Manager Leiter, helped to secure funds authorized through Proposition 70, enabling the Wildlife Conservation Board of California's Department of Fish and Game to purchase the ninety-three acres from the trust for \$1.3 million. Brisbane contributed \$50,000 to the effort.

"It's one of those rare projects on which we can all agree," said Ray Miller, who once again was serving as Brisbane's mayor. Decades later, Miller still recalled the occasion warmly. "Everybody won," he said, "and I was mayor then, so that was good; it was nice." Secured as open space for future generations, Owl and Buckeye Canyons were a legacy more enduring than any Civic Center could ever be. And the settlement with SDI, which brought with it amenities that would markedly improve life in Brisbane in coming years, had achieved a major goal of Brisbane's leadership in the 1980s. It had been a stormy passage that still was not quite finished. But most in Brisbane were ready to move ahead.



On November 6, 1989, the City Council voted unanimously to accept a development plan with Southwest Diversified Incorporated (SDI) for a much-reduced housing project on the Northeast Ridge. The plan was the outcome of a court-mandated mediation process. In September 1991, with construction officially under way on the reduced development, SDI Senior Vice President Rich Garlinghouse wrote to Miller and Smith, looking on the bright side of what had been a bitter conflict. He added a handwritten comment to Smith's letter: "What can I say—we worked from opposite poles and accomplished a lot."

CHAPTER TWO

Moving Ahead

1990-1993

Just after 5 p.m. on October 17, 1989, the day Susan Nielsen formally resigned from the Brisbane City Council, Police Chief Tom Hitchcock was driving home and looking forward to watching Game 3 of the World Series, about to begin in Candlestick Park just north of Brisbane. As he crested a hill, Hitchcock felt a jarring shake, as if all four of his tires had blown out. A glance at the waving power lines nearby told him that his tires were all right—it had probably been an earthquake. When he arrived home, his neighbors were in the street frantically insisting that the Bay Bridge had fallen down. Chief Hitchcock chastised them for spreading ridiculous rumors. He went inside, turned on the TV, and found out that a section of the Bay



Tom Hitchcock joined Brisbane's Public Safety Department in 1985 as a sergeant, transferring from Menlo Park. His rise in the City was rapid, with a promotion to lieutenant and acting chief occurring on the same day and a final promotion to chief in 1987. "Tom was a really good listener," said former City Manager Robin Leiter, "and he advocated for his troops." Hitchcock retired in 2010.

Bridge had indeed collapsed, as well as a section of the elevated freeway in the East Bay. Overall, more than sixty people had died, and damage estimates would reach into the billions. Game 3 had been postponed and might be cancelled altogether. Hitchcock figured he had better get back to work.

When he arrived at the 700 San Bruno Avenue facility shared by Brisbane's police and fire services, Hitchcock discovered that all the phones were out and the electricity was off. The Public Safety Department had no radio communications. Brisbane's only contact with the outside world was a single cell phone in the Parks and Recreation Department. "There weren't too many cell phones in those days," the chief noted. He and City Manager Robin Leiter took a tour of the City in a police car to assess the damage. Traffic lights were out, so most of Brisbane's police officers were out directing rush-hour traffic. Some old masonry buildings in the industrial park were slightly damaged, "but other than that," Hitchcock concluded, "the City fared pretty well."

The 6.9-magnitude Loma Prieta earthquake, named after its epicenter near Loma Prieta peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains, was the region's strongest since San Francisco's historic trembler in 1906. And while San Bruno Mountain's sedimentary rock offered greater protection to central Brisbane than some of the Bay Area's liquefaction-prone landfills, the extent of the damage in cities from San Francisco to Santa Cruz was a worrisome reminder throughout the region of the importance of community solidarity, organization, and preparedness. "We didn't really have any elaborate operating plans like we do now," said Hitchcock. "We ended up making a list of the resources in the community—food, people with construction equipment—and made plans around that. I think everybody's pretty set for an earthquake now, but it was all an outcome of Loma Prieta."

Filling Out the Council: Special Election, February 6, 1990

Clara Johnson moved to Brisbane ten years before the earthquake and had served on the City's Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission as well as the Planning Commission. Brisbane's potential vulnerability during the Loma Prieta quake made a deep impression on her. But Johnson also was upset about the man-made divisions in Brisbane in recent years and decided to run for Susan Nielsen's vacated seat in a special election to be held on February 6, 1990. "We have been caught up in some very divisive issues," she told voters in a campaign pamphlet. "It is time now to move on." For Johnson, that included accepting the 579 residential units in the Northeast Ridge settlement while making sure that construction followed a lengthy list of conditions that had been very carefully spelled out to minimize the project's effect on the mountain habitat.

Johnson joined three other contenders for one council seat. Don Shoecraft was a five-year resident and journalist who had once covered Brisbane for a local paper and who urged the City to move forward on developing the Northeast Ridge so that "work can commence as quickly as possible on a community swimming pool and other amenities linked to it." Civil engineer and architect Jay Kushner campaigned to limit Brisbane's government, in part by "releasing the hammerlock that zoning codes have on the use of property" and by giving citizens a direct vote—"referendum by mail," he called it—on all major policy decisions coming before the City Council. He rejected the recent Northeast Ridge settlement for a mixture of environmental and personal reasons, concluding that "the total domination of one species of this planet over all others has become a global terrorism which threatens to poison all of us."

Heidi Dupre had served on the City's Planning Commission, opposed the Northeast Ridge settlement, and favored a park on the former Cozy Cove Motel site. She was backed by Bay Area Mountain Watch, which also rejected the City's settlement with Southwest Diversified Incorporated and was threatening a referendum to block it. Dupre described the owls, raccoons, butterflies, and snakes that lived near her house when she moved to Brisbane twenty-two years



Clara Johnson served on the City Council from 1990-1995, with a term as mayor in 1994. She returned to the Council for another five years, 2000-2005, and served another term as mayor in 2002. In 1990 she lead the effort to organize Brisbane's Community Emergency Volunteers and was active on the Council's Open Space and Ecology Committee.

before and warned that development would make the entire Peninsula, Brisbane included, "one large metropolitan area." She set people's "right to live a healthy life with clean air, in balance with animal and plant life," against a developer's right to develop.

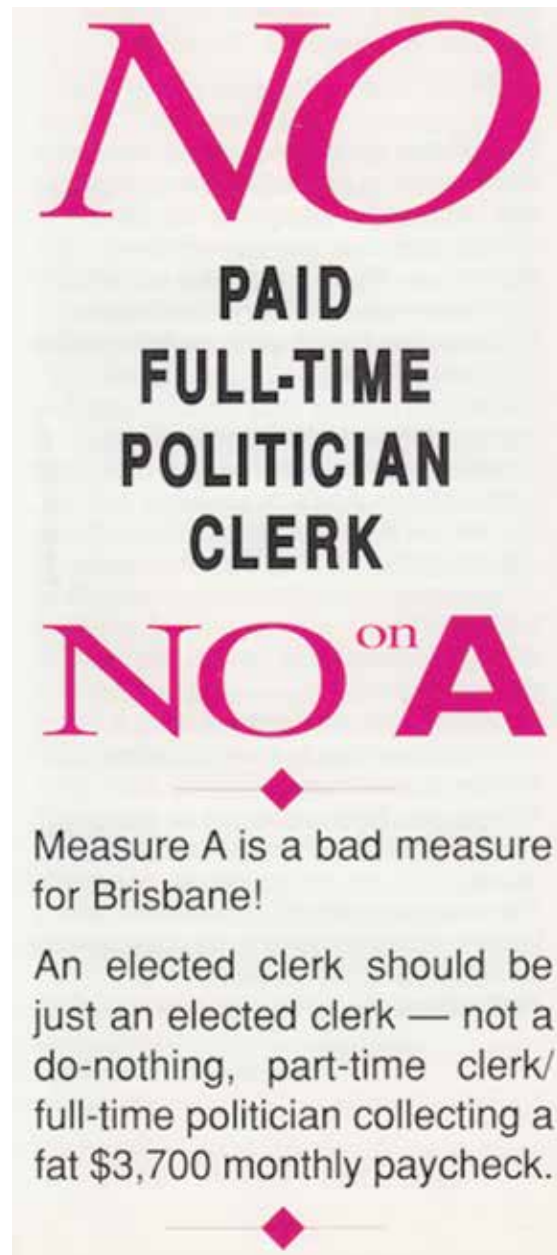
Fred Smith, Steve Waldo, Jeannine Hodge, Lorna Groundwater, and the editors of the San Mateo County daily paper *The Times*, backed Johnson. So did voters, giving her 256 votes to Dupre's 209 and Shoecraft's and Kushner's 153 and 102, respectively. The following week, on February 13, City Clerk Lynne Bowman-Jones administered the oath of office to Johnson, who joined a Council that had been incomplete for months and intent on restoring some calm to Brisbane's political life. Presumably, most voters had felt the same way when they chose new council members in 1989. But achieving that aim was not as easy as marking an election ballot. The controversy stirred up in recent years by accusations of mismanagement and waste among Brisbane's City employees, as well as charges that they lacked basic integrity, spilled into the new decade and yielded yet another sharp electoral clash in June. For her part, City Manager Leiter complained to council members privately about the relentless "staff and Council bashing" during council meetings over the past three years. "While as a professional I honor the

public's rights," she said, "I believe the meetings are demoralizing and debilitating to the staff." Leiter was even considering limiting staff presence at council meetings to reduce their exposure to the stress.

Controversy's Echoes: The City Clerk Initiative and Challenges to the Northeast Ridge Settlement

This time the anger at City Hall focused on Lynne Bowman-Jones, whose invalidation of the recall petition in September 1988 had been reversed by San Mateo County Superior Court Judge John Schwartz. Bowman-Jones's decision on disputed ballots in the May 1989 recall election that had changed Susan Nielsen's status from recalled to incumbent was also reversed in court, this time by Superior Court Judge Harlan K. Veal on July 21. In accordance with general municipal practice, Brisbane's employees and elected officials had their legal fees paid by the City if the dispute resulted from their conduct of official business. But those who had sued the City over Bowman-Jones's decisions and had won their cases resented having to pay their own legal fees when, as Luman C. Drake, treasurer of Brisbane Citizens for Better Government, put it, "the Administration spent over \$120,000 of our City money to hire high-priced San Francisco lawyers to fight the citizens." Heide Dupre had taken up this cause, criticizing "enormous expenses for attorney's fees" in her unsuccessful run for City Council in November 1989.

At the end of the next month, on December 27, Brisbane Citizens for Better Government's Walter Bednar and "co-proponents" Luman Drake, Gary Gaspar, and Jan Magdalik filed sufficient signatures to place Measure A on the June 5, 1990, primary election ballot. Measure A, titled the "City Clerk Accountability Initiative," would make the position of city clerk elected, not appointed, and would require the city clerk to reside in Brisbane and be a United States citizen. State law allowed for city clerks to be either elected or appointed, and both arrangements were common in California. But opponents of Measure A in Brisbane feared that its backers were driven by anger and would be quick to resort to extreme measures such as recall, including recall of an elected clerk who might make a decision they did not like.



Brisbane City Clerk Lynne Bowman-Jones found herself at the center of the 1989 recall storm when proponents questioned her decision on some disputed ballots. They succeeded in placing on the ballot an initiative to make the City clerk position an elected rather than civil service position. On June 5, 1990, voters rejected the initiative, but Bowman-Jones soon moved on from Brisbane.

Proponents denied that Measure A was a retaliatory action aimed at Bowman-Jones personally. But Bowman-Jones was, in fact, a British citizen who probably had not helped her case with Brisbane Citizens for Better Government by telling Brisbane Bee reporter John Curry in November that she found dealing with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service “such an unpleasant experience that I’ve had no inclination to have any more to do with it than I have to.”

Lee Panza shared some of the Measure A proponents’ concerns about the city clerk’s accountability. But he joined the rest of the Council in opposing the initiative on grounds that it would increase rather than reduce costs, as well as only further politicize important functions of the City rather than improve accountability, which was more properly a management function. Voters agreed and rejected Measure A in June, though Bowman-Jones, who Robin Leiter had described as “a real trooper” during the recall lawsuits, soon moved on from Brisbane. Perhaps not surprisingly, Leiter had trouble filling the job after Bowman-Jones left, and in August she admitted that “selling” applicants on the position was a more apt description of her task than interviewing them. Josephine McHugh filled in as acting clerk until December, when Angelina Reyes, former deputy city clerk for the City of Hayward, joined Brisbane’s staff.

Measure A was not the only grassroots initiative to emerge at the end of 1989. By December 4, just one month after the City Council approved Ordinance 351 encoding the settlement with Southwest Diversified Incorporated (SDI) for residential construction on the Northeast Ridge, environmentalists at Bay Area Mountain Watch had gathered enough signatures to submit the matter to a voter referendum. The City Council met to set a date for the election. But in the meantime, SDI had gone to court to obtain a stay on the referendum; it expected a ruling from San Mateo Superior Court Judge Thomas M. Jenkins on the morning of January 9.

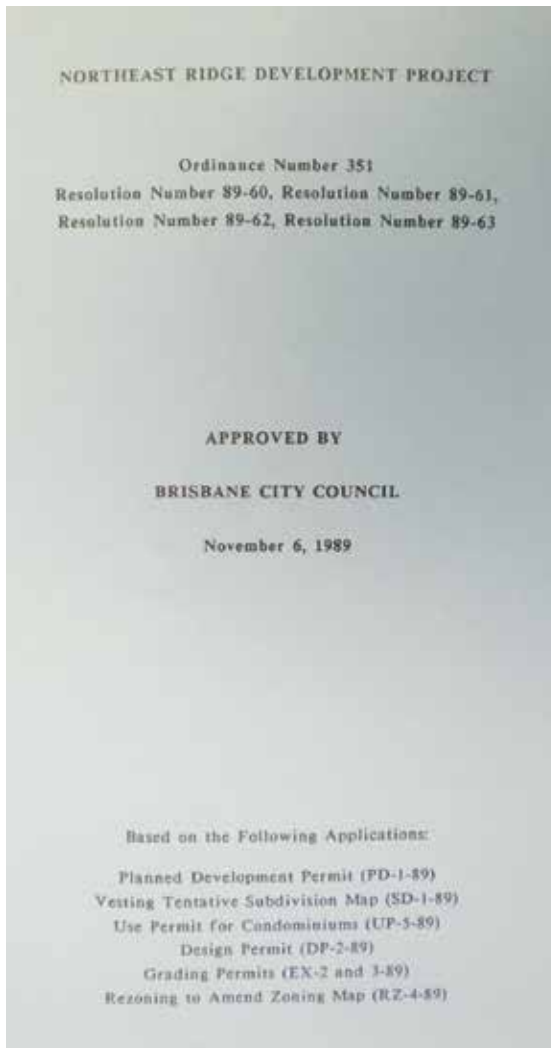
That same day, Sandy Gaspar of the Citizen Action League circulated a “news release” announcing “another voter revolt in Brisbane!” over the Northeast Ridge project. Gaspar called the future housing development “a second City

of Brisbane” whose residents “will not want to earmark any government funds or resources for the existing town. The second City people will want to spend it on themselves.” Additionally, Gaspar cited threats to endangered species on the mountain and health dangers from the project such as dust, possibly containing toxic materials, stirred up by earth-moving equipment.

The timing of the Council’s approval of Ordinance 351 on November 6, 1989, just one day before the election that brought Lee Panza to office, had fueled mistrust among some citizens. During the campaign, Panza had spoken out against the settlement with SDI, and he later thought that SDI’s Rich Garlinghouse had pushed for a council vote before the election in order to get a unanimous result. Had the Council waited, Panza would have made the vote four to one instead.

At a January 8, 1990, council meeting, Mountain Watch’s Lorraine Burtzloff and John Burr, along with Luman Drake, a proponent of Measure A, were among those urging the Council to set a date for the referendum immediately, before Judge Jenkins issued his ruling the next morning. If the Council delayed and Judge Jenkins granted the stay, “the people of Brisbane will feel that their right to vote has been taken away,” said Drake. Sandy Gaspar upped the ante, threatening another recall if council members “attempt to take away the vote of the people.” Nevertheless, the Council stuck by its decision to wait for Judge Jenkins’s ruling. On January 9, the judge imposed a stay on the referendum. After several more weeks of recriminations about the overlapping issues of Measure A and the Ordinance 351 referendum, new Council Member Clara Johnson reminded attendees at council meetings that threatening recall “creates a climate within which it is difficult to go ahead with the business of the City.”

Complicating matters was the looming expiration date of April 15—Brisbane’s last chance to buy the Northeast Ridge property from SDI and declare it open space. This was the “purchase option” alternative to development, and opponents of the project clung to a hope that the required \$35 million to \$40 million might somehow turn up. Indeed, Assistant City Manager Rosemary Cameron was actively



Some environmentalists regarded the City Council's decision to reach a settlement with Southwest Diversified Incorporated (SDI), developer of housing on the Northeast Ridge, as a sellout. San Bruno Mountain Watch sued Brisbane, the Council, and SDI but six months later, in June 1991, agreed to a dismissal of the lawsuit. However, Clarke Conway, who was concerned about how additional housing on "the Ridge" might affect the City's historic character, soon resumed the legal effort. He lost that lawsuit, but went on to a long and successful political career in Brisbane.

looking for sources of funding. Setting an election for April 10 meant that voters might approve the referendum prior to the expiration of the purchase option deadline, thus raising the level of hope for funds from virtually negligible to faint at best. After discussion that focused mostly on meeting the requirements of the Election Code, however, the Council decided

that April 10 was too early and set April 17 as the referendum date.

On January 31, Judge Jenkins gave his final ruling. The Council's actions in Ordinance 351, he decided, had been "ministerial" or "administrative" rather than "legislative," and therefore the matter was not subject to a voter referendum. Notwithstanding its importance for Brisbane and SDI in terms of the amount and types of housing, he found that Ordinance 351 had simply moved for a short distance some project boundary lines that had been decided upon in the early 1980s. This, said the judge, did not constitute a new legislative act by the Council.

John Burr demanded that the Council represent the people of Brisbane by appealing Judge Jenkins's decision, but council members demurred. Not only had Brisbane formally accepted the settlement with SDI, but council members actually thought it was a very good deal for the City, all things considered. Burtzloff and Burr continued their challenge to the Northeast Ridge grading permits, suing Brisbane, the City Council, and SDI on grounds that grading of the hillside required a new Environmental Impact Review. Burtzloff also tried to persuade the Council that the area's water shortage necessitated a moratorium on construction. The Council did not agree. Six months later, on June 27, 1991, Mountain Watch agreed to a dismissal of the lawsuit with prejudice, effectively ending its litigation.

The Northeast Ridge conflict was not over yet, however. Clarke Conway, a lifelong resident and the son of Ernest Conway, a member of Brisbane's first City Council, entered the fray at a September 9, 1991, council meeting, where he objected to the Council allowing the Ridge development to proceed. Conway then used his own funds to form a nonprofit organization, the Brisbane Development Corporation, which filed suit against the City in October over its approval of the project.

Conway had moved out of town in 1983 but returned in 1990 to discover, like Rip Van Winkle, that a great deal had occurred in his absence. Shocked by the prospect of the new development on the Northeast Ridge and its potential for changing life in his hometown, Conway allied with environmentalists John Burr,

a childhood friend, and Dana Dillworth, along with others in Mountain Watch, to stop it. The lawsuit by Brisbane Development Corporation was Conway's own, however. "Of course, I got shellacked in court," he recalled later, and when others urged him to appeal he added up the costs. He had paid for it all and no more funds were available. His alliance with Burr and Dillworth, however, survived the episode.

Mountain Watch: Politics, Culture, and the Environment

Mountain Watch found allies in the campaign against Northeast Ridge development who were motivated as much by politics as by environmentalism. The history of this alliance went back at least as far as the December 1986 demolition of the Cozy Cove Motel, which Mountain Watch had seen more as a cultural treasure than an eyesore—"a vibrant mixture of pensioners, working folks, and newcomers, most recently from Central America." The Cozy Cove was "not the Garden of Eden," Mountain Watch conceded, "but a kind of haven, with its own roots and energy... It was certainly 'out of synch' with a growing municipality preparing to service

top-dollar real estate on the Northeast Ridge, which would soon double the town's population." Mountain Watch combined social compassion, counterculture aesthetics, and a romantic—even spiritual—conception of San Bruno Mountain. But it also reflected the apprehension some Brisbane residents felt over losing control of their town to newly monied professionals buying expensive homes above them on the Ridge.

Having embraced the diverse charms of the Cozy Cove, Mountain Watch had, of course, opposed the Civic Center project. That controversy also enabled it to garner support for resisting development on the Northeast Ridge. "The conflict," it asserted, "points up the differences between the established social network that built the community and the new, more aggressive upwardly mobile one, which would flourish if 'the second City of Brisbane' is built." It was hard to separate environmental from political motives among development opponents in Brisbane since the two overlapped widely, even in individuals.

Fred Smith had been among the City Council majority, with Ray Miller and Jeannine Hodge, who had championed the environment by



Courtesy: USFWS. Image Donated by Parick Kohernis

Launched forty years ago by David Schooley, San Bruno Mountain Watch has played a central role in preserving the mountain and its varied flora and fauna, and in educating the public about this invaluable habitat. Perhaps the most famous of San Bruno Mountain's endangered species is the Mission Blue butterfly.

fighting SDI's condo project in 1985. But that majority had also recognized political realities, as illustrated by the famous "snail darter" case in Tennessee, in which the U.S. Supreme Court halted dam construction based on its interpretation of the Endangered Species Act, only to have Congress amend the act to counter "environmental extremism." The political climate of the 1980s was clearly leaning toward private property rights. Fred Smith had been one of the principal architects of the San Bruno Mountain's Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), the first in the nation, which accepted SDI's right to build but only under conditions allowing for the protection of native and endangered species.

Mountain Watch regarded Smith's accomplishment not as an act of realistic compromise but as a sellout of environmental principles. In 1987, the organization had mounted a letter-writing campaign criticizing Smith's request for San Mateo County authorities to evict Dwight Taylor, a forty-three-year-old former junior high school teacher, from his rock-and-wood A frame shelter in an upper area of Buckeye Canyon. Where Smith and others saw an illegal squatter despoiling an environment intended to be kept pristine, Mountain Watch saw a man whose lifestyle was a part of—not a spoiling of—the mountain. Taylor, said Mountain Watch's David Schooley, lived a "non-technological, simple, gentle, natural existence," sharing his knowledge of plants and animals with groups of schoolchildren introduced to him by Schooley during Schooley's popular educational hikes.

In May 1987 park officers evicted "Dwight the Hermit," as he had become known, and Schooley encouraged young people who had visited Taylor to write David Christey, director of the county's Department of Parks and Recreation, in protest. Dozens of students responded, one sixth grader from Holy Angels School pleading, "He didn't bother anybody or harm the mountain in any way. He only wants to get away from everything." The eviction stood, but it allowed Mountain Watch once again to cast the "iron bureaucrats" of government as insensitive collaborators with corporate profit-seekers. Meanwhile, Dwight Taylor landed on his feet. He fell in love with one of the teachers who had brought her students to the mountain, and the two moved to a house on

the coast where they grew native plants.

The Search for New City Hall Offices

While the Northeast Ridge project wound its way toward eventual groundbreaking, Brisbane continued its struggle to find new City offices and decide on a park design for the weedy field where the Civic Center had once been set to stand. The decision process was protracted and often contentious, as each new issue seemed to attract fallout from the recent recall and as the new Council made a deliberate commitment to ease some of Brisbane's political pain by giving all participants plenty of time to air their views and feelings. Controversy might not be avoided, but perhaps it could be defused.

Making new office space for City workers could not be delayed, however. The City offices and council chambers at 44 Visitacion Avenue and the public safety building at 700 San Bruno were cramped and rotting, with commensurate decay in their wiring, ventilation, and lighting and heating systems. Moreover, both structures lacked adequate parking and handicapped access, putting them in noncompliance with state and federal regulations. The political process in Brisbane at the time did not, however, lend itself to efficient decision-making on large issues, so the Council opted to rent space temporarily to allow time for continued public debate on a permanent structure. In the spring of 1990, City staff found suitable space at reasonable cost farther up the mountain toward the Northeast Ridge at 150 North Hill Drive where, as chance would have it, SDI's office also was located.

The Former Mayors of Brisbane had supported the City's settlement with SDI, but now Jim Williams, head of that group, became concerned. He suspected that City employees who were angry over the prolonged assault on their integrity and competence during the recall and Measure A campaigns might now be plotting retaliation in the form of a move to North Hill Drive that would shift power in Brisbane away from the City's old center toward the new residents who would one day occupy the Ridge. The problem with 44 Visitacion was not too little space, Williams asserted, but too many City employees. Other residents such as Frank Walch, early promoter of the famous lighted stars that residents placed

on their homes during the winter holidays; Linda Salmon, daughter of former Mayor Jess Salmon; and Don Shoecraft, who had run in the last council election, supported a move to leased space on North Hill Drive.

Former Mayor Ed Schwenderlauf favored purchasing the Panasonic Building on Old County Road as a way of keeping City Hall in central Brisbane and preventing downtown Brisbane from being “outvoted” one day by new residents on the Ridge. But the owners of the Panasonic Building had taken it off the rental market when the current tenant decided not to move. Nor were the owners at all certain that the building would be for sale in the future. At the end of an April 2, 1990, council meeting, the issue boiled down to a choice between a three-year and a five-year lease on the 150 North Hill space. The Council chose the latter on a 3-2 vote, with Miller and Panza objecting not to the site but to the length of the lease commitment. When staff soon moved to North Hill Drive, the City opened an annex at 345 Visitacion Avenue where residents could pay water bills, buy bus passes, and take care of other routine matters.

The Council's New Approach to Dissent

The April 2 meeting was marked by ongoing dissension but also by the Council's different approach to contention from the floor. Steve Waldo exemplified it when Jan Magdalik, a frequent—and often cantankerous—participant at the meetings, asked for more time to talk about the Panasonic Building option just when the Council was poised to vote on renting the North Hill Drive space. Brad Kerwin requested a call for the question, which would end discussion and start the voting. But Mayor-pro-tem Waldo offered that he was willing to stay “as long as people are willing to talk.” The talking continued for a while and then wound down, at which time the Council voted for the five-year lease. “We couldn't repeat what we'd just been through,” recalled Waldo, referring to the acrimony of prior council meetings. After the recall, he said, “We spent the next four years making sure that people who wanted to speak at Council meetings were heard—ad nauseam sometimes, but they



Steve Waldo ran for office in Brisbane in part to help restore civility and calm to a political atmosphere charged with distrust and anger. He retired from his political career in November 2011 after eighteen years of continual service on the Council and passed away in June 2013. Waldo's long service record testified to citizens' appreciation of his approach.

were heard, just to let all that riot drain away.”

City Manager Leiter greatly appreciated the change in tone that Waldo campaigned for and then worked to implement. “He had a profoundly calming effect,” she later recalled. “He got elected saying that we were standing up with each other, that it's just our neighbor up there [on the Council], not somebody who is trying to do something to us. He brought a kind of intelligence and warmth and civility that really made, and is continuing to make, a difference in the community.”

Waldo and Fred Smith acknowledged that Ray Miller, now the Council's only member from the pre-recall days, had modeled the new approach to steering through troubled waters. As a council member and mayor, Smith had felt an obligation to keep some citizens from what many saw as a disruptive hijacking and monopolizing of council meetings. They were public meetings, after all, and not exclusive venues for the particularly, or chronically, aggrieved. Still, he allowed that Miller's non-confrontational approach had succeeded in pouring oil on Brisbane's roiling seas. “If it takes more time, you use the time,”

as Smith described the new order. “If somebody wants a vote, you give them a vote. You do a survey. You get more and more input. You keep on talking and talking until you’ve talked out the opposition. Process is more important than outcome. You don’t ever want to have a fight like that again.”

Tom Hitchcock, Brisbane’s police chief, found this new approach compatible with a progressive, “community-based” philosophy in which enforcing laws was not an end in itself but part of a broader police function of maintaining order and keeping the peace. “Our goal,” said Chief Hitchcock, “has been to create ties and bonds with you, the citizens.” To that end, the department started a “Community Contact” program in January 1992 that assigned a sergeant and three officers to each of three sections of Brisbane. The officers met with residents each month to hear their concerns and work together toward solutions. Hitchcock intuited accurately the needs and wishes of the City regarding law enforcement and developed a program in tune with them. “He was really a good listener,” noted Leiter about Hitchcock’s success as chief, “and he advocated for his troops.”

Caring for Brisbane: Public Works, Community Emergency Volunteers, Lagoon Cleanup, and Recycling

Brisbane’s Public Works Department also made contributions to life in Brisbane that pleased almost everyone, even as the recession of the early 1990s forced reductions in staff and spending. With help from crewmembers, but often working on his own time and by himself, Public Works Supervisor Vince Marsili built a softball field on vacant land at Sierra Point just in time for the 1990 season. Dedicated “Vince Marsili Field” in his honor on May 26, the facility served the community during a shutdown of the more permanent field at Lipman Middle School. Marsili learned to be careful about watering the grass, however, when the City incurred a \$6,027 penalty at the end of the summer from its supplier, the City of San Francisco, for exceeding its water allocation.

Brisbane also paid San Francisco fees for using its sewage processing and treatment facilities. And while it continued to be less

expensive to pay San Francisco for these services than to build its own facilities, the City absorbed a share of the costs of repairs and upgrades to San Francisco’s system. Brisbane maintained a separate Sewer Enterprise Fund that helped it bridge the difference between what San Francisco charged and what Brisbane residents had to pay, but large cost increases passed along to the smaller City strained that fund. Between 1988 and 1990, San Francisco had increased its charges to Brisbane by nearly 50 percent, while Brisbane had passed along to its households an increase of just under 14 percent.

In the spring of 1990, the Bay Area experienced a severe water shortage, and in May the Council adopted a water conservation program imposing mandatory 25 percent reductions in residents’ water use. The next month, after residents posted only an 18 percent reduction, the Council opted for a progressive rate increase on households using water in excess of an established monthly allotment of 200 gallons per day per person in each household: a \$1 rate increase for up to 10 percent excess, \$5 for up to 40 percent, and \$10 on excesses of 40 percent. Over the next two decades, Brisbane officials continued the struggle to balance the real and sharply escalating costs of the City’s use of San Francisco’s water and sewage systems against the political and social costs of increasing rates to residents.

Brisbane’s responsibility for water and sewer service expanded in 1990 when the City absorbed the Guadalupe Valley Municipal Improvement District (GVMID), which had been set up in 1959 to provide water, sewer, storm drain, and street lighting services to Crocker Industrial Park. Since GVMID tanks, pipes, and drains would now also serve new homes on the Northeast Ridge, its planned merger with Brisbane’s water and sewer system became part of the 1989 settlement with SDI. The developer agreed to pay for required improvements, including construction of water tanks and underground piping that would integrate the two systems and increase overall efficiency. Additionally, SDI agreed to clear sediment from storm drains, replace fractured pipes, and remove sludge from a GVMID-owned but now abandoned sewage treatment plant on Bayshore Boulevard. The site was increasingly seen as a possible location for a new fire station in

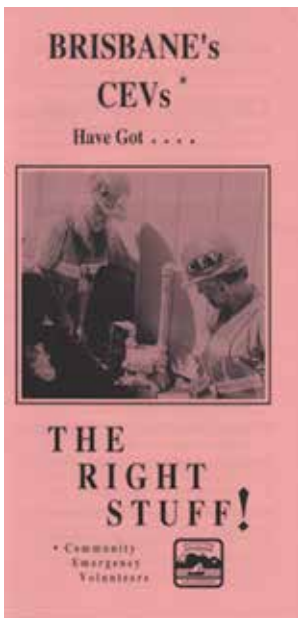
Brisbane, a project that—according to an opinion survey commissioned by the City Council and conducted by San Francisco State University—residents strongly supported.

Also that summer, Council Member Clara Johnson followed up on a long-standing desire to improve the City's response to natural disasters by organizing Brisbane's Community Emergency Volunteers (CEVs). She held a meeting on July 12, 1990, in the Community Center, invited personnel from Brisbane's police and fire services, and outlined the purpose of the new organization. Volunteers, trained in CPR and first aid, would assist their neighbors during a disaster that would likely stretch police, fire, and other rescue resources. They would also use a communications network to inform rescue personnel about the location of injured persons as well as dangerous situations in individual neighborhoods. The program proved to be enduring, but with an ambitious goal of 174 volunteers, the City was always in search of recruits. By the fall of 1993, 45 Brisbane citizens were enrolled and had received training.

Preserving Brisbane's tidal lagoon east of

Bayshore Boulevard was another of Johnson's commitments. Sediment carried by rain runoff from the hills to the west posed one threat to the lagoon's shallow waters, while debris and litter tossed from passing vehicles on Lagoon Road and Sierra Point Parkway posed another. In the late 1980s, Johnson, Dan Sorrentino, Michele Salmon, Terry O'Connell, and some friends walked the shoreline picking up trash. Later, the cleanup became more organized after sixth-grader Amanda Waldo noticed unsightly debris during a stroll with her family and decided it should be cleaned up.

Amanda's initiative sparked a major effort in November 1990 in which several community organizations and businesses participated, including the Brisbane School District Parents Club, South San Francisco Scavenger Company, Brisbane Lions Club, Five Star Café on Visitacion Avenue, and Taiwan-based Tuntex Corporation, principal owner of the Baylands property. With this support, the volunteers filled several large dumpsters and helped make the Lagoon cleanup an annual event in Brisbane. In 1994 Amanda Waldo was among thirteen "Super Star Award"



Though Brisbane suffered little damage in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, Council Member Clara Johnson thought it wise to organize a group of trained volunteers who could respond to an emergency should the need arise. The Community Emergency Volunteers, or CEVs, first met on July 12, 1990. Since then, the CEVs have worked closely with Brisbane's police and fire services to build a well-coordinated and ready response team.

winner in Brisbane for her five consecutive years of meriting Star Award recognition.

Meanwhile, the Scavenger Company reported that only 25 percent of Brisbane's residential customers were taking advantage of the recycling program that former Council Member Susan Nielsen had helped launch during her tenure on the City's Planning Commission. Under a new state law (California Integrated Waste Management Act, AB 939), cities had until July 1, 1991, to develop and implement a plan to achieve a 50 percent reduction in trash going to landfills. City staff increased efforts to educate and assist residents about the details of separating and preparing their recyclables, including used motor oil, for curbside pickup.

Sharing Services and Resources

Brisbane joined forces with neighboring cities South San Francisco and Millbrae to fund the planning required to meet these waste reduction goals. It was an example of increased cooperation and resource sharing by local governments in an era that combined increased state and federal mandates with shrinking local revenues. In 1992, for example, the State of California took 9 percent of Brisbane's property tax revenues to help meet a \$2.5 billion shortfall in its general funds. Between 1981 and 1992, the state's expanding reach into local coffers for larger portions of cigarette and liquor taxes, prisoner booking fees, mobile home license fees, and a host of other revenue streams had cost city governments in California an estimated \$3.7 billion.

Cities claimed that such actions undermined their ability to plan sensibly for the future. The financial uncertainty in local budgets was undoubtedly bad for morale among employees, whose projects could suddenly lose funding. Brisbane's department managers reduced their service and supply budgets by 10 percent between 1991 and 1993, while the City left several vacant positions unfilled and downgraded others. Brisbane's staff managed the situation well. As Robin Leiter later said of Finance Director Roger Kalil, "There's managing with money and there's managing without money, and when you know how to manage without money then you have really reached the top ranks of being a professional municipal officer. Roger had that talent."

Cities in shared financial straits often united in common defense and found innovative ways to share resources and deliver services such as public transportation, telecommunications, waste management and disposal, airport noise monitoring, and police, fire, and emergency medical services. Brisbane and other cities developed "joint power authorities" to govern such arrangements of mutual self-interest. In addition to its waste management agreement with South San Francisco and Millbrae, for instance, in 1991 Brisbane joined with six other cities and San Mateo County to negotiate a cable television agreement with TCI Cable Television to improve the quality of service and fund a public education channel. In 1993 Brisbane and other cities in San Mateo County agreed on a plan developed by the County Fire Chiefs' Association to provide aid to each other in emergency situations. At a minimum, this meant that a fire engine from Daly City would join a Brisbane fire engine in responding to any fire in the City.

Managing Brisbane's Fire Department

A formal "joint powers" agreement on managing fire services and training firefighters was still ten years in the future when, on May 2, 1991, a group of Brisbane citizens and officials gathered on the east side of Bayshore Boulevard and Valley Drive. A few of them picked up fire axes and took a commemorative swing to start construction of Brisbane's new fire station. With funds from the SDI settlement, Brisbane had leveled the old sewage treatment plant that the GVMID had once operated on the site and awarded a \$1 million contract for construction. Additional funding came from partial use of nearly \$3 million in Certificates of Participation that had been sold to investors in April 1988 in anticipation of building the Civic Center, and which were still available for a municipal project.

Some worried that the new firehouse would be dangerously close to the Kinder Morgan "tank farm" just to the north, which stored a variety of fuels in several silo-like structures, including jet fuel for nearby San Francisco Airport (SFO). Fire Chief Cy Bologoff, however, thought it was perfectly situated at the geographic center of town. "No matter where you went," he said, "it took you just so many



Clara Johnson, Dan Sorrentino, Michele Salmon, and Terry O'Connell had been picking up trash along the shores of Brisbane Lagoon during walks in the late 1980s. But after sixth-grader Amanda Waldo got involved during a stroll with her family in 1990, the Lagoon Cleanup became an organized annual event, sponsored by local businesses and community organizations. Here, volunteers Tom Lambert and Michele Salmon fill their buckets at the Lagoon in September 2011.

minutes,” granting an exception for Sierra Point, a longer reach south along Sierra Point Parkway. “In fact,” said the chief, “I ran the engines. I was the driver. We took down how many miles it was from here to there. It was a matter of timing. Can you get there within two minutes, five minutes, four minutes?” In fires and other emergencies, a single minute mattered, and Bologoff wanted to assure equal coverage throughout the City.

Even as she looked forward to a new fire station, City Manager Leiter was trying to bring greater harmony and efficiency to Brisbane’s Fire Department. There were internal problems that possibly did not interfere with the performance of duties but were serious nonetheless. The Council had decided to fund a new fire trainee program that would put four, rather than three, firefighters on duty at all times. That would be good for morale as well as performance. But the City also commissioned a management audit of the department, which was completed in May 1990.

Auditors traced the department’s continuing

troubles back to 1978, when Proposition 13’s freeze on property taxes had obliged Brisbane to consolidate its police and fire services in a Public Safety Department, lay off all but three firefighters, and cross-train remaining personnel. Subsequent actions by the City Council had again detached the fire and police services, but the resolution formally establishing the Public Safety Department had never been rescinded. Some members of the department nursed grudges over the merger and doubted the Council’s intention to ever completely separate police and fire departments. In such a small group, auditors observed, it took only a few of the chronically disgruntled to undermine general morale.

“The best way to describe the Brisbane Fire Department at this time,” the audit stated, “is a cynical, distrusting, and ambiguous organization that lacks both focus and accountability . . . Department members seem to suspect hidden agendas behind every conversation, whether it be from the Mayor, the City Manager’s office, the fire chief, company officers, or firefighters.” The consultants sympathized with Chief Bologoff’s

difficulties in trying to manage the organization. But Bologoff, who had risen through the ranks since 1963, brushed off their sympathy and, on June 15, 1990, he delivered to City Manager Leiter, Mayor Miller, and the Council a lengthy rebuttal. Bologoff's most poignant statement, though, seemed to reinforce rather than refute the audit. "You gave me a few broken pieces," complained Bologoff, "and ask me to build you a fire department." Chief Bologoff soon gave notice that he would be retiring on June 30, 1991, after twenty-seven years of service to the City, including four years as fire chief.

The cramped and demoralizing facilities that Brisbane's police officers and firefighters shared at 700 San Bruno Avenue only amplified questions about the police and fire departments' separate identities and reinforced suspicions by some that City officials had not fully abandoned the unpopular public safety model. On March 11, 1991, Robert V. Heald, fire chief for the Carmel Valley Fire Protection District and vice president of the California Fire Chiefs Association, came to Brisbane as the City's new fire chief, heading a department of twelve salaried and eleven reserve firefighters. Heald's arrival, three months before Bologoff's official retirement in June, allowed for a transition period. Just two months later, officials broke ground for the City's new firehouse.

Fire, always a danger when dry, hot winds sweep westward across California's drought-prone hills in the fall, was uppermost in residents' minds in October 1991 following a conflagration in San Francisco's East Bay that killed 25 people, injured 150, and destroyed 3,300 homes. It was the most destructive fire that California had experienced since the earthquake-induced fires in San Francisco eighty-five years earlier, and just the sort of disaster that Brisbane's Community Emergency Volunteers both feared and prepared for. The CEVs drew many lessons from the breakdown in communication and coordination that characterized what became known as "the Oakland fire."

Brisbane officials also took a second look at the City's vulnerabilities. A 510,000-gallon steel water tank that would provide four hours of firefighting capacity had been scheduled to replace the old wooden one on Margaret Avenue

by spring 1991. However, construction was delayed until the fall because the owner of the property, who had lost the site under eminent domain, disputed the City's appraisal of its value. The one-acre site was ideal for the water tank because it had been pre-flattened by Virgil Karns, a previous owner, who had bulldozed it with dreams of building a house. "This is back in the days when people just did what they wanted," chuckled Clarke Conway as he recalled Karns's determination to domesticate his own piece of the mountainside. The tank finally went into operation in mid-March 1992, providing adequate water pressure to Brisbane's higher streets for the first time.

Brisbane also shared with other Bay Area towns a hazardous combination of narrow, winding streets and wooden houses built into hillsides and surrounded by flammable brush. Bologoff recalled training firefighters to drive fire engines in the City. He would start novices on the relatively broad and gently sloped streets of Crocker Industrial Park. "Then, when they got nice and cocky and think they can handle the world, I would wait until 9 or 10 o'clock at night when it's pitch black and everybody's home from work. Then I'd say, 'Let's take a ride.' We'd go to the top of Kings Road and work our way down. That's when you find out if they can handle a piece of equipment or not."

Brisbane's streets often made for awkward parking, which was aggravated by many residents having converted garages to living or storage space. Competition for on-street parking could be fierce, as could a sense of territorial rights over what often were, in fact, public spaces. In 1991 the City passed a new ordinance setting forth minimum clearance for the passage of emergency vehicles and allowing for the towing of parked cars. But citizens were ever sensitive to encroachment on their parking customs, and when the City used red and white paint on some curbs to control parking, they objected. "That was one of the last projects I did for Robin Leiter," said former chief Bologoff. "That lasted a couple of weeks or so and the people started speaking at the Council and the Council backed off." Balancing safety concerns with Brisbane residents' penchant for self-regulation created an ongoing ebb and flow



Carole Nelson came to Brisbane from Santa Cruz in 1990 to serve as the City's Planning and Community Development director. Her first success was turning back a proposal by San Mateo County to site a toxic waste disposal facility on the Baylands. Nelson also guided an extensive revision of Brisbane's General Plan and helped shepherd the design of the Mission Blue Center as a premier venue for the performing arts.

of parking headaches for City officials. Indeed, residents shared the same headaches but seemed to prefer them to being told where and how they could park their cars.

The Politics of the Unexpected: Environmental Win Spawns Challenge to Brisbane's General Plan

In June 1991 Brisbane completed its two-year campaign to remove the old Southern Pacific property on the Baylands from San Mateo County's list of potential toxic waste disposal and incineration sites. "The champagne flowed yesterday for Carole," an exultant Robin Leiter informed City Council members on June 21. Carole Nelson, Brisbane's planning director, had successfully directed the effort, which entailed rezoning the Baylands areas in question from "industrial" to "commercial-mixed use" and amending the housing element in Brisbane's General Plan to allow, technically, five hundred residences to be built on the landfill.

Life long resident John Christopher Burr promptly filed a lawsuit challenging both changes. Lorraine Burtzloff, now associated with an environmental group called CLEAN

(Citizens League for Environmental Action Now) also weighed in against development on the Baylands landfill. The occasion signaled a shift in environment vs. development tensions from San Bruno Mountain to the Baylands, following Tuntex's purchase of the Southern Pacific property in 1989. Council Member Ray Miller wrote a "Dear Neighbor" letter to citizens on June 16, 1991, assuring them that "these amendments do not approve any specific development of anything!" Even if there was a specific plan for development, Miller reminded them, approval by the Council would be a legislative act subject to voter referendum. The incident reminded Miller, who in turn reminded his constituents, that a ten-year update of the City's General Plan was due.

It was a tough time to be undertaking this laborious task. The national economic recession of the early 1990s, as well as uncertainties in the oil market accompanying the Gulf War in Iraq, had encroached upon Brisbane's finances. City revenues were down 7 percent in FY 1990-1991 from the previous fiscal year, and City Manager Leiter and Finance Director Roger Kalil were making "belt-tightening" contingency plans that included possible staff reductions and furloughs. "This year will be a hard one," Leiter advised the City Council, "especially since a public participation process and a general plan are significant additional expenses to budget." As Leiter predicted, the General Plan effort proved time-consuming, but it also was "politically interesting, technically demanding, and philosophically stimulating" to the core team of herself, Nelson, and Kalil.

It was a great shock, then, when Kalil, who had been the City's finance director since 1973, suffered an aortic aneurism in September 1991. He remained in critical condition for weeks, drifting in and out of consciousness. "As resilient as I may be," Leiter confided to the Council, "I am deeply affected by Roger's illness. He is not only important to the City, but a good ear and counsel to me. As his wife said, all I can do is pray." By February 1992 Kalil, who was in his early forties, seemed to be recovering, though he had trouble with his short-term memory. Neighboring Redwood City, a larger city in southern San Mateo County, lent Brisbane the services of its finance director in the interim,

but Kalil never returned to work. In July 1992 he passed away. His friends at City Hall and on the Council honored him with a special resolution and summoned their energies to keep business moving forward. That summer also saw the passing of Dorothy Radoff, who had lived in Brisbane for sixty-two years and had been instrumental, along with librarian Dolores Gomez, in collecting, preserving, and writing about the City's history.

“Have Your Say Day”: the New Council’s Approach in Action

Time-consuming as it was, making sure that the public was included in the process of revising the General Plan was a necessity felt deeply by Brisbane’s leaders in this new era of process-driven governance. In August 1991 the Council had commissioned the Public Research Institute (PRI), a San Francisco State University (SFSU) affiliate, to conduct a questionnaire survey to help illuminate citizens’ understandings of the major issues in Brisbane’s future. Lorraine Burtzloff and Dana Dillworth, then president of CLEAN, objected to the survey on grounds that its questions might be biased, presumably in favor of development; however, the Council proceeded and survey results were compiled by the following June.

The survey confirmed what many might have surmised: that shops and services in downtown Brisbane should be improved; that single-family and senior housing were preferable to multi-family units; and that growth should be gradual, carefully managed, and locally controlled. Surely there were no surprises there, but that was not the point. Leaders sought data they could cite when referring to “the will of the people” to avoid getting caught in circular, rhetorical disputes based on inferences and assumptions about what citizens wanted.

In addition to the SFSU questionnaire, Brisbane conducted a town meeting on May 30, 1992, dubbed “Have Your Say Day” by then Mayor Brad Kerwin. More than two hundred residents gathered in the Lipman Middle School gym for the daylong affair. In structuring the day, Planning Director Nelson was determined to emphasize individualized thinking and to moderate the influence of groups with special

interests or predetermined agendas. She described how she did it. “As they came in, we put colored dots on their name tags in a random order, so if they came in a group, one would get green, one would get yellow, one would get red. Then we told them in the introduction that we were going to go into small discussion groups based on the color on their name tag.” There was a catered lunch, but participants were not told what would happen afterwards. To find out, they would have to stay.

Throughout the day, trained facilitators recorded people’s ideas on newsprint for later summary. “Everyone stayed,” Nelson recalled. “No one wanted to miss out on giving their opinions, which was great.” After the event, Nelson, who had come to Brisbane in 1990 from a similar position in Santa Cruz after the Loma Prieta earthquake devastated that City’s downtown, walked Brisbane’s streets in the evenings with her dog, chatting with folks and picking up the community’s moods and anxieties. She thought she sensed a change in the community—“a loosening up, a kind of warmth, of interest in participating.” City and PRI staff analyzed and summarized the day’s work, along with the results of a follow-up questionnaire mailed to residents that summer, so that citizens’ input could help shape General Plan revisions over the next several months.

Brisbane Dedicates New Firehouse

Just three weeks earlier, on May 9, 1992, after a year of mostly volunteer effort, the City of Brisbane proudly opened the first building it had constructed since incorporation. State Senator Quentin Kopp, U.S. Representative Tom Lantos, and assembly member Jackie Speier joined 250 attendees at an elaborate dedication ceremony for the new, \$1.7 million fire station at 3445 Bayshore Boulevard, which would also house the dispatch operations for Brisbane’s Police Department. A flag was lowered at the old firehouse on San Bruno Avenue, carried across Bayshore, and raised at the new station. Just as officials had used fire axes rather than shovels to break ground for construction the previous May, Glinn Corbello, a former volunteer who had come in from Louisiana for the occasion, now cut a fire hose instead of a ribbon to mark the

new firehouse's opening.

Perhaps no organization in town had been closer to Brisbane's heart—or experienced such heartache—as its fire service, now sixty years old. All attendees received a copy of an attractive forty-page book, *Born of Fire: In Praise of Brisbane Volunteers*, that had been commissioned for the occasion and that served to remind the community of the volunteer department's historic and unifying role in every aspect of Brisbane's life since 1932. The Brisbane Fire District's three-member commission, for example, had functioned as the town's effective governing body for many years. The *Born of Fire* narrative ended in the mid-1960s, just after incorporation, when Brisbane started its own paid fire service to work with the volunteers. The book's focus on volunteers, however, may have left some readers wondering whether its historical aim was to stir wistful nostalgia for an era now long-gone or to provide foundational reinforcement for moving forward. In any event, Chief Heald would play a minor role—he had resigned in December 1991 after only nine months. Acting chief (captain) Tom Reaves filled

in until a new chief, Scott W. Kenley, took over on April 6, 1992.

The Bane of Brisbane: Aircraft Noise and the Airport Roundtable

Fire was a perennial concern in Brisbane, but in recent decades, noise from departing jets at nearby SFO also threatened the peace and tranquility Brisbane considered crucial to its quality of life. The City had never shied away from confrontation with airport authorities over noise and was an active member of the Airport Roundtable, an informal organization consisting of local and airport officials who met periodically to discuss concerns and solutions, primarily regarding noise. Brisbane had joined with other cities to sue the Airport Commission over its December 1992 decision to expand the airport, adding 300 daily flights to the existing 1,100. In addition to the roundtable, the San Mateo City/County Association of Governments, of which Brisbane was a founding member, had a state-mandated subcommittee (Airport Land Use Committee) that focused primarily on safe land use around the airport.

Airport Roundtable meetings had yielded some



Brisbane's new fire station, on Bayshore Boulevard, was dedicated on May 9, 1992. Unfortunately, roof leaks eventually led to mold problems that forced firefighters into temporary quarters next door until repairs were made.

Born of Fire

In Praise of Brisbane Volunteers



Published in 1992, *Born of Fire* recounted the central role of Brisbane's volunteer fire service in the City's history and civic life.

solutions over the years, such as the creation of a noise complaint “hotline” number and the FAA-provided noise insulation for some three hundred homes in South San Francisco, and for others in Millbrae and San Bruno. But noise-level enforcement was usually trumped by safety concerns, and airport authorities were reluctant to challenge any pilot who defended his takeoff pattern by citing some safety-related reason, including the Bay Area's changeable wind and weather conditions. Brad Kerwin, Brisbane's mayor in 1992, had been a fighter pilot in the Vietnam War and, back in Brisbane, was a forceful advocate on issues of airplane departure practices and jet noise at SFO. His experience in the cockpit gave him an insider's perspective on the problem, and he was less readily persuaded than others by airport officials' explanations concerning deviations from standard departure paths.

Kerwin also was impatient with what he believed to be bureaucratic obfuscations surrounding the issue. On June 2, 1993, as Brisbane's representative to the Airport Roundtable, he participated in a tour of the control tower at SFO. According to the air traffic manager accompanying the group, Kerwin told a supervisor that the air traffic controllers “didn't know what they were doing” in instructing pilots about departure paths to mitigate noise over nearby homes, and that if citizens would bypass the official noise complaint number and call the tower number directly, maybe the controllers would get the message.

It was a tactic Kerwin had used in the early 1980s when he was Brisbane's city manager and when the control tower's number was publicly listed. “It's the only time I can remember getting satisfaction on anything from the airport,” said

Recoiling from Recalls

Shortly after celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary as an incorporated city, Brisbane was immersed in controversy over plans for a new Civic Center. The dispute led to a recall campaign in 1989 directed at four council members. Two survived. One grew weary of continued litigation over disputed ballots and resigned, while the other retired at the end of his term a few months later. Such recalls were not new in Brisbane. Indeed, the City's history of recalling elected officials helps shed light on Brisbane's transformation from an earlier time of rough-and-tumble politics to a new era of governance in the early 1990s.

In 1964 voters tried to recall the entire Brisbane Elementary School District Board when it became clear that plans to expand the school property would lead to the condemnation of thirty-two separate land parcels, some with homes on them. The recall effort failed by a wide margin. Future Brisbane Fire Chief, Council Member, and Mayor Cy Bologoff and his wife Bonnie were among those who lost their home in the subsequent school expansion.

In 1967 Council Member Jess Salmon handily survived a recall vote over his position favoring a settlement with Sunset Scavenger over that company's garbage dumping at Sierra Point—dumping that violated a recently passed Brisbane ordinance that Sunset Scavenger regarded as invalid. The Council eventually decided to settle the matter out of court. Six years later, in 1973, council member and town physician Dr. S. J. Guardino participated in a successful recall of three of his own colleagues on the Council over numerous political matters that centered around their support for a large development project slated for San Bruno Mountain. And in 1979 all five council members survived a recall effort sparked by their budget-driven decision to merge the City's police and fire

departments into a single Department of Public Safety, following passage of Proposition 13.

When established by political reformers in the nineteenth century, recall was intended as a last resort, to be used only in cases of gross malfeasance or incompetence that could not wait for the next general election. But in Brisbane, as in other cities, urgency was a subjective judgment reflecting petitioners' impatience and anger as much as any dire need to remove an elected official.

Recalls were wearying, divisive, and expensive, and by 1990 Brisbane had had enough of them and their traumatic effects on the community. The recall mechanism remained in place as a constitutional right, of course, and sometimes an upset citizen would threaten it, largely for rhetorical purposes. But Brisbane had moved on to a more civil style. The Council went to great lengths to channel citizen discontent into debate and discourse, using surveys, meetings, and discussion groups to take careful soundings of residents' sentiments on all major matters prior to making a decision. There has not been a recall election, or even a serious threat of one, in Brisbane since 1989. From the dust and debris of a derailed Civic Center project came a new era of forbearance and dialogue.

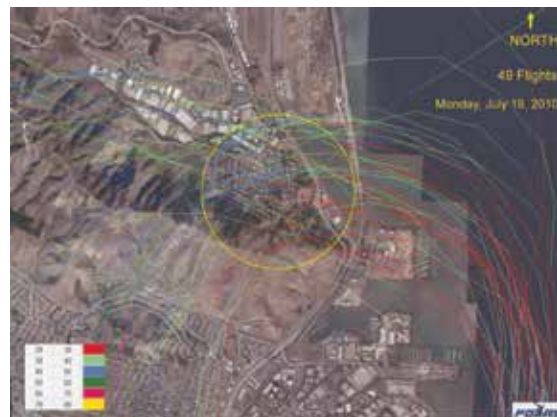
Kerwin, explaining why he had called the tower once again the previous month. But the control tower's number now was unlisted—Kerwin had it as a member of the Airport Roundtable—and his telling others on the tour of the direct call tactic he had used in 1983 upset tower officials. They complained to Airport Director Lou Turpen that Kerwin was, in effect, threatening to release the tower's unlisted number to the public, and that noise complaint calls made directly to the tower would distract controllers and pose a safety threat. With safety now arguably hanging in the balance, Turpen took action and barred Kerwin from further admission to the control tower. Said Kerwin, "What am I supposed to do when things are not being done properly, keep my mouth shut?"

Though SFO officials may not have seen it, Kerwin's airborne interests had a lighter side. In May 1992 he traveled to the old Gold Rush territory where, on Brisbane's behalf, he entered a frog in the famous Calaveras County Jumping Frog Jubilee. Alas, the City of Stars entry jumped only seven feet and four inches, considerably behind the winning leap of nineteen feet and eleven inches. Brisbane supporters wished Kerwin and the frog better luck next year. City Manager Leiter also saw some possibility for humor in the continuing jet noise, suggesting wryly in October 1993 that maybe she and Kerwin "should go back to the tower—the noise at my house the last two weekends has been awful."

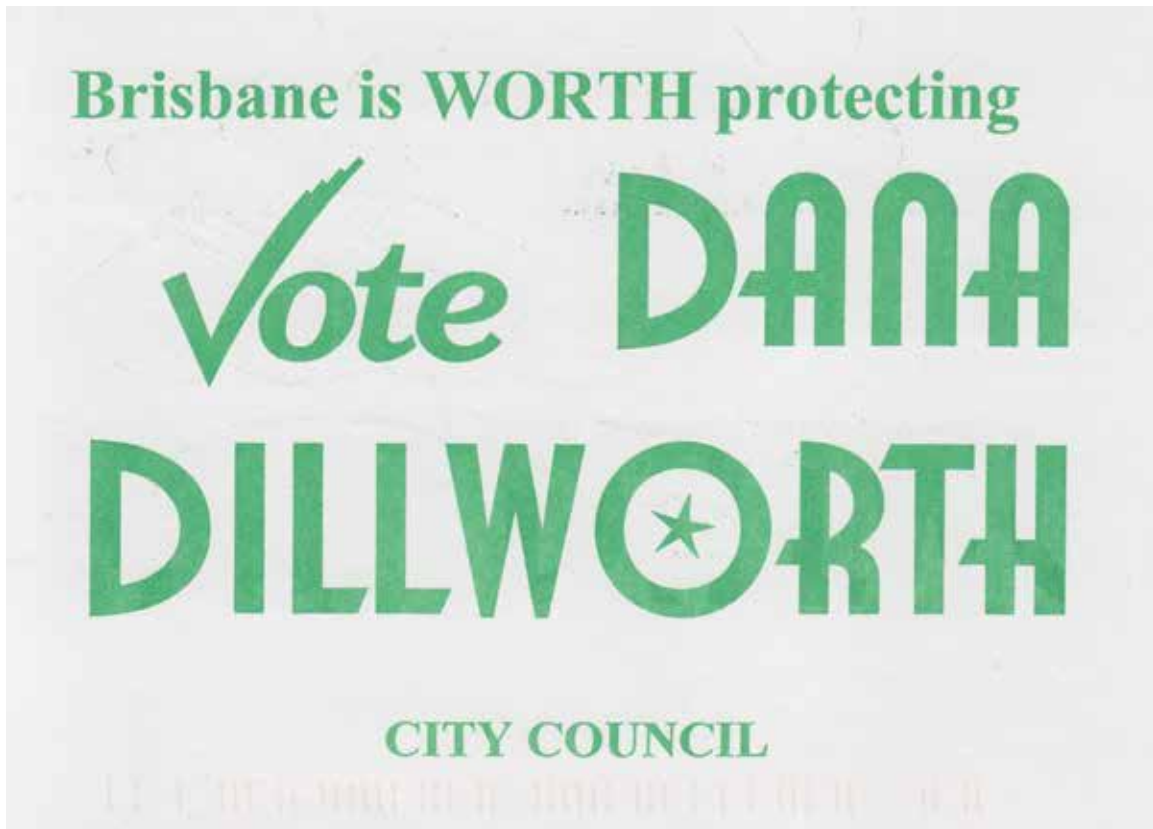
Community Park Planning Begins; Council Election Focuses on Development

In spring 1993 Brisbane at last began to focus attention on the design for a park on the old Cozy Cove Motel site. During a public hearing at Brisbane's Community Center on May 23, several subcommittees formed to tackle issues such as landscaping, carpentry, and financing and met again in August to present initial plans to the City Council. By October, the Council had approved "phase 1" of the site plan, which included contour grading, irrigation, and grass seeding. Given the site's politically sensitive recent past, the Council allowed plenty of room for citizen input on the project, from the overall concept to details of plantings, fencing, and any structures to be built. As it turned out, City officials' expectation that the Community Park would be completed by spring 1994 proved overly optimistic.

As grass sprouted on the future park site, Brisbane voters went to the polls on November 2, 1993, in impressive numbers—the City posted a 50 percent turnout rate—to elect three new council members. It was a critical election, the core background issue being the City's General Plan, which was still being revised for council approval. The General Plan would serve as the City's principal policy and planning guide for the next ten years. With construction details on the Northeast Ridge still providing ample



Brisbane residents perennially complained about noise from jets departing nearby San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and flying over Brisbane. These photo images from a May 2012 Federal Aviation Administration report show a doubling of such flights in the period 2005-2011, from an average of twenty per day to forty-one.



Dana Dillworth advocated for a number of issues in Brisbane, ranging from environmental preservation and public health to municipal utility ownership. Her three campaigns for a seat on the City Council (1993, 2001, 2005) were not successful, but her commitment and activism proved an influential force in the City's decision-making process over the years.

ground for contention, and with the prospect of some Baylands development growing nearer, the next council could wield significant influence on the shape of Brisbane's future. Feelings ran high between candidates. "There is certainly no love lost," observed a reporter for the Peninsula Independent, "between those already in office and those hoping to replace them."

Current Mayor Lee Panza's term was up, as were the terms of fellow incumbents Steve Waldo and Brad Kerwin. All were seeking re-election. Ray Miller and Clara Johnson had another two years to go. Challenging the three incumbents were John Burr, Dana Dillworth, and Clarke Conway. Burr and Dillworth were environmentalists solidly against development on the Baylands, primarily on the grounds that the area's toxic contamination posed ongoing threats to Brisbane residents that would only be

heightened by disturbing the landfill. Better to leave it alone or, better still, clean it up carefully and then leave it alone.

Additionally, Burr and Dillworth were critical of the Council's way of conducting business. Burr, an attorney, thought the Council was secretive in its proceedings and too accommodating toward outside agencies. He told voters that he would seek both greater transparency and an even more forceful advocacy role for the City. Dillworth asserted that the City could manage financially without development and cited her background in business management to support that view, which she said most people in Brisbane shared.

Clarke Conway had mixed feelings about getting involved in Brisbane's public life. As the son of one of the City's founders and first council members, he had grown up amidst the storms and recalls of the garbage-dump era and

had seen how differences between City leaders like Jess Salmon and his own parents could be visited on their children. He remembered, for example, the taunting that Michele Salmon, one of Jess's daughters, endured at school from schoolmates, mostly boys, over her father's support for the Sanitary Landfill Company. Conway did not want to be part of the political strife that could spawn such unpleasantness. He preferred to view Jess Salmon as the man who, with Dan Twomey and other volunteers, was now building a new library and computer lab at Brisbane Elementary School.

Conway's decision to form the Brisbane Development Corporation in October 1991 and sue the City over the Northeast Ridge housing, however, put him squarely in the fray. In that case, fighting the ridge development had involved litigation, not electoral politics, and Conway wound up hurting only himself. His decision to run for office was another matter. Politics meant, "You go in there and you beat the hell out of each other mentally," he recollected. When he called his father and told him of his decision to run, Clarke expected to hear some words of enthusiastic support. Instead, there was silence on the other end of the line. After a few seconds, Ernest asked his son, "Are you sure you want to do that?" Clarke answered that he had "pretty much made up my mind." Again, his father asked, "Do you know what you're getting into?" "Yeah, yeah, I do," his son acknowledged.

Conway turned down an invitation to run on a slate with Burr and Dillworth, not because he disagreed with them but because he judged that slates were not popular in Brisbane and that incumbents would feel threatened and band together to the challengers' detriment. He worked hard in the campaign, knocking on doors and handing out his leaflet, which delineated four issues: Brisbane staying small, which included all major land use decisions being brought to the vote of the people; better recreation programs, which included restoring the fields owned by the school district, delivering on the now thirty-year-old promise of a swimming pool, and providing a teen center; returning City Hall to central Brisbane in a facility owned by the people; and a balanced budget.

Did Conway raise the General Plan as an issue? "No, most people weren't really cognizant of that," he said. "For most people, what does the General Plan have to do with anything? They were looking at the values of what they see in their front yard." And what they saw in their front yard during the campaign was often Clarke Conway. He kept a tally of voters who were for, against, and unsure of him, and he returned continually to win over the uncertain.

Brad Kerwin agreed with Conway's assessment of the General Plan's importance in the minds of



As a lifelong resident and son of former City Council Member and Brisbane founding father Ernest Conway, Clarke Conway at first shied from entering what he expected to be a rough-and-tumble political arena. After his election to the Council in 1993, however, he found to his pleasant surprise that council members and city staff were working together to get things done and not just fighting over differences. At heart a good neighbor more than anything else, he described himself as "the accidental politician." In Brisbane, that made Conway one of the most popular and well-regarded office holders in City history.

voters. “I think people were happy,” said Kerwin. “Things were stabilized. People recognized that.” It was only shortly before the election that the incumbents paid much attention to a couple of dozen campaign workers from an environmental group who had been canvassing homes and registering votes in Brisbane on behalf of Burr, Dillworth, and Conway. Kerwin, Waldo, and Panza got a phone bank up and running the night before the election. If the General Plan was not much on the minds of voters, and perhaps incumbents, its importance in shaping Brisbane’s future appeared to have been uppermost in the minds of the challengers.

As Burr and Dillworth had realized in wanting him on their slate, Conway had the value of “name recognition” in Brisbane. But beyond that, he had what might be called “values recognition.” He embodied much of what made Brisbane what it was—straightforward, plainspoken, unpretentious, no nonsense. People sensed that, saw that he was working hard to win their trust, and rewarded him with the highest number of votes of all six candidates in one of the closest elections in Brisbane’s history. The vote tally was: Conway 520; Waldo 511; Panza 466; Kerwin 456; Dillworth 453; and Burr 446. Only 20 votes separated the third from the sixth candidate.

The election meant that Conway would replace Brad Kerwin on the Council when the three winners were sworn in on November 22. City staff took Kerwin out to lunch at the Brisbane Marina to say goodbye and gave him a farewell gift—a dartboard with a picture of an SFO official affixed to it. “I think he was very pleased,” said Leiter. After the November 22 swearing-in, the new Council chose Clara Johnson as Brisbane’s new mayor and Ray Miller as mayor pro-tem.

Clarke Conway, the new member, described himself as “the accidental politician.” He had enjoyed winning the respect of the voters. But now history kicked in, triggering memories of the rough politics of his father’s era, and he felt a profound reluctance. “What the hell am I going to do now?” he wondered. Conway entered City Hall expecting to step into a battle zone. What he found there instead—somewhat to his surprise—was straightforward, plainspoken, unpretentious, and no nonsense.

❖ CHAPTER THREE ❖

A Work in Process

1994-1997

In his first weeks at City Hall during the winter of 1993-94, Council Member Clarke Conway was doing his “due diligence” on behalf of the citizens. Robin Leiter noticed him going through file folders and asked if there might be anything specifically he was looking for, and if she could help him find it. What followed was a frank talk in which Leiter allowed she had heard rumors that Conway was intending to fire her. Conway replied that he could not do that by himself, for it would take three votes on the Council to fire the city manager. “But if you’re doing something wrong or you’re not doing your job,” he added, “I’ll do everything I can to make that happen.” “Fair enough,” said Leiter.

Having been warned by some residents of shenanigans and corruption in City Hall, Conway looked diligently for the rot. But the more he looked, the less he could find. When he reported this back to constituents, they would say, “Oh man, they got to you! They got to you!” The new council member reflected, “You can say anything you want when there’s no accountability. But when you’re accountable, you can’t say anything you want. There’s a difference there.”

Conway joined staff and council members who were hard at work, often meeting two or three times a week, on the General Plan update. His initial tack was to do what he thought he was elected to do—fight to include various environmental policies in the plan. The meetings proved contentious and wearing on all concerned, until one evening Conway made a personal decision. “I remember sitting back and going, ‘Shut up.’ I told myself, ‘Just don’t say anything for a while.’” During his self-imposed silence, he watched Ray Miller, Steve Waldo, Lee Panza, and Mayor Clara Johnson at work. “They were having this really, really good dialogue. Everybody was taking in what each person was saying,” he recalled. “I didn’t say a word. I just listened and I watched them. I said to myself, ‘That’s it, then. That really is it.’ It was kind of like a revelation, a key moment for me. It’s not just about being

contentious; it’s about working together to solve an issue.” The experience aligned with Conway’s team-building background in the corporate world, though he had not expected to find it applicable to politics.

As had others on the Council, Conway saw Ray Miller as a key shaper of the more patient style. “He was very process-oriented. People want to feel like, ‘Yeah, I’m being heard. You’re listening to what I’m saying. You’re taking my ideas into account.’ I think the majority of the time we’ve been successful with doing that,” said Conway. “That’s why there haven’t been any recalls.” Conway’s forthrightness, a trait he shared with Robin Leiter, quickly helped get their working relationship on sure footing. “I just developed an immense amount of trust,” he said later. “She really knew what she was doing.”

Concerns about Biotechnology and Animal Research Fuel Challenge to Revised General Plan

The coming months afforded Conway and his fellow council members plenty of opportunities to test the limits of their process approach to governance. During the last election, candidate Dana Dillworth had made environmental health concerns a centerpiece of her campaign, citing various studies linking proximity to unregulated landfills with birth defects, premature births, miscarriages, cancer, and respiratory ailments. She alleged that quarry dust, airborne particles from the fuel tank farm east of Bayshore Boulevard, and pollution from the landfill were specific threats to Brisbane residents, and she pointed to the City’s General Plan as offering inadequate protection from these as well as future dangers from development. Dillworth’s allegations instilled sufficient anxiety in the community to lead to a query to the San Mateo County Health Department about Brisbane’s cancer rates. The Health Department reported that they were “average,” though it could provide



Brisbane's City Council in 1994: L to R: Steve Waldo, Clarke Conway, Clara Johnson (mayor), Lee Panza, and Ray Miller.

no data on birth defects since the state had stopped collecting that information.

Dillworth found the county's response inadequate for a number of reasons, but the issue at hand for the City Council at its January 24, 1994, meeting was not sorting through public health statistics but whether or not to publish the Health Department letter in the *Brisbane Star*. Dillworth argued that if it were to be published, a rebuttal or additional information should accompany it. That approach threatened to increase anxiety and confusion rather than settle the matter. Waldo, in particular, had been upset during the campaign with what he believed to be inflammatory statements about disease risks in Brisbane made by Dillworth and the environmentalists backing her, Burr, and Conway. He saw the close vote as testimony to "the power of misinformation. I'm not at all pleased for Brisbane," he commented after the election.

It was Conway who found a diplomatic exit from the dilemma. Observing that the letter, which downplayed causal links between cancer and environmental conditions in the county, could be seen as insensitive to cancer victims, he suggested that the letter not be published

but simply be made available to anyone who wanted to read it. As to the larger issue of health risks that Dillworth had raised, the absence of definitive research about Brisbane's specific conditions was not very satisfactory, but at the same time it was unreasonable to expect that the City could commission a conclusive health study. In the end, Waldo moved that the matter be deferred "for further thought and discussion." His colleagues agreed unanimously. But Dillworth's environmental health crusade remained on a collision course with Brisbane's General Plan, then heading toward finalization.

On May 31, 1994, the Council held public hearings on the General Plan in the City's Community Center. Planning Director Carole Nelson noted the extensive work that had gone into the plan over the past three years, including two citizen surveys, the "Have Your Say Day" workshop in May 1992, and a published first draft in September 1993 that was made available for citizen review. In all, the plan had been the focus of fifty-five City Council meetings, thirty-eight Planning Commission meetings, and eighteen Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission meetings. Nelson reminded those attending the

public hearings that specific development projects would have to come before the Council for review and approval, and that the General Plan was just that—a statement of the City’s broad aims and goals in a variety of areas or “elements” to serve as a guide in making specific decisions.

Public reaction was mostly favorable at the May 31 council meeting, but sharp-edged opposition arose from Dana Dillworth, John Burr, and Mountain Watch’s David Schooley, who believed that the General Plan was not specific about limiting future development in the Baylands. The Council decided, therefore, to continue the discussion and scheduled an additional meeting for Sunday, June 5, at 3:00 pm in the Community Center. Bay Area Mountain Watch called for a meeting of its own that same afternoon in the Community Center, a half-hour before the Council meeting, to insure a strong presence at the following hearing.

Complicating the hearings was the announcement earlier that spring by the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) that it was considering Brisbane’s Baylands as one of two possible sites for building a biotechnology research facility. In May, the Citizens League for Environmental Action Now (CLEAN) circulated a flyer in Brisbane asking residents to “imagine secret animal research which produces a new bug . . . resistant to all efforts to kill it. During an earthquake, this form of biological warfare is accidentally released. Within weeks, the entire planet is infected and all life dies. Sound impossible? Not really.” If the Brisbane City Council had its way, the flyer warned, “You and your family could be the next guinea pigs.” Dana Dillworth had little regard for UCSF biotech researchers. “If you heard the things they do [to animals], you wouldn’t want these barbarians coming to your City either,” she told a reporter.

Not only would the General Plan permit biotechnology research, CLEAN insisted, it also would bring “large-scale shopping developments attracting criminal gangs,” high-rise buildings blocking Bay views, and traffic jams. The flyer, titled “Will the Council Let Brisbane Disappear?” ended with an invitation for readers to contact Dana Dillworth regarding a “comprehensive health survey.” The flyer hit its mark. One

resident described how his five-year-old son had brought home a copy and that the information in it had been alarming. How could the Council allow this type of activity in Brisbane, asked the child’s father, referring to the UCSF research? Another CLEAN flyer explained that the Tuntex Corporation “is pulling the Council’s strings” and underscored the dangers of a “mutant killer-virus” that could spread through the air and wipe out human populations.

Mountain Watch repeated CLEAN’s contentions that Brisbane’s proposed General Plan would allow “weird and cruel animal experiments, Bio-warfare, and virus experiments,” twelve-story high-rise buildings on the Bay, and “big box” retail stores. Mountain Watch also appealed to Brisbane residents concerned about losing political control to the Northeast Ridge by insisting that City Hall be relocated to the center of town. As the June 5 public hearing wound down, Council Member Lee Panza moved to adopt the General Plan, arguing that further delay was not likely to resolve any of the issues raised and may in fact complicate them further. But the degree of contention in the room did not sit right with Ray Miller, who suggested waiting until the end of the month to allow for still more public comment and reaction.

Council Adopts Revised General Plan, Faces Campaign on Measure H Referendum Challenge

Two weeks later, at a June 21 meeting, the Council unanimously adopted the General Plan, which contained more than 400 policies and programs. It was “a remarkable document,” Robin Leiter told the Council, “and one I think each of us can take great pride in.” For Carole Nelson, the City Council’s action capped a process that she later called “the proudest thing in my entire career because it was tailored to this community [in order] to develop a consensus.” Individual residents’ answers to fourteen different questions filled a 238-page transcript that afforded Nelson and other drafters of the General Plan a wide-ranging perspective that contributed to the plan’s 250-page length and unusual character. “They didn’t need someone with a briefcase who came in and said, ‘These are the planning solutions that everyone’s using

WILL THE COUNCIL LET BRISBANE DISAPPEAR?

Imagine secret animal research which produces a new bug... resistant to all efforts to kill it. During an earthquake, this form of biological warfare is accidentally released. Within weeks, the entire planet is infected and all life dies. Sound impossible? Not really.

For years governments have participated in secret experiments on unknowing populations. Radiation and biological warfare testing are but a few examples recently revealed in the press.

If the Brisbane city council has its way, you and your family could be the next guinea pigs. Why would they do that?

Because Tuntex is pulling their strings. Just like when they got the council to zone the toxic dump for housing.

Secret biological research is not all you have to worry about:

- High rise buildings blocking access and Bay views.
- Large-scale shopping developments attracting criminal gangs.
- Our local small businesses will lose customers.
- You will spend a lot more time in traffic jams.

That's why it is important for you to tell the council what you don't want:

- NO BIOTECHNOLOGY**
- NO MORE REDEVELOPMENT DEST**
- NO HIGH RISES**
- NO HIGH-TRAFFIC IMPACTS.**

Remind them what you do want:

- PROTECT THE PUBLIC**
- ZONE THE TOXIC AREAS AS OPEN SPACE**
- KEEP THE TOWN SMALL.**

Do it today. The council plans to adopt a general plan by June to allow biological research and dense development... right in our backyard.

COMING CLEAN
CITIZENS LEAGUE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION NOW
P.O. BOX 81, BRISBANE Q.L. 4000

Because of all the toxic contamination, air pollution, and health problems, we are organizing a comprehensive health survey. Please contact Dana Dillworth 468-1533 to help.

"Will the Council Let Brisbane Disappear?" Opposition to development in Brisbane often melded with other causes, such as preserving or restoring habitat, protecting public health and safety, limiting war-related spending, weakening the influence of large corporations, and stopping the use of animals in research experiments. This flyer captured them all.

today," Nelson observed. "They needed things to be crafted for them." So she gave the Planning Commission and the Council "a hundred policies, and poetry. I mean, it was just different from any General Plan anyone had ever seen before." When other City planners saw it, they wondered how staff had ever managed to work with it. But Nelson felt it had been just the right approach for Brisbane. "It worked," she countered. "Everyone can see themselves in this."

Chapter 3 of the General Plan began with a quote from a 1975 issue of California Living magazine: "This is about Brisbane and its mountain. It stands more than a thousand feet high, this great outcropping of rock and scrub brush that surrounds the town like a pair of loving hands, isolating Brisbane from the metropolis grown up around, preserving here a time capsule of the way life was years ago—quiet, unhurried, comfortable in its familiarity with the land." Notwithstanding that this sentiment matched

closely Mountain Watch's heartfelt love for the San Bruno hills, that organization did not see itself reflected in Brisbane's new General Plan. Nor did CLEAN and Dana Dillworth, or some Brisbane voters who signed a petition circulated by Dillworth during that summer that would nullify the Council's adoption of the General Plan and subject it to voter approval.

In mid-July, Dillworth handed the signed petition to Robin Leiter at City Hall. On August 8, after officials had verified the signatures, the Council set November 8, 1994, as the date for the referendum, which went on the ballot as Measure H. Both sides geared up for an emotion-packed campaign. CLEAN had already demonstrated what it believed to be the high stakes it saw in the balance, while supporters of the General Plan marshaled their arguments in defense. Meanwhile, City staff worked to assuage the concerns of Tuntex representatives and other property owners whose plans depended on Brisbane having an official plan in place. This was difficult since City attorney Robert Booth confirmed that no zoning permits, use change permits, or subdivision permits could be granted until the referendum was settled. Such permits required a finding of consistency with the General Plan, and the General Plan had in effect been put on hold pending the outcome of the referendum.

A Solution for Levinson Marsh

"Every day seems to bring a new issue which allows for my continuing education and surprise," Robin Leiter told the Council in mid-August. Annual negotiations with the police and fire unions proceeded with hope that all parties would recognize the continuing impact of the recession on the City's budget. Former Mayor Ed Schwenderlauf wondered about the lack of progress on the Community Park. The Council investigated a possible bargain purchase of a building, currently occupied by Johnson Controls, an air conditioning and heating manufacturer, on Park Lane in Crocker Industrial Park that could provide permanent quarters for the City's offices and the police department. Southwest Diversified sold its interest in the Northeast Ridge development to a Canadian company, Coscan Davidson, later renamed

Brookfield Davidson. And Robin Leiter inched forward an agreement between Daly City, the Tuntex Corporation, PG&E, and the Levinson family estate that would solve a large drainage and pollution problem in Daly City and the part of Brisbane now known as the Levinson Marsh.

Once a corner of a dairy farm, the marsh area was north of central Brisbane on Bayshore Boulevard within the City limits and adjacent to PG&E's Martin Service Center, a former manufactured gas plant site just inside Daly City. It had served as a repository for the plant's toxic wastes between 1906 and 1913, the years of the plant's operation. Nearly a century later, residues from the manufacturing process such as polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PNAs) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) had been found in soil and groundwater samples in several areas surrounding the former plant. The Levinson estate and Tuntex, owners of some of the affected land, alleged that the pollution prevented them from realizing the worth of their holdings and that PG&E, the present owner of the former gas plant site, should pay the cleanup costs. PG&E countered that the affected properties simply should be condemned.

Drainage problems in the area only made things worse. The Bayshore Storm Drainage Basin, as it was known, collected rainwater starting in Daly City's Southern Hills. From there, the water flowed southeasterly through Midway Village, a low-income housing area in Daly City, to the Levinson and PG&E properties, across Bayshore Boulevard onto a mixture of "real land" and landfill on Tuntex property and finally to the Bay.

Attorneys had passed the "hot potato" of cleaning up the site from one party to another. The Measure H referendum challenging Brisbane's General Plan had further unsettled the situation. With both Brisbane and Daly City threatening to invoke eminent domain on the PG&E property, PG&E had hired outside counsel and scheduled twenty depositions. Leiter, an attorney herself, estimated the cost of the depositions alone to be about \$250,000. So in August 1994 she called all involved to get together to see if they could find an alternative. As she reported to the City Council, "Levinson wants to sell the property, Daly City wants to

stop the flooding, and PG&E has to deal with the contaminants."

At the first meeting, held on neutral ground in the Hitachi Building on Sierra Point in Brisbane, the parties agreed to put all litigation on hold. At a second meeting, they sketched the outline of an agreement that would preserve the Levinson Marsh in perpetuity while solving the drainage problems in Midway Village and on the Levinson and Tuntex properties, should they ever be developed. The agreement, finalized early in 1995, involved designating the marsh in perpetuity as a wetlands; easements granted by PG&E and the Levinsons for storm drainage facilities across their properties; toxic remediation plans presented jointly to the appropriate regulatory agencies by all parties; and costs shared proportionally.

Leiter credited Jim Thompson, Brisbane's city engineer, with putting together a plan "which is not just a stock engineering solution of putting a pipe in the ground, but rather has a greater sensitivity to preserving the marsh." Thompson figured that, since the particular pollutants that had accumulated in the site were not water soluble, they could be encapsulated and prevented from draining eastward toward the Bay and from backing up into Midway Village. His solution involved laying down a system of interlocking louvers that sealed the toxins underneath while allowing for wetlands and marsh growth on top. It was an elegant and effective design. "If you wanted to go in and clean it," explained Clarke Conway, "you could just scrape it along and clean the marsh out without disturbing the toxins locked in below the pavers." But building it took seven months of concentrated effort. Work had to proceed during the rainy season—the most difficult time for construction—in order to minimize the spread of any airborne pollutants by dust and wind. "When the wind shifted more than 30 degrees," Thompson recalled, "we were supposed to shut down, even when it was pouring rain!" At one point, two of the main water pipelines serving San Francisco had to be shut down. "We worked around the clock for ten days to bring them back on line," said Thompson. "Mayor Willie Brown [of San Francisco] called and told us, 'You've got to get this pipeline back in service before the 49er/New York Giants game at Candlestick.'"

As project manager, Thompson faced additional stress from political protests by Nation of Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan and Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, whose members chanted "Medication, Compensation, Relocation" at the job site. The marsh remediation under way would actually prevent pollution from backing up into Midway Village, but the protests focused on the construction work to draw attention to another long-standing problem: toxic contamination of the earth underlying Midway Village itself. Thompson also worked around protests from environmental activists suspicious of the project's soundness and of its ultimate effect on the area's rare and endangered species. "We had people dressed up as red-legged frogs coming to Council meetings," Thompson chuckled. But in the end, the solution worked very well. Conway concluded, "It was good for the drainage; it was good for Daly City; it was good for PG&E; it was good for the Levinson marsh; it was good for Brisbane to get all this dealt with."

General Plan Referendum Campaign Raises Emotions

While Leiter managed the Bayshore Storm Drainage Basin negotiations—"sometimes I see myself as a juggler with wooden sticks and swirling plates," she confided to the Council—the Measure H campaign showed no comparable tendency toward equilibrium. The question facing voters on November 8 would be, "Shall the 1994 Brisbane General Plan, as adopted by the City Council, be approved?" Those planning to vote "Yes" organized Neighbors United for Your General Plan with Dan Sorrentino as chair and residents Anna Lou Martin and Alex Reisman; former Mayors Bradshaw, Goercke, Kerwin, Hodge, Lawrence, Smith, Salmon, and Anja Miller; current Mayor Clara Johnson, and Council Members Miller, Panza, Waldo, and Conway.

City planning had, in fact, become a rather arcane function in recent decades due to increasingly specialized administrative and regulatory requirements that were responses to diverse citizen needs and demands. It was confusing enough for ordinary voters, and, as was often the case in similar situations such as medical care, income tax filing, or computer

How do you feel about outsiders who provide the funding for local campaigns? Well, it's happening right now, right here in Brisbane. And if they have their way, Brisbane's General Plan will become the next victim of their special interests!

What is the General Plan?

- A GENERAL PLAN is required by State Law. It expresses the character, desires, and needs of the community.
- Brisbane's GENERAL PLAN has been created by the people of Brisbane, our elected and appointed officials, and the city staff.
- The GENERAL PLAN protects the community from unwanted development. *The voters have the last word on any development on the Baylands.*
- Opposition to the GENERAL PLAN includes groups from outside the community who exploit Brisbane's small size to pursue their own agendas.
- After 3 years of hard work and over 100 public meetings, it's time to give this comprehensive, dynamic document – the GENERAL PLAN – our seal of approval.

**Support Brisbane's General Plan
On November 8,
Vote YES on Measure H!**

Neighbors United For Your General Plan
A Committee Supporting Measure H
574 Alvarado St. • Brisbane CA • 467-6459

Claiming that the City's newly revised General Plan offered insufficient control over future development, petitioners succeeded in putting the General Plan to a referendum vote, Measure H. The election was held on November 8, 1994. Voters approved the General Plan, which many of them had helped craft, by a two-to-one majority (873-475).

repair, people had little choice but to trust in professionals. If that trust were undermined, citizens could start sliding on a liquefying amalgam of conflicting information. The General Plan was not the legitimate expression of the wishes of Brisbane's citizens, Dana Dillworth and John Burr asserted. On the contrary, they argued, "Have Your Say Day" had prevented people from speaking rather than giving them a voice; PRI survey questions had been biased; and politicians and Tuntex had influenced the General Plan.

General Plan supporters avoided directly confronting the "Vote No" movement but countered its arguments point by point. When volunteers from Clean Water Action and other groups posted day-glo posters around town saying "No to Taxes, Toxics, and Traffic," for instance, Steve Waldo answered—in a letter mailed at his

own expense—that the plan prohibited housing on the Baylands and required that toxics be cleaned up in compliance with all state and federal requirements; that the plan proposed no new taxes or changes in the existing ones; and that the plan limited Baylands traffic by making it proportional to the type of building constructed (retail generates more traffic than a warehouse; therefore, it gets less building space on the same size parcel). Further, any Baylands builder would be required to provide improvements to Brisbane’s infrastructure to mitigate adverse traffic impacts.

Ray Miller explained the plan’s proportional traffic control model when he and Steve Waldo debated Dana Dillworth and John Burr in the Community Center during the campaign. It was a rather complicated model, he allowed, but attendees seemed to understand his explanation. But Miller believed that what won voters over was not so much explaining the plan’s extensive details as reminding them that the plan was, in fact, their own creation. What was in the plan was what they had said they wanted in it, and that included no housing on the Baylands, no adverse traffic impacts, and a remediation of toxic waste. As to UCSF research, said Miller, “We explicitly prohibited any kind of research or operational activity that would have those kinds of toxic qualities. That was in the General Plan. It was written by Steve Waldo.”

Fred Smith and Jeannine Hodge came forward to support the plan and to charge environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club with opposing it on general grounds without having bothered to understand the situation in detail. The Sierra Club’s Julia Bott unapologetically admitted as much in a reply, confirming that the Club’s Executive Committee had made its decision solely on the ballot arguments written for the measure. It was a disappointment for Ray Miller, who had visited the Sierra Club offices with Robin Leiter and discovered that the club, Clean Water Action, and other environmental groups had fallen in line with each other on Measure H without looking very hard at the specific issues. “They didn’t do their homework at all,” Miller recalled, “and yet they were prepared to put their name out there and endorse the campaign against the General Plan without really having any information.”

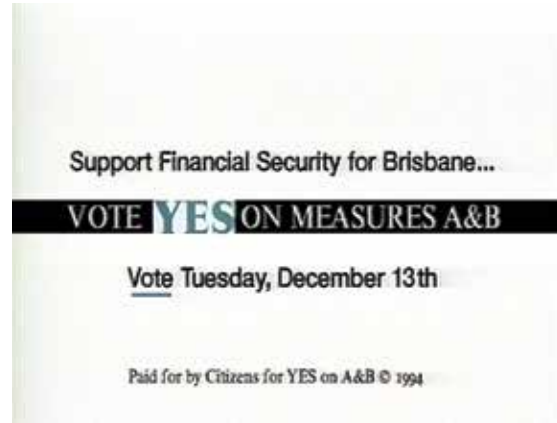
It was déjà vu for Fred Smith, whose open letter with Hodge to the people of Brisbane asked, “Why throw out an entire General Plan that hundreds of Brisbane residents put three years of work into?” Smith had experienced the same feeling over the Civic Center just five years earlier. “It was the rhetoric against the Plan that really offended me,” said Smith. “The opponents were using anecdotal information about cancer clusters. There was no basis in fact for it. They were just making things up to generate fear.”

The extremes of rhetoric were evident at Brisbane’s annual Family Festival in October when General Plan opponents displayed graphic photos of “animal torture” in research and deployed animal hand puppets covered in bandages, “blood,” and electrodes. The Council considered an “urgency ordinance” to control the distribution of campaign literature in the town but abandoned the effort as incompatible with free speech rights, a cause that Mayor Clara Johnson insisting on upholding despite her distaste for some of the “No on H” campaign material. “You couldn’t find a space in town that didn’t have a sign on it,” recalled Ray Miller. “The town was plastered with signs against the General Plan. I mean, every telephone pole had twenty. It was awful.”

It was an especially awkward time for Clarke Conway, who, nearly a year after his election to the Council, found himself at odds with his former political allies Dana Dillworth and John Burr. It had been Conway who warned against being too confrontational in responding to referendum proponents. Colleagues on the Council readily accepted the suggestion on its merits, but it also reflected Conway’s mixed sympathies. “I felt like I was really out on an island,” he recalled about the General Plan. He explained to Dillworth and Burr, “I voted for it. That means I believe in it. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have voted for it.” The best he could do under the circumstances was to adopt a tactically neutral position on Measure H while standing by his earlier vote for the plan.

General Plan Affirmed; Gambling Initiative Defeated

On election day, November 8, 1994, Brisbane voters approved by nearly a two-to-one majority (873-475) the General Plan that the City Council



Just one month after voting to accept the City's General Plan, Brisbane citizens returned to the polling booths on December 13, 1994, to decide an initiative to permit gambling. Turning aside arguments that casinos or card rooms would provide much-needed revenues for the City, voters overwhelmingly rejected the initiative. This schematic shows the entranceway for the proposed facility, which was to be constructed on Sierra Point.

had adopted the previous June. Residents Lynn Grant and Gary Apotheker, who made preserves from their garden every year to give as Christmas presents, celebrated the occasion by canning a special batch that they labeled "General Plan Preserved." Robin Leiter told the City Council that the election outcome brought "a sense of relief and a sense of good fortune" to City employees, who carefully avoided taking sides during the campaign. "The idea of doing the General Plan all over again was a depressing thought," she said. "We are all looking forward to moving ahead with many items which appear to be more productive and constructive for the community."

One might have said, "Not just yet," about the constructive forward movement: five weeks after the Measure H referendum, voters faced yet another controversial decision. On December 13, 1994, they went to the polls to decide whether Brisbane would allow gambling. "Never let it be said that people here don't vote—often," quipped San Mateo Times reporter Dave Madden. There were two measures at issue. Measure A would allow "card rooms" and games in which participants played against each other but not against "the house." Measure B would limit gambling to a single, two-hundred-table card room that would be located on a twenty-two-acre site at Sierra Point. Proponents envisioned the construction of shops and restaurants, and perhaps a movie theater, near the casino on land bordering the Brisbane Marina.

To budget-beleaguered and recession-weary local governments, allowing taxable gaming establishments often appeared to be a viable way to fund activities such as schools, recreation centers, and even police and fire services. Backers of the gaming initiative in Brisbane anticipated new revenues of between \$8 million and \$12 million. Lee Panza, who was mayor when the proposal surfaced in 1993, was not particularly in favor of permitting gambling in Brisbane, but in accordance with his general political philosophy, he stated, "If the people say they want it, I'm willing to consider getting behind it." Council member Steve Waldo, on the other hand, was an outspoken opponent. "I do not like the idea, at all, period," he declared. Neither did Hitachi America, Ltd., occupant of a new high-rise office building on the Point, which sent a representative to a City Council meeting on November 28 to explain the company's position. Gambling, said Nancy Whipple, would have "an adverse effect on the character of the community."

The gaming industry had recently been accepted in neighboring Colma, which adopted a card room ordinance in February 1993 in hopes of realizing \$4 million in new revenues. Daly City voters, by contrast, had rejected a card room measure in June, and South San Francisco, which already had two card rooms, was not interested in any more. To the industry, and to twenty-five local Brisbane investors

such as attorney and Chamber of Commerce President Ray Schnibben, the prospect of card rooms seemed like a harmless way to provide entertainment while raising much-needed funds for the community.

Industry representatives like San Diego's Mark Owens, who helped organize a presentation on June 23 at a nearby Radisson Hotel, had heard all the opposing arguments before. He preferred to make his case directly to the people. Brisbane was "not going to be overtaken by a Vegas-type interest sweeping down on the City," he asserted. On December 13, 1994, Brisbane voters guaranteed that such a thing would not soon happen in their town by rejecting both gaming initiatives by an even wider margin than they had accepted the General Plan in the previous month's election. Brisbane would have to raise its funds the old-fashioned way, recession or no recession.

Residents' Philanthropy and Developer's Contributions Help Meet Local Needs

One of those time-honored ways was local philanthropy. The Brisbane Chamber of Commerce awarded \$5,000 in scholarships to the City's high school students in 1995, while the Hitachi Corporation gave \$100 and \$200 savings bonds to students receiving straight A grades—the higher amount for two consecutive grading quarters. The local chapter of the Eagles, a community service organization, did its best for Brisbane. In the six months between July 1994 and January 1995, for instance, the Eagles collected nearly \$6,000 for distribution to a diabetes fund, an Alzheimer's fund, a cancer fund, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Lipman Middle School's music program, the Special Olympics, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and an association to help the mentally challenged in San Mateo County.

The money for Lipman School was especially appreciated by Brisbane School District superintendent Stephen J. Waterman, whose reports to Brisbane residents typically featured warm thanks for recent donations coupled with warnings about the school system's deteriorating financial condition. There were grounds for concern. Declining tax revenues and assistance

from the state, along with the recession's erosion of the school system's investment income, had forced more than \$100,000 in cuts in the 1993-94 year. At the same time, grants and private donations had raised nearly \$70,000, including \$10,000 from the Brisbane Education Support Team (B.E.S.T.), comprised mostly of Brisbane parents.

The school district was about to receive \$1 million from Northeast Ridge developer Coscan Davidson as part of the City's 1989 settlement with the former developer, Southwest Diversified. Originally intended to fund the building of a new school to accommodate families moving into the Ridge, the money would now go to the school system's flagging investment fund and to building improvements. But, observed Waterman, prolonged planning and approval had whittled down to one acre the size of the site on the Ridge that had been set aside for the building of a new school. Since the minimum recommended size for an elementary school was ten acres, a new school was no longer an option. Fortunately, the district's existing schools, Waterman judged, would be able to incorporate any children moving onto the Ridge when homes there went on sale in 1996.

Johnson Controls Building Goes on the Market: A New City Hall?

The Brisbane School District was not the only beneficiary of the settlement with Southwest Diversified. Brisbane had been pledged about \$4 million in developer contributions, and there were additional funds left over from the Certificates of Participation originally issued for the Civic Center. In the spring of 1994, with the City Council poised to adopt the new General Plan and the lease at 150 North Hill Drive set to expire, a realtor walked into the City's offices on North Hill and told Carole Nelson that Johnson Controls was moving to Hayward and wanted to sell its building on Park Lane quickly. Did she know of any buyers? Nelson went to take a look at the 23,000-square-foot building and saw its potential for the City. Robin Leiter was out of town, but Nelson informed the Council that the Johnson Controls building was on the market.

The structure had a large warehouse section that might, with extensive renovation, serve as a

Dancing with the Brisbane Stars

At first glance, an organization dedicated to teaching dance to youngsters would seem to have little connection with the large economic and political forces shaping Brisbane's future. But in truth, the Brisbane Dance Workshop (BDW) has been an important contributor to Brisbane's civic culture since Camille Olivier Salmon founded the nonprofit in 1984.

The City offered BDW the use of its new Community Center beneath the library on Visitation Avenue, but the Center's rigid concrete terrazzo floor would stress dancers' bodies. A solution emerged when Bob Dettmer heard of a gym floor being taken up in Sacramento and recovered it for another dance group. BDW could use the remaining pieces of "sprung" floor. Dettmer, Marc Salmon (former Mayor Jess Salmon's son and Camille's husband), and other volunteers installed the former gym flooring in Brisbane's Community Center, and BDW was safely launched.

The flooring was a clue that BDW was going to be a professionally run operation. Another clue was the founder's own background as a dancer and choreographer. Camille Olivier Salmon trained in New York with Martha Graham, Jose Limon, and Rudy Perez, performed professionally in New York City and San Francisco, and choreographed numerous works that were performed in both cities. She also served on the Board of Trustees of the Brisbane School District and was program director for the San Francisco Arts Education Project, which placed artists in residence in public schools.

BDW was an immediate success in Brisbane, performing at the annual Festival of Lights, the Community Festival or Day in the Park, and at the Mission Blue Center when that facility opened in 2000. Mission Blue's expertly engineered floor was designed specifically to support dancing at the highest professional level—a point of well-earned pride in the community.

Many of BDW's thousands of participating student dancers over the years have gone on to advanced study. But that, says Camille, is neither the point nor the purpose of BDW. "You learn so much from the performing arts," she explains. "You learn time management, self-esteem, self-confidence, team building, collaboration, and self-discipline." But even that is not quite the point, Camille continued, since one can learn those things from organized



Brisbane named Brisbane Dance Workshop director Camille Olivier Salmon its "Arts Advocate of the Year" for 2007.

sports, too. What makes the performing arts world different is that "It's really safe to have a voice, and your voice can be different. It's about finding that voice and finding out what makes you an individual, and honoring that."



In spring 1994 Brisbane officials received word that the Johnson Controls building was up for sale, but the City could not act quickly enough to prevent the sale from going to another buyer. However, that deal fell through, and in February 1995, after canvassing citizens' views on the matter, the Council moved ahead with the purchase. The building was formally dedicated on November 4, 1995. Immediate renovations made the building functional for City staff, but final improvements were delayed for thirteen more years. In the meantime, the City Council continued to meet in the Community Meeting Room beneath the library on Visitacion Avenue.

meeting room for the Council and others. Its office section was of “tilt-up” construction, meaning that the concrete walls had been poured flat into molds, hardened, and then raised into place—an inexpensive means of construction. It did not take long for Clarke Conway and Steve Waldo, the Council’s Facilities Subcommittee, to conclude that at \$1.35 million, the building would be a good buy for Brisbane. At two meetings, on May 23 and on June 6, council members hastened to prepare an informational flyer and a citizen survey about the 1.5-acre site. Eager to get out from under the \$150,000 annual lease at 150 North Hill but cautious about getting ahead of public opinion, the Council sought to gather input and address citizen concerns as quickly as possible while hoping that the building would not be lost to another bidder.

Although it was a bargain, the building was controversial because it was just inside Crocker Park and therefore disappointing to those who still sought the reassurance and convenience of a more central location. Former Mayor Ed Schwenderlauf, a retired contracting partner and council member with Ernest Conway, Clarke’s father, was among those who maintained that City Hall should be in Brisbane’s traditional downtown area, perhaps at

the Gil’s gas station site on San Bruno Avenue, at Dick’s Tower Bar at the corner of Visitacion and San Francisco Avenues, or in the Panasonic building on Old County Road.

Schwenderlauf also was deeply involved in the design of the Community Park and envisioned a City Hall overlooking it. He approached the Council at a meeting about the Johnson Controls building and declared, “If you guys buy that building, we’ll recall you all.” Clarke Conway, who had been conducting City Council business two or three nights a week for the entire six months he had been in office, shot back, “Well, that’s fine with me. After six months of this, bring the papers by—I’ll sign them!” Schwenderlauf replied, “I’m not talking about you.” “Well, I’m the one who’s pushing this,” Conway retorted. The room erupted in laughter, but Conway was only half joking. “I meant it,” he recalled. “After six months of this, throw me out. This is way too much work.” While Brisbane debated, however, Johnson Controls signed with another buyer.

Through the summer and fall of 1994, the General Plan referendum campaign preoccupied City officials. Then, in November, Clarke Conway learned that the Johnson Controls sale had

fallen through: the building was back on the market. Its owners now gave the City until the end of January 1995 to come to a decision. On January 7, Ed Schwenderlauf died at home at age sixty-eight after a brief illness. With his passing, much of the energy for a downtown City Hall site seemed to dissipate. On January 23, the Council held a public hearing on the proposed purchase. Four participants took thirteen minutes to offer comments. Then the Council voted to authorize City staff to proceed with negotiations to buy the property. At the next meeting, on February 6, the Council unanimously passed a resolution approving the purchase, with a prudent amendment by Ray Miller to the effect that the citizens had been consulted by a survey and had expressed clear support, with 550 favoring the purchase and only 80 opposed.

Nobody thought that the structure was particularly uplifting or attractive. An initial renovation would allow staff and the police department to move in and start working. The City would then undertake planning for a second round of improvements, including seismic retrofitting, extensive construction on the building's second floor, and converting the warehouse area into a meeting room. The structure was utilitarian, plain, and unassuming—the opposite of what the City Council had envisioned when it hired Michael Graves to create an architectural landmark for Brisbane in the late 1980s. But it also was affordable and available, and its deficiencies were remediable. Besides, maybe the City could sell it in ten years or so and build a more inspiring facility, mused Council Member Panza and Mayor Johnson. Council member Waldo summoned

enough enthusiasm to allow that the purchase was “a step in the right direction.” In any event, it seemed like just the right step for Brisbane.

Though only a stone's throw from the Community Park, which was still under construction, the new City Hall was physically separated from downtown Brisbane and could be reached by car only by exiting the City via Old County Road, turning onto Bayshore Boulevard, and then reentering at Valley Road to Park Lane. When the Council authorized the building purchase, it also directed City Engineer Jim Thompson to begin exploring a new access road to connect Brisbane's new City Hall to its old downtown. In the next few months, as contractors remodeled the building's interior to prepare for the staff and the police department to move in, the structure's aesthetics seemed less important than having a new home that belonged to the City. “In the 30 plus years since incorporation,” Leiter observed, “the City has grown and matured and the purchase of the building is reflective of that growth. I also think of how proud Roger [Kalil] would be that the City had permanent quarters, which it owned.”

New City Hall Dedicated

On November 4, 1995, Mayor Ray Miller cut the ribbon dedicating Brisbane's City Hall. Among four hundred attendees were state Senator Quentin Kopp, San Mateo County Supervisor Mary Griffin, former Brisbane Mayors and Council Members Jess Salmon, Bill Lawrence, Jeannine Hodge, Paul Goercke, Anja Miller, and Tony Attard, and U.S. Representative Tom



Mayor Ray Miller at a celebration to mark the opening of Brisbane's new City Hall.



Lantos, who was especially fond of Brisbane because it reminded him of his boyhood home in Hungary. Perhaps the most enduring feature of the dedication, apart from a permanent metal plaque, was a series of historical photographs titled “A Celebration of the People of Brisbane” that had been mounted on the building’s interior walls. The photos portrayed a barber shop, a popular coffee shop, a July 4, 1930, parade, and other scenes that placed Brisbane’s architectural present within a larger context of the City’s human past.

With the installation of those pictures, generations of Brisbane residents seemed to move into the building, along with the furniture and file cabinets, to impart a distinctive, personal flavor to the building’s functional interior. Dolores Gomez, who had retired as Brisbane’s librarian in June 1993, teamed with her husband John to choose photos from the library’s archival collection and write descriptive captions. The selection included several that had been taken by renowned photographer Bill Owens in the 1960s for a project depicting “small town America.” Carole Nelson arranged for museum-quality mounting, hanging, and display, while Ray Miller, Clara Johnson, and the Friends of the Brisbane Library also provided support.

Halting Eucalyptus Clear-Cutting at San Bruno Mountain County Park

Nine months earlier, when contractors were undertaking renovation of the former Johnson Controls building, Ray Miller had been among many Brisbane residents who, while driving on Guadalupe Canyon Parkway through San Bruno Mountain County Park, were startled to see a scene of forest wreckage. Where just recently acres of eucalyptus trees had provided pleasant scenery, passersby now witnessed what Carole Nelson described as something resembling Mount St. Helens after its 1980 volcanic eruption. Miller soon discovered that the County, intending to rid the park of the invasive tree species imported a century earlier from Australia and now considered an obstacle for butterfly flight, had contracted with a logging company to remove the trees, which the company planned to ship to Japan for making particle board. But the loggers had proven far more efficient than anyone had

expected and were already thirty acres into the one hundred acres under contract. Carole Nelson believed that no more than four to twelve acres a year should have been cleared in order to minimize the visual impact and allow adequate time for clean-up and replanting.

Besides being mayor of Brisbane, Miller chaired the City/County Association of Governments. The legal counsel for the association was also the attorney for San Mateo County, which had jurisdiction over the park. He called the attorney, who agreed that the clear-cutting of eucalyptus trees had been too drastic. Miller also called Daly City Council Member Al Teglia, a horticulturalist, who confirmed that the logging should be limited. Mountain Watch’s David Schooley, who knew the area better than anyone, gave his organization’s support. But San Mateo County had signed a contract, and there seemed to be no way around that. Then the county attorney had an idea. “Sue us,” he told Miller. A lawsuit might lead to negotiations that could halt the clear-cutting.

So Brisbane went to San Mateo County Superior Court, where a judge denied the City’s request for a temporary restraining order but set a May 17, 1995, date to hear additional arguments. As the county attorney had predicted, a month later the parties reached a settlement that would spare fifteen acres of eucalyptus around the park’s entrance and establish a plan for replanting with native blue lupines, coffee berry plants, lizard tails, elderberry shrubs, and other native species. It was not an ideal outcome, but it was much preferable to a Mount St. Helens moonscape. And it allowed Miller to savor another of those rare moments that he enjoyed in political life—when parties usually at odds with each other come together for a good cause.

The Quarry, a Stone in Brisbane’s Shoe

By contrast, the County and Brisbane had been divided for years over the one hundred-year-old quarry, now owned by the American Rock and Asphalt Company (ARA), whose trucks, noise, and dust had plagued Brisbane residents for decades. By the mid-1990s, the quarry, a reliable source of revenue for the County, was no longer mining rock but continued in business by trucking in old asphalt and concrete to crush and



Eucalyptus groves near the entrance to San Bruno Mountain State and County Park. Early in 1995, Brisbane residents were startled to see employees of a lumber company clear-cutting eucalyptus trees at the site. City officials took actions that resulted in a halt to the operation, which San Mateo County officials had approved.

recycle. Since much of its materials were used for large construction projects such as roadway resurfacing that were conducted at night, the quarry operated around the clock. And though quarry trucks had been rerouted off Brisbane's residential streets and through Crocker Industrial Park since November 1990, night operations at the site remained disruptive to the town's peace and quiet and posed a nuisance to future residents on the Northeast Ridge.

The quarry's periodic requests to renew its mining permits became opportunities for Brisbane to register protests with county authorities. In March 1995, Council Member Conway announced to his colleagues that he had not been allowed to speak at a recent hearing at which the County Board of Supervisors had approved up to two hundred truck trips per night. Ray Miller and Steve Waldo had attended the meeting too and had spoken up, but their opinions had been ignored. Lacking any political or legal leverage over the

County's supervisors, the City Council decided on a protest campaign. Clarke Conway, who, like his father, was an imposing figure, helped with a door-to-door signature drive on a petition to ban night hauling. Robin Leiter accompanied him one evening on a visit to a trailer park on Bayshore Boulevard whose residents often did not play a large role in Brisbane's affairs. "I really had a great time," Leiter reported back to the Council. "We were quite a duo. When I am not a city manager, it would be fun to stir things up." In the end, though, the County granted a new, five-year permit to ARA that included night hauling, with a "compromise" provision allowing for a hearing in twenty-two months to reassess the impact of night operations. "That's not a compromise," complained Ray Miller after the meeting. "That's a sell-out to ARA."



Brisbane also found itself at odds with San Mateo County over the county's continued permitting of nighttime operations in the one-hundred-year-old quarry, seen here from Crocker Industrial Park. The quarry no longer mined rock but recycled concrete and asphalt from construction projects. The owners claimed that night work was essential to their business.

A New Council: Ray Miller and Clara Johnson Step Down, Cy Bologoff and Sepi Richardson Elected

The next month, three weeks after the City Hall dedication, Brisbane voters chose two new council members to replace Ray Miller and Clara Johnson, who had retired at the end of their terms on November 27. It capped fifteen years of service for Miller, who had started on Brisbane's Planning Commission in 1980 and whose City Council terms had included three mayoral years. Miller also had helped foster Brisbane's increasing ties with neighboring jurisdictions. He was a primary founder and Chair of the City/County Association of Governments, chair of the San Mateo County Council of Cities, and North County's representative on the Transportation Authority's Board of Directors.

Clara Johnson, Brisbane's third woman mayor (after Anja Miller, 1974-75) and Jeannine

Hodge, 1978 and 1984), had also served on the City's Planning Commission and Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission before her 1990-1995 council service. Among her many contributions were coordinating Brisbane's annual Lagoon Clean-up and founding the Community Emergency Volunteers. Johnson also supported Brisbane's "vigorous enforcement" of the numerous environmental conditions—154 pages' worth—placed on builders on the Northeast Ridge. Some of these were intended to prevent sediment runoff into the Brisbane Lagoon, which Johnson had always wished to protect. Robin Leiter acknowledged that monitoring compliance with all the conditions was "sometimes daunting for the staff, but we remain focused." Indeed, Fred Smith visited City Hall in May 1996 to conduct research on a paper he was writing. Smith had enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley, and was close to finishing his degree in environmental economics and City planning. The

topic of his research was the Northeast Ridge, “The Project Which Never Ends.”

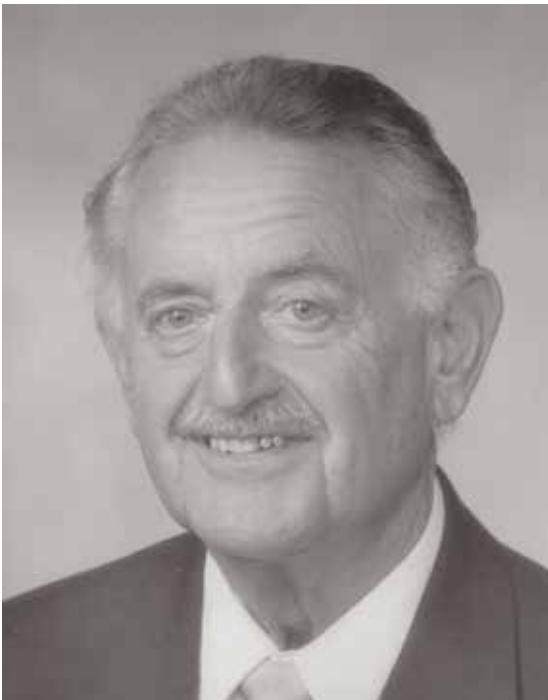
Joining second-time Mayor Waldo and Council Members Conway and Panza at the end of November 1995 were two new council members, Cy Bologoff (571 votes) and Sepi Richardson (398), who had won decisively over candidates Dean Jennings (276) and Louie Ladow (213). Bologoff was well known in Brisbane for his years of service in the fire department, as a planning commissioner and through his membership in the Lions Club, Seniors Club, and Eagles Club. Richardson was a fifteen-year Brisbane resident and self-employed financial consultant who had decided to run for office without the usual “vetting” experiences of serving on the Planning Commission or the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission. Though she had demonstrated her popularity with voters, Richardson faced something of an uphill climb with council incumbents, whom she had criticized at an August 28 council meeting for “talking too much and wasting time.” The awkwardness of the

situation was compounded just before the election when a Richardson campaign flyer mistakenly claimed Clarke Conway and a well-known local photographer as supporters, an error for which Richardson apologized.

But it was a forgiving time in Brisbane politics, and the City busied itself with numerous projects and transitions. The Council selected Park Lane as the street whose short extension from Crocker Industrial Park through the existing post office facility to Old County Road would enable ready access between City Hall and “downtown.” As it turned out, however, the seemingly simple extension was soon ensnared in lengthy red tape concerning the post office’s lease on the building.

City Improvements: the Corporation Yard, Anti-Graffiti Ordinance, Teen Center, and Senior Housing

In June 1995 Sal Gutierrez replaced the retired Vince Marsili as Brisbane’s Public Works



Former Fire Chief and longtime Brisbane resident Cy Bologoff launched a new career in public service when he won election to the City Council in November 1995. He subsequently served four consecutive terms, including three terms as mayor.



Sepi Richardson was elected to the Council in November 1995 along with Cy Bologoff, replacing retiring Clara Johnson and Ray Miller. With the exception of a two-year hiatus (2000-2001) when Clara Johnson returned to the Council, Richardson has served continuously to the present day, with two terms as mayor (2005 and 2009).

supervisor. Among his first duties was the pleasurable one of arranging to relocate the City's Public Works Department and "corporation yard," where it stored heavy equipment and other department materials, from inside an abandoned railroad tunnel to above-ground quarters in a building near the tank farm leased from the Santa Fe Pacific Pipeline. Gutierrez was, as Leiter put it, "eager to get the troops out of the tunnel," which also would clear the way for replacing the outdated Tunnel Avenue Bridge. Both would prove to be long-term projects. Brisbane's thirty-year lease on the "Unocal Building" cost just \$1 per year, but the City would bear the initially estimated \$250,000 in renovation costs. Southern Pacific, Santa Fe Pacific Pipelines, and the Tuntex Corporation agreed to contribute to building the new bridge over the Caltrain tracks.

Also in June 1995, the Council passed an anti-graffiti ordinance after many weeks of debate over how to balance it with free speech rights. The following March, vandals ignored the new ordinance and spray-painted the post office, shop windows, traffic signs, and the City's glass-enclosed notice board. Like other cities big and small, Brisbane had no quick solutions for such problems. However, it did commit to create a new Teen Center and establishing a Youth Advisory Committee in September 1996 and identifying a location for the center at 22 San Bruno Avenue, site of a former gas station and, later, a pizza parlor. Brisbane purchased the site for \$380,000 and spent \$40,000 renovating and equipping it with table games, couches, a stereo, and a large-screen TV. On April 19, 1997, Mayor Clarke Conway opened the facility for Brisbane's approximately 220 teenagers, under the supervision of the Recreation Department's Russ Carmick.

For those at the other end of the age spectrum, the City purchased an old but now decrepit landmark, the Tower Bar, at the intersection of Visitacion and San Francisco Avenues for renovation as a senior residence and activity center. Acquired with Redevelopment Agency funds in November 1995 for \$400,000 after a citizen survey showed strong support for the decision, the block-long location close to shops and diagonally opposite the Community

Park was ideal for seniors. "Bravo!" wrote Diane Harris. "Can you get it built by the time I'm old enough to live there?" But some neighbors remained skeptical that it could be integrated into the residential setting without parking or aesthetic design problems.

Fred Smith Returns to City Hall

Carole Nelson hired former Mayor and Council Member Fred Smith, who had recently graduated from Berkeley, to work on the senior housing project. Smith helped recruit Bridge Housing, an affordable housing company, to build and manage the facility. He also developed and ran the City's first-time homebuyers' assistance program to help qualified applicants obtain financing for some affordable units that had been included in the Northeast Ridge homes, the first of which had their foundations poured in mid-February 1996. Smith put the senior housing effort, simple enough in concept, in its more complicated civic context. "We had a Redevelopment Agency, and the Agency was required to put a certain percentage of its revenues into a low and moderate income housing fund. That money had been accumulating but there had been no program to develop affordable housing in Brisbane. So this was our first foray into that, something that was really new to the City."

If not spent within a certain time, Redevelopment Agency funds dedicated to affordable housing would revert back to the State. Given many residents' existing notions of affordable housing as undesirable "Section 8" tenements, Smith felt it was crucial to give them something that they would accept and of which they could be proud. It was ironic that Smith, who had once tried to please Brisbane residents by giving them an impressive Civic Center—only to be lambasted for lavishing funds on a high-priced architect to design an extravagance—now endeavored to please them from the opposite direction by working for a modest, low-cost facility for the City's seniors, just yards from where the Civic Center would have stood. As Smith saw it, however, both projects were "examples of architectural excellence," notwithstanding their differences in style and scale.

Abandoned Cars and “Gil’s Oly”

As Brisbane worked to increase its affordable housing stock, it also tackled a long-standing problem of residents storing wrecked and abandoned cars on their property or on City streets. Back in 1991, resident Carolyn Straub had pointed out to Council Member Ray Miller the anomaly of Brisbane’s historic resistance to being San Francisco’s garbage dump while allowing its own streets and yards to become depositories for junked cars, abandoned appliances, and discarded auto batteries. Straub provided several photos as evidence, and Police Chief Tom Hitchcock, alerted by the Council and Mayor Waldo, assured her that the City would take “appropriate action.”

More problematic was a town fixture on San Francisco Avenue known as Gil’s Olympic Gas Station, or “Gil’s Oly,” after the original owner Galen “Gil” Gilbrech. The station had ceased pumping gas in 1991 over a dispute between the owner, Gil’s son John, and state authorities over the extent and clean-up costs of underground leaks in the lines leading from the holding tanks. During the protracted stalemate, John kept the station open as a repair shop, though no sign identified the facility as such. A variety

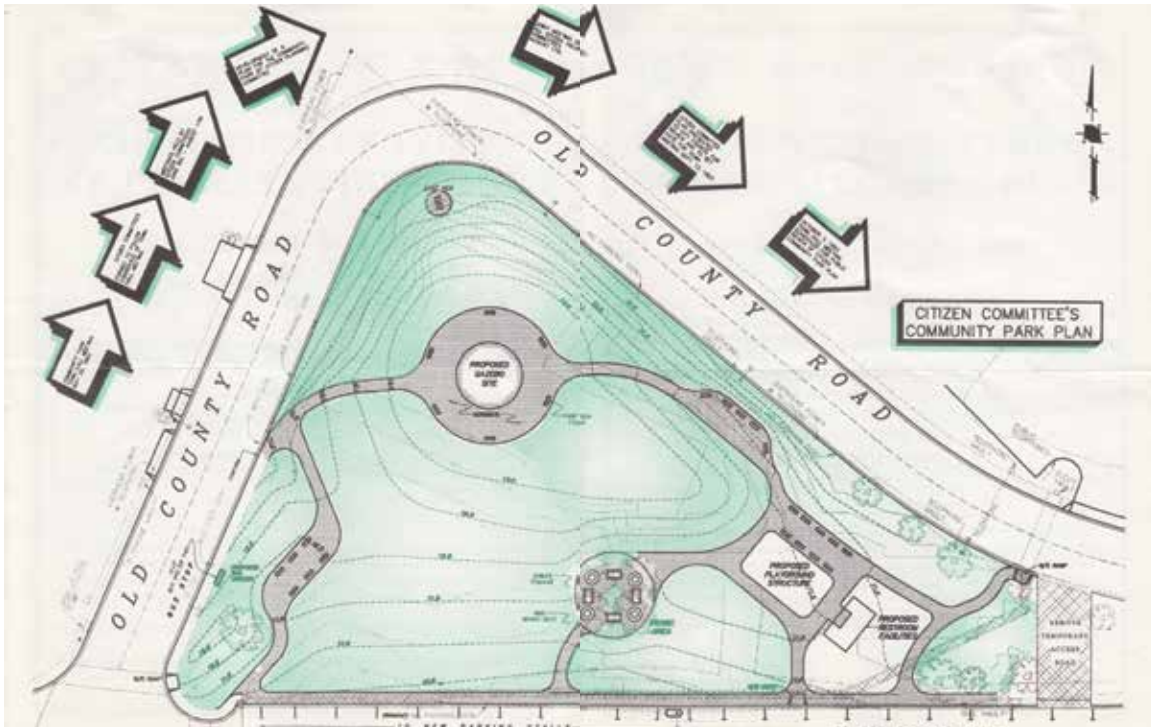
of vehicles, a couple of boats, and a camper gradually accumulated on the property, creating a vexing loophole in the City’s existing ordinances concerning abandoned cars. Some cars had been there for as long as four years, partially as a protest against bureaucracy, while goldfish swam in the water-filled hole made when the underground tanks were removed—living proof, maintained the Gilbrechs, that the station posed no health threat. The general understanding was that the Gilbrechs wished to sell and that the City wanted to buy; the problem was reconciling the sellers’ sense of a good price with the City’s awareness of environmental clean-up costs. “I believe that no one is communicating well,” said Robin Leiter, who enlisted Fred Smith’s help in sorting through the conundrum, a task that would take several more years.

Community Park Opens, Awaits “Focal Point”; Planning Starts for Swimming Pool

Brisbane’s Community Park, across the street from Gil’s Oly, afforded City leaders a clearer sense of accomplishment. Mayor Steve Waldo regarded completing the park as the City Council’s single greatest achievement in 1995.



Brisbane recognized the need to provide a locus for teen activities and opened a Teen Center at 22 San Bruno Avenue on April 19, 1997, to serve the City’s approximately 220 adolescents. The facility, shown here in 2004, was remodeled in 1999.



Brisbane devoted much effort to designing a Community Park that would please a majority of residents. The park at last opened in 1995, though restrooms and a “focal point” or gazebo remained to be built. These also took time and were finally completed in 1999.

Eighty percent of the park was grass, and the rest had been landscaped with carefully chosen trees and plantings. Money had been allotted for construction of restrooms and a “focal point” structure such as a gazebo, and a redwood tree had been planted that had been donated by the Schwenderlauf family in memory of the former mayor, who had envisioned a “village green” on the site. It would take a few more years to work through differences of opinion on what sort of structure would serve as the park’s “focal point,” but in the meantime Brisbane could rightly consider itself to have a functional and attractive greenway at its entrance.

But the City still lacked something that residents had long desired and that had been an important part of Sepi Richardson’s recent, successful campaign for City Council—a swimming pool. In 1987 Mayor Ray Miller acknowledged that “people have been talking about a swimming pool for years, yet nothing seems to happen.” In all recreational surveys, said Miller, interest in a swimming pool always topped the list. He projected that the Northeast

Ridge developer might bear “a significant share of the construction and maintenance costs,” and that “an all-weather pool in this location could serve as a binding social activity for all residents and even workers in the Crocker Industrial Park.” But, he concluded, “this is all speculation.” Many sensitive details would have to be worked out, including whether to locate the pool on the Northeast Ridge or closer to central Brisbane.

In February 1989 citizens once again put a pool at the top of their list of recreational facilities, this time linking it with the Teen Center and the aim of providing constructive outlets for the City’s adolescents—a “good, healthy way for them to vent their energy,” offered Mary O’Shaughnessy. In November that year, following the traumatic recall election, Brisbane’s historic settlement with Southwest Diversified brought the realization of the City’s dream closer to reality. The settlement provided \$1.3 million for a pool, enough for an outdoor pool but only half of what would be needed for an indoor pool.

But with everything else it had piled on its plate—trucks from the quarry, monitoring construction

on the Northeast Ridge, building a new fire station, updating the General Plan, establishing the Bayshore Drainage Basin, constructing the Community Park, and finding permanent quarters for City Hall—City staff had not been able to focus on a pool. In September 1996, though, Robin Leiter reported that staff had begun researching the specifics of construction and maintenance of a swimming pool. Council member Richardson urged action and recommended establishing a council committee to work with the staff. But her colleagues Conway, Bologoff, Panza, and Mayor Waldo decided to hold off pending further information from the staff. After a citizen survey and public hearings conducted in June 1997, the Council decided on a site near Lipman Middle School as preferable to one on the Northeast Ridge. Factors like sun and wind exposure, as well as the site’s centrality, favored the Lipman field.

Some residents who had opposed any settlement with the developer had rejected Southwest Diversified’s 1989 offer to build a pool as a form of bribery, a concession to old Brisbane that was designed “to mitigate the private pools and spas to be enjoyed exclusively by residents of the NER.” But the passage of time, and the realization of the settlement’s many benefits for Brisbane, had drained some of the intensity of opposition. Now, with the site selected, staff began the process of planning, designing, and constructing the much-desired pool. Once again, Sepi Richardson encouraged the Council to move quickly and aim for a grand opening in August 1998.

First Occupants of Northeast Ridge Units Move In

In early summer 1997, the first residents moved into thirteen units on the Northeast Ridge. Mayor Clarke Conway, who had been sworn in by his father the previous November during a celebration of Brisbane’s thirty-fifth year of incorporation, invited the new residents to a City Council meeting to welcome them formally to town. Six years earlier, Conway had filed an unsuccessful, eleventh-hour lawsuit over the issuance of the grading permit in an attempt to stop the development. Aware of the irony, he swept all that aside in an expression of warmth and acceptance. Now they were all neighbors,

Clarke Conway told remaining grumblers. “They came here and they’re excited about living in a small town. Don’t judge them because they want to move here. They’re not even aware of the fights over this development. The best thing to do is open your arms and welcome them because those houses are going to be built whether you like it or not.”

School Funding and Tax Revenues: Brisbane and School Officials Work Together

The new property tax revenues boosted the City’s finances, already in good shape as Brisbane’s economic ship floated on the rising national tide. Finance Director Gul Ramchandani, who had succeeded Roger Kalil in 1992, reported a surplus in general fund revenues of \$450,000 in FY1997-98 and an operating fund balance of \$3.5 million, with increases across the board in investment earnings as well as sales and property taxes. However, Ramchandani warned that Brisbane’s dependence on sales taxes from a single business, chemical distributor Van Waters & Rogers (VWR), could become a problem in the future.

City Manager Leiter also told the Council that there were no plans at the state level to reverse the flow of local funds into state coffers, so facilities such as schools and libraries would continue to feel the pinch. Brisbane did not neatly overlap the Brisbane School District, which included Panorama Elementary in Daly City. Moreover, there was no high school in Brisbane, whose teenage students were included in the Jefferson Union High School District, along with students from Daly City, Pacifica, and Colma. Jefferson Union representatives had often asked the Brisbane City Council for funds to support after-school programs, computer facility upgrades, school bus transport, and extra library hours used by Brisbane students who attended the district’s four high schools, Oceana, Terra Nova, Jefferson and Westmoor. The Council had usually accommodated these requests, though with varying degrees of scrutiny or complaint.

In February 1995, the Council wryly noted to new Jefferson Union High School District superintendent Michael Crilly that his appearance before the Council to request money was the first



Nearly eight years after reaching a compromise with Brisbane over the extent and nature of housing on the Northeast Ridge of San Bruno Mountain, developers put the first units up for sale. Residents started moving in during early summer 1997. This photo, overlooking Crocker Industrial Park, shows housing construction still under way in March 2003.

time they had heard from the superintendent in five and a half years. After some mild questioning by council members, Crilly got the \$3,000 he asked for. The Council also responded favorably to subsequent appearances by the new superintendent. In 1997 Crilly received all of the \$50,000 he had requested from Brisbane to support its high school students.

To show the City's commitment to continued support for JUSD programs that support Brisbane students, the City Council, on Dec. 15, 1998, adopted a resolution stating that, as part of the annual budget process, the City Council will appropriate funds to the JUSD. The amount of the appropriation would be determined annually by a City Council Subcommittee, after meeting with the District Superintendent.

The relationship between Brisbane and the Jefferson Union High School District went beyond Crilly's visits to council meetings. Leiter and Crilly worked together to obtain grant funds that would help both the school district and the City meet the needs of Brisbane's high school students. In the Brisbane Cooperative Agreement, as the arrangement was known, the school district provided a "late bus" for students

participating in after-school activities; furnished computers to the Brisbane Public Library and the Brisbane Teen Center for students who could not stay after hours to use the school's computers; and sponsored student art shows at City Hall.

Still, many City residents had wanted their own high school for as long as they had wanted a pool. But the relatively small number of Brisbane high school students—only twenty-five of a total of five thousand in the district in 1995—had always been an obstacle to state approval. Most residents considered a separate high school something of a lost cause, but some continued hoping, and Council Member Sepi Richardson placed a high school in Brisbane close to the swimming pool on her to-do list for the City. Lee Panza, too, continued to hold out hope for a Brisbane high school.

On November 4, 1997, voters expressed their contentment with the status quo by choosing council incumbents Waldo (475 votes), Panza (386), and Conway (550) over returning challenger Heidi Dupre (186) and Michael Barnes (266). Dupre, who like Clarke Conway had once opposed the Northeast Ridge

development, was now concerned about making the new residents there feel welcome. Barnes was a thirty-eight-year-old pharmaceutical researcher and member of Brisbane's Planning Commission, Lion's Club, and Friends of the Library who wanted to make sure the City protected its financial reserves while carrying out various improvement projects.

More Improvements: Marina Dredging, Sewer Infrastructure, and Brisbane's First Website

Among the improvements begun in 1997 was dredging the Brisbane Marina to a depth of nine feet, a project for which the design was completed in March of 1997. Because of the time required for the City to obtain the required permits from various state and local agencies, the actual dredging wasn't completed until June of 2000. Another 1997 project had been an in-pipe, photographic survey of the entire sewer system that led to one hundred repairs, reported Mayor Waldo just before the November election. The reminder to voters was timely. Raising sewer and water rates to fund and improve the system was always politically sensitive, as proven the previous February and March when the Council held public hearings on the matter that concluded with a request for City staff to study the entire rate structure, last overhauled in 1992, and report back.

A new form of infrastructure, the City's first presence on the Internet, also came on-line in 1997. Fred Smith, who had recently joined the staff as assistant to the city manager, reported in July on the progress of a Council Internet subcommittee comprised of Lee Panza and Clarke Conway. Two years earlier, Panza had created an informal City website using a small Macintosh computer that Robin Leiter had donated after obtaining a newer model. Panza was serving as Brisbane's representative to the Council of Cities at the time and was on that body's legislative committee. He often found himself mailing the same letter to several people and was receptive when someone pointed out that using a computer could make that chore much easier. Having finished engineering school in the late 1960s, Panza had acquired little familiarity with personal

computers, but now "it was like a light bulb going off." Not only did he use Leiter's old Mac to increase his mailing efficiency, he also saw its potential for the City at large.

Panza proved a quick study, and before long he had designed an all-text website for Brisbane. When graphics made the system potentially more interesting to users, Panza spread the word, "We need a City website, a real, official City website." Working with Smith and other City staff, and with counsel from City attorney Hal Toppel, Panza and Conway prepared a draft set of Internet policies and procedures that they presented for the Council's approval in the summer of 1997. Soon Brisbane went officially "on-line."

On Labor Day weekend, former Mayor Bill Lawrence started growing his beard. By November 12, his ninetieth birthday, it was getting full. On Christmas morning, when Lawrence, as Brisbane's Santa, boarded the City's old 1937 fire truck for his annual gift-giving ride through town, his beard was in splendid form. Lawrence had been delivering candy, fresh fruit, and toys to delighted children for twenty-three years. "Now they're mothers and fathers bringing their own to visit me," he said. Jess Salmon, representing the Brisbane Lions who sponsored the annual event, drove a full-size "lion" ahead of the fire truck to announce Santa's arrival, just as he had done for twenty-five years. This was vintage Brisbane, displaying the charm and character everyone wished to preserve and nourish, even as—perhaps especially as—the City grew in size and complexity.



Bill Lawrence, who had served on the City Council through some of Brisbane's most heated political controversies, found a happier role in his annual appearances as Santa, a role he fulfilled well into his nineties.

CHAPTER FOUR

Growth and Complexity

1998-2001

The economic boom of the mid-1990s brought 200,000 new jobs to the Bay Area—110,000 in 1996 alone—and started a competition for real estate not seen in decades. At the end of 1995, there were 1,823 single-family homes on the market in San Mateo County. One year later, that number had fallen to 1,050. By the end of 1997, newcomers, many of them affluent, were engaged in bidding wars to purchase just 806 homes. Building costs, from airport expansion to kitchen upgrades, escalated. Contractors and construction workers began to pick and choose projects, their time and skills more highly valued than at any time in recent memory.

Just as new high-tech workers and other professionals were bidding up the price of their dream estates, those looking to get some work done around the house—or around the City—often found themselves outbid by competitors with deeper pockets. Waiting time for home remodeling projects more than doubled in nearby Redwood City, from under six months to fifteen. Tom Cardas was overseeing SFO's \$2.5 billion expansion project in 1999, but even his connections were of little help. "With all the guys I know," he said, "it was hard to get someone out to work on my house. Even when I told them I'd buy all the materials."

Among the projects in the contractors' queue was the remodeling of Brisbane Village Shopping Center at Old County Road and Bayshore Boulevard. New owners Charles and Judy Ng replaced the center's rustic but flammable cedar shingles and siding with aluminum and stucco, and adorned the clock tower with a Brisbane "Star" logo. The remodel also included increased handicapped access, an upgraded parking lot and fire alarm system, and the subdivision of the second floor into light commercial space. Between 1997 and 1999, when the project was completed, the Ngs worked with the City and Brisbane residents to make sure that every element in the remodeling, right down to the paint, reflected the tastes of the community.

Gazebo Becomes Focal Point for Community Park

But it was political sensibilities rather than economics that held up the completion of Brisbane's Community Park. Former Mayor Ed Schwenderlauf's advocacy for a "Village Green" with a gazebo as an alternative to the Civic Center in the late 1980s had politicized the term "gazebo," which some now associated with that era's acrimonious recall vote. "We knew how volatile that piece of property was," Robin Leiter explained. As a result, City officials deliberately spent three years reviewing and debating various designs for a gazebo, or "focal point, as it became known, for the park where musicians or dance troupes could perform.

It was another example of the post-recall governance process in Brisbane, which City Engineer Jim Thompson dubbed "marinating an issue" until it was "done," however long that might take. Thompson served on a Citizens Ad Hoc Committee for the Community Park established by the City Council. "If you didn't let it happen," Thompson said, "then nothing would happen, on any issue. That's the spirit of the town. If you try to shove it through, it just won't work, and you'll be into collateral damage." Surveys indicated that most citizens wanted some structure, though reaching a consensus among all the possible design permutations proved difficult. These included a wooden, metal, or concrete gazebo with a solid roof, a wooden arbor, or a gazebo with an arbor surrounding it, in octagonal, hexagonal, circular, or semicircular shape. But the costs, which ranged from \$25,000 to \$100,000, were not the biggest barrier.

Nearly an hour of public input at a July 14, 1997, council meeting revealed irreconcilable differences in taste and aesthetics reminiscent of those that had reached battle-pitch over the Civic Center design in the late 1980s. Council member Waldo agreed with speakers like Calvin Webster, who stated that all the alternatives seemed



In 1999, Charles and Judy Ng, owners of the Brisbane Village Shopping Center, completed several upgrades to the property, which is Brisbane's most visible presence to drivers passing by on busy Bayshore Boulevard.

dull, “probably because they were developed by committee with extensive input from a variety of sources.” It was an acknowledgment that the “marinating” process through which Brisbane had attained a measure of calm in its internal debates for nearly a decade had some drawbacks. Resident Dan Twomey complained in January 1998 that the process of defining a focal point for the park had already taken a long time; he wondered if council members really knew what they wanted. But if the abandoned Civic Center project could serve as an example, perhaps some drawbacks were preferable to others in Brisbane.

By the next month, the Council, working with project architect Robert Tanaka, had narrowed the selection down to two options. But after hearing more public input at a meeting on February 9, 1998, the Council remained divided. Citizens and council members alike were getting tired of debating the alternatives, yet no strong consensus had emerged. Steve Waldo allowed that most people had already expressed their

views and that little remained to be said, but it was probably best for the Council “to listen until people stopped talking.” Clarke Conway agreed, as did Mayor Lee Panza. But when Council Member Sepi Richardson moved for a vote, Cy Bologoff and Panza joined her, giving 3-2 majority approval to “Option A,” a relatively vandal-proof and low-maintenance concrete and steel gazebo with a roof sloping up to a nineteen-foot-high, pyramid-shaped skylight.

In May the Council approved the plans, and in June the project went out for bid. But only two contractors submitted bids, and both of them were substantially over budget. The Council rejected them, and Tanaka went back to the drawing board to simplify the design and reduce costs. The region’s tight construction market had added a new source of delay—and increased cost—to Brisbane’s normally painstaking planning process. Indeed, Robin Leiter reminded council members that they might want to consider postponing some long-

term, City-funded projects such as upgrading the corporation yard and the new City Hall until the Bay Area's overheated bidding climate cooled down.

High Costs Siphon Record Revenues; Pool Construction Delayed

Despite some problems on the purchasing end, Brisbane's finances were in fine order when new Finance Director Evelene Payne presented mid-year budget highlights to the City Council in June 1998. Overall revenues were up 26 percent, or \$3.3 million. Building permit fees, fines, and interest income were rising. Property taxes were expected to bring in 12.6 percent more than the previous year, and sales tax revenues seemed likely to increase by \$150,000. Indeed, the level of commercial activity appeared to Robin Leiter to be "unprecedented" in her time with the City. City staff had been fielding numerous inquiries from businesses interested in locating or expanding in Crocker Industrial Park. Two hotels and an office building were under construction at Sierra Point, and three buildings were going up on the northwest corner of Bayshore Boulevard and Guadalupe Canyon Parkway that became Brisbane Technology Park when completed in 2001. With tenants primarily in biotechnology

businesses, Brisbane Technology Park marked the City's entrance into one of the Bay Area's most promising new entrepreneurial fields.

City expenditures also had risen by 6.7 percent. These included a cost-of-living pay raise for employees and increased contributions to the retirement system. The City's operating budget was up by 51 percent, mostly due to \$8 million allocated for capital projects, but the balance sheet ended solidly in the black. The only dark note on the horizon was one that might have been predicted: the City's sewer fund reserves were depleting quickly, and no one had figured out how to square any commensurate escalation in rates either with prevailing standards of fairness or with citizens' expectations.

There were also high expectations for Brisbane's new swimming pool. In the winter of 1997-98, residents considered three design alternatives while City staff conducted surveys and the Council heard public comments. Council member Richardson asked Peter Rosekrans, a landscape architect, to assure residents that the pool would neither destroy a much-used children's play area next to Kids 'n Things day care center, nor ruin the grass on Lipman field. The pool would displace the tennis courts on Lipman field, but those were to be reconstructed



Completed in 2001 and easily entered from Bayshore Boulevard, the three buildings comprising Brisbane Technology Park offered working space for biotechnology and other high-tech enterprises flourishing in the Bay Area.

nearby and would remain dedicated to former Brisbane resident Brian “Pinky” Thompson, a Vietnam War veteran who had died in a boating accident in 1973. Robin Leiter and Clarke Conway met with Sharon Evancek, operator of Kids ‘n Things, to explain that a pool would enhance the play area and that her facility would not have to move. Conway also met with Rich Rae, a longtime friend of “Pinky” Thompson, to reassure him that the new courts would be rededicated to the war veteran.

While preparatory site work continued for the pool, the Council hired Glass Architects to take over from Aquatic Designs due to the latter’s slow progress. Jim Thompson reviewed three bids for the pool’s actual construction. When all three came in over the City’s estimated cost of \$420,000, Brisbane awarded the contract to the lowest bidder at \$457,510. The opening, once expected in August 1998, was set back one year.

It was an unfortunate time for the City’s Planning Department to suffer the temporary loss of Carole Nelson, who, along with City Engineer Jim Thompson, was badly injured in a traffic accident early in 1998 while en route to a meeting with San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown. “We were right in the middle of the design for the pool,” Thompson recalled. Though his injuries required several days of intensive hospital care, Thompson soon returned to City Hall. Nelson, however, spent the better part of a year in a body brace and rehabilitation. The Planning Department’s Tim Tune, who had overseen the remodeling of the Brisbane Village Shopping Center at the town’s entrance and was monitoring construction on the Northeast Ridge, acknowledged that he and his colleagues had been “deeply impacted” by their director’s absence. Tune expected an avalanche of permit applications during the coming year, including some advance planning for the Baylands.

City Manager Robin Leiter Announces August Retirement; Increased Business in Crocker Park Generates Trucking Complaints

In January, Robin Leiter announced that she would retire in August, ending thirteen years of service to Brisbane during one of the most dynamic periods in the City’s history. Over the next six months,



Viewed from the Northeast Ridge with San Bruno Mountain in the background, Crocker Industrial Park became home to a number of freight-forwarding businesses in the late 1990s. When Brisbane residents, including newcomers on “the Ridge,” complained of increased truck noise and diesel fumes, the Council took action to limit such businesses. Nonetheless, some citizens continue to seek additional limits or even an outright ban on freight forwarding in Crocker Park.

the City Council conducted a nationwide search for her replacement. There would be time in August to reprise her career and contributions to Brisbane; meanwhile, the pace of events in the City demanded as much of Leiter’s attention as ever.

Leiter recently had told the Council of increased business activity in Crocker Industrial Park, including freight forwarding by firms such as UPS and FedEx. Brisbane’s proximity to the airport made it a favored location for warehouse operations, which involved round-the-clock loading and unloading. The economic boom had stepped up the activity of these businesses. In 1992, they had comprised 9.7 percent of the businesses in Crocker Park, but by 1998 that percentage had risen to 18.7. The resulting truck traffic in and out of Brisbane was a sore spot to many residents. Some complained about diesel fumes, while others, especially in the new Northeast Ridge homes above the warehouses, objected to the steady chorus of backing beepers as trucks drew up to the dock every night.

In October 1997 the Council had adopted

a forty-five-day moratorium on any new night operations in Crocker Park pending further study and then had extended the moratorium to October 1998. Nevertheless, the City was being inundated with requests by freight forwarders for business permits in Crocker Park. The City's General Plan, as City attorney Hal Toppel told the Council, encouraged a mixture of uses in the park, but it was up to the Council to determine when a particular business verged on becoming too dominant a presence. On January 25, 1999, after listening to arguments by residents, freight forwarding applicants, and owners of affected commercial space in Crocker Park, the City adopted Ordinance 434. The new law capped freight forwarders at 20 percent of all park businesses and required those seeking to perform night operations within 300 feet of a residential area to apply for a use permit in addition to a business license.

The ordinance did not affect existing operations, but some businesses already were seeking exemptions. At the January 25 meeting, Nick Sebelius of PSI Group, Inc. explained that his company sorted first-class mail for business customers. When PSI picked up the mail, he argued, it became PSI's property and therefore the company's activity should not be considered as freight forwarding. But Toppel pointed to the ordinance's definition of freight forwarding as "distribution of goods for others, including mail." David Black, representing Cabot Partners, a Boston-based company that owned thirteen buildings in Crocker Park, asked whether the U.S. Postal Service could be exempted from the ordinance's 20 percent cap on the grounds that it is a City operation; Cabot Partners leased one of its buildings to the U.S. Postal Service. Toppel explained that Brisbane did not own or operate the U.S. Postal Service. Like some other business representatives who attended the hearings that evening, Black left unhappy with the outcome.

Park Lane Extended to Old County Road; Connects City Hall to Downtown

Perhaps David Black had other reasons to feel discouraged. In 1998 City Engineer Thompson had been poring over some aerial photographs of Crocker Park and Brisbane, looking for ways to create easier access to City Hall and connect

it to central Brisbane. Studying the frontage on Old County Road with Robin Leiter, he exclaimed, "You know what? I think I can get a road through there!" There was only one obstacle—the building housing the post office would have to come down. Everyone presumed that the U.S. Postal Service owned the structure, but a title search revealed that the Postal Service leased it from Cabot Partners and that the lease had expired.

After consulting with attorney Hal Toppel, Leiter asked the Postal Service if it would relocate in order to allow Brisbane to extend Park Lane to Old County Road. When postal officials refused, the city manager took the gloves off and threatened to condemn the building. Cabot Partners stayed out of the brewing confrontation as the Postal Service countered with threats to leave Brisbane if the City shut down the building. "If you asked me what were some of the impossible things I did," Leiter later recalled, "there's one." With nearby Crocker Park giving the Postal Service plenty of business, Leiter figured that the office was profitable and that the perennially red-inked U.S. Postal Service was not about to shut it down. "We just have to call their bluff," she told the Council. "They're not going to leave Brisbane." The Council reminded her, "You know, if you lose the Post Office, you're toast," but backed up Leiter anyway. In the end, as Jim Thompson put it, "Robin rolled the dice"—



Mayor Bologoff officially opened the new Park Lane extension with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in spring 1999. The new roadway greatly eased access to Brisbane's City Hall and helped connect Crocker Park to central Brisbane. The City's Community Park is in the background. (L to R: Clarke Conway, Steve Waldo, Cy Bologoff, Chamber of Commerce chairperson Brad Kerwin, Lee Panza)



The City's old firehouse on San Bruno, built by volunteers over three years from 1934-1937, held historical and sentimental value. But when fire damaged the building in April 1998, the Council deemed it a liability to the City and the firehouse was quickly demolished. Longtime volunteer firefighter and Council Member Lee Panza, who was serving that year as mayor, cast the sole dissenting vote.

and won. The Postal Service agreed to move one block away to a building on Old County Road.

In spring 1998 Brisbane purchased the Cabot Brothers building and began working with the Postal Service to coordinate the move. Improvements to the new building were long delayed, however, and extended nearly to the end of the year, thus delaying the demolition of the old building and the start of the Park Lane road extension. At last, in spring 1999, the extension was completed. The new road brought far more than another several dozen yards of public roadway to Brisbane. It brought City Hall and the police department into downtown, softened the hard boundary between Crocker Park and the central City, and created another artery to the Community Park in the heart of Brisbane. It seemed to relegate to another era anxieties about new Northeast Ridge residents conspiring with City Hall for political influence.

Indeed, in April 1998 Mayor Panza attended two homeowners association meetings on the Northeast Ridge to get acquainted and to encourage new residents' greater participation in Brisbane's affairs. He also urged all other Brisbane residents to make their new neighbors feel welcome. The Park Lane extension also required renaming what had been the north-south leg of Park Lane, which was now a couple hundred yards of roadway fronting City Hall and connecting Valley Drive to the east-west segment of Park Lane. City Hall's new address would be 50 Park Place, and City staff set about ordering new stationery.

Council Votes to Demolish Old Firehouse on San Bruno Avenue; Senior Housing Opens as Visitacion Garden Apartments

At an April 13, 1998, council meeting, just after members had voted to lease a parcel of land to the Sierra Point Yacht Club for a new facility, Police Chief Tom Hitchcock received a radio call. He excused himself, explaining that the old firehouse, which had sat vacant and unused on San Bruno Avenue for the past six years, was in flames. The damage was confined to the interior of the building but had exposed asbestos insulation that further complicated the already dubious proposition of saving the station. Put together by volunteers over generations, the structure was a sentimental favorite to some residents like Mayor Lee Panza and twenty-nine-year volunteer John Clancy, who remembered nailing tarpaper on the roof in 1950. But only three of the fire department's fourteen professional firefighters now lived in Brisbane. And others with deep fire department ties, like Council Member Cy Bologoff, saw a greater liability hazard for the City and recommended demolition. Two weeks after the fire, the Council voted 4 to 1—Panza opposed—to level the old firehouse.

Two months later, in June 1998, construction began on the senior housing complex at Visitacion Avenue and San Francisco Street that Fred Smith and Bridge Housing had been shepherding through the complicated processes of approval and financing. Using Redevelopment



Cy Bologoff leads several seniors in groundbreaking for a new senior center and housing facility in Brisbane. In 1995 Brisbane purchased the Dick's Tower property for the project. Construction began in 1998, and in October 1999 the Sunrise Senior Center and fourteen garden apartments, named Visitation Garden Apartments, opened their doors. The facility's harmonious appearance helped pave the way for other affordable housing projects in central Brisbane.

Housing Funds, the land was acquired in 1995 from the owner of the bar on the site, Dick's Tower. Former City Manager and Mayor Brad Kerwin served as the project's financial advisor for the sale of tax increment bonds to finance the construction of the project. In October 1999 the senior housing complex, now named Visitation Garden Apartments, opened its fourteen garden apartments, which went by lottery to a lucky few of the fifty-four applicants. Bologoff, whose colleagues on the Council had appointed him mayor in November 1998, commended those who had joined him and his wife, Bonnie, on the project's Citizens Advisory Committee—Bill Lawrence, Anna Martin, Bud Mozzetti, Del Mozzetti, Dorothy Nagy, Irene Oliver, Letha Pruett, and Ruth Tripp.

Neighbors approved of the facility's design, and its style and colors blended well with the surroundings. Moreover, its location at the entrance to the main street across from the Community Park gave it a special prominence. "We were concerned at first," said Scot Martin, an Inyo Street resident. "But our concerns were answered. Bridge Housing did pretty much what they said they'd do." Years later, Fred Smith smiled with satisfaction as he described the project's acceptance by the community. Clarke Conway echoed the feeling. "To provide something like that was real special," he said. "It's just one of those things that make you feel real good about being on the Council."

Clay Holstine Succeeds Robin Leiter as City Manager; Council Establishes Open Space and Ecology Committee

Another purpose that the Council could both agree on and feel good about was the preservation of open space within the City limits. This was a goal in the City's General Plan and referred not to landscaped yards, however well kept, but to natural habitat where native species of flora and fauna might grow. Toward that goal, City Manager Leiter had underscored in June 1998 the importance of balancing recent pressures toward development with the pursuit of open space, and set as one of her staff goals for the coming year development of a plan for open space acquisition and administration. On August 24, 1998, as Leiter turned over her keys to new City Manager Clay Holstine, the Council established an Open Space and Ecology Committee to help implement the goals of the General Plan.

Leiter had assumed her duties in 1985, just two years after the City's annexation of Crocker Industrial Park changed Brisbane's future forever by strengthening its tax base and giving it some control over further development in the park and on the Northeast Ridge. She credited Anja Miller, Brisbane's mayor in 1975, with uniting the City in order to get that done. Anja Miller had been instrumental in getting the "sphere of influence" designation, the first necessary step before annexation. However, the hard-won changes created new problems and challenges for the City.

Managing Change—Robin Leiter and Brisbane

When Robin Leiter replaced Brad Kerwin as Brisbane's City manager in 1985, she might have expected that the City would be experiencing some major changes. After all, Crocker Industrial Park and the Northeast Ridge had been annexed just two years earlier, adding the growth potential of increased tax revenues, and a new majority in the Council resulting from the 1984 elections signaled a shift in Brisbane's political winds toward increased environmental advocacy. Leiter's background as an attorney and assistant City manager in the City of Orange, in Orange County, soon came to the fore as residential housing development planned for the Northeast Ridge, as well as Brisbane's proposed new Civic Center, took center stage.

City Manager Leiter worked hard to sustain morale among Brisbane's staff and to keep the City on an even keel. She worked with council members who were personally sued, along with the City, by Northeast Ridge developer Southwest Diversified Incorporated (SDI) for alleged breach of contract when the Council voted in 1984 for the General Plan Housing Element that SDI believed limited the development potential on the Northeast Ridge. After the lawsuit was remanded from federal court, a San Mateo Superior Court judge eventually approved a mediated settlement (1989) between Brisbane and SDI. But while the slow wheels of justice turned in that case, numerous other matters demanded Leiter's daily attention.

These included the recall fight over the proposed Civic Center on the Cozy Cove Motel site; personnel issues in the fire service; beautification of Visitacion Avenue; cleanup of the Levinson marsh to the north near Daly City; construction of the Community Park and a new fire station; a thorough updating of the City's General Plan; a new City Hall; building a productive relationship with the Jefferson Union High School District; and the hiring of competent professionals to manage Brisbane's increasingly complex affairs.

By the time Leiter retired in August 1998, she had served longer than any prior Brisbane City manager—thirteen years—and had worked with fifteen council members. She had been at the center of Brisbane's transformation from an earlier era characterized by fractious politics to a new era of professional management. Contention



did not disappear, to be sure, and Brisbane had also benefitted in earlier years from professional management. But after an especially grueling period in the late 1980s, Leiter's professionalism and sound judgment helped reestablish trust in City Hall and in the City's employees. Thanks in part to her cool head and the respect she inspired in council members and citizens, overheated rhetoric lost its capacity to ignite political firestorms in Brisbane.



Clay Holstine celebrated his forty-fourth birthday by succeeding Robin Leiter as Brisbane's City manager on August 24, 1998. He described his pragmatic approach to the job. "We are constantly questioning, 'Are we going in the right direction? Do we have another idea of how we can do this?' That's definitely part of our organizational ethic, and I think it's part of the Council's approach, too."

Leiter offered a summary appraisal: "While it worked out for us, to have a new city come like that overnight and grow in that way was very unsettling. It was a wonderful opportunity, but also very full of its own conflicts. How are you going to weave something that will then feel to the community like a real city?"

If Leiter was quick to reach into Brisbane's history for an understanding of how her contributions could best be assessed, others were less reticent about simply praising her skill and tenacity. "Robin, a true proponent of local government," said Mayor Lee Panza, "would say her achievements reflect the vision and leadership of the Councils under which she served. However, Robin's own efforts in hiring staff, in navigating litigation, in learning and honoring our values, and in negotiating with developers and other agencies, were instrumental in steering the course of Brisbane's future." For her part, Leiter repaid the compliment. When asked what she had told Clay Holstine, her successor, about his new job, Leiter assured him that "first and foremost he had an honorable Council. They won't undercut you. That doesn't mean they agree with you, but that

they were going to take a position and they were very honorable." Even when faced with public uproar, no Council ever attacked the staff. "They never shot the messenger while I was here," Leiter explained, "and that's very rare in government."

Additionally, Leiter reassured Holstine that, regardless of the size of a community, there were always about a dozen difficult public members. She laughed as she observed, "If you're in San Francisco you get twelve; if you're in Brisbane you get twelve. Every community gets their dozen, so don't think they necessarily reflect the larger community." Holstine understood. He had grown up in the Bay Area and attended the University of California at Berkeley. Like most of the region's residents, he knew little about Brisbane. But as city manager in Reno, Nevada, in the early 1990s, he had lived through a contentious recall election when voters turned against the City Council over a project that the Council had believed they supported. When he heard about Brisbane's politically volatile past, he said to himself, "Oh yeah, I know how this goes."

But what Holstine experienced during the second of his two job interviews with the City Council was anything but contentious. To his surprise, the Council insisted that he take off his tie, sit back, and tell them a little bit about himself. "I didn't think of myself as a stuffed shirt," he said, "but I wasn't really prepared to get that informal." Nevertheless, he added, "It gave me a sense of who they were and what the community was about."

Holstine's to-do list when he started work on August 24, 1998, his forty-fourth birthday, included brick-and-mortar projects—the pool, the Park Lane extension, the Community Park "focal point," the corporation yard renovation, and the Tunnel Avenue Bridge. But, as Robin Leiter had stressed, it was just as important for Brisbane to create open space as it was to construct needed facilities. Holstine's first day on the job also saw the City's go-ahead to form an Open Space and Ecology Committee. It was an idea several years in the making. Ray Miller, who had retired from the Council in November 1995, and Mayor Clarke Conway sat down at Miller's kitchen table in 1997 to brainstorm some ideas. One that had kept recurring to Miller was John Burr's recommendation, back in 1993, to form

a citizens' environmental commission, mostly to attend to toxic waste in the Baylands. After his election that year, Conway had initiated the idea of putting an Open Space Commission in the City's General Plan. As Miller envisioned it now, however, the commission would look more broadly at preserving the entire range of Brisbane's natural resources and habitat.

Conway agreed this was a good idea and assembled an ad hoc committee of former Mayors Ray Miller, Jeannine Hodge, and Clara Johnson. Assistant to the City Manager Fred Smith, also a former mayor, served as staff liaison. The ad hoc committee recommended the establishment of a broadly based Open Space and Ecology Committee. The Council agreed and gave the committee a two-year charge to develop an open space plan. Its seven members were Ray Miller, Clara Johnson, Elena Court, and Alexandra Early as citizen representatives, Clarke Conway as the council representative, Michael Barnes as the Planning Commission representative, and Mary Howle as the representative of the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission.

In the meantime, Brisbane was already taking advantage of some opportunities for open space acquisition. John Burr reported to Clarke Conway that there were two parcels of land in Brisbane Acres that were in tax default. Conway asked Fred Smith to look into it, and he reported that two parcels were available for purchase at \$11,000, the amount of the tax liens. In a subsequent closed session, the Council voted to buy the properties using the City's General Fund. "After that," said Conway, "we asked the County to arrange things so that if they ever had any more properties designated as Brisbane Acres that went into tax default, bring them to the City first because we want to have the first right of refusal. I think we may have gotten one more after that." By June 1999 the new Open Space and Ecology Committee had been formed to advise the Council on open space acquisition and other conservation issues. The new committee's first order of business was to hire an intern, Raphael Breines, to carefully survey and document all the open space in the City, a painstaking job that took two years.

As the Open Space and Ecology Committee set about its survey, Clay Holstine was doing his own study of Brisbane's expanding recreational

and social arena. The City had a Teen Center and a new senior housing facility. Soon it hoped to open a new pool—groundbreaking was scheduled for July 27—and complete construction of the long-delayed Community Park gazebo. Moreover, as part of the 1989 settlement with the Northeast Ridge developer, a new sports field and multipurpose activities building were under construction on Mission Blue Drive in the Northeast Ridge housing area.

City Reestablishes Parks and Recreation Department, Addresses Transportation Needs

On Holstine's recommendation, the Council voted in February 1999 to establish a Parks and Recreation Department to provide professional management for all these activities. Those with long City memories, like Clarke Conway, recognized this as the reincarnation of the department dismantled by the 1979 budget cuts following passage of Proposition 13. In December 1999, the City hired Jim Skeels as its new Parks and Recreation director, probably to the relief of Finance Director Evelene Payne, who had been serving as temporary head of the department. The renewed Parks and Recreation Department set up quarters in a temporary building while awaiting renovations that would realize another of Holstine's recommendations—to locate Parks and Recreation within City Hall.



The Crocker Park/BART/CalTrain Shuttle started in 1994 for workers in Crocker Industrial Park and for Brisbane residents. The shuttle was part of a public-private partnership to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality.

The new businesses in Crocker Park and the new residents on the Ridge added to the region's traffic congestion. In 1994 Brisbane had set up a shuttle bus program, known locally as "the Crocker Park/BART/CalTrain shuttle," to carry commuters to and from local BART and Caltrans stations. City residents also could use the buses, which swung through City residential streets for their convenience. The next year, that program's administration and management was taken over by a regional body, the Multi-city Transportation Systems Management Agency (MTSMA), under a state mandate to reduce traffic and pollution. By 1999 the program had added twenty contributing employers to the original four. In coming years, the program evolved to include seven other northern county cities (Daly City, Colma, Burlingame, South San Francisco, San Bruno, Millbrae, and San Mateo), as well as twelve more in southern San Mateo County, to form the Peninsula Congestion Relief Alliance. Clarke Conway, who had been Brisbane's representative to the MTSMA, also served as the alliance's first board chair.

In 1998-99 Brisbane solved another long-standing transportation problem when it de-

annexed about a mile of Bayshore Boulevard near its southern border with South San Francisco in order to allow for the state's and "South City's" construction of new freeway ramps. Originally annexed in the early 1960s to enable Brisbane to block the removal of the top of San Bruno Mountain for development in the Bay, the stretch of roadway had become a liability for Brisbane. Jim Thompson recounted a fatal bicycle accident that had occurred when a rider hit a street grate and was run over by passing vehicles. Now, much of the property devolved to the possession of Caltrans. Construction of the freeway ramps began in 2000, just as Thompson ended twelve years of service with Brisbane and left the City to return to a private engineering practice.

City Serves Eviction Notices to "Live-Aboards" at Marina

Some Brisbane residents hoped to avoid the area's housing and transportation problems by living on boats in the City's marina. But in June 1999, Police Chief Tom Hitchcock, who was also acting harbormaster, mailed eviction notices to nearly fifty "live-aboards," who were paying between \$180 and \$220 a month for their slips



The Brisbane Marina opened in June 1983 and has berths for 573 boats. Close to San Francisco and only 7 nautical miles (8 miles) from the Bay Bridge, the marina houses the Sierra Point Yacht Club and a public fishing pier. The facility has been a useful as well as enjoyable addition to Brisbane. The marina's spacious parking lot doubles as the City's Residential Assembly Point in case of an ordered evacuation.

and access to the marina's shower, restroom, and trash removal facilities. Some of the live-aboards took up shore housing; some just sailed away. But several fought the evictions, complaining that their presence served a valuable security function, or that their chosen lifestyle ought to be accommodated, even if limited to what they believed to be a customary 10 percent of live-aboards allowed at most marinas. They stated it was unfair to evict them now after years of allowing them to believe that what they were doing was permissible. In fact, a few had been given permission by the previous harbormaster.

City officials countered that excessive numbers of live-aboards were straining the marina's facilities, and that their presence could jeopardize Brisbane's permit application to the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) to conduct a dredging operation. There was some validity in the former charge but little in the latter. In truth, the Council—Mayor Cy Bologoff in particular—had taken a dislike to the idea of boaters living in the marina and feared that their presence would discourage more recreational yachters. In the end, a few live-aboard exemptions were granted, one to an eighty-eight-year-old sailor who had built a replica of the famous *Spray* in which Joshua Slocum had soloed around the world in 1895.

Most of the evictions were completed by the end of summer. Subsequent bids for the dredging project followed a trajectory now familiar in the Bay Area's new "gold rush" economy—sharply upward. Brisbane had expected to pay about \$4 per cubic yard. Of the four companies who attended a pre-bidding session, only one chose to submit a bid—at \$9 per cubic yard. The project seemed too big for small companies and too small for big companies, Holstine opined. But prospective bidders had told Brisbane's senior engineer Bob Aris that dredgers were getting \$10 per cubic yard at other area marinas. The City Council swallowed hard and then voted to award the contract to the sole bidder.

The summer controversy at the marina spilled over into the fall, when Daniel Ray Licon, one of the evicted live-aboards who had moved into town, joined challenger Clara Johnson and incumbents Cy Bologoff and Sepi Richardson in a race for two City Council seats in the November 2 election.

Licon, a financial consultant, had been among those protesting the evictions. Now he tried to broaden his base of issues by citing the Community Park's gazebo as an example of "politicians running wild." He countered that the park needed a fence to protect children playing near traffic on Old County Road. Alleging that the City had turned its marina into a "police state," Licon said his role on the Council would be to "make people think twice before they do something."

Clara Johnson Returns to Council

Clara Johnson's return run for the Council became a high-profile campaign. Johnson's active role in defeating the 1994 referendum challenge to the General Plan had been greatly appreciated by many, although it earned her the opposition of former referendum backer Dana Dillworth. The Committee to Elect Clara Johnson included former Mayors Anja and Ray Miller, Jess Salmon, and Jeannine Hodge. Former Council Member Tony Attard signed on, as did others who had served on the Planning Commission and been active in the City's public life.

The election results confirmed Bologoff's enduring popularity with voters—he garnered 503 votes. Johnson's 466 votes topped Richardson's 405, returning her to the Council, while Licon marshaled only 114 votes. As the Council's representative to the Airport Roundtable, Richardson had shown great interest in learning the territory, even taking flying lessons to enhance her understanding of control tower, runway, and flight path issues. But in the months preceding the election, she had indicated to other roundtable members that Brisbane would support pending emergency state legislation that would allow the airport to claim noise reduction as a mitigating factor in seeking a BCDC permit to expand one of its runways by filling in the Bay. The Council, however, was opposed to allowing SFO any shortcuts through the environmental review process, and some members thought that their colleague had dropped the ball. Still, given the prevailing prosperity and the numerous useful projects under way across town, Sepi Richardson's loss was probably more a function of Clara Johnson's long-time appeal than a rebuke to any positions Richardson had taken.



The gazebo in Brisbane's Community Park was a long time in the making but has become exactly what it was intended to be—an attractive focal point for concerts, Tai Chi classes, and numerous informal events.

Escalating Project Costs Continue to Strain City Resources; Swimming Pool Over Budget; Community Park Gazebo Design Finally Accepted

Prosperity's downside continued to dog Brisbane's capital improvement projects. The estimated cost of renovating the Unocal building and surrounding territory next to the tank farm so that the Public Works Department and the City corporation yard could be relocated from their old railroad tunnel space had ballooned from an original budget of about \$600,000 to \$1 million. Once again, the Council swallowed hard and signed. The pool, too, had suffered numerous delays and cost overruns due to labor shortages and other problems associated with the construction boom. Already nearly \$600,000 over budget, the pool threatened to absorb City funds intended for seismic upgrades and other improvements at City Hall. Those were estimated at \$2 million, and the longer the expenditures were put off, the more the costs were likely to rise.

Council members' disenchantment with construction projects was evident in a vote in February 2000 over a resolution to accept as completed the Community Park gazebo. There was no undoing the work—the project was finished. The issue at hand involved simply pronouncing the work completed so that paperwork relating to payment could be released. Still, Mayor Waldo voted “no” in order to remain consistent with his prior record of dislike for the design; Clara Johnson voted “yes” while stipulating that she would have voted “no” had she been in office

when the design was approved; Clarke Conway also said he had voted against it in the past and therefore would do so again. Johnson's reluctant “yes,” added to that of Cy Bologoff and Lee Panza, constituted a lukewarm acknowledgment that the Focal Point issue had been resolved, and the paperwork was forwarded. All the time and effort seemed almost not to matter much in the end—the gazebo looked just fine to anyone not exhausted by its prolonged gestation and delivery.

City of Stars Celebrates Thirteenth Annual Community Festival, Festival of Lights

About nine hundred attendees gathered in the Community Park on Saturday, October 2, 1999, for Brisbane's Thirteenth Annual Community Festival. The previous June, the Council had accepted a Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission recommendation to change the name of the event from “Family Festival” to Community Festival to broaden its appeal for adults. The festival now featured more arts and crafts, a layout that extended into the Brisbane Village Shopping Center as well as onto the new Park Lane extension, an art exhibition, a dance floor, and a raffle. The park also hosted the “Festival Tree” in December, also named for maximum inclusiveness, and was the setting for caroling, hot cider, and cocoa during Brisbane's Thirteenth Annual Festival of Lights. The



Residents and visitors celebrated Brisbane's Thirteenth Community Festival on October 2, 1999, in the Community Park, now boasting a new gazebo. Once slated for a civic center, the site has proven useful for a variety of events and gatherings.

Frank and Mae Walch Remembered

Frank Walch had moved to Brisbane in 1939, in the City's earliest years, and soon joined resident Arthur Kennedy in launching the City's famous annual holiday Star displays (see Brisbane: City of Stars, page 4). In the seventy-plus years that Frank and his wife, Mae, lived in "the City of Stars," Brisbane underwent many changes, but constant through it all was the commitment the Walches made to their community's welfare and betterment. Early on they helped to set up Industrial Savings and Loan, the only source of home loans to Brisbane residents at a time when the City was "redlined" by major banks. They also made personal loans to many local businesses, supported Sister City youth exchanges, participated in many fundraising efforts, and provided funding in perpetuity for the Lions Club's annual Flu Shot Clinic.

After Frank passed away in January 2000, Mae continued to support the Lions Scholars Awards as well as local students she knew. Over the years, her contributions to the Community Church provided the funds for many renovations, including roofing, painting, parking, and landscaping. After Mae's death in October 2010, her estate included continued support for the Lions Scholars Awards.

Though they had no children of their own, the Walches teamed with Art Kennedy to create a special grant to benefit the health of Brisbane's children. The grant is administered by the Seton Foundation, which is funding the renovation of the children's playground in the Community Park. Summing up Brisbane's memory of Frank and Mae, Marc Salmon described the couple as "fantastic and beautiful ambassadors of love, faith, and integrity."



Lions Club and the fire department collected toy donations for distribution by “Santa” Bill Lawrence later that month.

It was the time of year when Brisbane residents mounted large, wooden, lighted stars outside their homes. The tradition went back more than sixty years to when Chamber of Commerce member Arthur Kennedy thought it would put Brisbane in a good light. The ritual had caught on and had provided Brisbane with its moniker, “The City of Stars.” Frank Walch, who moved to Brisbane in 1939, joined his friend Art Kennedy in making stars for distribution. By his eighty-ninth birthday, in 1999, Walch had made hundreds of them and was still enthusiastic despite a four-year struggle with cancer. Shortly after Christmas that year, one of Brisbane’s largest stars dimmed. Frank Walch died, just three weeks short of his ninetieth birthday. He was fondly remembered, not only for his stars but also for his kindness and good counsel through many decades of the City’s growth. Bob Wilson picked up where Walch had left off, making sure there were plenty of stars to brighten the long winter nights for residents as well as passersby.

David Schooley as Champion of San Bruno Mountain Watch, Habitat Preservation

Bill Lawrence was wearing a “Brisbane—City of the Stars” t-shirt while visiting Reno, Nevada, once when someone asked him, “Who are your stars?” Lawrence replied that Brisbane had three thousand of them. And though Lawrence and Mountain Watch’s David Schooley did not always see eye to eye, certainly Schooley qualified as a City “star” who had been enlightening visitors about Brisbane’s natural surroundings since his arrival in town in 1969, when he made San Bruno Mountain a virtual home-away-from-home. He knew every inch of its peaks, canyons, and creeks, as well as its Indian lore and the life cycles and ecology of its native flora and fauna. Supporting himself as a gardener and deck builder, Schooley had been instrumental in resisting development on the mountain over the years, not only in Brisbane but in nearby South San Francisco and Daly City. He was equally committed to taking adults and schoolchildren on guided tours of the San Bruno Mountain habitat.

One such visitor was Ken McIntire, a science

teacher whose wife had taken one of Schooley’s tours and came home to announce, “You’ve got to meet this guy. You’ve got to go up on this mountain.” McIntire did, and then started returning with his classes. Schooley’s was an educational rather than an athletic tour. “He pointed out individual plants and talked about the history and the butterflies and the ecosystem in a way that really touched me,” said McIntire. “You can’t see it from the road. You’ve got to hike it.” McIntire carried on with teaching, and when he retired many years later he returned to Brisbane as executive director of San Bruno Mountain Watch.

Schooley’s uncompromising beliefs had often placed him at odds with City officials and others over matters of development and habitat management, but his love for the mountain and his wholehearted commitment to it won wide respect throughout the Bay Area. In 1999 he won one of the first Sustainable San Mateo County Awards in recognition of his thirty years of environmental work. Anja Miller had nominated him, impressed by what she perceived to be Schooley’s “spiritual connection with the mountain.”

Brisbane Celebrates Opening of Swimming Pool and Mission Blue Center

A February 2000 landslide on the hill above the swimming pool construction hiked the cost and delayed the opening of the long-awaited pool. It started operations on July 17, but not until August 5 did the City officially welcome residents with a grand opening celebration. Sepi Richardson, who had worked hard for the pool during her term on the Council, accepted the hard political fact that the names on the dedication plaque were, as was the custom, those of the present council members and did not include her. The pool had indeed taken a long time for the community to achieve. As early as the 1970s, proceeds from fund-raising for a pool had been put into a small fund in the City’s budget. Now, at last, the dream was realized.

A planned opening for Brisbane’s new activities and performance center on Mission Blue Drive that had been scheduled for September 9 also was delayed, but on Saturday, November 4, 2000, it opened for tours during

Brisbane Gets a Pool

Brisbane residents had a swimming pool on their wish list as early as the 1970s, and had even started a small fund for it. But other priorities always intervened, and the pool was a long time in coming. In 1987 Mayor Ray Miller observed, “People have been talking about a swimming pool for years, yet nothing seems to happen.” In the meantime, residents who wished to swim continued to travel to neighboring facilities.

Brisbane’s 1989 agreement with Southwest Diversified Incorporated included developer contributions that made it financially possible for residents to look forward to their own swimming pool. But the reality still proved elusive, as uncertainties remained about a specific location—near the new Northeast Ridge housing or closer to central Brisbane—and as other needs continued to compete for the City’s funds.

By 1996, however, City staff were actively engaged in specific plans to make the pool dream come true, and in October 1998 the Council approved designs for an outdoor pool that would be located close to central Brisbane on a broad field near Lipman Middle School. Groundbreaking took place on July 27, 1999, with opening expected in time for the Memorial Day weekend the following year. A February landslide in the area just behind the pool delayed construction and pushed the opening back two months, to July 17, 2000, with an official dedication on August 5.

Costs overruns in excess of half a million dollars could not dampen residents’ enthusiasm for their impressive new facility. The addition of solar heating panels in 2005 completed Brisbane’s energy-efficient swimming pool. As Mayor Ray Miller had foreseen in 1987, the community pool quickly became “a binding social activity for all residents and even workers in the Crocker Industrial Park.”



The pool, under construction in 2000.



Brisbane’s community pool opened on July 17, 2000, and was officially dedicated on August 5. (L to R: Council Members Cy Bologoff, Lee Panza, Steve Waldo (mayor), Clara Johnson, Clarke Conway)

the day and a semi-formal gala in the evening attended by 350 guests. With striking, panoramic views of San Bruno Mountain and the Bay, the new Mission Blue Center had been built with funds from Brookfield Homes, the Northeast Ridge developer, and carefully designed to fit in with the Ridge homes' architecture as well as Brisbane's scale and needs.

Community Development Director Carole Nelson, who also was an artist, felt especially invested in creating a facility of which Brisbane would be proud. Indeed, when a car accident left her in a body brace during Mission Blue's construction, she asked her husband to carry her up to the site so that she could continue to monitor the center's progress. Nelson enlisted the advice of several professionals, including lighting designer and Brisbane resident Michael Garrett, and Camille Olivier Salmon, creative director of Brisbane Dance Workshop (BDW). Salmon had taught hundreds of Brisbane students and scripted dozens of original dances

since founding BDW in the early 1980s. She recommended a layered, "sprung" floor with some "give" to prevent injuries. Nelson followed up by consulting with the San Francisco Ballet, and Mission Blue soon boasted performance-grade, basket-weave floors covered in oak.

Despite its attractive design, superb dance floor, and beautiful mountain setting, the Mission Blue Center's debut as a meeting venue aroused some alarm because the facility's acoustics were what experts call very "alive." In other words, there was quite an echo effect, especially when microphones were used. But over the next couple of years, artist Beth Grossman, Camille Salmon, film maker David Brown, and former City Manager Robin Leiter worked with Nelson to outfit Mission Blue for professional presentations in all artistic media. With financial support from the City, Nelson oversaw the installation of curtains and risers to dampen unwanted sound, as well as sophisticated sound and projection systems.

Kevin Fryer also kept an eye on Mission



Built with funds provided by Northeast Ridge developer Brookfield Homes and designed with professional arts venues in mind, the Mission Blue Center quickly became a focal point for Brisbane's artists and performers. The facility's unique acoustics and beautiful setting have become known far beyond Brisbane's borders.

Blue's progress. A Bay Area harpsichord maker of international renown, Fryer had rented an apartment in downtown Brisbane in 1997 and, a couple of years later, purchased a condominium on the Northeast Ridge. While his new home was being built, Fryer biked over to watch its progress. On the way, he noted the new community meeting hall going up on Mission Blue Drive and stopped to peer through the windows. "That would be a perfect place for a concert," he thought. Adding to Fryer's dawning inspiration was the knowledge that JungHae Kim, an accomplished harpsichordist, would soon be his neighbor in a Northeast Ridge condo. Though Mission Blue Center's "echo chamber" characteristics had bothered many others, Fryer's first reaction was quite the opposite: the space's acoustics struck him as "absolutely perfect" for the performance of live chamber music. But Fryer did not know many people in Brisbane, and it took him a couple of years to figure out how to realize his dream of a live concert series at Mission Blue.

Quarry Housing Controversy on Horizon; Rising Utility Rates Spur Move to Include Brisbane in Proposed Municipal Utility District

Carole Nelson also kept track of two additional developments that emerged while the Mission Blue Center was under construction. In the winter of 2000, SummerHill Homes applied to Brisbane for a permit to build 148 houses and 61 condos in the Guadalupe Quarry. If the permit were granted, Brisbane would annex the property and the Quarry's owners would then formally sell it to SummerHill. Housing in the Quarry would put an end, once and for all, to the site's historic nuisance status in Brisbane. On the other hand, the prospect of more houses and more residents in Brisbane threatened to resurrect all the conflicts and controversies that had attended the development, now more than half completed, on the Northeast Ridge. David Schooley entertained still another vision for the Quarry—a philanthropic purchase that would create a nature reserve and perhaps a museum about the north Peninsula. The permitting, planning, and review process would require several years of debate prior to its conclusion.

Additional controversy loomed in the context



Brisbane celebrated the opening of the Mission Blue Center with a gala on November 4, 2000. The center signaled a new era in Brisbane's cultural life and in its contributions to the wider Bay Area community.

of a state energy crisis. In response to rising PG&E rates, the San Francisco-based group Coalition for Lower Utility Bills (CLUB) mounted a drive to form a publicly owned alternative. There were then thirty-one such entities, called Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs), in California, supplying 25 percent of the state's power needs. Their appeal was lower rates and more citizen control over the provision of services. For some, there was the additional appeal of independence from what they saw as a corporate monopoly answerable only to shareholders and indifferent to consumers.

Neither San Francisco's Mayor Willie Brown nor its board of supervisors supported establishing a MUD, so advocates had mounted a petition to place the issue on the November ballot. But the law governing MUDs required that at least two polities be involved, so proponents had looked southward to Brisbane, the second-smallest city in San Mateo County. CLUB spokespersons attended a June 12 council meeting in Brisbane where they laid out their case for a MUD. But problems began when observers noticed that CLUB was not so much asking Brisbane to come on board but rather announcing that it had already enlisted Brisbane and had been collecting signatures without first consulting its smaller "partner." Many commentators were furious. "They hijacked Brisbane," fumed the San Francisco Chronicle's Peninsula correspondent Mark Simon, "just another day in the colonies." And the San Mateo

County Times headlined an editorial, “Proposed utility district snubs Brisbane.”

Brisbane appreciated the press support, but of all the cities on the Peninsula it had learned to stand up for itself. The Council wrote to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and asked that the issue not be allowed on the November ballot. On Monday, July 14, the supervisors agreed, by a 9-2 vote. “They were trying to ram this thing down Brisbane’s throat,” said Supervisor Barbara Kaufman. But the official reason for the supervisors’ decision was not CLUB’s insensitivity to Brisbane but the fact that the organization had failed to have the proposal reviewed by a Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). By the fall, a LAFCO had been formed, and on November 28, 2000, the commission approved the CLUB proposal, thereby requiring the supervisors—assuming the petition signatures were in order—to place the MUD proposal on the November ballot the following year in San Francisco and Brisbane.

City Manager Clay Holstine was able to separate the two matters—respect for Brisbane, on the one hand and the merits of the proposal on the other—but he saw few benefits for Brisbane. The small City would have to purchase PG&E’s physical plant and pay for all changes relating to the operations of the MUD. “We may be having an energy crisis,” Holstine allowed, “but this billion-dollar investment up-front won’t solve that problem. The cost of buying the system has to go on top of the costs for operation, and it will fall on the rate-payers.”

Debate continued through the next year leading up to the November 2001 election. What would happen, for instance, if San Francisco voters approved the MUD proposal and Brisbane voters rejected it? Would their vote matter? The LAFCO ruled in April 2001 that Brisbane would not have to abide by the will of a San Francisco majority. Brisbane’s attorney Hal Toppel welcomed the decision as “an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the voters of Brisbane.” Those voters would have their say in November, although by then the MUD proposal had been overshadowed by larger events.

Balanced Growth Plans Include Radisson Hotel, Office Building at Sierra Point; Revised Design for Northeast Ridge Homes; Open Space Purchases

On the way to that election, Brisbane continued to balance growth with open space acquisition. On November 6, 2000, two days after the Mission Blue Center’s premier gala, a new, eight-story Radisson Hotel on Sierra Point held its own official opening celebration. A new six-story office building was also in the works for Sierra Point, just east of the Radisson. The City Council approved revised designs for thirty-seven single-family homes on the Northeast Ridge after extensive public input, council discussion, and work by Carole Nelson and the City’s Planning Department. This included amending the original Habitat Conservation Plan to provide for the Calippe Silverspot butterfly, which was listed as endangered in December 1997 under the federal Endangered Species Act.

In June 2000, Nelson and Fred Smith also helped negotiate the sale to Brisbane from the State Department of Fish and Game of a portion of what once had been Old Quarry Road, from San Francisco Street to just west of South Hill Drive. Though the Quarry retained an easement on the property, its use for truck or any other vehicular transit had long since been precluded by the construction of a new quarry entrance and a short connection between upper Old Quarry Road and South Hill Drive. That same month, Smith’s success in obtaining a U.S. Fish and Wildlife grant of \$200,000 allowed Brisbane to purchase six parcels of land, valued at \$300,000, in Brisbane Acres. By the following June, Smith had acquired three more Brisbane Acres parcels with a 50 percent matching California Coastal Conservancy grant of \$65,000. And two months later, in August 2001, he presented to the Council a draft of the Open Space and Ecology Committee’s first Open Space Plan, crediting intern Raphael Breines with careful field surveys of Brisbane Acres, and consultant Randy Anderson and the committee members with drafting much of the plan’s text. Brisbane now had a good roadmap for future habitat conservation decisions



In addition to building the Mission Blue Center, developer Brookfield Homes also constructed a lighted baseball field and tennis courts next to the center.

and the Open Space and Ecology Committee became a formal ongoing committee.

As most Brisbane citizens saw it in the new millennium, life in town was good. Their City government was in competent hands. They trusted and liked their elected officials. They enjoyed a new Community Park, Senior Center, swimming pool, tennis courts, Teen Center, fire station, performing arts and meeting center, and, after October 2001, a new, lighted baseball field next to the Mission Blue Center. Their marina was being dredged and improved. And there would soon be a new skateboard park on the remaining portion of the old post office site, Jim Skeels announced in June 2001.

City Officials Worry Over Costs of Upgrading and Maintaining Water/Sewer Infrastructure; Council Raises Rates

Businesses in Crocker Park and new enterprises on Sierra Point offered the assurance of a solid revenue base. City Hall, which also held the police department and would eventually house the revived Parks and Recreation Department, was made more accessible by the Park Lane

extension. And with continued renovation, the building would soon provide a new venue for City Council sessions and other meetings. Finally, the City's natural setting, which was richly entwined with fond memories to longtime residents and no less appreciated for its beauty by new arrivals, was under careful stewardship. But it was what the citizens could not see, beneath their streets and Community Park, that troubled three of Brisbane's more recent arrivals, City Manager Clay Holstine, new Public Works Director/City Engineer Randy Breault, and new Finance Director Stuart Schillinger.

When Holstine took over from Robin Leiter in late August 1998, he sat down, as the Council had requested, to study the City's sewer and water problem. Rates had not been raised in years, and council members knew they had a deteriorating infrastructure and a tough issue on their hands. Holstine talked the matter over with City Engineer Jim Thompson, went home to mull over what he had learned, and in the end concluded, "This is a huge problem." With about \$300,000 in the sewer fund and roughly the same amount in the water fund, the interest earned would be at best \$30,000 a year, a paltry sum for the extensive improvements

necessary to prevent leaks, stoppages, and overflows, especially in the rainy season.

In an environmentally sensitive community that felt passionately about the state of its hills, lagoon, and Bay, this was indeed, as Holstine put it, “a huge problem.” In addition to caring about their natural resources, Brisbane residents also were conscious of their wallets and suspicious of San Francisco, which provided water and sewage treatment services. At the time, San Francisco was undertaking major improvements in its Hetch Hetchy water system, and the costs of those upgrades would eventually flow down to consumers, including those in Brisbane. Rate increases of any kind were usually a bit mysterious and always resented, and no elected official looked forward to explaining their complicated structures or rationales. Finally, Brisbane’s residents were not unlike those in thousands of other communities faced with choices about how to spend money: if clean water came out of the tap and the toilet flushed, what was the problem that needed fixing?

One problem was the Valley Drive Lift Station, located a stone’s throw from the Community Park and City Hall. Located at the bottom of the geographic bowl holding Brisbane, the station was one of four in the City—the others were on Sierra Point and at the marina—designed to collect sewage and pump it through to larger lines on its way north to a treatment facility over the city line in San Francisco. “That was my biggest scare when I got here,” said Randy Breault about his arrival in Brisbane in spring 2001. “We were really, really lacking in capacity. There was the possibility to have a major sewer overflow. That’s not something you want to do.” Stuart Schillinger, who had worked with Clay Holstine in Reno, Nevada, and joined Brisbane in spring 2001, agreed. “If the city doesn’t fix the sewer and water fiscal problem, it will put other programs at risk,” warned Brisbane’s new finance director.

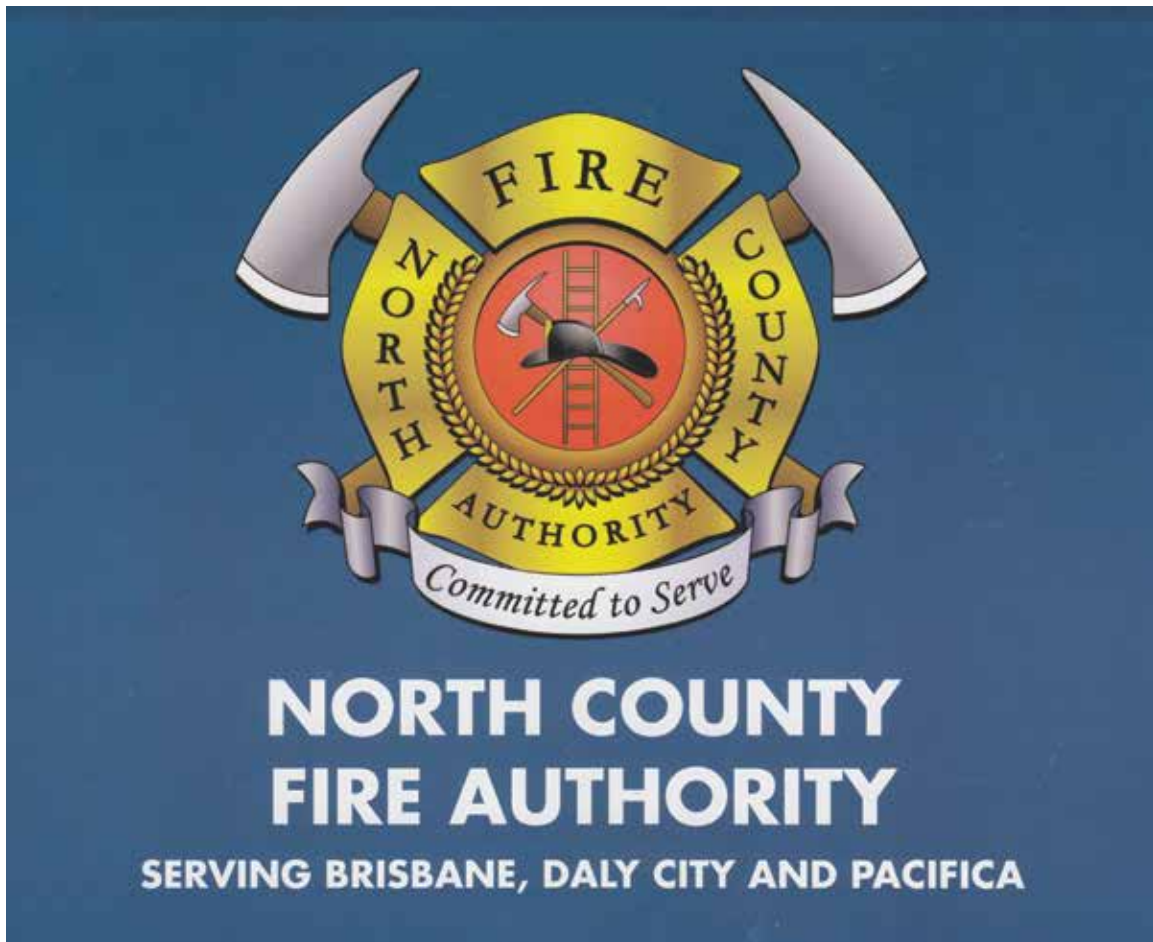
Holstine reminded the Council that a thousand-mile journey starts with a single step and suggested that the City commission an independent assessment. In July 2001 the consultant delivered the bad news. Against the backdrop of the “dot.com bust”—the collapse of the speculative hi-tech and Internet bubble that

had helped overheat the Bay Area’s economy for nearly a decade—Brisbane’s City Council heard that fixing all the problems with both the water and the sewer systems could cost close to \$30 million. Rates would have to rise 30 percent to 60 percent just to maintain the system at its present level. To accomplish everything that was needed, however, residents would have to absorb increases of 250 percent in their bimonthly bills over the next two years. This would include developing a master plan for each system; upgrading the water tanks for conversion from chlorine to chloramines, now the standard water purification method; building water-sampling stations; and expanding and upgrading the Valley Drive Lift Station. Mayor Conway remembered his stunned reaction to the consultant’s report: “Why don’t you just shoot us?” he thought.

During the summer of 2001, the Council held hearings, citizens commented and asked questions, and City staff served the process by researching and presenting all the requested facts, figures, and scenarios. It did not take long for most to agree that some rate increase was necessary. In the end, the Council judged that a 30 percent increase, automatically adjusted for inflation, was the maximum that residents could manage at present, in addition to their absorbing automatically in the future all sewer and water rate increases levied by San Francisco. Previously, Brisbane had tried to shield its citizens, at least partially, from those increases by subsidies from the City’s General Fund. But now those days were over. On August 27, a unanimous Council passed Ordinance No. 458, making the new rates official. Brisbane had bitten the bullet—sort of. No teeth had been broken in this first engagement, but the hard problem of water and sewer infrastructure was sure to give City officials another chance at feeling the residents’ pain.

Joint Powers Agreements and the Creation of the North County Fire Authority

In July 2001, Mayor Conway delivered the annual “State of the City” speech to the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce at the Hitachi building. He referred to the past years of economic expansion, noting that “we’re either at the tail end of that expansion or at the beginning of the



From the mid-1990s, Brisbane had explored ways to share firefighting and other emergency services with neighboring jurisdictions. While the City took some measures in that direction, such as an agreement in 2000 to contract administrative functions to the Pacifica Fire Department, working out a more complete joint agreement took a few more years. Authorized in 2001, the North County Fire Authority went into service in 2003, joining the forces of Brisbane, Daly City, and Pacifica to take maximum advantage of each city's resources while assuring full coverage to all residents.

next recession, unfortunately.” Notwithstanding the City’s sewer and water system worries, which Conway acknowledged, Brisbane did not expect to be greatly affected by any economic downturn. That was due in part to the City’s solid revenue base. But it also stemmed from cost-savings and efficiency measures undertaken by Brisbane in conjunction with some nearby cities.

In 1997, for example, the Council had decided to join Daly City, South San Francisco, and Pacifica to explore consolidating services. Brisbane had one fire station, Pacifica had three, and Daly City and South San Francisco had five each. Under a consolidated system, special teams, such as paramedics, hazardous waste, and

explosives experts, would be on duty at all times at a given station, thus allowing round-the-clock response capability without duplicating services and personnel. The cities already had a “mutual aid” agreement in place; a more formal “Joint Powers Agreement” (JPA) promised to spell out specific obligations in greater detail. Worry among some Brisbane residents that they might lose control of their fire department stalled that agreement. However, in 1998 Brisbane signed on to a countywide agreement to provide paramedic services on fire engines rather than dispatching them separately in an ambulance.

After Fire Chief David Eufusia retired in June 2000, Brisbane decided to contract out the

administration of its fire department to Pacifica, renewing talk of a wider consolidation effort. Pacifica Fire Chief Andrew Stark, now also serving as Brisbane's fire chief, saw no downside to the move, and Clay Holstine agreed. In June 2001, the Council approved a JPA establishing the North County Fire Authority, governed by a JPA board with equal representation from each participant's City Council (Brisbane, Daly City, and Pacifica). Cy Bologoff and Lee Panza volunteered to represent Brisbane.

Emergency services were very much on the nation's mind a few months later, when on September 11 terrorists hijacked commercial aircraft and crashed them into New York City's World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Another assault, probably intended for a target in the nation's capital, was prevented when passengers mounted a counterattack that plunged the aircraft into the Pennsylvania countryside. Brisbane's Gary Apotheker spoke for many when he told a reporter, "It's unreal—it's a dream. Everything is in slow motion, like time is suspended. People want answers, and I don't think there are any." In October, Council Member Clara Johnson personally delivered a proclamation of condolences to New York City and, on behalf of her City, conveyed her respects at a police precinct and fire station there.

U.S. Representative Tom Lantos Helps City Celebrate Fortieth Anniversary

Just three days earlier, Brisbane residents and friends had gathered at the Mission Blue Center to celebrate the City's fortieth year of incorporation. U.S. Representative Tom Lantos was there, a firm friend who had helped Brisbane fund several useful projects over the years. Prior to departing Washington, D.C., for the West Coast, Lantos had read into the Congressional Record for September 5 a brief history and congratulations to "the small but feisty City of Brisbane." It was perhaps the last time for a long time that such a celebration would not be shadowed a bit by the somberness and uncertainty that a small group of extremists had so violently cast over the nation.

Terrorist Attacks of September 11 Affect November Election Issues; Clarke Conway and Steve Waldo Step Down; Voters Reject Municipal Utility District Measure

The "9-11" attacks also influenced Brisbane's November 6 election, which included Measure I on forming a Municipal Utility District. The attacks, opined the San Francisco Chronicle's Rachel Gordon, had pushed the energy crisis from "Topic A" in California to the back burner. Incumbents Clarke Conway, the outgoing mayor, and Steve Waldo had decided not to run again. Conway was tired after eight years of service, and Waldo after twelve. Both needed a rest. Many times, said Waldo, he spent six to eight hours preparing for a single meeting, and that did not include subcommittee work and other projects. Any council member in the City's history could attest to the prodigious amount of work and commitment required, all for little pay—a small, monthly stipend—and sometimes for little thanks. In the ancient world, Aristotle and Cicero had observed that the highest good lay in public service, "pro bono publico." That sentiment surely was alive in Brisbane as well.



U.S. Representative Tom Lantos and his wife, Annette. Rep. Lantos was the guest speaker at Brisbane's fortieth anniversary celebration at the Mission Blue Center. He had always enjoyed coming to Brisbane, saying that it reminded him of his boyhood home in Hungary. The only Holocaust survivor ever to serve in the U.S. Congress, Lantos was a champion of human rights and also a champion for Brisbane. His assistance was crucial in the City's obtaining federal funds for many infrastructure improvements.

Candidates lined up to seek the two vacant council seats. Sepi Richardson was looking to return to the Council, while Dana Dillworth and Michael Barnes, challengers in a prior election, sought a first term. Haji Jameel Munir, an engineer and city planning commissioner, and Ken McCall, a former business owner, were running for the first time, while incumbent Lee Panza sought another four years in office. If he won, it would be his fourth term. The major issues were upgrading the water and sewer system, deciding on whether to permit housing in the Quarry, and, of course, Measure I. All candidates except Dillworth opposed establishing a MUD for Brisbane. At a February 13 council meeting, Dillworth had expressed surprise at the City's cool response to the MUD proposal. She had expected that "there would be a dance celebrating the spirit of public-interest warriors." Environmental activists in San Francisco also had hoped that "feisty" Brisbane might fall in line with the anti-monopoly measure.

On election day, Brisbane voters confirmed Lee Panza (561 votes) for another term, returned Sepi Richardson (457) to office, and gave Michael Barnes (463) a seat on the new Council, which would include incumbents Cy Bologoff and Mayor-pro-tem Clara Johnson. Johnson joined Dillworth and departing Mayor Clarke Conway in favoring the MUD. But Brisbane voters soundly rejected Measure I by more than a 3-to-1 margin. "How much more persuasive can you get?" asked Hal Toppel. "He doesn't expect Brisbane denizens to be asked to scratch their northern neighbors' electrical itch again," concluded San Mateo County Times columnist John Horgan in agreeing with Brisbane's City attorney. "The reason the community didn't want the MUD," said Dillworth, "is they thought they were going to lose control." Concern over loss of control particularly related to the fact that there was no reserved spot on the governing board for a resident of Brisbane. All the members of the board were to be elected at large from the San Francisco/Brisbane electorate, of which Brisbane formed an insignificant proportion.

In a world grown suddenly more threatening, Brisbane citizens had confirmed that they could still exert a measure of control at home. Their small City was a special place, and they would continue making it so. As the holiday season

approached to close out 2001, Bob Wilson measured lengths of furring strips to make stars and thought about Frank Walch and Bill Lawrence. Lawrence had been right when he told the man in Reno about those 3,000 Brisbane stars. Except now, according to the latest U.S. Census, there were 597 more, mostly residing in the new homes on the Northeast Ridge.



In November 2001, Brisbane voters rejected an initiative to join San Francisco in forming a Municipal Utility District (MUD) that would purchase the power generating plants of Pacific Gas & Electric and manage the provision of energy resources on its own. Essentially a consumer-activist effort, the initiative failed to overcome voter uncertainty about ultimate costs.

❖ CHAPTER FIVE ❖

At Home

2002-2004

Brisbane entered 2002 in a mood of guarded optimism. On the one hand, the City had completed several major projects including sewage infrastructure, senior housing, and an arts/performance center, and there were several others on the drawing board. Funding secured from the Northeast Ridge developer in 1989 had helped, along with federal grants, redevelopment agency financing, and savings derived from shared regional services such as transportation, emergency/fire, and libraries. But only a few projects did not require additional money from Brisbane's own coffers—and these were filled mostly by business sales tax revenues.

Early in 2002, City Finance Director Stuart Schillinger cautioned the City Council that hotel tax revenues would probably amount to less than half of what had been projected in the 2001-2002 budget. Nevertheless, business tax revenues in general remained strong for Brisbane, and recent rate increases had forestalled further shrinkage of the City's water and sewer funds. That picture reflected national economic trends following the 9-11 attacks. Travel and insurance-related businesses had just begun to recover from the recession when terrorists struck at the symbolic centers of American trade and governance. And while many observers concluded that the attacks had aggravated the recession and lowered consumer confidence, later analysis showed that the overall economy was starting to recover at that time and continued to do so.

To complete its swimming pool, Brisbane had tapped the General Fund reserves, something the City Council was always reluctant to do. Like a personal savings account, a healthy General Fund reserve provided security against future uncertainties. Using it for non-emergencies, therefore, expressed a sense of confidence about the future while at the same time raising anxieties about setting an unwise precedent. But mixed feelings also came with cost-cutting measures. Leaving vacant staff positions unfilled had saved the City money, Schillinger noted, but it had also

led to increased costs in overtime and in hiring temporary help. In 2002 the Council tried to balance savings with expenditures—and caution with optimism—as it tended to Brisbane's future. In acknowledging the ongoing construction of a new Hilton Homewood Suites hotel on Sierra Point, for example, Council Member Lee Panza worried about counting tax revenue chickens before they hatched. “The construction of a shell,” he observed, “does not mean the project will be finished as anticipated.”

Visions for the Future, Fiscal Caution for the Present: Brisbane Ponders a New Library, Supports Schools with Parcel Tax

Discussions of a new City library reflected these mixed feelings of ambition and reserve. The existing library that occupied the top floor of the building at 250 Visitacion Avenue, which also housed the Community Center, had been dedicated in 1982. The building had cost \$600,000 at that time and had seemed a spacious, modern facility compared to the poorly heated, uncarpeted quarters that Bernice Delbon, Dolores Gomez, Dorothy Radoff, Michelle Salmon, and others had courageously sustained for decades. But just twenty-one years later, the library strained to meet the demands of its constituents whose numbers, interestingly, had not greatly increased over the years. But their needs certainly had.

Part of the problem was that computer-based resources such as the Internet and on-line databases required additional floor space as well as outlays for hard and soft technologies. New programs such as organized storytelling suggested the wisdom of separate spaces for adults and children, a consideration that had seemed less necessary in the past when librarians had enforced the “Shush” rule. And the library's collection of historical documents, photographs, and artifacts required special storage and



Brisbane's Library and Community Center building at 250 Visitation Avenue was dedicated on April 13, 1981. But after twenty years, what had once been new and spacious now seemed cramped. Despite hard economic times for California cities, the Friends of the Brisbane Library sustained their hopes for a new facility.

study areas with humidity and other controls unanticipated in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Finally, but no less important, maintaining an attractive and well-resourced community library expressed values such as commitment to education, self-improvement, and front-row participation in the Information Age, to which the Bay Area was so vital a contributor. Friends of the Brisbane Library, organized by Helen Sullivan in the mid-1970s, marshaled support for the library's growth, while the City Council pondered a consultant's report recommending a 16,000-square-foot facility with thirty-six parking spaces. With so many other projects on the agenda, Brisbane's visions of a new library were likely to remain unrealized for some time. Financing was only one concern: relocating an expanded library in downtown Brisbane presented some complex parking and zoning challenges to City planners. Nevertheless, as had been the case with the swimming pool, a vision rooted in and sustained by the community's core values had staying power for the long term.

Brisbane also expressed its commitment to a better future by supporting its public schools. Jefferson Union High School district superintendent Mike Crilly visited the City Council toward the end of the school year in 2002 to thank Brisbane for funds that had helped pay for numerous student services such as after-school buses for students participating in extracurricular activities; extended library

hours; advanced placement class sections; on-line resources; art materials; and a student art show in Brisbane. But Brisbane schools required much greater assistance as they struggled—along with school districts across the state—to overcome the ongoing, enervating effects of the Proposition 13 property tax cap.

In November 1995, Brisbane voters considered Measure E, a proposed "parcel tax" that would raise \$96 per property for the district's K-8 schools. A parcel tax was not "ad valorem," or tied to the value of the property, but was simply a short-term levy in order to raise money for a specific purpose—in this instance, the schools. Eligible senior citizens could apply for an exemption from the tax, which required approval by a two-thirds majority of the voters. Measure E garnered a favorable vote from 56 percent of the electorate but fell short of the super majority required for tax measures. In March 1999, however, voters had another opportunity when a new measure appeared on the ballot, this time for a \$72 levy.

Council Member Sepi Richardson left Brisbane early in the morning of March 2—before the polls opened—for a three-hour drive to a business meeting in Gridley, California. The workday included some evening activities, so in order to cast her vote for the parcel tax, Richardson drove back to Brisbane, voted, and headed back to Gridley. By the time Richardson finally returned home again, she had traveled



In 2002 the Brisbane Educational Support Team/ Parent Teacher Organization (BEST/PTO) undertook a unique fundraising campaign centered on a mural for which Midtown Market owner Jung Choo agreed to lend his western wall on Visitacion Avenue. Lee Panza coordinated the scaffolding.

twelve hours, half of it to spend less than one minute voting. When the ballots were tallied, the measure passed by the slimmest of margins—a single vote—with 651 voters approving and 331 voting against the tax. “If somebody would not have voted that day,” Richardson recalled, “my vote would not have counted, and if I had not voted their votes would not have counted. It’s a strange balance, but one vote can make a difference.” In this case, that single vote, which belonged to all the “ayes” and yet to none of them in particular, meant much-needed financial support for Brisbane’s schoolchildren, as well as a statement by the community about its values and priorities.

Bob Dettmer had grown up with his brother Bill in Brisbane; Ernest Conway, Clarke’s father, had built the Dettmers’ house in the mid-1960s. Bob graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and taught school with the Peace Corps in Liberia. Elected to the Brisbane School Board in 2000, he embodied the passion that committed parents brought to the cause of public education. “I think Brisbane really values education and recognizes that we are in this little isolated place and we need the extra help,” he offered. “They’ve come through. They’ve been paying for a bus to get kids to high school, as well as keeping the library open at one of them in the evening so they can be studying while waiting for the bus. Brisbane is stellar, a City of Stars, and



Jung Choo, BEST/PTO member Deanna Washington, and artist Mona Caron, as Caron describes the planned mural.

there it is.” Brisbane’s students also shone. In the spring of 2002, sixth-grader Gina Dettmer of Lipman Middle School won a gold medal in the junior division of the California State Science Fair, an award from the American Institute of Professional Geologists, and congratulations from Mayor Clara Johnson and the Brisbane City Council for her work on rain and soil saturation levels in Owl Canyon.

The Brisbane Educational Support Team/Parent Teacher Organization (BEST/PTO) and the Midtown Market Mural

Encouraged by families like the Dettmers and by the Brisbane Educational Support Team/Parent Teacher Organization, or BEST/PTO, Brisbane voters approved two more parcel taxes over the next twelve years as state funding for education continued to shrink. But taxpayer support was only one of many ways in which BEST/PTO heightened appreciation for public education. Lisa Worthington was among many residents involved in the creation of a 15’ by 75’ mural by Swiss-born, San Francisco-based artist Mona Caron on the western wall of Brisbane’s Midtown Market on Visitacion Avenue. Against a background of mountain and water scenes with butterflies, Caron set a series of seven chronologically ordered, sepia-toned “vignettes” depicting Brisbane’s history. In the



The finished product, 15 x 75 feet, depicting the history of Brisbane from the days of the Ohlone Indians up to present time.



Sepia-toned portions of the mural depicted important elements in Brisbane's history, as with this image of Native American Ohlone life.

artist's conceptualization, butterflies morphed into stars, symbolizing the effects of humans on the landscape, and then stars morphed into books, expressing the development of human striving through education—the motivating force behind BEST/PTO. Caron enlisted fifteen local schoolchildren to draw their visions of Brisbane's future in order to help her create the final work.

The mural was almost complete in the summer of 2002 when BEST/PTO's Worthington approached the Council for financial support for the project. Many residents had donated, she said, but funds were still needed for landscaping, honorary plaques, and protective coating to guard the mural against vandalism during its expected fifteen-year life span. Council Member Richardson was familiar with the project, for she had been serving as BEST/PTO's treasurer for nine years. In September, when Caron had completed her work, the Council approved a donation to the project, which had already raised \$10,000 for Brisbane's schools.

Gas Station/Mini-Mart Proposal for Bayshore Boulevard Stirs Opposition, Is Withdrawn

As the BEST/PTO mural took shape outside the Midtown Market in the spring and summer of 2002, Brisbane debated a proposal by George Hawawini. For five years the prominent local businessman had been thinking about building a combination gas station, mini-mart, and car wash on City-owned land he proposed to lease at the northwest corner of Bayshore

Boulevard and Tunnel Avenue. If the City Council approved the ground lease, he would then have to obtain permits to construct a gas station, including one that required an Environmental Impact Report. In their input to the 1994 General Plan, many citizens had said they would welcome a gas station. Hawawini, then the owner of Mangiare Restaurant in the Brisbane Village Shopping Center and Xebec restaurant in the Radisson Hotel at Sierra Point, believed there was another need he could fill for Brisbane.

Hawawini had reason to think that his request would be well received. Brisbane once had supported four gas stations, but now there were none within City limits and residents had to drive south to South San Francisco or northwest to Daly City in order to fill up. But Hawawini's proposal came just as gas station tanks across the country, and especially in California, were discovered to have contaminated underground drinking water supplies. In particular, a gasoline additive named MTBE, or methyl-tertiary butyl ether, had proven to be readily soluble in water and thus helped spread the leaks more widely and quickly. Experts debated MTBE's toxicity at very low levels, but it was certain that even tiny amounts of the chemical—as little as 40 parts per billion (ppb)—imparted an unpleasant, turpentine-like taste to drinking water. In 1996, two of Santa Monica's wells, comprising half of the City's drinking water supplies, were measured at MTBE levels of

610 and 86 ppb and led officials to shut them down and import water. The finding set off a nationwide alarm that led to the discovery of numerous MTBE contamination sites and a subsequent phaseout of the additive.

At an April 29, 2002, council meeting Hawawini insisted that his products would be MTBE-free and that his underground tanks would be constructed of double-lined fiberglass and equipped with the latest leak- and load-monitoring technology. He promised further to keep the station's design low-key and in tune with Brisbane's architectural styles. The Council approved the ground lease only—approval of the gas station as an actual use for the site was another matter—but a month later, on May 28, four residents, including Anja Miller, presented the Council with separate citizen-signed petitions opposing the gas station. More petitions followed, and by the end of June Mayor Clara Johnson estimated that about 133 signatures had been gathered.

It is possible that Brisbane residents might have resisted construction of a new gas station even if the MTBE crisis had not occurred. Those attending a June 24 council meeting voiced a variety of objections, including aesthetics, environmental concerns, and competition with retailers who feared a new mini-mart would siphon off their customers. Additionally, as Council Member Cy Bologoff pointed out, the gas station would not include what residents had said they really needed: an auto repair facility. Marie Gilbrech, whose husband Gil had operated a station on San Bruno Avenue for years, further undermined Hawawini's position by describing how it took ten years to close and sell "Gil's Oly" because of extensive underground leaks and costly clean-ups. Hawawini seemed surprised at the level of opposition from the community, and though the Council was willing to entertain further debate, he withdrew his proposal.

Council Approves Silverspot Cooperative Nursery Lease on Solano Street

While George Hawawini tested the waters for his gas station, several Brisbane parents were working to realize their own dream of a



Mangiare Restaurant, in the Brisbane Village Shopping Center. Owner George Hawawini, who also owned Xebec Restaurant in the Sierra Point Radisson Hotel, sought to build a gas station on Bayshore Boulevard in 2002 but withdrew the proposal in the face of strong opposition from residents. In 2012 Hawawini closed Mangiare.

cooperative childcare facility in town. When Kids'n Things Daycare, a private business that leased City-owned property at 4 Solano Street, closed in 2001, Brisbane requested bids for a replacement facility. But by mid-May 2002, ten weeks after the bid request, no one had submitted any proposals. Then, as Parks and Recreation Director Jim Skeels was rewriting the criteria to be less restrictive, a group of parents interested in forming a cooperative approached City staff with their own proposal and were encouraged to apply. Several other applicants also responded to the City's newly revised criteria.

By August 2002 staff had narrowed a pool of five childcare applicants to two for consideration by the City Council. One was the YMCA, which offered a day-long program for working parents. The other was the Silverspot Cooperative Nursery, the main appeal of which was direct participation by the parents whose children attended the facility. The nursery took its name from the Callippe Silverspot, one of the butterfly species native to San Bruno Mountain. On August 12, Lisa Worthington, who had helped lead the BEST/PTO mural fundraising drive, appeared before the Council to press for the cooperative model. Joining her were parents who cited their positive experience with a cooperative in the nearby City of Millbrae, and Bob Dettmer, who had taken his daughters to a similar preschool

in San Francisco. Dettmer had become a firm believer in its benefits to children and parents alike. “That’s where I learned that you are a part of your kids’ education,” he said. “You are a big part. I got the message and became a volunteer.” Calvin Webster also offered his support, insisting that children were a valuable resource and that the nursery should merit top priority in the Parks and Recreation Department’s planning.

The wide educational and childcare experience among numerous attendees who spoke in favor of the cooperative convinced the Council to award the lease on 4 Solano Street to Silverspot. On March 10, 2003, the Council officially approved a two-year lease for Silverspot, which would pay Brisbane \$300 per month. All other expenses, including remodeling, would be covered by participating parents or by grants they might obtain.

The building needed a lot of work, as Jim Skeels recalled, but parent volunteers, local contractors, and others with the needed skills pitched in. “The wiring, painting, and structural parts of it were completely overhauled to make the beautiful building that it is today,” said Skeels. Brisbane’s childcare needs would again be a focus of debate early in 2008 over complaints that some non-residents were using the facility. But for the time being, the City had a nursery reflective not only of its concern for young children but also of its support for



In 2002, Brisbane residents formed a childcare cooperative called the Silverspot Cooperative Nursery and applied for a lease on a City-owned building at 4 Solano Street, next to the community pool and Lipman Middle School. In March 2003, the City Council approved the lease and Silverspot was launched.

a new, grassroots model of parental initiative and involvement.

Brisbane’s First Live Broadcast of City Council Meeting; City Gets Own TV Channel

On September 23, 2002, Brisbane tried out another model of citizen involvement when it broadcast on television for the first time a live City Council meeting. Other cities on the Peninsula were already televising some government meetings, and Brisbane’s council members thought this would well serve public education and participation. Initially, council meetings were broadcast on cable channel 26, a countywide educational government channel. Soon Brisbane got its own channel, channel 27, which simply broadcast a blue screen with the Brisbane logo whenever a meeting was not being aired. Fred Smith, assistant to the city manager, managed the ongoing process for the City.

The next step involved hiring Millbrae Community TV as a vendor that would do for Brisbane what it was already doing in Millbrae—acquiring public domain programming on issues such as health, political affairs, or the environment and offering them on the City’s channel. “With that equipment,” Smith explained, “we could carry a meeting live, and also create a recording of it and then rebroadcast it one or two times later in the week if someone wasn’t able to watch it live at home. Gradually we built it up into a pretty holistic, pretty nice TV station for a little town. It’s always got something interesting on.”

It was at this first televised meeting that BEST/PTO obtained council support for its mural project. The television also may have alerted boaters at the Brisbane Marina that their rates soon were going up 10 percent. In January 2001 the Council had brought the marina, previously a separate City entity, into the Parks and Recreation Department. Dredging, landscaping, and other upgrades were in place or under way, and the marina’s new allure had increased berth occupancy from 56 percent to 83 percent in 2000 alone. At-home viewers on September 23 also watched Jim Skeels outline initial plans for a 3.3-mile loop “rails to trails” project in Crocker Park that would provide safe pedestrian and bicycle access to San Bruno



Brisbane's dog park, constructed along a narrow stretch of property near City Hall, officially opened on November 10, 2004. The park proved a draw to people as well as their canine companions.

Mountain from downtown Brisbane. John Burr and David Schooley spoke in support of the plans, though City Attorney Hal Toppel dutifully reminded everyone that the City would have to figure out who actually owned the rails before anyone could remove them.

As council members and City staff had hoped, television boosted public participation in the affairs of the City and City Council. Brisbane's residents had always taken a keen interest in their City's governance, but now that interest could seek more immediate expression. "A lot of people watch," Smith confirmed. "It would be something that would probably please a network executive if they could get that ratings share. You'll be sitting in a meeting and someone will come in and they will say they've been watching the meeting and saw something going on and thought, 'I'm going down there.' They would come in and weigh in on a particular subject." Brisbane kept up with the latest technology, eventually incorporating live streaming on the Internet so viewers without cable TV could follow

meetings on their computers. "You don't even have to be in Brisbane to do that," said Smith.

Brisbane's New Dog Park

No doubt there were some dog owners watching the City Council's television debut in September, for in recent months council members had been hearing much about their wishes for a dog park in Brisbane. Complaints of unleashed pets and of droppings left on the playing fields of Brisbane Elementary and Lipman Middle Schools had dogged City officials for years, and recently more than seven hundred residents had signed a petition supporting construction of an off-leash area to exercise their canines. To them, a dedicated, fenced-in area where dogs could run freely with their peers and where their human companions also could socialize seemed like a constructive addition to community life. It would also improve safety for all concerned. Kathy Wall, chair of the City's Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission, told the Council at a

May 28, 2002, meeting that she had been leaning toward supporting a dog park but had become a much stronger supporter after a recent incident in which her dog “got off his leash, attacked a cat, and got his head stuck in a fence.”

On January 5, 2004, the Council approved plans for a dog park to be located on the site of a former Southern Pacific railroad spur running alongside the City Hall/police department building. State parks bonds of \$55,000 helped finance the project, while volunteers contributed by clearing brush and assisting City employees in grading the 25- by 400-foot site. On November 10, 2004, officials cut the ribbon to open Brisbane’s newest civic amenity, which included—for the amusement of the park’s bipeds—a token fire hydrant painted to look like a cat.

Brisbane had always tempered self-expression with a sense of humor. The dog park hydrant harkened back to the 1976 bicentennial when Women’s Club artists painted downtown fire hydrants with whimsical star-shaped, human-like, and other designs. A degree of self-deprecation, not taken too far, reminded residents that they remained pleasantly “small town” and distinct from bustling, big-city San Francisco just minutes away to the north. But with the opening of the Mission Blue Center in November 2000, and with a growing awareness of the talent residing within its own borders, Brisbane opened a new window to the world and began more seriously to embrace and showcase its artists, performers, and craftspeople.

With Mission Blue Venue, Brisbane’s Artists Take Leading Role In City’s Civic and Cultural Life

Artist Beth Grossman had moved to Brisbane in 1996 from Oakland and missed the sense of community among artists that she had enjoyed there. She found an ally in Mayor Clara Johnson, who rallied council support for establishing the Mayor’s Achievement Award for Recognition in the Arts in January 2002. The award was not to judge artists’ creations but to acknowledge formally that recipients’ work had earned significant recognition in their respective fields. One of the first awardees was, appropriately enough, Beth Grossman, a “sociopolitical artist” whose prolific portfolio included a side trip to

one of Brisbane’s fire hydrants, on which the artist depicted “Mother Nature” embracing San Bruno Mountain and its butterflies and Indian shell mounds.

Mayor Johnson and the Council also supported Grossman’s vision of Brisbane artists sharing their work with each other and with the community. On October 19, 2002, Brisbane celebrated its first Creative Community Art Sharing evening at the Mission Blue Center, where twenty-one local filmmakers, dancers, writers, and other artists took five minutes each to showcase their work. Soon afterwards, the Council provided additional backing for the complicated technology required to sustain the professional quality of the multimedia event. David Brown made his award-winning documentary *Surfing for Life* available for the June 2003 debut of Mission Blue’s new projection system. Six months later, harpsichordist JungHae Kim joined Kevin Fryer for a joint lecture and recital at the center. By then, Fryer had met many more people in Brisbane who helped sharpen his thinking about starting a concert series in the City. Through his involvement in Friends of the Brisbane Library (F.O.B.L.), he met Jeri Sulley, a member and sometime president of F.O.B.L., who also was an artist and an opera lover. Fryer figured that if the City offered Mission Blue as a venue, he could raise enough funds to pay for the musicians and channel ticket proceeds and additional funds to F.O.B.L.

Sulley, Robin Leiter, and Beth Grossman helped introduce Fryer to council members, who gave him some quizzical looks when he asked for their support. They had heard more about Mission Blue’s acoustical problems than about its suitability for chamber music. But the Council soon warmed to the idea, as did Mitch Bull, then at Hitachi Corporation and later president of Brisbane’s Chamber of Commerce. Business consultant Mike Pacelli helped Fryer launch the first “Live at Mission Blue” concert series in the 2004-2005 season. The series was a sell-out success that continued, over the next several years, to raise Brisbane’s artistic profile as well as money for Friends of the Brisbane Library.

Such events seemed a world apart from the honky-tonk and rockabilly venues for

which Brisbane had been known earlier. Still, the DeMarco family's 23 Club on Visitacion Avenue hosted special events that drew fans from across the Bay Area. It remained a lunch meeting favorite among sentimental old-time residents who recalled when fleet-fingered guitarist Jimmie Rivers headed the house band and backed the likes of Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, and Carl Perkins. "You know," owner Nuggett (DeMarco) Towle reminded the public in August 2000, "we're not a plastic fern bar."

But nostalgia was perhaps more popular than profitable, and a few months later, just before the 23 Club's sixtieth anniversary, Towle leased the facility to "Athena J," who renamed it the "Lost City 23 Club & Arcadia Southern Fusion Restaurant," redecorated the interior, and introduced an entirely different playlist of "goth," "techno," and "industrial" music. By August 2001, Athena J had passed away and the goth and electronic music had proven neither popular nor profitable. "The change was too drastic," observed patron and City Council Member Cy Bologoff. So Nuggett Towle returned to manage the 23 Club and brought back the old style on a more limited schedule, hoping to preserve a historic element of Brisbane's cultural history and turn a profit.

Preserving Open Space in Brisbane Acres: A Balance of Ideals, Interests, and Incentives

In a real estate version of Nuggett Towle's challenge, Brisbane officials struggled to find a way—short of continued outright purchases—to preserve valuable open space habitat in Brisbane Acres while still allowing property owners to realize a fair value. Brisbane's preservation strategy up to the fall of 2002 had been to look for opportunities to purchase open space in Brisbane Acres and then buy the available lots using City funds, grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the California Coastal Conservancy, or money that the Northeast Ridge developer had provided. But on October 28, 2002, Fred Smith reported to the Council that only \$274,000 remained in the pool of grant monies available for land acquisition in Brisbane Acres, and that City staff had been unable to locate any willing sellers.

The problem appeared to be incentives. The Bay Area's real estate boom was in high gear, with the value of taxable property in Brisbane ballooning rapidly, from \$763 million to \$970 million—an astounding 27 percent—between 1999 and 2000 alone. Brisbane's rate of increase was more than twice the rate in San Mateo County overall, which had experienced an impressive enough rise of 10.3 percent in that year. Owners of lots in Brisbane Acres, with their incomparable, panoramic Bay and San Bruno Mountain views, may have felt they had more to gain by waiting for a developer's offer than by selling to Brisbane for open space preservation.

The solution seemed to lie in a relatively recent market-based incentive system known as "transfer of development rights (TDR)," or, in its usual variant, "density transfer." The model had been used to great success in various parts of the United States where, for example, a local government wished to keep large areas of farmland free from "suburban sprawl" but did not want to be in the position of illegally blocking farmers from exercising their right to sell their property.

In a density transfer program, the owner could sell the right to develop his property—but not the property itself—to a developer, who could transfer that development right to another property in a location deemed more appropriate, such as property located near shops, schools, and public transportation. The developer's incentive would be that the program allowed for a greater density on the developed property than otherwise would have been permitted under existing zoning laws. If, for example, a developer was allowed to build two units per acre under the usual zoning, he might be allowed to build four units if he used "density transfer" credits purchased from the farmer and dedicated that acre as permanent open space. If the program worked as designed, the owner and the developer both would benefit while the community could save its open space at no cost to taxpayers. Applied to Brisbane Acres, the program would allow owners of lots deemed high-priority open space preservation areas to sell their development rights to someone planning to build on lots not considered to be high-priority open space. As an incentive, the builder would be allowed a greater density than

Art and Politics, Politics and Art

In a city where “having your say” was central to civic life, it was perhaps no accident that artists in every branch of creative work found a home in Brisbane. Beth Grossman’s mother had been very active politically, so Grossman grew up attending city council meetings and believing that citizen participation was a vital component of community life.

When she moved to Brisbane in 1996, Grossman felt that the City’s political culture and approachable City Hall had been tailor-made to her ideals. “I had a goal that I wanted to know everyone at City Hall and have them be happy to see me,” she explained, “and that I would be a contributing member. I would have a voice, and my voice would be heard; and I wouldn’t be always fighting against them. There would be a way that I would have a relationship with them where they would respect what I had to say even if we differed; and that they would still be happy when I came into City Hall and not say, ‘Oh no, here comes Beth Grossman.’” Did things work out that way? “Absolutely, phenomenally,” she asserted. “I can’t imagine it in San Francisco or Oakland.”

Grossman offered a “participant observer” analysis of Brisbane’s politics. “City Hall struggles to find a way to make all the issues open to the public and make sure that the public feels that their voice is heard,” she noted. “Yet the public often doesn’t come until afterwards, and then they’re all angry and turn it into an us versus them scenario. I think the Council and staff have their heart in the right place and they do their best. But it’s really, really hard to get people involved and to keep their attention.”

Much of Grossman’s professional work is geared toward engaging citizens’ attention, toward increasing their awareness of their own powers and capabilities so that they can participate meaningfully in community decision-making. Humor, beauty, and nostalgia are the ingredients she combines to draw observers into a dialogue about understanding their pasts and shaping their futures. Her *Seats of Power* project at City Hall in 2009 drew international attention while illustrating this aim. “How are you powerful in your life? What do you want to see happen in our City; and how are you going to go about doing that?” These were the challenges and opportunities that Grossman’s art posed to Brisbane, and to communities everywhere.

Sometimes officials at City Hall also used art—whether they thought of it that way or not—to convey political messages. When twenty-eight-year-old City

Engineer Jim Thompson showed up for his first day of work in Brisbane’s stormy civic atmosphere on April 15, 1988, City Manager Robin Leiter presented him with a life preserver. “On my first day of work!” he exclaimed years later, adding with pride, “I still have it.”

Thompson reflected, “The town is a very tough place, and if you go in with an attitude that you’re superior, you’re just gonna get killed.” Thompson developed his own acronym, a creative caricature of bureaucratic shorthand, for Brisbane’s culture in those days—WYSIWYG: What You See Is What You Get. “There’s a wonderful spirit and fire about that town,” he declared with genuine fondness. “Brisbane was created because they fought for their own survival. We fought the good fight.”



(Top Left) Artist Beth Grossman working on a *Seats of Power* exhibit for City Hall in 2009. Grossman was among many Brisbane artists seeking greater engagement with, rather than detachment from, political decision-making in Brisbane and in the wider world.

(Top Right) Harpsichord maker Kevin Fryer was instrumental in organizing the *Live at Mission Blue* concert series to benefit Friends of the Brisbane Library.



Kevin Fryer, Jeri Sulley, and Mayor Sepi Richardson display a check to go to Friends of the Brisbane Library, courtesy of the “*Live at Mission Blue*” concert series, January 2005.



Brisbane's 23 Club was a famous venue for many country-western and rockabilly bands. Along with the Mission Blue Center, it exemplified Brisbane's diverse cultural offerings. Said owner Nugget (DeMarco) Towle in August 2000, "We're not a plastic fern bar."

was typically permitted on the lot.

In the October 28, 2002, council meeting, Fred Smith raised the possibility of using TDR incentives, long considered by the Planning Commission and City staff, as a means to motivate potential sellers. In December, the Council held public hearings on the matter. But in the intervening weeks, the complexity of the TDR and the always-upsetting prospect of land use change in Brisbane had raised alarms and fed rumors about imminent massive development, "monster houses," and huge, multi-story residences.

Community Development Director Carole Nelson prefaced the December hearings with an explanation of how zoning changes could double the number of transferable development units per 20,000 square feet of open space from one unit to two, essentially a "density bonus" for

preserving open space. That could prompt sellers to sell and thereby create what the community had said it wanted in the 1994 General Plan—more open space in Brisbane Acres. Some attendees, like Planning Commission members Clifford Lentz and Haji Jameel, supported the two-for-one transfer as a reasonable approach to current market realities. But the myriad anxieties, concerns, criticisms, and alternative ideas raised by many attending the hearing indicated that a long discussion period lay ahead.

By February 2003, in response to strong citizen objections as well as continued doubts among some council members, the Council had jettisoned the idea of a two-to-one transfer ratio; transfer would remain one-to-one. However, council members were still considering changes to the provisions of proposed Ordinance 473 to clarify conditions under which any new homes

could be built in Brisbane Acres. Under the one-to-one transfer arrangement, developers would be limited to one single-family dwelling per 5,000-square-foot (minimum) lot, transferred from a lot no smaller than 20,000 square feet. Additionally, a new home could cover no more than 25 percent of the lot, be no taller than thirty-five feet, and have no secondary or fractional units (“Granny” suites, for example). At the next council meeting, on March 10, 2003, members voted 3-2 to adopt the changes. Council Members Michael Barnes and Sepi Richardson dissented because they believed a larger minimum lot size—Barnes suggested 10,000 square feet—would more effectively limit density.

If the original idea, dating back to 1980, had been to encourage property owners to cooperate in creating open space in Brisbane Acres by offering them positive incentives to transfer their development rights, the result appeared to be something that simply discouraged development. “We changed the Ordinance to make it much clearer what the process was supposed to be,” said senior planner Tim Tune, “but we got nowhere with increasing the density.” Still, clarifying the process seemed to help. Within the year, the City received its first density transfer proposal, on San Diego Court, which resulted in the preservation of an acre of open space on San Bruno Mountain.

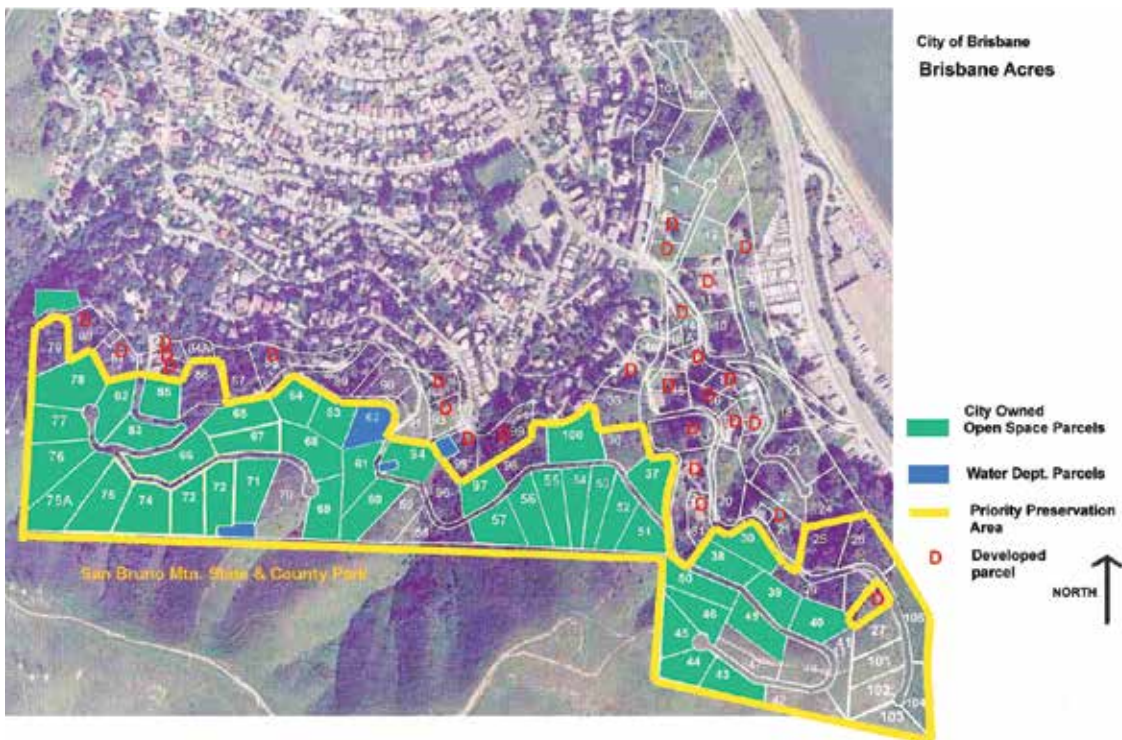
Deferred Renovations at City Hall Lead to Increased Costs

Several months earlier, during the December 9, 2002, hearings, Linda Salmon had raised an issue not directly pertinent to the matter of density transfers but nevertheless much on the minds of council members. There was a rumor, said Salmon, that \$4 million was being spent to renovate City Hall, and if this was true, the money would better be spent purchasing open space in Brisbane Acres. The issue passed by in the ongoing stream of comments on density transfer, but the Council returned to it later in the evening when City Engineer/Public Works Director Randy Breault provided an update on work still needing to be done on the City Hall building. This included making seismic upgrades to meet current building codes, creating permanent space for the Parks and Recreation

Department on the second floor, renovating the building’s warehouse for use as a meeting space, and correcting numerous inadequacies in the police department’s section.

Breault estimated the total cost of these improvements to be about \$2.4 million, though final plans had yet to be developed. In fact, ever since moving into the building in 1995, the Council had been wary of spending money on itself. It had postponed all but minimal renovations so that other projects such as the swimming pool and sewer and water system improvements could proceed. But as City Manager Clay Holstine pointed out, seismic strengthening was not a luxury. And the requirements of Brisbane’s Police Department seemed straightforward and sensible: a separate holding space for detainees; separate bathrooms for detainees and staff; separate locker rooms for male and female officers; a training room; and a secure evidence room. While deliberating these upgrades, the Council also decided to add a solar power energy system whose energy savings over time would more than return the investment. On January 6, 2003, Mayor Cy Bologoff sent a letter to Brisbane residents explaining the proposed City Hall renovations. Meanwhile, escalating construction costs in the Bay Area translated delays into dollars. With the solar energy system included, the renovations now would cost about \$3.5 million.

Later that month, Mayor Bologoff urged his colleagues to move quickly in order to avoid higher costs and interest rates. But the City was still waiting for the federal government to respond to a grant application for funds to help with the seismic upgrade. The Council was also hesitant to apportion \$900,000 in Northeast Ridge developer contributions, as it did not wish to allocate the entire amount for City Hall. Council debate over spending \$110,000 on a sound system for the proposed council chambers illustrated the conflict. On the one hand, said Council Member Lee Panza, it looked to taxpayers like a lot of money for speakers and wires; on the other hand, as Clara Johnson noted, citizens would be very unhappy if the Council spent more than \$3 million and people ended up not being able to hear each other.



This July 2010 map shows more than one hundred parcels in Brisbane Acres, an area south and east of central Brisbane. Most of the lots were undeveloped, and the City sought to keep it that way by purchasing them as open space when possible and by creating incentives for lot owners to limit any building plans. The lots shown in green on the map were purchased by the City for open space.

The Election of 2003: Brisbane Council Members Go Unchallenged

As it turned out, Brisbane’s elected officials went into the November 4, 2003, election unchallenged for the first time in the City’s history. The anomaly occurred in other Bay Area cities, as Belmont, Foster City, San Bruno, and Newark also cancelled their elections. No explanation seemed adequate, though some pointed to the distraction of the previous month’s successful recall of governor Gray Davis, the first such recall in the state’s history, and the certification of the recall vote, which was not completed until November 14. Three days later, Arnold Schwarzenegger emerged victorious from a field of 135 candidates to succeed Davis. It had been an odd electoral season, shadowed by the United States-led invasion of Iraq on March 20, which some believed made local issues seem less important.

In Brisbane, after council members expressed their regret over the lack of citizen involvement,

Michael Barnes, Sepi Richardson, and Lee Panza appointed Clara Johnson and Cy Bologoff, the two unchallenged incumbents, to serve new four-year terms. But Bologoff, for one, had fewer regrets. “It was a relief,” he admitted, not having to prepare mailers and canvass door-to-door. Where some saw voter apathy, Bologoff saw a satisfied electorate: “There wasn’t anything controversial, really, going on,” he explained.

Brisbane Tackles Parking Problems, Complaints: The White Striping Controversy

Perhaps that had been true in August 2003, when the filing deadline passed. But by October, new controversy had surfaced over parking. Crews on contract for the City’s Public Works Department had recently repainted the white striping delineating parking areas on Brisbane’s residential streets. But as work proceeded, staff came across areas not previously marked that seemed to require

white lines; areas where parking once had been allowed but now would not be permitted due to new street width standards; areas where old white striping had faded so badly that drivers could not see it; and areas where parking was clearly in violation of municipal code. Rather than return for the Council's approval to paint lines where the need for them seemed so apparent, supervisors made decisions on the spot, sometimes calling in fire trucks to test for adequate clearance.

But parking was not a straightforward matter to Brisbane residents. After Randy Breault explained to a distressed audience what had happened, several residents at the October 6, 2003, council meeting rose to voice their objections. Among them were former Mayors Jess Salmon, Jeannine Hodge, and Clarke Conway, along with former City Manager Robin Leiter. All recommended reversing any work done beyond the Council's specific directions and channeling input from citizens to a Traffic Advisory Subcommittee of the Council. Leiter insisted that another hearing should be scheduled to allow more citizens to "have their say." She offered the Council a history lesson on Brisbane's values, to wit, "the importance of reaching out and getting public participation, the need for transparency in decision-making, taking time to listen to comments from members of the public as long as people want to talk, and realizing that all decisions need 'heart' to avoid detrimental impacts on the way people live." At issue, of course, was not only the convenience of parking in front of one's property, but the perceived threat to property values if parking spaces were constricted beyond the already strained capacity of Brisbane's streets.

At a meeting two weeks later, Fire Chief Andrew Stark and Council Member Lee Panza, a longtime volunteer firefighter, expressed their continued concerns about the ability of fire trucks to maneuver through some of the City's residential streets. Nonetheless, the public pushed back, and Mayor Cy Bologoff, former head of Brisbane's Fire Department, admitted that Daly City fire units could answer new calls if Brisbane's fire trucks were to be boxed in by ambulances during a medical emergency. Daly City had recently joined Brisbane and Pacifica in

the North County Fire Authority.

Former Council Member Susan Nielsen, who had moved out of town but still owned property in Brisbane, returned to fight for the parking spaces in front of her house that the new striping had eliminated. Jeannine Hodge also asked for her parking space back, and Robin Leiter counseled that the City should protect peoples' rights before worrying about liability issues. Clarke Conway suggested purchasing a smaller fire engine when the time came to replace current equipment and volunteered that many people in town would be happy to help paint out the new white lines. Council Member Michael Barnes made a motion to direct staff to remove any lines that had not been there before, except around fire hydrants, until new safety standards could be developed. The motion carried 4-1, with Lee Panza dissenting. City staff were left



This lot in Brisbane Acres demonstrates both the desirability of preserving the mountain habitat and the severe challenges of trying to build on the property.



Parking on Brisbane's narrow, winding, and hilly streets had always been problematic. When crews repainted the white stripes demarcating permitted parking areas in fall 2003, public outcry forced a partial turnaround by the City Council. Council Member and volunteer firefighter Lee Panza was the only defender of the new stripes. Central Brisbane's parking problems have yet to be satisfactorily resolved.

to puzzle out some other solution to Brisbane's thorny parking problems.

Group Forms to Oppose Cellular Tower Installation in Downtown Residential Area; City Negotiates Resolution

Just as the parking controversy was cooling down, film maker David Brown announced the formation of a new committee, Citizens for a Safer Brisbane, to oppose the installation of cellular antennas in residential Brisbane, and in particular the installation of three, screen-enclosed antennas by MetroPCS (Personal Communication Service) on a church tower at San Bruno and Mendocino Streets. The Planning Commission had approved these antennas early in October 2003. Citizens for a Safer Brisbane included many influential residents such as Robin Leiter and Clarke Conway. Brown invited all council members and City staff to attend a special presentation on the subject scheduled for November 16 at the Community Center below the library.

Lee Panza and Clay Holstine accepted Brown's invitation. At the meeting, they watched a video about irradiation of the United States embassy in the Soviet Union that had occurred between 1953 and 1973 that was alleged to have caused numerous health problems, including permanent damage to embassy employees' DNA. The film described various other injuries such as infertility, cognitive impairment, leukemia, immune

system malfunction, and brain tumors that could be associated with exposure to low-level radio frequency exposure.

At a December 1, 2003, council meeting, Brisbane's Community Development Director Bill Prince, who had replaced Carole Nelson the previous May, explained that federal law prohibited local communities from banning cellular facilities on the basis of radio frequency emissions. Federal authorities had determined that radio waves at the frequency required for cellular phone transmission were not hazardous to human health. But varying standards in other countries, along with continued skepticism by citizens who suspected that the powerful communications industry had captured the regulatory process, assured ongoing controversy. It seemed that opponents could block the antennas only by demonstrating that alternative sites would be just as good, but MetroPCS held that the church tower was the best location in town to close gaps in its coverage area. Clay Holstine argued that it was MetroPCS's job, not Brisbane's, to find optimal sites, and that the company had failed to investigate all the possibilities.

The Council responded to strong citizen opposition to installation of the antennas by asking City staff to draft an urgency moratorium on all wireless communications facilities near residential zones. On December 15 the Council reviewed the moratorium, which would be in effect for forty-five days and would allow for a rewrite of the zoning regulations concerning cellular antennas. The only sticking point, as

attorney Hal Toppel noted, was that the urgency moratorium would not apply to applications, like MetroPCS's, which had already been filed and completed, even if they had not yet been approved. The Council, hoping to find a legal means of stopping the installation, found what the Planning Commission already had discovered—there seemed to be none.

The urgency moratorium bought some time to solve the larger problem of future installations, but it was not clear if anything could be done to stop MetroPCS. In drawing up the urgency ordinance, the Council debated whether to expand the existing zoning law's minimum allowed distance of 300 feet between a cellular antenna and residences to 600 feet, 900 feet, or even 1,000 feet. But there was scant scientific evidence for increasing the existing limit on health grounds, which federal law precluded as a reason for banning antennas. Clarke Conway devised an alternative, suggesting that establishing a minimum 600-foot distance could be based not on health reasons but on aesthetic factors. Attorney Toppel ventured that it could be done.

State law allowed for an extension of the forty-five-day moratorium if public hearings were held, so this was done on January 20, 2004. Meanwhile, Clay Holstine had met with MetroPCS representatives to see if a mutually satisfactory solution could be found. As it turned out, MetroPCS technicians discovered that an area immediately adjacent to City Hall and next to the dog park, then under construction, would easily satisfy the 600-foot residential limit requirement and meet the company's needs. Moreover, MetroPCS agreed to share a tower with other cellular providers, a solution that the company had initially dismissed as unusual and unacceptable.

On May 17, 2004, the Council approved a five-year lease with MetroPCS at \$18,000 per year, with the company donating an additional \$7,000 for Brisbane to augment its police and fire communications capabilities. Hal Toppel clarified that the City's main objective had been to get the antennas out of residential neighborhoods, not to increase revenues, but the outcome appeared to have served all parties well—except, perhaps, the church at Mendocino

and San Bruno that had hoped to raise money by leasing its tower.

Council Wrestles with Water and Sewer Rate Hikes Proposed by Master Plans

At the end of December 2003, as City planners were mulling over parking problems and Citizens for a Safer Brisbane were thinking about cellular towers, Randy Breault and his staff celebrated an infrastructure success. During a heavy storm that dumped 2.6 inches of rain on the City in two days—about 10 percent of the area's yearly average—the newly upgraded Valley Drive Lift Station easily handled a peak flow of 3.1 million gallons per day, more than its previous capacity of 2.6 million gallons, with no sewage backups or overflows. “That was a huge improvement,” said Breault. He used the occasion to remind the Council of the ongoing importance of developing sewer, storm drainage, and water system master plans for Brisbane so that future needs could be anticipated across a twenty-year time span.

Early in 2004 Breault brought these three master plans before the Council. The water master plan, which associate civil engineer Jerry Flanagan had helped develop, reported Brisbane's system in “fair condition” but needing replacement of about 20,000 feet of water mains, additional storage capacity, and better pumps. Flanagan's colleague Matt Fabry had worked on the sewer master plan, which also described many of Brisbane's sewer lines as deteriorated or too small to accommodate the equipment that Public Works employees used to clear blockages. Aware that some residents might take plans for improving the City's water and sewer systems as signs that more development was in the offing, Holstine and Breault stressed that the master plans addressed current infrastructure needs only and not those that might arise from any future development.

Breault explained master plans in terms of automobile maintenance. Conscientious owners keep track of oil changes, belt and filter replacements, tire rotations, and other scheduled maintenance and look ahead to replacing parts before they break down, he observed. “Public works folks just do that with 26 miles of water pipeline and a handful of reservoirs and pump stations.” But in fact, Brisbane's total pipeline

stock, including water, sewer, and storm drainage lines, totaled about 100 miles, all in varying conditions of integrity.

If the engineering challenges of this system were not daunting enough, there were always the financial and political considerations. In the two fiscal years of 2002-2003 and 2003-2004, Brisbane spent more than \$8 million on improvements to the City's water and sewer systems. The money had come from federal funds, obtained with the assistance of U.S. Representative Tom Lantos, but also from bond issues, redevelopment agency financing, connection fees for new and renovated buildings, and, last but not least in the eyes of residents, increased utility rates. As City Manager Holstine looked forward, he expected that the City would spend an additional \$4 million on repairs and upgrades in FY 2004-

2005. But revenues to cover those costs would fall short by about \$1 million.

In August 2001 a consultant had informed the City Council that rate increases on the order of 250 percent would be required to fully refurbish the systems. Council members had blanched at the prospect of residents receiving bills three and a half times larger than before, so they had approved a gradual phasing in of water and sewer rate increases, starting with a 30 percent hike in 2001 and adding a 20 percent increase in 2002. Council members had done what was achievable at the time, but aging pipes respected neither pocketbooks nor politics, so Brisbane once again confronted the issue of necessary rate increases. Some federal funding was available in the form of a matching grant—Brisbane would have to raise its share or lose the federal contribution.

Through the spring and summer of 2004,



City Manager Clay Holstine and City Engineer Randy Breault had long recognized the danger to Brisbane of flooding posed by an outdated pumping or "lift" station on Valley Drive, near City Hall and the Community Park. They oversaw a major upgrade in 2003, and in December of that year the Valley Drive Lift Station proved its worth, handling 3.1 million gallons per day of runoff during a heavy storm.

Mayor Michael Barnes and the Council weighed all the difficult choices and on July 19 approved a phased-in increase of 15 percent initially, 15 percent in nine months, and 10 percent nine months after that. This 40 percent hike over eighteen months would allow the City's water and sewer fund to break even in FY 2005-2006. Brisbane was not alone. Other communities also faced problems of infrastructure deterioration, increased local rates, and additional "pass-through" increases by San Francisco to cover that City's costs of upgrading the Hetch Hetch water supply system that served the Bay Area.

Redevelopment Agency Funds Facilitate Affordable Housing in Brisbane; Projects Slated for San Bruno Avenue and for Plumas Street

While circumstances seemed to conspire to raise the costs of living for most Brisbane residents, a few initiatives helped make life less expensive for some. In January 2004 Fred Smith briefed the Council on a proposal to enhance an affordable housing program for qualified applicants, including first-time homebuyers, using revenues from the Brisbane Redevelopment Agency (RDA). State law required communities to set aside 20 percent of the tax increment revenue from redevelopment agencies for affordable housing. Furthermore, the law required that cities should make such housing available proportional to its identified housing need. Brisbane had implemented a first-time homebuyer program for the Northeast Ridge in 1997, but the City had made only two loans, and the rapid escalation of home values had soon put all those units beyond the program's reach. By 2004, however, Brisbane's RDA had accumulated a balance of about \$1.7 million in its low- and moderate-income housing fund. The City expected that balance to rise to \$2.3 million by the end of FY 2004-2005. It sounded like a lot of money, but in San Mateo County, where the median income for a family of four was \$95,000, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development had set \$90,000 as the maximum income for a family to qualify for low-income housing loans.

Over the years, RDA funds had enabled

Brisbane to build its marina, the new fire station on Bayshore Boulevard, the Community Park, and the senior housing facility. Now those funds could help pay for an expanded, citywide first-time homebuyers program with higher funding limits and a sweat equity project at two locations in downtown Brisbane. Smith proposed that Brisbane work with Habitat for Humanity to build five townhouses at 20 Plumas Street, a site then occupied by Brisbane's community garden, and two single-family homes at 700 San Bruno Avenue, once home to Brisbane's fire station. The units would first be made available to current Brisbane residents, then to persons working in but not living in Brisbane, and finally to others as available. Potential residents could qualify for a loan by using "sweat equity" instead of cash to qualify, thereby demonstrating their personal investment in the property. Bob Dettmer, who lived on Plumas Street directly across from the proposed housing, expressed support, as did several other citizens. But the project would go through additional public hearings and neighborhood meetings before the Council gave its final approval, and in coming months the anxieties of some who confused it with federally subsidized Section 8 housing would be aired and addressed.

Development Concerns Continue: Condo Proposal for Bayshore Boulevard, Residential Housing in the Quarry?

Almost any project involving development in Brisbane, especially one that increased housing, touched a nerve close to the City's small-town heart. Brisbane residents Charles and Judy Ng did so in 2003 when their Best Design and Construction Company applied for permits to build thirty two-bedroom condominium units in two buildings on Bayshore Boulevard, just south of the Old County Road entrance to town. After three public hearings, the Planning Commission gave its approval, pending the resolution of several issues such as the project's effect on the surrounding hillside and the inclusion of some affordable housing units.

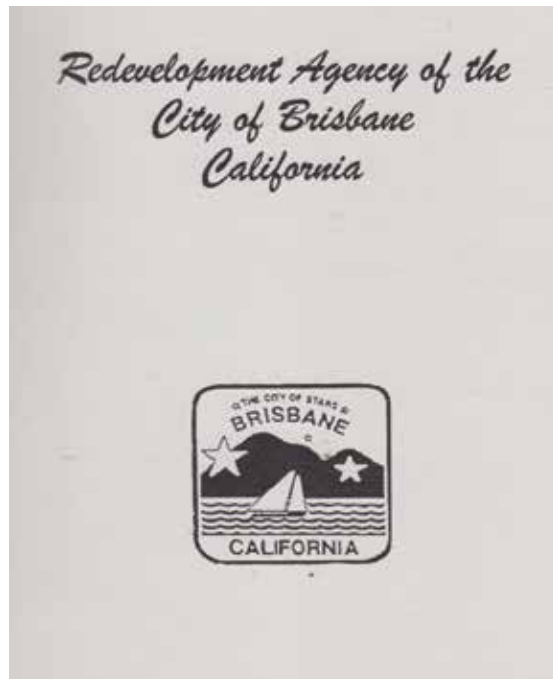
Because of concerns over geotechnical and other issues, the Planning Commission's

decision was appealed to the full City Council by Mayor Barnes and Councilmember Richardson, setting the stage for additional public hearings on the project. During public comment at a City Council meeting in January 2004, citizens voiced a variety of new concerns such as the geological stability of the steep terrain behind the proposed buildings, the project's size, and pedestrian safety issues for the potential residents on Bayshore Boulevard. A few attendees supported the Ngs' proposal, including Planning Commissioner Brad Kerwin, who offered that some people in Brisbane might be opposed to all development but that this project was as good as or better than any that had come before the Planning Commission during his tenure.

The many elements in the controversy—the sudden addition of an estimated sixty-six new residents, the possibility of renters, the possible effects on habitat conservation efforts—were all soon focused into the issue of hillside stability and whether the developers could offer sufficient proof that the grading required at the site would not destabilize the terrain and threaten homes above. As with the affordable housing projects proposed for Plumas Street and San Bruno Avenues, the process of deliberation over the Ng condo proved to be a long one. In the Ngs' case, however, it would stretch out more than three years beyond the date of the original Planning Commission approval and generate both a lawsuit and a threatened referendum.

Council Sets Precedent, Gives Voters Binding Authority to Decide Quarry Housing Issue

During the period 2002-2004, Brisbane again took up SummerHill Homes' application to build 209 residential units—148 houses and 61 condos—in the Quarry. Since the original submission in 2000, California Rock and Asphalt, Inc., the Quarry owner, and Western Pacific Housing had replaced SummerHill as applicants and were preparing the required Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs). The approval process in this case, now known as the One Quarry Road Residential Project, would make history. Believing that voters



Redevelopment Agency, or RDA, funds had helped build Brisbane's marina, fire station, Community Park, and senior housing facility. In January 2004, assistant to the City Manager Fred Smith outlined for the City Council a plan to use RDA funds to meet Brisbane's obligation to provide affordable housing. In 2011 the state eliminated RDAs. They no longer exist in California as a tool for financing public infrastructure and affordable housing.

should have the final say on major residential projects, Mayor Clarke Conway introduced a resolution giving voters binding authority to decide the matter of housing in the Quarry. On May 29, 2001, the Council passed it by a 4-1 vote.

"I wanted to make sure that we didn't have the Northeast Ridge repeated," Conway later explained, describing the unusual measure as a "pre-referendum." Clara Johnson, the dissenting vote on the Council, agreed that the people should have their say through referenda, but believed that this should come after—and not preempt—decisions by the Council. She regarded the resolution as an abdication of the Council's responsibility. But Council Members Bologoff, Panza, and Waldo agreed with Conway to put the people in charge of this matter.

By late 2003, Western Pacific Housing had submitted a final draft EIR for a project that now proposed 129 single-family homes and 54 townhouse condos. The Quarry was on county, not Brisbane, property, and annexation to Brisbane was contingent on voters' ultimate approval. The Council, therefore, was not yet in a position to change zoning designations, but in October 2004 the Planning Commission recommended that the Council pre-zone the Quarry for residential use. As plans proceeded through these initial stages, the developers agreed to make \$7 million in contributions to Brisbane for "public improvements" and to offer 28 of the units as affordable housing. But much still remained to be debated and negotiated before Brisbane citizens cast their deciding vote on the One Quarry Road Residential Project.

Robin Leiter Returns to City Hall as Consultant

The return of former City Manager Robin Leiter to City Hall in April 2004 as a consultant on major development projects such as the completion of the Northeast Ridge, One Quarry Road, and the Baylands was a good indication that Brisbane was anticipating some highly complicated and controversial issues. Universal Paragon Corporation's (UPC) plans to develop retail and commercial facilities on its 660 acres of landfill on the Baylands, between Bayshore Boulevard and the Bay, was by far the largest project Brisbane had ever considered, and also posed the greatest threat thus far to the City's identity as a small-town community sheltered from "outside" urban stresses.

Universal Paragon Corporation's Specific Plan for Baylands Development Moves Issue to Center Stage; City Hosts "Have Your Say Day" Workshops

Development plans in Brisbane naturally conflicted with many residents' notions of community stability and environmental health. City planners and officials usually struggled to find some way to balance such factors with property owners' rights, though in the case of

the Quarry, the Council chose to step aside and let voters make the final determination. With the Baylands, the City aimed to include citizens in the planning process itself, holding a series of workshops during 2004 covering environmental remediation, land recycling, urban design, and sustainable development. Controversy attended even this stage, as some citizens criticized the choice of consultants and topics as weighted toward a presumption of development. The Council responded by scheduling a "Have Your Say Day" in late summer followed by a workshop, hosted by Mayor Michael Barnes and facilitated by urban design specialist Michael Freedman. There, residents shared their sometimes competing visions for the Baylands. Freedman expressed the consensus among attendees as including mild support for retail, office, and other revenue-generating businesses; against housing; and strongly supportive of open space and environmentally friendly uses such as a wind-powered energy plant. Interest ran high at the meeting, which had started at 7:30 p.m. and was extended from 10:30 p.m. to 11:45 p.m. to give as many people as possible a chance to contribute.

On August 31, Mayor Barnes opened another workshop to discuss UPC's draft "specific plan" for the Baylands. UPC Project Director Jim Stickley presented the plan, which divided the acreage roughly into two halves. The southern end, closer to Brisbane and to the Lagoon, would have some office space, perhaps a hotel and restaurants, and a public park, but it would mostly be open space. Commercial development such as stores, arts and entertainment facilities, and higher-density buildings would cluster in the northern half where there was ready access to Muni (San Francisco Municipal Railway) and Caltrain station. No development would begin prior to completion of toxic site remediation, which was ongoing and on which UPC had already spent about \$20 million. Stickley estimated that cleanup costs would total \$75 million for the entire Baylands project.

Jim Stickley had given Brisbane citizens and their City Council members a lot to think about. The Baylands' financial success, he noted, depended on serving the larger region, not just Brisbane, and therefore the development was likely to become more than an extension of



In the summer of 2004, Brisbane held another “Have Your Say Day” event at which residents could weigh in on proposed development plans for the Baylands. The future of that 660-acre site would become one of the most controversial and important issues in the City’s history, and at present it remains to be decided. Shown here is an early “bubble” plan, drafted in April 2003 by Baylands property owner Universal Paragon Corporation, showing areas to be developed but not describing specific uses.

downtown Brisbane. At the same time, residents wished to make it clear to UPC that they wanted the development to reflect Brisbane's values and priorities. That desire, said Stickley, had come through "loud and clear." Mayor Barnes outlined the next step: an extensive staff review of the specific plan, and then an environmental impact review supervised by Brisbane (but paid for by UPC). The specific plan would be either approved or denied and, if approved, the planned development permitting process would follow.

Search for Solutions to Parking Problems Continues

The Baylands project and all its ramifications loomed large on Brisbane's agenda and figured in its forward vision. But old issues still clamored for attention. In October 2003, after the white striping controversy, City planners had gone back to their offices to find new solutions to Brisbane's residential parking conundrum. They emerged nearly a year later with some proposed new regulations. One was tying parking spaces to the square footage of housing: the larger the house, the more parking spaces the owner would be required to maintain. There would be "nonconforming" exemptions for existing residences as well as for existing residences whose owners decided to enlarge. The idea would be to discourage large, new houses—an idea that most residents seemed to support.

But according to Clarke Conway, who attended a September 7, 2004, council meeting to voice his objections, the new law threatened to render as many as half the houses in Brisbane "nonconforming." Conway asserted that such a designation amounted to saying that a home was in violation of a city code, a factor that he believed would lower resale value. At a follow-up meeting two weeks later, senior planner Tim Tune clarified that about 25 percent of Brisbane's houses would be nonconforming with respect to the proposed new parking ordinance. However, he added, if all the other code changes that had been introduced in recent decades, such as those pertaining to height, setbacks, and the like, were also taken into account, about as many houses in the City would be nonconforming as conforming.

The Council concurred unanimously with Mayor Barnes's suggestion to review the matter



Brisbane's annual Concerts in the Park series showcased the park's gazebo and earned an award from the California Park & Recreation Society in March 2004.

and discuss it again at a future meeting. On October 18, Council Member Bologoff measured the prevailing mood when he observed that parking had been a problem in Brisbane for many years, but he was not sure when the right time would be to address the issues. That evening did not prove to be the right time, either. The search to replace Brisbane's customary parking arrangements with something more formal continued.

Life in the City: Concerts in the Park, Open Space Acquisition, Community Garden, Shuttle Bus Service

Brisbane's burgeoning arts programs and conservation efforts seemed unaffected by any parking problems. In March 2004 the City's "Concerts in the Park" series won an award from the California Park and Recreation Society, while Friends of the Brisbane Library co-sponsored a different series of five concerts in the Mission Blue Center to raise funds. Also in March, Fred Smith facilitated the acquisition of two more parcels of open space in Brisbane Acres, and on April 24, Brisbane conducted its first Habitat Restoration Day, with volunteers clearing broom, fennel, and other invasive species from the mountain near the Margaret Avenue water tank.

That summer, Brisbane relocated its Community Garden across town to property on San Francisco Street near the Quarry Road trail entrance so that the Habitat for Humanity



Brisbane relocated its community garden across town to San Francisco Street near the Quarry Road trail entrance in summer 2004, as the former site on Plumas Street was slated for affordable housing. The newly prepared garden was ready for planting in May 2005 and quickly flourished

housing project at 20 Plumas Street could begin. Back in 1997, Debra Patton had approached the Council on behalf of twenty-four other prospective gardeners and more than one hundred supporters with a request to establish a community garden on the Plumas Street RDA-owned property. The City had long-range plans to use this property for affordable housing, but in the meantime a garden would be a productive

way to use the land. Brisbane's community gardeners paid fees to keep the operation self-sustaining, which they continued to do at the new thirty-nine-plot location between San Francisco Avenue and Old Quarry Road.

In August 2004 the Sam Trans Number 34 bus route connecting Brisbane to downtown San Francisco was discontinued due to insufficient ridership, leaving residents with no public means

of getting to Daly City or San Bruno's Tanforan Shopping Mall. Fred Smith worked with Daly City, Sam Trans, and C/CAG (City/County Association of Governments) officials to create and fund a shuttle service to replace the local 34 bus service and to add a stop at the Bayshore Caltrain station. In a letter to the San Mateo County Times, Mayor Michael Barnes dubbed the achievement "a shining example of effective regional planning and an efficient bureaucracy."

Milestones: the Passing of Bill Del Chiaro, Don Bradshaw, and Charles "Bud" Mozzetti. And Some "Firsts."

The 2002-2004 years also included some losses that could not be replaced. Bill Del Chiaro, Jr., owner of Brisbane Hardware & Supply, a commercial stalwart in the community, died on May 3, 2002, at the young age of fifty-six. "A very kind and fair man who really knew his business and cared for the community," as Clara Johnson described him, Del Chiaro had kept the business going when his own father, the previous owner, had passed away. His son, Bill Del Chiaro III, stepped up to the counter to greet customers at 1 Visitacion Avenue.

A year later, on May 18, Brisbane marked another passing, that of former Council Member and Mayor Don Bradshaw, who had served in the years leading up to Brisbane's historic decision to limit development on the Northeast Ridge. And on February 12, 2004, a member of one of Brisbane's "founding families" died. Charles "Bud" Mozzetti, former president of the local Eagles Aerie and of the Lions Club, took with him many long memories of the family's motel business, now the site of Brisbane's Community Park.

But there also were some "firsts" in Brisbane. The City officially declared November 12, Bill Lawrence's birthday, as "Bill Lawrence Santa Day." At ninety-seven years of age, Lawrence was still looking forward to his next Christmas. And on November 15, 2004, the City Council selected Sepi Richardson to replace Michael Barnes as mayor at the expiration of Barnes's term. Richardson, who had immigrated to the United States from Iran in the early 1970s, became Brisbane's fourth woman mayor and, as

best as she could determine, the first Persian-American woman ever to be elected to public office in the United States.

It was an emotional moment for Richardson, as California Assembly member and former South San Francisco Mayor Gene Mullin administered the oath of office. Richardson believed that her election to the Council in 1995 indicated a larger change in town. "I had heard about the fear of the new people coming in and changing Brisbane," she recalled. "I was one of them." The change had not always been easy, but she had embraced Brisbane as her home and voters had responded by electing her twice to the Council. Now, her fellow council members were entrusting her with the office of mayor.

Richardson's perspective was remarkably similar to that of Anja Miller, a fellow immigrant and Brisbane's first woman mayor. After a tumultuous election in 1973, Miller had urged citizens "to get things done in a positive way, not negative. Don't tear anyone down. Let's do something we all need." Richardson echoed this spirit three decades later. "That's not the Northeast Ridge, that's Brisbane. I'm Sepi. I'm your community member. You're my neighbor. Don't treat me differently. Don't embarrass me. Don't embarrass people." Though Brisbane kept close watch over its borders with the "outside" world, it continued to thrive at home by keeping its doors, its arms, and its mind open to change.

CHAPTER SIX

Change Versus Stability

2005-2007

Brisbane resident Ramon Garcia received a quizzical but mostly supportive response when he approached the City Council in 2004 to request a change in the City’s laws dealing with fowl. Specifically, Garcia wanted his twenty-five carrier pigeons exempted from the ordinance’s prohibition on keeping birds within one hundred feet of any residence. Brisbane’s close quarters virtually precluded raising chickens or keeping wild fowl of any kind, as Police Chief Tom Hitchcock noted, and therefore threatened Garcia’s hobby—as well as his expensive flock. Moreover, the birds’ remarkable homing instincts meant that Garcia, a member of the American Racing Pigeon Union, could not just sell them or give them away, for they would simply fly back to his Brisbane home.

Recalling Brisbane’s history as open grazing land, Mayor Michael Barnes sympathized with “people’s desire to keep animals.” But still, there were the complaints, like the one about an unpleasant mess on a neighbor’s roof. An investigation exonerated the racing flock on that score, but it did not resolve the larger issue. Council members asked City staff to come up with changes to Brisbane’s animal control regulations to accommodate Garcia’s special circumstances. Though Cy Bologoff, the sole dissenter, cautioned that permitting the birds might “open a can of worms the City will regret,” in winter 2005 the Council passed Ordinance No. 500 allowing racing pigeons to be kept at a distance of thirty feet from any residence, not including the owner’s home. For good measure, the Council also exempted dogs from the leash law while in the City’s new dog park.

There is something in Brisbane’s culture that makes it tolerant of the independent-minded and the unusual—and reluctant to impose strict rules and regulations where informal or flexible rules will suffice. Even the General Plan, now due for another ten-year revision, reflected the particular wishes and visions of the City’s residents more than most such documents. In August 2004,

Brisbane had held two public workshops to gather input on revisions to the General Plan and to consider future development in the Baylands. Many of those who turned up had brought along their nametags and information packets from the original “Have Your Say Day” in 1992. For the most part, consultant Lloyd Zola observed, their visions of Brisbane’s future had not changed much over time—the 1994 General Plan would likely need just some minor updating. But the proverbial devil would lie in the details of several ongoing matters facing Brisbane in mid-decade, including the use of animals in research, residential housing construction, and, of course, development in the Baylands.

General Plan Revisions in Background, Changes Ahead for the Council: Lee Panza Decides Not to Run for Re-election; Clara Johnson Resigns

With matters evolving slowly, continuity in leadership was a major concern among council members. In February 2005, four-term council veteran and two-term Mayor Lee Panza announced that he would not seek re-election in November. In June, Clara Johnson surprised everyone by announcing her resignation for health reasons halfway through a four-year term. Panza hoped that incumbents Sepi Richardson and Michael Barnes would run again; Cy Bologoff’s term was not yet up. “It is disruptive enough to have two new Council members,” he allowed, “but three would be more than disruptive—it would be a crisis, really.”

After Johnson’s resignation, effective July 4, the Council opted not to fill the seat by appointment or by special election but to carry on with four members until the November general election. The possibility of tied council votes was not then of great concern—that is, until the controversial issue of using animals in research came before the Council when Slough Estates USA, Inc., purchased twenty-three acres on Sierra Point

from Opus West for commercial development. Though the sale had not yet been completed and no specific plan for development had been submitted, Opus West and Slough representatives reminded the Council at a June 20, 2005, meeting that demand for biotechnology, life science, and research space was still very strong despite an otherwise lackluster commercial office market. Use of the Sierra Point property for research and development, however, would require council approval of an amendment to Brisbane's General Plan. It was Clara Johnson's last council meeting.

Controversy Over Possible Animal Research at Proposed Sierra Point Biotech Facility

Between that evening and the next council meeting, on July 5, flyers went up around town warning that the Council was about to approve animal research. As it turned out, amending the City's Ordinance No. 501, which, like No. 500, concerned animals, to specify that Brisbane would comply with applicable federal, state, and local regulations as a condition for activities involving live animals happened to be on the Council's agenda for the July 5 meeting. Council member Lee Panza insisted that Ordinance 501 did not constitute approval of animal research and had nothing to do with Slough Estates' proposal for an R&D facility at Sierra Point, which required a separate amendment to the General Plan. City Attorney Hal Toppel pointed out that the proposed amendment to Ordinance 501 would establish regulations over animal research where none had previously existed. But these attempts to separate the amendment of Ordinance 501 from the determination of conditions for R&D on a biotech campus across Bayshore Boulevard got nowhere. The inflammatory issue of animal research was now out on the table for public comment.

The Council heard a range of views, from those who considered animal research necessary for the advancement of science and medicine to those who insisted that it was in all cases cruel and that alternatives were available. Council member Michael Barnes, a scientist who had worked in the biotech industry for twenty years,

explained that alternatives like cell-based assays and computer models had limitations, and that sometimes animal research was necessary. He warned that developers were not likely to build in a City that made it unusually difficult to establish an animal research facility. Lee Panza added that specific applications for development could be treated on a case-by-case basis, and that Brisbane could employ a conditional use approval process to impose standards more stringent than existing federal or state requirements at any time if it chose to do so. In the meantime, however, amending Ordinance 501 would close a gap in Brisbane's Municipal Code.

Mayor Sepi Richardson and Council Member Cy Bologoff were less certain. They sought to continue the discussion at a subsequent council meeting. But Michael Barnes feared that further delay would only allow time for animal rights activists to mobilize and moved to adopt Ordinance 501 as amended. The Council vote split, and there was no fifth member to break the tie. Panza's motion to put the matter over to a subsequent meeting passed unanimously. At a September 6, 2005, meeting, Barnes gave a slide presentation outlining the differences between biotechnology, pharmaceutical, and stem-cell research and describing the differential use of animals, cell cultures, and computer simulations in these three research areas.

Two weeks later, however, there was no evidence that anyone's mind had changed. Indeed, the extra time and information seemed to further confuse the issue. Bologoff advocated limiting testing to certain non-companion species like rodents. Richardson questioned the need to change the City regulations at all since they apparently had been acceptable to the community. But the previous weeks' discussion had led to a proposed ordinance refinement that would permit animal testing under restrictive "conditional use" terms, which Barnes thought should be applied only to research using hazardous materials.

Richardson read a letter from Clara Johnson urging prohibition of animal testing—and revealing how the matter would have been settled had Johnson not resigned—as well as one from resident Rich Cutler strongly supporting biotech research. Attorney Hal Toppel



Michael Barnes served two terms on the City Council, from 2001-2009, including two terms as mayor. A scientist by profession, Barnes believed that voters should make decisions based on a rational assessment of the common good. That ideal proved difficult to attain in matters about which people held very strong and often opposed feelings, for instance, Baylands development, approval of potential biotech research facilities at Sierra Point, and restricting trucking operations in Crocker Industrial Park.

temporarily resolved the dilemma by offering to rework the amended Ordinance 501 language and bring three versions before the Council: one for conditional use only, another allowing animal research within existing regulations and guidelines, and one permitting animal research but banning the use of dogs, cats, and non-human primates.

Toppel's alternatives, presented at the October 3 meeting, did nothing to change the minds or soften the positions of either attendees or council members, who were still deadlocked despite seven months of hearings and debate. To some, discouraging development and burdening medical research with excessive regulation seemed problematic. "Companies don't want to fight the battle," said Barnes. Others were more worried about lax monitoring of laboratory conditions and inhumane treatment of animals.

The issue defied consensus or even a majority vote. When motion after motion to approve versions of the amended ordinance died for lack of a second, Lee Panza moved to table the matter until after the next month's election. That motion carried unanimously.

Condominium Proposal for Bayshore Boulevard Draws Criticism, Lawsuit

Controversy also swirled around the complicated Ng condominium project proposed for Bayshore Boulevard near the Old County Road entrance to town. The project had received initial approval from the Planning Commission in 2003, but opponents feared that construction grading would increase the chances of a landslide in the hills behind the project. The Ngs proposed restoring temporarily graded areas as native grasslands and creating half an acre of nectar plants to provide habitat for butterflies, but opponents like San Bruno Mountain Watch insisted that Brisbane should require an Environmental Impact Review (EIR). The group cautioned Brisbane not to proceed on the basis of a "mitigated negative declaration"—a judgment that the project's effects on the environment would be minimal enough to be mitigated "to a level of insignificance" by measures taken during construction.

Much of the disagreement about the project stemmed from differing judgments about the soundness or reliability of geotechnical assessments, differing views of what constituted a significant effect on the environment, and who qualified as an expert on the subject. But after considering the pros and cons, Council Members Bologoff, Richardson, Barnes, and Panza voted unanimously on August 1, 2005, to adopt the mitigated negative declaration and to approve a mitigation monitoring program. Meanwhile, geologic studies of the pertinent terrain continued. At City Manager Clay Holstine's suggestion, the Council also agreed to bring the mitigation measures and geological study results back for further public review prior to issuing any building permits to the Ngs's Best Design and Construction Company. By October, the Council had given the Ngs a "vested right" to proceed with their project—that is, the right could not be taken away by any subsequent changes in

zoning laws. In return, Brisbane would receive \$375,000 in cash, five affordable housing units, and \$800 per unit fees for maintenance of the Habitat Conservation Plan.

As always, feelings ran high on Brisbane housing proposals. Early in 2004, Planning Commissioner Brad Kerwin, an outspoken former City manager and council member, had argued that the Ng project was one of the best that the Planning Commission had ever reviewed, and that Brisbane's Habitat Conservation Plan requirements should not be used to block it. Stronger statements by Kerwin, who also was a Brisbane Chamber of Commerce member, were printed in the chamber's monthly publication, *The Luminary*. Critics charged that the chamber should not be taking political positions, and Kerwin countered that his opinions were his own and that he intended to continue to exercise his right to free speech.

On August 15, 2005, the same day that the City Council approved Ordinance 505 codifying the development agreement with the Ngs, San Bruno Mountain Watch filed a lawsuit against Brisbane and Charles and Judy Ng on the grounds that the City's adoption of a "mitigated negative declaration" understated the condo project's impact on the environment and violated the California Environmental Quality Act. The plaintiffs argued that the dangers of construction on the steep hillside merited a full Environmental



A condominium project planned on the west side of the 3700 block of Bayshore Boulevard, shown here, drew sharp criticism from environmentalists who worried about its effect on surrounding habitat, as well as from residents who were concerned about geological instability and landslides.

Impact Review. One month later, on September 14, project opponents submitted signed petitions to place the recently passed agreement with the Ngs on the ballot as a referendum measure. City officials pointed out that reversing the agreement would not necessarily stop the condo project, but it would certainly relieve the Ngs of providing cash benefits and building affordable housing units. Still, the referendum movement forged ahead, with June 6, 2006, as the date for the vote.

Brisbane Residents to Decide on Residential Housing in Guadalupe Quarry

While Brisbane debated the Ngs's project, another plan to build houses against a potentially hazardous hilly backdrop returned to the center of attention. Carved out of San Bruno Mountain more than a century ago, the 144-acre Guadalupe Quarry just west of central Brisbane, adjacent to Owl and Buckeye Canyons, had been granted operating permits perennially by San Mateo County. The fees were a source of income for the County, but the quarry had long ago ceased to mine anything and was now in the business of recycling concrete and asphalt. In 2000, SummerHill Homes proposed building the One Quarry Road Residential Project at the site.

In May 2001, Mayor Clarke Conway led the Council in passing a pioneering resolution that gave voters final decision-making authority over housing construction in the quarry. Despite the community's strong opposition to the housing proposal, proponents believed that the right design, presented as the most realistic use for the site, could win sufficient support at the polls. After all, the plan would shut down the century-old quarry, a dusty, noisy annoyance in Brisbane's backyard. Voters eventually would get an up-or-down say on the matter, but only after the proposal had worked its way through several stages.

The City's 1994 General Plan did not permit housing in the quarry. In order to undertake the construction, California Rock & Asphalt, owner of the quarry, and Western Pacific Housing, the new developer, would have to present a plan acceptable to a majority of Brisbane voters. If voters approved the housing proposal,

the Council would then go forward with an amendment to the General Plan, approval of a pre-zoning annexation (the quarry was on county, not City, property), a specific plan, a vesting tentative map, a planned development permit, and a development agreement.

Over the coming months, in several council meetings and hearings, a plan would take shape for Brisbane voters to consider. “The City Council,” explained City Attorney Hal Toppel, “processed an entire project through, including an EIR and all of the land use approvals, so people would know exactly what they were voting on.” The first stage involved the Council’s consideration of an Environmental Impact Review that Brisbane had conducted at the developer’s expense. What would be the effects on the surrounding habitat if the quarry should cease operations and the site be transformed for housing? How safe would it be for residents whose homes would be dwarfed in the shadow of multi-tiered earthen banks in varying states of solidity? What would happen in an earthquake? How would developers meet Habitat Conservation Plan requirements, manage rain runoff, prevent flooding and pooling, and mitigate or prevent rockfalls?

The consultants Brisbane had hired to conduct the EIR concluded that all the significant environmental impacts of the proposed construction could be successfully mitigated by using retaining walls, catchment basins, and other engineering measures and by employing three small water tanks instead of one large tank as a reservoir for the development. If the Council accepted the EIR, then the project applicant could proceed with the next steps in the long process of gaining a final building permit. At any stage in that process, the Council might find cause to deny the application, but opponents at a September 12, 2005, meeting sought to stop the process at the outset by persuading the Council not to certify the EIR.

To some, like Michele Salmon, the proposed development recalled Brisbane’s long struggle with the Northeast Ridge project, which they still felt had been a mistake. Salmon urged the Council not to make any similar compromise in the quarry. Others, like Jeri Sulley, along with Mountain Watch’s David Schooley and Ken McIntire, thought the quarry should be returned



Madhouse Coffee, at the top of Visitation Avenue, had a sweeping northeast view that included the old Candlestick ballpark far in the distance. Owner and real estate businessman Ron Davis matched citizens’ donations as well as donations by the Eagles Club Women’s Auxiliary for Hurricane Katrina victims in 2005

to nature and perhaps become an environmental education center. Clarke Conway joined Mary Gutenkanst in questioning whether homes in the isolated quarry location could ever form a true Brisbane neighborhood. John Burr, a childhood friend of Conway, had survived various misadventures in the quarry, whose horizontally stepped walls reached heights of 1,000 feet. He now looked back on the site as dangerous, especially for children. Lee Panza thought the site might actually prove an “attractive nuisance” for kids. Burr, now an attorney, also believed that the quarry constituted a “public nuisance,” and since the legal concept of public nuisance lay behind all environmental regulation, the City should not only block housing there but should also pursue shutting the quarry down on environmental grounds.

But council members were concerned that the quarry owners, who had at least an arguable claim to development rights on their property, should be given due process. Rejection of an EIR on grounds that would seem arbitrary or narrow could leave the City open to a lawsuit. The Council could also ask for clarification of issues raised by the EIR and defer a decision pending receipt of additional information. Late in the evening, council members accepted Mayor Sepi Richardson’s suggestion to schedule further hearings on this sensitive matter for November 14, a week after the November 8 elections.

Residents Reach Out to Hurricane Katrina Victims

As the meeting came to a close, Richardson drew attention to Brisbane citizens' efforts to aid victims of Katrina, which had crossed Florida as an 80-mile-per-hour Category 1 hurricane on August 25 and 26, 2005, then picked up speed heading northwest through the Gulf of Mexico. The huge storm peaked at 175 miles per hour, a Category 5 rating, and covered the entire Gulf as it bore down on the Louisiana–Mississippi border on Monday morning. The storm's eye passed over Biloxi and Gulfport at 155 miles per hour, devastating those cities. But it was the mass evacuation of New Orleans and the plight of the many residents who did not—or could not—evacuate that captured the nation's attention most vividly. Thousands took shelter in the Superdome from broken and overrun levees as officials at all levels of government stumbled to grasp control in what became a tragic display of unpreparedness.

The world watched, and many took action to help. In Brisbane, the Lions Club and the Women's Club sponsored concerts in the Community Park to raise relief funds for the hurricane victims. Local realtor and businessman Ron Davis, owner of Madhouse Coffee at the top of Visitacion Avenue, matched the donations. When the Eagles Club Women's Auxiliary raised

\$1,500 at a breakfast, Ron Davis matched that amount, too. Local churches also raised money, and numerous citizens called City Hall to see how they could best channel their contributions.

Despite real differences on important matters such as land use, Brisbane residents shared a common sympathy with victims of a natural disaster 2,300 miles away. If former Mayor Ray Miller had been right about the necessity in a small town for consensus decision-making, which was often slow to form on controversial topics, it seemed also true that Brisbane's small size made for efficient communications between government and citizens, unanimity of purpose, and concerted action. While Brisbane quickly organized its Katrina relief work, volunteers also spread out around the Brisbane Lagoon to collect trash—three dumpsters' worth, Cy Bologoff informed his colleagues on the Council—in the City's annual Lagoon Cleanup event in September.

Groundbreaking Celebration, Habitat for Humanity Affordable Housing

Two months later, sixteen officials donned hardhats and, with more than sixty witnesses in attendance, posed with shovels at a groundbreaking celebration for the Habitat for Humanity affordable homes to be constructed at 20 Plumas Street and at 700 San Bruno Avenue. Council member Michael Barnes, who had been



On November 8, 2005, groundbreaking took place for Habitat for Humanity affordable housing at 700 San Bruno Avenue, former site of Brisbane's firehouse, and at 20 Plumas Street, where the community garden had been located before being moved across town to San Francisco Street. On September 10, 2007, television broadcaster and weather forecaster Spencer Christian spoke at the dedication of completed housing units on San Bruno. The 20 Plumas Street housing is shown also and illustrates the fine quality of work that made project sponsors and participants so proud.



In March 2005, the City Council approved funding for the installation of solar heating panels at the community pool. The panels provided shading over a set of bleachers as well as heating for the pool and were expected to recoup their costs in energy savings in ten to twelve years.

a high school friend of the current head of Peninsula Habitat for Humanity, had been able to facilitate a meeting with Assistant to the City Manager Fred Smith to move the project along. Barnes also took the initiative to help overcome anxieties about “Section 8,” or public housing, among future neighbors of the affordable homes. After convincing longtime resident and school board member Bob Dettmer that the homes would be a positive addition to Brisbane, Barnes and Dettmer together succeeded in gathering broad support for the project.

Funded by loans from the Brisbane Redevelopment Agency’s Low and Moderate Income Housing Fund, San Mateo County, and the Federal Home Loan Bank, by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and by private donations to Habitat for Humanity, the seven homes would be constructed using “green” principles such as solar-based electricity. The previous March, the Council had authorized funding for a solar heating system at the community pool, a \$105,000 investment that was expected to pay for itself in utility savings in about ten to twelve years. Brisbane’s historic sense of environmental

stewardship was keeping pace with the latest energy-saving technologies.

Public Works Supports Energy-Saving Improvements

Some energy-saving technologies, however, were not new and reached back to earlier times and methods. The Safe Routes to Schools program, for instance, used federal grants to help communities promote pedestrian and bicycle routes for schoolchildren. Not only could such routes help reduce energy consumption, but they could also help counter a national trend of growing childhood obesity. City Engineer/Public Works Director Randy Breault became aware of the program in 2004 and, with Mayor Barnes’s encouragement, researched the program and found that local funds also were available through the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the City/County Association of Governments. In May 2005, the Council threw its support behind Breault and his staff, while then-Mayor Richardson volunteered to serve as Council liaison to Brisbane Elementary School.

“Wave a red flag in front of Randy and then get out of the way,” joked Barnes about Brisbane’s energetic Public Works director. “As soon as he got approval, he was off to the races.” Breault brought together parents and representatives from Brisbane’s Police Department and schools to explore how children got to school, and how the best routes for biking or walking could be made safe enough for parents to feel comfortable allowing their children to use them. The result was a large grant that funded improvements such as flashing speed limit signs to warn drivers when they were over the limit, as well as manually operated, in-street flashing lights with an advanced warning light to cue drivers that a pedestrian was ahead in the crosswalk.

Breault and Associate Civil Engineer Matt Lee also brought in grants to support bike lanes on the soon-to-be-constructed Tunnel Avenue Bridge replacement, which would facilitate travel between central Brisbane and Sierra Point, and for the Bayshore Corridor Bikeway Project. The latter, for which Brisbane received a \$550,000 grant in April 2007, would improve existing bikeways near the shoreline and extending to South San Francisco, and restripe the 2.5 mile stretch of Bayshore Boulevard spanning Brisbane’s northern and southern boundaries. The City added \$75,000 in funding to the bikeway project and celebrated its opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on January 10, 2009. Breault gave due credit to his staff. “We never would have been able to do that with our

funds,” he allowed, “but when you’ve got a young engineer who can do a lot of the grunt work to help put together applications, you can do it.”

The American Society of Civil Engineers reinforced Breault’s judgment in 2007 by selecting Lee from a nationwide pool of young engineers to represent its “New Face of Engineering.” Michael Barnes also had helped advance bikeway projects in Brisbane. Before his election to the City Council in late 2001, Barnes persuaded the Council to establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, an act that eventually helped Brisbane qualify for some of the grant support that Breault, Lee, and other Public Works staff succeeded in obtaining.

Daily Life in Brisbane: Police Chief Hitchcock Postpones Retirement; Native Plant Nursery Revived; Women’s Club Brings Shakespeare to Mission Blue Center

With large and controversial issues overhanging the upcoming November elections, Brisbane continued the often quiet processes of enriching daily life. Police Chief Tom Hitchcock earned wide admiration when he decided in July to postpone his retirement—which he and his wife were to have started with a six-week trip to Paris—because neighboring Millbrae’s Police Department needed a chief. Hitchcock assumed leadership of both departments until Millbrae could find a permanent chief. The decision, headlined in a local editorial as “Top cop



Bikeway on Bayshore Boulevard, under construction and completed, 2008-2009, with grant funding obtained by City Engineer Randy Breault and his staff.

shows he's a top guy," halted the impending, cost-cutting takeover of the Millbrae Police Department by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office and earned the gratitude of Millbrae's officers. "The department now has a top cop with the experience, leadership, and enthusiasm to get the job done," opined the San Mateo County Times. "And that's just what Millbrae needs." It was what Hitchcock had been giving Brisbane for eighteen years.

When a greenhouse for native plant species lost its site in South San Francisco in 2005, Doug Allshouse of Friends of San Bruno Mountain approached the Brisbane City Council for support in relocating the facility. Brisbane was responsive to the cause of restoring these plant species in both private and public settings. Michael Barnes had learned of the nursery's plight when he met Allshouse at an Earth Day event and had encouraged him to seek help from the Council. Meanwhile, Barnes approached representatives of UPC, owner of most of the Baylands property, and negotiated a site for the greenhouse just behind the Brisbane fire station on Bayshore Boulevard.

In February 2006, as contractors prepared to demolish the old greenhouses, Allshouse thanked the Council for its support on site choice and permitting issues and invited council members to a Friends of San Bruno Mountain fundraiser to be held at the Mission Blue Center the next month. On February 11, volunteers moved the plants and equipment to the new location in Brisbane, and in following months Barnes, Allshouse, Paul Bouscal of Mountain Watch, and several other volunteers pitched in to construct new greenhouses, now named Mission Blue Nursery. Over time, San Bruno Mountain Watch took over from Friends of San Bruno Mountain as steward of the nonprofit nursery and hired Joe Cannon to manage it. Under Mountain Watch's direction, the facility expanded its mission from providing native plants for contractors and for mountain restoration to include wide community involvement and education.

The Council also gave its unanimous support to the Brisbane Women's Club when the organization's president, Bonnie Bologoff, sought financial assistance for a performance of Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

at the Mission Blue Center. Council member Panza invited Ms. Bologoff to attend a Lions Club meeting the following day to enlist their aid, so that the Women's Club could fulfill its goal of offering the production at no charge to attendees. The effort capped two years of inquiry by the Women's Club into ways to bring innovative Shakespeare productions to Brisbane. The *Two Gentlemen* performance on November 20, 2005, was the first of what would become annual Shakespeare productions organized by the Women's Club. "They involve the audience," Bologoff explained. "Usually a couple of kids from the audience go up on stage, and they're part of the show. Four or five people play multiple roles." The dimensions and spontaneity of the San Francisco troupe's renditions of Shakespeare seemed to suit smaller venues like Brisbane, Bologoff thought. "That's probably why it's popular."

Complex Issues Weigh on Voters in Council Election, November 2005

But as Bonnie Bologoff and the Brisbane Women's Club looked forward to the Shakespeare production, nine candidates for Brisbane's City Council prepared for the election on November 8, 2005. Three seats were open, along with a two-year seat vacated by Clara Johnson's resignation in July. The only council member not up for re-election was Cy Bologoff. Incumbents Sepi Richardson and Michael Barnes sought another term, while Steve Waldo was running unopposed for the two-year seat. Seven other candidates included Michael Schuman, Jameel Munir, David Gangloff, Dana Dilworth, Joe Pelayo, Ron Colonna, and Clarke Conway, the only candidate with prior council experience.

The quarry housing proposal and the nature of future development on the Baylands were the two major issues in the election. Their complexity, controversy, and importance for Brisbane's future may have swayed voters toward experience as a deciding factor in the election. Richardson, who soon became the new mayor, and Barnes were returned to office along with former Council Member and Mayor Conway, who once again garnered the highest number of votes of all nine candidates, and Steve Waldo, also a council and mayoral veteran. The vote

Mothers of Brisbane

Much was said in Brisbane about small-town culture and character and the values of caring and involvement, but these abstractions took human shape in many different ways. In summer 2005, new mother Jessica Aloft appreciated the social opportunity that the Brisbane Library's Wednesday morning Storytime offered her to meet other mothers and share experiences. With a background in community organizing and advocacy work, Aloft saw potential for a larger and more beneficial meeting. In August, she, Anne Hopkins, Angel Ibarra, Daisy Sundstrom, and Christy York met at Brisbane's Madhouse Coffee to draft a plan for meetings and activities to supplement the library's Storytime event. Mothers of Brisbane, or M.O.B., was born.

Aloft had some knowledge of similar organizations in San Francisco. But in contrast to those groups, she sought to make M.O.B. an inclusive rather than an exclusive group. M.O.B., for instance, would not require members to be Brisbane residents. Motherhood had

been a bonding experience as well as a leveling one for her. "It's a greater unifying thing than geography," she said. "I just couldn't see drawing a boundary around Brisbane. If there's a first-time Mom in South San Francisco who's feeling lonely and isolated, I'd be open to having her be a part of our group. Brisbane's a very welcoming and supportive community, and not everybody has that."

M.O.B. members agreed. By 2011, more than two hundred members had signed up, about 15 percent to 20 percent of them from outside Brisbane.





Bonnie M. Bologoff exemplified Brisbane's community spirit through more than five decades of active leadership and participation. She joined the P.T.A. when she and her husband Cy and their children moved to the City in 1959. She worked on Brisbane's successful incorporation effort in 1960-1961 and, subsequently, on the City's first General Plan, as well as on the campaign to "Save San Bruno Mountain." Bologoff was active in establishing Brisbane's Senior Center and senior housing facility and has served as director of the Seniors' Club. Over the years she has also been closely involved with the Cub Scouts, the Fire and Police Wives Organization, and the Brisbane Women's Club, and has served as an inspector during every election.

As president of the Brisbane Women's Club, Bologoff led that organization's drive in 2005 to bring innovative Shakespeare productions to town at no cost to attendees. The Brisbane Lions Club and the City Council pitched in to help the Women's Club attain their goal, and on November 20 *Two Gentlemen of Verona* was performed at the Mission Blue Center.

Bologoff has served on the Parks and Recreation Commission since 2004, including two terms as commission chair (2004, 2012). Brisbane recognized her achievements in 2002 by naming her the City's Volunteer of the Year.

count was: Conway 699; Richardson 627; Barnes 529, and Waldo 879 (unopposed). Resigning Council Member Lee Panza, whose seat would be occupied by Clarke Conway on December 5, was feted at the Mission Blue Center on November 21 after serving four consecutive terms.

In January 2006, the new Council settled down to business. Council members unanimously approved a novel Adopt-a-Drain program suggested by Randy Breault. Clogged drains were a predictable problem during the area's rainy season, and Brisbane's ten-person Public Works crew was hard pressed to keep the City's five hundred grates open and operating during storms. In the new program, Brisbane purchased one hundred steel rakes at a discount from Bill Del Chiaro's Brisbane Hardware and distributed them to citizen volunteers who then used them to help keep storm drains near their homes clear of vegetation and other debris. "It's a good idea to provide tools for people to be a little more proactive," said Clarke Conway in support of the effort.

Brad Kerwin at Odds with Council; Retires

But different storms, brewing around development matters, soon strained unanimity on the Council. On returning to office, Clarke Conway had taken issue with Planning Commissioner and leading Chamber of Commerce Member Brad Kerwin's public criticisms of the Council's handling of development proposals such as the Ng condo project. Kerwin regarded fees such as those negotiated as part of the 1989 Northeast Ridge settlement, as well as those expected to result from final approval of the Ngs's condo project, as forms of "extortion" levied on builders and new residents. Conway, who had been skeptical toward the condo project, regarded Kerwin's comments as inappropriate for an official appointed by the Council.

At a February 21 meeting, council members considered Conway's recommendation that Kerwin be removed from the Planning Commission. Steve Waldo, who had originally suggested appointing Kerwin to the Planning Commission in 1996, conceded that using the word "extortion" was "unfortunate," but argued that Kerwin's many years of service to Brisbane, including four years

on the Council, a term as mayor, and several years on the Planning Commission, warranted a lighter touch than outright removal from the Commission. Moreover, said Waldo, the Council should not want to send a message to the community that discouraged people from expressing their views. Michael Barnes agreed, adding that he appreciated Kerwin's frank opinions even if he did not always agree with them. "This is not only an attempt to throttle me back," Kerwin had declared several days earlier, "but a shot across the bow of all planning commissioners, that they're supposed to be sycophants."

Council members Richardson and Bologoff admitted that they were uncomfortable with the decision they faced in considering Kerwin's removal. Richardson wished that Kerwin had simply resigned, and Bologoff also regretted that the controversial planning commissioner had not spared the Council by leaving office voluntarily. But that was not Brad Kerwin's style. He showed up at the meeting with his wife, Ingrid, recited some poetry, described his love for Brisbane and his many years of service, and expressed disappointment that all this would culminate in such a "slandorous charge" against him. Comments from citizens attending the meeting split between support and criticism of Kerwin, and when Sepi Richardson gave him the opportunity to resign before the Council voted, he declined. The Council then approved Clarke Conway's motion by a 3-2 vote, Waldo and Barnes dissenting. A ten-minute recess called by Mayor Bologoff gave all concerned a brief respite from the evening's awkwardness.

Soon afterward, Kerwin retired and moved to Florida, a decision he says he had already made going into the council meeting. Five years later he allowed he had no regrets about having expressed his opinions about the Council's policies, particularly the Habitat Conservation Plan fees of \$800 per residence levied on Northeast Ridge residents. While acknowledging that he had served at the pleasure of the Council, he still felt that the Council's behavior in publicly firing him had been "objectionable." He and Clarke Conway never spoke to each other again.

Conway, meanwhile, was deeply affected by the removal process he had set in motion. He had become physically sick the night before the

February 21 meeting and later much regretted the unpleasantness the session had caused. "It was very ugly, very ugly, because you have to do it in public and it was just not a pretty thing to do," he said. "If I had to do it over again, I would've gone back and talked to Brad first, before I talked to the Council, and told him where I stood. I've never taken the opportunity to tell Brad that."

Quarry Housing Plan Moves Forward; Citizens to Have Final Say

No doubt the quarry housing proposal and the materialization of development plans for the Baylands had increased tension between persons holding differing visions for Brisbane's future. Since 2000, the number of residential units planned for One Quarry Road had been reduced from 209 to 183, and a seasonal wetlands area at the mouth of Owl Canyon was now planned with water diverted from the project's storm drain system. But the developer's application to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for an amendment to the San Bruno Mountain's Habitat Conservation Plan to allow incidental take of endangered butterfly species reopened old wounds in the decades-long struggles between environmentalists and developers in Brisbane. Mitigation measures such as designing a seasonal



Bill Prince, shown here with Carole Nelson, succeeded her as Brisbane's Community Development director in spring 2003. Prince saw the City through the quarry housing decision and the early years of the complex Baylands development process. He was a strong advocate for planning that responded to the challenges of climate change.

wetlands and ensuring planting of native flora did not convince opponents that the project's effects on the biological environment could be reduced to the required standard of "insignificance."

Moreover, there were still questions about the geological soundness of the quarry's walls during a major earthquake. Community Development Director Bill Prince, who had inherited the quarry housing project from Carole Nelson when she retired in the spring of 2003, remembered "eight feet of files on geotechnical analysis" of the effects of a seismic event. Consulting engineers estimated that a major event would throw off boulders about five feet in diameter, "so they took a bunch of boulders that size to the top of the quarry and used a Caterpillar tractor to push them so they could study what the behavior of the rock fall would be," Prince said. Initially skeptical about housing in the quarry, he became persuaded that "it wasn't as cockamamie a scheme as you would have thought when you first looked at the idea."

But project opponents had a variety of objections that would not yield to the force of geotechnical data, however generated. Estimates that the quarry's extractable mineral resources would be used up by 2017 encouraged them simply to wait out the owners rather than use housing as a means to terminate quarry operations. The owners disputed the 2017 calculation, claiming that many more decades of Franciscan limestone remained beneath the quarry floor. And besides, they asserted, their operation could profitably grind up asphalt and concrete indefinitely.

On February 27, 2006, the Council voted 4-1 to certify the EIR on the One Quarry Road project, clearing the way for further decisions on amending the General Plan and on reviewing the specific development plan put forward by the applicant. Clarke Conway vigorously challenged the EIR on multiple grounds and cast the sole dissenting vote. Mindful of rumors that the Council was about to override the will of the people by amending the General Plan to allow housing in the quarry, attorney Hal Toppel advised the Council to remind citizens that the whole issue of development in the quarry would eventually be placed on the ballot and in their hands.



Six weeks of rain in the spring of 2006 saturated the hillsides supporting many Brisbane homes, turning earth into mud. On April 11, a mudslide on Humboldt Road carried off one unoccupied car and damaged three homes. On April 20 a crane removed the car.

Life on a Mountain: Mudslides and Mishaps

During the spring and summer, meetings and hearings continued to shape the planned development—project proponents hoped they also helped win over voters. But nature also weighed in with a reminder that Brisbane's mountain setting could make for precarious living. Late in the evening on April 11, after six weeks of nearly daily rainfall, a saturated portion of hillside on Humboldt Road, one of Brisbane's highest, gave way. More than fifty cubic yards of mud oozed downhill in a rolling, four-foot-deep wave, carrying off and overturning an unoccupied sedan and threatening to cave in the walls of one house on Humboldt and two more on Sierra Point Road. Fortunately, no one was injured and the three houses were saved. Over the next several days, contractors assisted Brisbane's Public Works crews and volunteer neighbors in clearing

the mud—about ten dump truck loads, lifting out the automobile, and placing tarps and sandbags to shore up weakened hillsides nearby. Randy Breault and his staff then set about planning the restoration of the washed-out roadway and the engineering of a large retaining wall to prevent future slides. Breault estimated the cost of the repairs to be about \$250,000.

Just two months later, human error, compounded by Brisbane's narrow streets and hillside hazards, led to another mishap when a driver making an early-morning delivery of gravel to a City water tank site on Glen Park Way lost control of the truck, which rolled downhill, through a concrete wall, and into the home of Cy and Bonnie Bologoff. The mayor and his wife were out of the house at the time, assisting with a June 6 election. As Bonnie related, "A neighbor came in and said, 'There's a truck sitting in your house.'" Cy went home to investigate and then told Bonnie, "You've got to get here. It's pretty bad." The driver was not injured, but the Bologoffs' house was destroyed. While it was being rebuilt, the couple settled in for an extended rental stay on Mendocino Street. Former Fire Chief Bologoff emphasized that this was a close call. "A block away is Brisbane Elementary School, so if our house hadn't stopped it, it would have been in the school yard, and the kids were going to school."

Bill Lawrence Remembered; Passes Away at Age Ninety-eight

Just a week later, on June 13, a quieter loss came to Brisbane when ninety-eight-year-old Bill Lawrence, Brisbane's Santa Claus for thirty years, passed away. He sat out his Santa duties the year before, uncertain about being able to hold the many children who always flocked to Brisbane's Fire Truck No. 7. "I love people and I love doing things for people," he said at the time. "You bet your life I'm going to miss it." A Brisbane resident since 1957, Lawrence had served on the City Council from 1971 to 1973 and again from 1981 through 1984. He was pro-development at a pivotal time in the early 1970s when environmentalists sought to slow Brisbane's expansion and preserve San Bruno Mountain as a park. Though he was recalled along with two other council members in September 1973,

Lawrence returned to the Council in 1981 to serve another term. He had found a happier role as Santa and as an active member of the Lions Club for nearly forty years. Even in his mid-nineties he volunteered at the Lions' Christmas tree lot. When customers asked Lawrence's friend Bob Wilson why they allowed such an elderly man to work so hard, Wilson could only reply with a laugh, "You tell him that!"

Bayshore Boulevard Condo Project Controversy Settled; Quarry Housing Rejected by Voters

During the spring and summer of 2006, the controversy over the Ng condo project planned for Bayshore Boulevard ended, though not through referendum. At a January 15 retreat, newly re-elected Council Member Clarke Conway reminded his colleagues that they could always repeal Ordinance 505, the development agreement with the Ngs, thereby removing the issue from a referendum vote scheduled for June. But on April 26, in San Mateo County Superior Court, the parties reached a settlement extending the Ngs' permits indefinitely while preserving the benefits to Brisbane under the development agreement—five affordable housing units, an \$800 per unit annual contribution to the Habitat Conservation Fund, and a \$375,000 contribution to the City.

Additionally, the settlement required the Ngs to contribute \$160,000 to Brisbane's Open Space Fund, to maintain the project's habitat restoration site for ten years after installation, and to pay Mountain Watch's \$26,650 in attorney fees. For its part, Brisbane agreed to revise the project's grading permit in order to address concerns about slope instability as well as other issues raised by Mountain Watch in reference to the City's ongoing update of its General Plan. Senior planner Tim Tune regarded the settlement as a "win" for all concerned. Soon afterward, the Council formally rescinded Ordinance 505, its terms having largely been incorporated into the court settlement with Mountain Watch and the Ngs.

By fall 2006, plans for the One Quarry Road project had been revised to reduce the number of units to 173 instead of 183, which would add about five hundred residents to



Michele Salmon (L) and Terry O'Connell co-chaired the successful Campaign against Quarry Housing in fall 2006. Brisbane voters rejected the project by more than two-to-one.

Brisbane's population, roughly a 12 percent increase. The construction on approximately 27.6 acres of the quarry floor was to employ green building practices and include energy-saving features such as solar water heating. The plan included sixteen live-work units for small businesses, thirty-two artist lofts, twenty-three carriage or "Granny" units, and twenty-eight units of affordable housing. Amenities included a community meeting building, a public park, and a soccer field. The developer agreed to contribute \$6 million for capital improvements such as a gymnasium and \$500,000 for Brisbane Elementary and Lipman Middle Schools. The proposal went on the November 6 ballot as Measure B, with a "Yes" vote signifying support for the project.

Campaigning was intense. The Campaign Against Quarry Housing, funded by about \$3,000 in contributions, went up against the pro-Measure B group with \$75,000, named the Committee to Close the Brisbane Quarry. "We'll do door-to-door until our feet bleed," vowed Michele Salmon, who co-chaired the anti-housing campaign with Terry O'Connell. Salmon remembered an especially discouraging moment when she considered how little money her group had been able to raise. Then she happened to open a fortune cookie. "It said, 'Do not be afraid of opposition,'" she recalled. "Remember, a kite rises against the wind." The message became a personal motto during the campaign, which got a lift in September when the San Mateo

County Democratic Central Committee voiced its opposition to Measure B.

But those in favor of the project could argue that the quarry was a long-standing nuisance to Brisbane; that the latest plans were better than the original proposal; that housing was the least objectionable of the options available to the quarry's owners; and that the financial benefits to the City were considerable. The argument that housing was a way to shut down the quarry, however, carried little weight with committed opponents, who believed—or perhaps wished fervently—that the quarry would be shut down or replaced by a business park. A 1991 agreement to that effect had included a limit on the total tonnage the quarry could produce, an amount that the facility was now close to reaching. But no business park had ever been built, and City Attorney Toppel and Council Member Waldo, also an attorney, regarded the long-neglected deal as irrelevant and unenforceable. "I don't believe either party has paid much attention to that agreement," said Toppel.

On October 9, in the run-up to the November 6 election, Salmon and project representative Owen Poole engaged in a public debate sponsored by the League of Women Voters. "It was really tough," Salmon recalled. "It was the first time I really had to put myself out there at that level. I remember I couldn't say my speech fast enough and I couldn't get my slides to go right." But if Salmon felt unsure about her own performance, almost everyone agreed that Poole's presentation on behalf of Western Pacific Homes had been a flop. "He talked down to the people of Brisbane," said Salmon, "and you just don't do that." Clarke Conway agreed, suggesting that Poole had unintentionally proven to be the Campaign Against Quarry Housing's best advocate. Steve Waldo, the only council member in favor of the housing, also believed that the debate had been a setback for project advocates. "It was embarrassing; that's how bad it was," he observed.

The Campaign Against Quarry Housing, on the other hand, struck the right note. On Halloween, three weeks after her debate with Owen Poole, Michele Salmon dressed up as a blue butterfly and handed out candy to her neighbors. Grown-ups got a small poster proclaiming "No Quarry

Housing.” Campaign workers handed out buttons picturing a house at the bottom of a cliff with rocks rolling toward it and also circulated posters featuring a house tottering on a cliff side with rocks tumbling down on houses below. Though it did not accurately reflect the conclusions of the geotechnical experts who had reviewed the plans, “You could not have put together a better poster,” observed City Manager Clay Holstine. Salmon’s kite had indeed risen against the wind. The following week, voters rejected the One Quarry Road project 1,095 to 400.

Brisbane citizens had achieved a milestone—and perhaps set a precedent—in settling a major land use issue at the polls. It would be hard to deny them the same say in future development matters. Though he ended up on the losing side of the quarry housing vote, Steve Waldo noted its historic roots in the 1989 recall controversy and underscored the recent vote’s importance. “The Council can’t spend all its time getting off the hook because it’s elected to be on the hook,” he explained. “But where you’re facing things that produce, or will produce, a fundamental change, then in this little town that’s something you let people vote on.” There would be no housing, but neither would the quarry shut down, and Brisbane residents soon resumed their age-old irritation at the site just across the City line and frustratingly beyond their control.

Baylands Development Plans Move Through Early Stages: Draft Environmental Impact Review Under Way

While citizens considered the prospect of housing in the quarry, they also prepared for a lengthy Environmental Impact Review process on Universal Paragon Corporation’s (UPC) Specific Plan for the Baylands. The company had submitted the plan in November 2004, and Brisbane staff had pronounced it “complete” in February 2006, though it was still far from final. The EIR involved several stages, starting with “scoping,” or making sure that all relevant environmental impacts would be reviewed, defining the City’s objectives for remediating the Baylands’ toxic wastes, and formulating a community-proposed alternative to UPC’s plan. The Community Alternative was

a legal requirement of the EIR process that was intended to help identify possible ways to reduce a project’s environmental impacts. It was also important simply as ongoing dialogue between UPC and Brisbane about the nature of any development that would take place. To further that dialogue, Brisbane scheduled more than thirty workshops, meetings, and hearings on the Baylands in 2006-2007.

Lipman Middle School teacher Stephanie Musso also scheduled some Baylands sessions for her seventh-grade students, who took field trips, made maps, and produced their own visions for future development on the site. The students presented their plans to the City Council and to visiting State Senator Leland Yee on May 21, 2007. The plans incorporated much that was already under discussion—mixed commercial and light industrial uses, an entertainment complex, lots of public parks and open space, a golf course, and an arts center. Additional recommendations for go-carts, paddleboats, and paintball and laser tag facilities were less likely to make it into any final plan, but the students clearly understood the complex environmental, transportation, energy, and lifestyle matters that Baylands development entailed, and they were applauded by Senator Lee and the Council.

Considering that the Baylands constituted about a quarter of Brisbane’s total acreage, it weighed heavily in thinking about the site’s future. But Planning Commissioner George Hawawini sounded a cautionary note at a joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting on April 27, 2006: in a project of such magnitude, if market conditions changed, so could the prospects for development. Brisbane Finance Director Stuart Schillinger also cautioned the Council. In a mid-year review of the City’s budget, he advised that while Brisbane’s budget was likely to remain balanced in the short term, and while anticipated development at Sierra Point, the Northeast Ridge, and the Baylands would add to revenues, in the long run another recession would surely come. In the meantime, Schillinger recommended, and the Council agreed, that the City’s budgeting process should anticipate downswings in the historically cyclical economy.

Brisbane Opens Basketball Court, 2.5-Mile Rails-to-Trails Loop

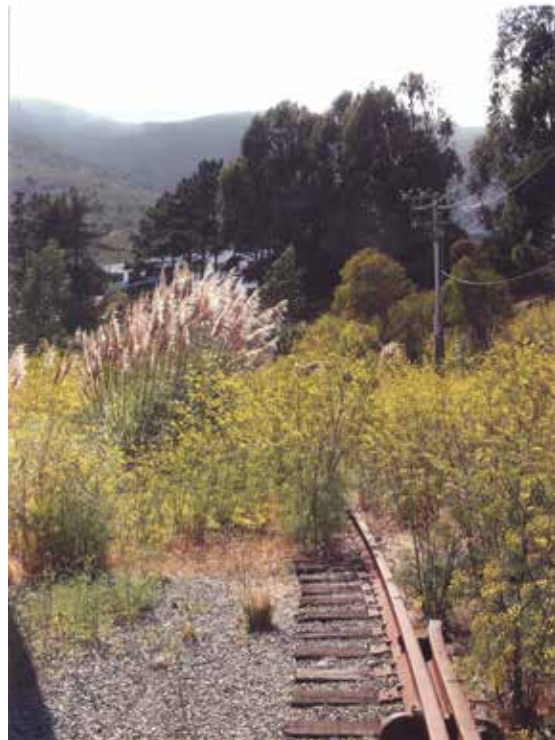
In comparison to the Baylands and its large uncertainties, some projects seemed satisfyingly manageable. In spring 2006 the City opened a new basketball court on Park Lane near City Hall. Parks and Recreation Director Jim Skeels introduced Daniel Evans Cunningham, one of the court's young users, to the Council on June 5. Cunningham gave council members a "thank you" banner signed by himself and many of his friends, and acknowledged Randy Romriell, Dale Conway, Tim Garcia, and the firms R & R Drywall, Fence Pro, Bode Concrete, and Dale Conway and Son's Construction for their contributions to the court. During the meeting, Mayor Bologoff proclaimed July 2006 as Parks and Recreation Month in Brisbane.

The mayor's proclamation was timely, for work was then under way on a project that had been shelved as too costly not long ago. The City had planned a rails-to-trails renovation of the long-abandoned, 2.5-mile railway loop that once had served Crocker Industrial Park, but progress had stalled on the anticipated cost of more than \$2 million. "The price tag was staggering," recalled Skeels, "and we really couldn't afford it." Then, in spring 2006, Jim and Joe Hattrup of the Iron Horse Preservation Society approached Skeels about a deal. In exchange for the old rails, which they would use in Nevada to help restore a 20-mile line between Carson City and Virginia City, the Hattrups would help Brisbane turn the former Crocker rail line into a biking and hiking trail. After City Attorney Hal Toppel determined that Brisbane actually owned the land—the City had acquired it from McKesson Corporation on September 18, 1996—the Council approved the exchange in May. On Saturday, December 9, 2006, Brisbane formally dedicated the new trail, whose total cost to Brisbane had amounted to less than \$2,000, thanks to Iron Horse.

Such changes in Brisbane were widely welcomed, and at a council meeting on May 14, 2007, to review land use issues for the General Plan update, Planning Commissioner Cliff Lentz reminded those in attendance that they should not be afraid of change. Since coming to Brisbane eighteen years earlier, Lentz explained, he had witnessed the coming of the

Community Park, the swimming pool, the Teen Center, and a new City Hall. None of these had harmed Brisbane's small-town atmosphere. Now he hoped that Brisbane would continue making positive additions such as a new library and a high school.

Brisbane once had planned a high school on the site where the Mission Blue Center now stood, but that had been back in the 1960s when the City's General Plan anticipated an expansion to 26,000 residents. Brisbane's history had forever been changed by residents' subsequent determination to halt that expansion, and the City's small number of students had never justified building a high school. Now, Lentz and others formed a group, Citizens for a Brisbane High School, to argue that times had kept changing and now warranted the establishment of a small, charter school option for the City's teens. The Council offered its support to the



Brisbane was able to convert a two-and-a-half-mile railway loop in Crocker Industrial Park into a hiking and biking trail when a railroad preservation group, the Iron Horse Preservation Society, offered to help develop the trail in exchange for the old rails on it. The new trail was dedicated on December 9, 2006.

grassroots organization, but the task was daunting and the goal elusive. A few years later, Lentz acknowledged that the drive had lost steam, but he remained hopeful; by the end of 2011, interest was picking up once again.

Council Passes Moratorium on “Formula” Retail Stores; Moves Forward with City Hall Renovations

The changes in Brisbane that Lentz had described had indeed been welcomed and long sought after, but one prospective change that most residents opposed was the introduction of “formula” retail stores. These were broadly defined as national chain operations whose products were uniform and whose store designs and interiors tended to look the same. Some objected on aesthetic grounds to the homogeneity of the stores, while others feared the stores’ power to undercut local retail establishments. In May 2007, after a national coffee shop chain showed interest in a downtown Brisbane location, the Council passed an Interim Urgency Ordinance imposing a moratorium on “formula” retail stores. The next month the Council extended the moratorium, effectively preventing the coffee giant from stepping into Brisbane.

The Council’s decision on upgrading City Hall had been far more ambivalent and had been drawn out for more than a decade since staff had moved into the former Johnson Controls Building in the fall of 1995. At that time, basic renovations had been completed, but much important work had been postponed on cost-saving grounds. The Bay Area’s booming real estate and construction markets had made council members—wary of public reaction—cautious about spending money on City Hall improvements. Clay Holstine summarized the skepticism with which the public often greeted such expenditures. “People are always wondering, ‘Are you building yourself some sort of golden dome, or is this really what the community needs?’”

Cost estimates had increased from \$3.5 million in 2003 to \$4.2 million in 2004, and then soared to \$6.1 million by mid-2007. Additionally, the demise of an architectural firm the City had originally engaged for the project derailed progress for nearly two years, with all the attendant inflationary costs, while new plans were reviewed and approved. At last, in July 2007 the Council voted to put the project out for bids. Svala Construction came

in with a winning bid of \$5.81 million, but the bid award was delayed when local trade unions representing plumbers and electricians objected to Svala Construction’s choice of subcontractors. The unions charged that some of the subcontractors had histories of violating wage and hour laws and of neglecting requirements to carry workers’ compensation insurance.

Though the City could find no hard evidence to substantiate the accusations, and attorney Hal Toppel clarified that the contractor, not Brisbane, was responsible for the practices of chosen subcontractors, the flap caused City staff to review contracting procedures and promise to minimize the possibility of any such objections in the future. The council hearings and their attendant publicity also helped assure that all companies working on the City Hall upgrades would operate in compliance with relevant laws. On September 17 the Council voted 3-2 to award the contract to Svala Construction, with Cy Bologoff and Sepi Richardson still harboring doubts.

After some debate about whether City staff could continue working at 50 Park Place while contractors renovated around them, the Council decided it would be quicker, and therefore ultimately less expensive, to relocate the City’s operations and allow the construction to proceed unencumbered. The City leased space at 140 Valley Drive, across the street from City Hall, to house staff during the extensive renovations, and on Friday morning, September 21, 2007, the moving company arrived. On Monday morning, staff resumed the City’s business at the new location, just where it had left off before the weekend.

In the City Council elections held six weeks later on November 6, Cy Bologoff (460 votes) and Steve Waldo (368 votes) were returned to office handily against a youthful challenger, twenty-four-year-old Roberto Martinez (192 votes), who had served in the Iraq war and was currently a student at San Francisco City College. With few apparent differences between the candidates—Martinez emphasized a new high school—experience once again proved a compelling credential among Brisbane voters.

New Tunnel Avenue Bridge Dedicated

Just three days before the election, Brisbane’s Engine No. 7 led a parade of antique and vintage



New Tunnel Avenue Bridge under construction, 2007.

vehicles eastward across the new Tunnel Avenue Bridge and back again in a ceremonial opening of the new structure. Mayor Steve Waldo, a passenger in No. 7 for the journey, expressed the Council's and the City's thanks to its staff, especially Public Works Director Randy Breault, Senior Civil Engineer and Project Manager Karen Kinser, and contractor RGW Construction for their work on the complex construction.

The old, narrow bridge, seismically insecure and dangerous for bicycles and pedestrians, had remained in operation while the new one was built just to the north. Height clearances that would accommodate future electrification of trains on the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board/Caltrain railway (formerly Southern Pacific's) required lengthening the bridge as well. But the new structure could not cross the railroad tracks at a right angle, as the increased height would make the approaches too steep, so the bridge and its approaches had to be lengthened well beyond the dimensions of the older structure. Its northern end

reached landfill near the Brisbane Lagoon, while its southern end terminated in a westward turn onto Bayshore Boulevard at Old County Road.

The length of the new bridge allowed for a gentler and safer curve descending toward Bayshore, but it also created several engineering challenges. Wicks were sunk in the mud to draw out water, compact the clay, and reduce settlement in the bridge embankments. On the western side of the bridge, where the close proximity of Bayshore Boulevard necessitated steeper embankments, engineers layered wire mesh into the dirt before applying concrete to the embankment walls, a technique known as MSE, or mechanically stabilized earth.

At other locations, the problem was not mud but boulders so massive that special equipment had to be brought in to drive piles through them. "They expected some rock," explained Karen Kinser, "and they have pretty big rigs to drive through that, but they found boulders that were just gargantuan and their equipment couldn't handle it. They brought in an oscillating driver with teeth bigger than the

size of the pile, and they just drove that through the rock.” Kinser surmised that the Southern Pacific Railroad had once brought the boulders in as fill and support when it originally constructed the rail bed and laid track.

The new bridge, with its bike and pedestrian lanes, represented not only an impressive civil engineering achievement but a striking new connection between central Brisbane and its lands near the Bay. It remained to be seen what other links the City would establish across Bayshore Boulevard and the railroad tracks in coming years.

In the meantime, Brisbane residents continued to strengthen the links, both new and old, established with each other over the years. In February 2007 they gathered at the Mission Blue Center to enjoy their fifth Annual Arts Evening of Sharing, and toward the close of that year they marked the twentieth annual Festival of Lights celebration with several performances from members of the Brisbane Dance Workshop, an appearance by Santa, and the lighting of the Festival Tree by Ken Walker, Brisbane’s Volunteer of the Year in 2007.



Fred Smith retired in September 2010 after thirty-five years of public service to Brisbane. Smith served three terms on the City Council (1978-1989) and three years as mayor (1981, 1986, and 1989). He added a degree in planning from the University of California, Berkeley, to his experience in elective office and then returned to Brisbane in 1996 to manage a variety of special projects, including affordable housing, the open space plan, and the acquisition of critical habitat in the Brisbane Acres.



Senior Civil Engineer and Project Director Karen Kinser oversaw the complex, new Tunnel Avenue Bridge construction for Brisbane.

Festival of Lights

The Festival of Lights has become one of Brisbane's beloved traditions, but its origins lay in a casual comment that Jeri Sulley's mother-in-law made back in December 1986 when the two drove past the barren acreage where the Cozy Cove Motel had just been demolished. "Well," said the elder Mrs. Sulley, "now that they've gotten rid of that old motel and trailer park, the least they could do is put up a town Christmas tree."

It was just the spark that Jeri, a lover of operatic pageantry, needed. She wrote to City Manager Robin Leiter and outlined her idea for people walking and caroling along San Bruno and Visitation Avenues and gathering around a tree for a lighting ceremony and refreshments. With Leiter's support, the festival rapidly took shape as the Lions Club, Eagles Club, Brisbane Women's Club, City Council, and numerous Brisbane merchants all pitched in. "We didn't really know how many people would come," Sulley reminisced, "but everyone was involved."

About five hundred people watched as students from the Brisbane Dance Workshop performed Camille Olivier Salmon's original scripting of Pachelbel's Canon in D. With Santa rounding the corner on a fire truck, Brisbane displayed the initiative and community spirit that helped it overcome rifts soon to develop over a Civic Center planned for the former motel site.

Fifteen years later, those conflicts had long receded. Sulley, who was named Brisbane Volunteer of the Year in 2001, enjoyed the honor of a ride with Santa on Engine No.7 during the Festival of Lights that year. Like the lighted stars on Brisbane's homes, the festival had started as a solitary inspiration, then spread and endured as an expression of the City's community spirit.



Santa arrives on Engine No. 7.



Jeri Sulley



❖ CHAPTER SEVEN ❖

Trying Times

2008-2011

“Brisbane has gone a long way from being a little hillside village,” observed Jess Salmon in October 2011. The sole surviving member of the “Founding Fathers” on Brisbane’s first City Council, Salmon looked over the town from the picture window of a house he had built mostly with his own hands and exuded the tough-minded optimism embedded in Brisbane’s foundations and civic character. “We’ve still got a good future,” the eighty-six-year-old former mayor insisted. When asked what he saw in that future, Salmon replied, “Industry. A little more on the

hillsides, and industry out on the old garbage dump that is not fit to put homes on,” referring to the Baylands and Sierra Point. “That’s my opinion,” he concluded, “and it won’t change.”

Salmon’s pronouncement epitomized what was generally considered the typical Brisbane spirit of “toughness,” “fight,” or even “fire.” In November 2007, however, the City Council and staff undertook a more detailed examination of the core values and the complex web of interdependencies and obligations that characterized Brisbane and informed the City’s



Former Mayor, Council Member, and one of Brisbane’s five original “Founding Fathers” in 1961, Jess Salmon taught high school and community college for many years in the Bay Area. He is an active member of the Brisbane Lions Club and poses here with the club’s lion, an emblem frequently seen at community events.

relations with its neighbors. The Council adopted six descriptors or values it believed important to keep in mind as it anticipated reduced spending measures in the coming months: Involved, Caring, Environmentally Progressive, Safe, Informed, and Interconnected.

National Recession Likely to Affect Brisbane: Council and Staff Study Budget

When the massed weight of flawed mortgage securities collapsed the national economy in late 2007, Brisbane felt the vertigo and some of the pain. The City was better prepared than most. In preparing forecasts and budget projections, Finance Director Stuart Schillinger anticipated cyclical downturns as inevitable rather than exceptional. But Brisbane still found itself facing stringencies not experienced in many decades.

At a council retreat and workshop in January 2008, council members, City staff, and residents considered a variety of cuts to services and staff and identified some potential revenue sources such as the \$5 million in sales taxes that was generated by Brisbane-based medical supply company Van Waters & Rogers (VW&R) and had been misdirected by the State Board of Equalization to another jurisdiction. City Manager Clay Holstine estimated that Brisbane could reduce its workforce by fifteen to twenty positions in the next three to five years, mostly through retirements. There were some dark clouds gathering on Brisbane's fiscal horizon, but as of yet, the City seemed to have time to deliberate and debate its options.

Listing of Callippe Silverspot Butterfly as Endangered Complicates Final Stage of Northeast Ridge Housing Construction

Meanwhile, Brisbane once again took up development questions as Brookfield Homes Inc. prepared to build seventy-one houses in the final portion of the Northeast Ridge residential project. In 1980, developer Visitacion Associates had faced a hurdle with the discovery that the endangered Mission Blue butterfly inhabited San Bruno Mountain. The landmark 1982 Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) allowed limited



Sacramento Fish & Wildlife Office and US Fish and Wildlife Service

In 1997, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's listing of the Callippe Silverspot butterfly as an endangered species necessitated amending the existing Habitat Conservation Plan before the final stage of Northeast Ridge housing construction could proceed.

development, with an expected "incidental taking" of a certain number of Mission Blue, while requiring the developer to mitigate the impact on the butterflies by restoring and conserving Mission Blue habitat elsewhere on the mountain. These activities would be funded in perpetuity by assessments on the homes and commercial properties within the development. A second butterfly species, the Callippe Silverspot, was considered for listing as endangered, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) took no action at the time.

By 1997, however, increased poaching of the Callippe prompted the USFWS to declare that species endangered too. Now authorities would have an enforcement tool against poachers, but the original HCP would need to be amended to accommodate the new listing. That would require the USFWS to complete a new Environmental Assessment (EA) and set the conditions for a permit allowing the "taking" of the Callippe. It would be up to Brisbane to approve conditions related to the housing development itself and to the development's compliance with USFWS requirements.

Since 1982, between four hundred and five hundred HCPs had been established across the country, covering millions of acres. As the practice spread, questions continued about the HCPs' costs and effectiveness. The amendment process for the Callippe Silverspot reopened



The Mission Blue butterfly's listing as endangered in June 8, 1976, profoundly affected the course of development on San Bruno Mountain and led to the nation's first Habitat Conservation Plan in 1982.

controversies raised by the Council's original 1989 compromise agreement with Southwest Diversified, the developer at the time. San Bruno Mountain Watch and other environmental advocates hoped that nearly twenty years of field experience with the HCP demonstrated that it had been ineffective—not that it should be amended—thus blocking the final portion of housing construction on the Ridge. They also rejected an addendum to the 1987 Environmental Impact Review and argued that the project required an entirely new review. For their part, supporters of the HCP defended the concept while conceding that the initial plan had been badly underfunded. Experience had shown how difficult it was to eradicate invasive plant species like gorse, for instance: about \$500,000 annually was required—considerably more than the \$145,000 currently generated.

An even thornier problem was defining just what species, especially flora, were “native” to an area subject to human influences for two centuries. Extensive cattle grazing had once turned the hillsides into grasslands, but now that the cattle were gone, non-grasslands species were taking root and transforming the terrain into chaparral. “We’re losing habitat at the rate of five to ten acres a year,” said Fred Smith, who added, “That was never anticipated in the HCP.” Notwithstanding such quandaries, Brisbane resident volunteers had taken to the hillsides

annually since 2004 for Habitat Restoration Day, a joint project of the Open Space and Ecology Committee and the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission. Though the County of San Mateo, with funding assistance from the HCP, bore the lion's share of habitat conservation work, the commitment to preserve rare and endangered species had become woven into Brisbane's community life, an expression of residents' love for the mountain and their appreciation of its special beauty.

After a two-month-long public debate, the Council approved a plan on March 10, 2008, that included several new limitations on development as well as increased funding for the HCP. Brookfield Homes removed 108 townhouses from its plans and replaced them with twenty-eight single-family homes, and agreed to locate them on a lower, less ecologically sensitive site. A public road connecting the Northeast Ridge to Guadalupe Canyon Parkway would be eliminated; grading would be minimized during construction to reduce the need for imported soil; and the amount of habitat slated to be temporarily disturbed during the project, then restored to native habitat, was reduced from fourteen to less than three acres. The amount of habitat to be left undisturbed was increased by twenty acres, further reducing the amount of grading that would occur. To pay for it all, annual HCP fees would be raised from \$40 to \$800 per residence, and Brookfield agreed to contribute \$45,000 per new home into a Habitat Endowment Fund.

These provisions, subject to approval by the USFWS, were expected to provide \$415,000 annually for conserving the habitat on San Bruno Mountain. Robin Leiter, acting as special counsel to the City on development matters, and City Attorney Hal Toppel advised citizens that the 1989 agreement on Northeast Ridge housing was still legally binding on the City. Council member Cy Bologoff added a reminder that it was past contributions from developers that gave Brisbane the Mission Blue Center, the community swimming pool, and partial funding for its City Hall remodeling project.

Opponents of further development on the Ridge continued to criticize the San Bruno Mountain HCP, but on February 16, 2010, after the USFWS had accepted the amended HCP,

and almost two years after the Council's initial approval, the Council voted unanimously to grant final approval of plans allowing Brookfield Homes to begin construction. Among those expressing their disappointment was Dolores Gomez, who remarked that gaining developer funds was not as important as preserving the City's integrity and pride. By then, however, the local real estate market had hit its lowest point since before World War II. Brookfield temporarily sidelined this last phase of the Northeast Ridge project.

Council Passes Green Building Ordinance; Rejects Crocker Park Freight Forwarding Application; Establishes Crocker Park Sustainability Subcommittee

It was in this slumping market that the City Council unanimously passed a Green Building Ordinance, the first of its kind in San Mateo County. The ordinance stressed the use of renewable energy and material resources as well as non-toxic paints and glue. Construction would also aim for the equivalent of a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental

Design) Silver rating, an internationally recognized standard developed by the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council.

Despite the climate of caution, there were signs of new business activity in Brisbane. South San Francisco's ongoing effort to shift some of its freight forwarding businesses out of town had prompted a few of them to look to Brisbane's Crocker Industrial Park for a new base of operations. In 1998 Brisbane had responded to residents' concerns about diesel fumes and noise by imposing an urgency moratorium on night operations in Crocker Park; then, on January 25, 1999, the Council had passed Ordinance 434 capping the percentage of freight forwarders at no more than 20 percent of all Crocker Park businesses and setting new requirements for night operations.

In 2007, International Airport Centers (IAC), a freight forwarder, approached Brisbane with a plan to demolish a warehouse in Crocker Park and replace it with a smaller building with loading docks at the rear. The City received the application before the Council passed the Green Building Ordinance, so compliance was



New homes can be seen across the hillside on San Bruno Mountain's Northeast Ridge, past the purple lupines that comprise a crucial part of the Mission Blue butterfly's habitat.

voluntary, but IAC promised its new building would conform to standards laid out in the City's new ordinance.

As the Council began reviewing the proposal in the summer of 2008, three concerns were paramount: traffic, air quality, and noise. Consultants hired by IAC anticipated nearly seven hundred vehicle trips per day, about three hundred of which would be by truck. The consultants also estimated that vehicle emissions would fall below levels determined by the California Environmental Quality Act to pose cancer-related health risks, and that noise levels would not exceed the City's standards. Finally, IAC fell within the 20 percent cap set by Ordinance 434. Of the eight citizens who offered comment at the June 16 council meeting, all opposed IAC's application. They expressed doubts about the consultants' estimates, voiced concerns about air pollution generally near the San Bruno Mountain habitat, and raised questions about the health effects of diesel exhaust on children at Lipman Middle School a quarter of a mile uphill to the south.

The discussion continued at a July 28, 2008, council meeting, where opponents reiterated concerns about diesel emissions. Council member Steve Waldo noted that IAC represented a \$9 million capital contribution to Brisbane's tax base, and that its operation complied with existing City regulations as well as air quality-related health matters already regulated by state and federal agencies. Finally, noted Waldo, Ordinance 434 subjected freight forwarding businesses to a more restrictive permitting standard than the City applied to other businesses in Crocker Park using trucks; therefore, if diesel emissions were the problem, it would be more logical to ban trucks from the City entirely than to deny the IAC application.

But more compelling to opponents was IAC's offer of \$30,000 to install better air filters at Lipman School, which unintentionally reinforced fears that diesel emissions might indeed be dangerous to students there. Faced with stiff opposition from residents and harboring their own concerns about truck exhausts, Mayor Barnes and Council Members Sepi Richardson, Clarke Conway, and Cy Bologoff voted to override an appeal of the Planning Commission's initial approval of the project and deny IAC's application. Their decision was summarized in an October 6 resolution affirming

the denial of the application, but adding that it was "without prejudice," meaning that IAC could reapply—presumably with a different response to the concerns about exhaust—without waiting the usual minimum period of one year. Bologoff and Barnes backed Waldo in adding the "without prejudice" qualifier, while Conway and Richardson dissented, believing that a "with prejudice" denial better reflected the strength of citizen opposition to freight forwarding in Crocker Industrial Park.

The IAC application raised a larger issue in Brisbane about what kinds of businesses the City wanted in Crocker Park. Most IAC opponents raised environmental health issues. Neither green building methods, promises to refrain from night operations, nor installation of new air filtering technology at Lipman Middle School had sufficed to help the application surmount Brisbane's rising bar for environmental acceptability. At a December 15 council meeting, Stuart Schillinger suggested that the Council establish a Crocker Park Sustainability Subcommittee to clarify the City's changing standards for businesses there. Council members embraced the idea unanimously and named Barnes and Conway to the new subcommittee.

Residents also weighed in at the December meeting with continued concern about truck traffic in the City. Ray Miller, a member of the Open Space and Ecology Committee, sought to enlarge the focus of the sustainability review to encompass using renewable water and energy resources rather than simply addressing tradeoffs between economic and environmental goals. Terry O'Connell told of refrigerator trucks that could not turn off their engines idling in Crocker Park, leaving Brisbane police seemingly unable to enforce the City's no-idling law. O'Connell urged the Council to lower the cap on freight forwarding businesses from 20 percent to 10 percent and to enact an urgency moratorium on further such operations. Artist Beth Grossman related her experience of having to leave her studio building on Valley Drive when its ventilation system picked up diesel fumes from the parking lot. Dr. Raymond Liu of Brisbane, an oncologist, added his views on the connection between diesel exhaust and cancer.

IAC changed its mind about building in Brisbane, but the company still owned the property and the warehouse it had sought to convert. Soon another

freight forwarder, FedEx, submitted an application to build a new structure on the IAC-owned site and start operations. The Planning Commission gave conditional approval to FedEx's application early in 2009, but Council Members Richardson and Conway appealed the approval so that the Council could consider residents' concerns. The concerns had not changed, and FedEx apparently expected little else to change either. On May 22, 2009, before the Council had even heard the appeal, FedEx withdrew its application, deciding to stay in South San Francisco. On July 20 the Council voted against a moratorium on freight forwarding in Crocker Park, with Conway and Richardson dissenting from the majority of Barnes, Waldo, and Bologoff. But two and a half years later, the warehouse at 325 Valley Drive was still vacant and up for sale.

Recession Stalls Plans for Biotech Campus on Sierra Point

Community opposition, rather than the recession, sidelined the proposed ventures for Crocker Park. The recession had more to do with interrupting plans for a biotechnology campus at Sierra Point; a proposal by Slough Estates USA for a twenty-three-acre campus had derailed in 2005 over controversy about animal research. Early in 2008, the Council reconsidered the proposal, now made by Health Care Property Investors, LLC, which had purchased Slough Estates in 2007. The company envisioned five mid-rise buildings on a landscaped campus with some ground-floor retail businesses and an extension of the Bay Trail along the southern edge of the site. All buildings were to conform to Brisbane's new green building standards and achieve the equivalent of a LEED Silver rating.

Community Development Director John Swiecki, who had succeeded Bill Prince in 2010, estimated that the campus would likely generate 1,800 jobs. Administrative Services Director Stuart Schillinger also noted that one-time, 1 percent taxes levied on expensive laboratory equipment could generate "significant tax revenues" for Brisbane. The Council now needed to certify the final EIR, approve General Plan and zoning amendments, issue a design permit, and promulgate a development agreement with Health Care Property Investors. At Ray Miller's

request, the Council delayed action on the matter until Council Member Clarke Conway, who was absent from the March 17 hearing to care for his ailing father, could be present.

Council members also wanted to hear from the public, although this time around citizens seemed less concerned about animal research than they were about renewable energy. Cy Bologoff confirmed that dogs, cats, and other companion animals would not be subject to animal testing in the facilities, while attorney Hal Toppel emphasized that Brisbane's proposed ordinance governing biotechnology research was stricter than that of San Francisco and South San Francisco. After strident public and council comment, especially from Conway, on the lack of attention to renewable energy in the proposal, Health Care Property Investors agreed to spend \$1.5 million for on-site renewable energy and to make a \$300,000 contribution toward installing the solar energy system planned for Brisbane's City Hall. After that improvement, the Council gave unanimous approval to the Sierra Point biotech campus project on June 16, 2008.

But construction quickly stalled. By 2011, what some were now calling the Great Recession had slowed even formerly promising biotech development—including in the Bay Area, one of the nation's most affluent and innovative regions. Six-foot-high stacks of steel I beams lay behind green-netted fencing, next to the planned Bay Trail extension on Sierra Point's southern edge. Just several hundred yards away, across the water, stood South San Francisco's already developed biotech campus on Oyster Point. A pole anchored by guy-wires and topped with wind monitoring instruments rose from the middle of the field, gathering data for wind-energy generation if and when construction resumed.

Wind Energy Tests Conducted at Baylands

The pole had a counterpart just to the north in the Baylands where, in April 2008, Universal Paragon Corporation (UPC) at the request of Citizens for Responsible Energy on the Baylands (CREBL) had installed a 197-foot wind tower—just below the 200-foot limit set by the Federal Aviation Administration—in response to Brisbane's interest in using wind-generated power

in any development that UPC would construct on the 660-acre property. “Ever since the original scoping,” said John Swiecki, “there has been a desire expressed by citizens that this project should be energy-neutral or better, and wind and solar energies are the ways of achieving that.” After a year’s data had been gathered, Brisbane would have a better idea of how to implement its renewable energy goals on the Baylands.

Founding Father Ernest Conway Passes Away, Remembered by Son Clarke as “King of Sustainability”

On June 3, 2008, Ernest Conway passed away at age eighty-three. A Brisbane resident from 1946 to 1978 and one of the five Founding Fathers, Conway left a lasting legacy in Brisbane, not only through his five children, twenty grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren, but also in the many homes and apartment buildings he had constructed in the City. But in his son Clarke’s view, Ernest’s legacy had more contemporary implications. “I called him the King of Sustainability,” Clarke laughed. “He would re-use everything.”

Ernest had been an advocate of recycling and sustainability long before these practices were absorbed into the modern environmental movement in the 1970s. Having lost cash assets in Oklahoma during the bank failures of the Great Depression, Ernest’s family had nothing left but property, with no market for it. Ernest, his brothers, and their parents dismantled several homes, board by board and nail by nail—saving and straightening every one—and trucked it all to Missouri where they built a house and barn and lived off the land for the duration of the Depression.

Later, after naval service in World War II, Ernest Conway moved to California where he maintained his habits of conservation and thrift learned so well in the Midwest. He carried a large magnet on a string to construction sites, and when Clarke and his brothers Dale and Craig helped out, he would hand them the magnet at the end of the day and instruct them to pick up all the loose nails and return them to their proper box. Clarke’s mother, Lucy J. Conway, shared what Clarke called his father’s “Depression-era mentality,” though she added a

deep appreciation of nature and was involved in the early years of the Save the Bay movement in San Francisco.

The Conway family represented a sometimes overlooked but very deep, multi-generational taproot for Brisbane’s environmental consciousness, beginning in the 1930s as habits of thrift and, as Brisbane’s mid-century residents raised their families, evolving into a new era as sustainable practices. In both manifestations, survival seemed to hang in the balance—of individuals and families on the one hand, and of community and even the earth on the other. Long-term Brisbane residents often experienced environmentalism not only as a commendable cause but also as a compelling dynamic in their own lives and histories.

San Bruno Mountain’s vulnerability to fires only heightened residents’ consciousness of the precarious balance in their natural surroundings. Shared dangers endeared them to symbols of civic unity such as Engine No. 7 and the old volunteer fire department. In May 2008 Brisbane firefighters responded as part of a twelve-company team to an apartment fire on Joy Avenue above Bayshore Boulevard. The fire was contained within a garage of the two-story structure, and no one was injured. Two more small fires of unknown cause over the next two days, during strong winds and dry conditions, also were contained by more than sixty firefighters assisted by two airplanes dropping fire retardant.

Fire in Owl and Buckeye Canyons Threatens Brisbane

Just one month later, on Sunday evening, June 22, just six days before Brisbane conducted its second annual fire evacuation drill, another fire of unknown origin ignited deep in Owl Canyon, just east of the quarry and only half a mile from houses high on the eastern side of the hills. The fire spread quickly to nearby Buckeye Canyon, which lay between Owl Canyon and the City, and grew to a five-alarm menace requiring the evacuation of 102 Brisbane residences. Some two hundred evacuees temporarily relocated to the Mission Blue Center and the Community Park. More than thirty fire companies and two hundred firefighters responded, including a special CAL FIRE crew dispatched from the state’s

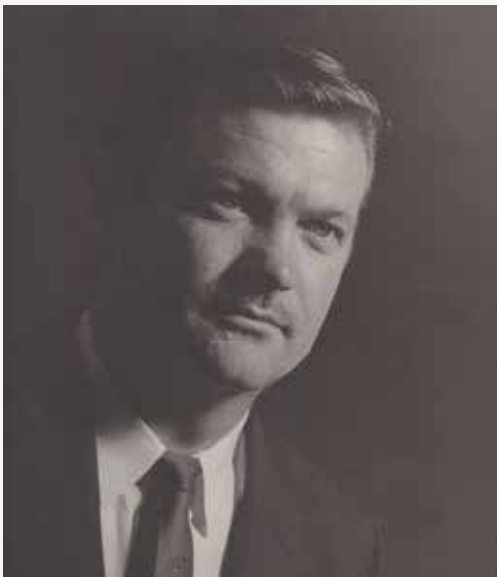
Forerunners of an Environmental Age

Many of Brisbane's founding families developed an appreciation of resource preservation long before it evolved into today's notion of "sustainable practices." Council Member and Mayor Clarke Conway called his father, former Council Member and City founding father Ernest Conway, "the King of Sustainability" because of his parsimony in saving and reusing materials in his building projects. The elder Conway acquired his conservation habits the hard way, in the Great Depression, but they were a useful reminder to a younger generation whose recycling beliefs were anchored in a culture of having too much rather than too little.

Clarke's mother, Lucy J. Conway, also bequeathed to her children and to the Brisbane community a love of nature and a legacy of environmentalism. Active in a wide range of civic matters, including the Brisbane School District, Recreation Center programs, and a host of fundraising efforts, Lucy Conway also was deeply involved in Brisbane's fight to halt garbage dumping in San Francisco Bay. In 1967 she led a "housewife's boycott" of Brisbane merchants to

protest a City Council decision to re-permit dumping at Sierra Point, a decision that citizens soon overturned at the ballot box. She also worked diligently to ensure the passage of legislation by the California State Assembly in 1969 that made the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission a permanent agency and gave the commission's Bay Plan the authority of state law. Brisbane resident and conservationist Byron Jensen praised Lucy Conway's dedication to the goal that "our children's children will still be able to enjoy that beautiful body of water called the San Francisco Bay."

The Conway family was among many in Brisbane who struggled to meld wise environmental practices with sound City management and positive business policies. By necessity, this task usually engaged another dynamic central to life in Brisbane: preserving the City's special "small-town" character while keeping pace with developments in one of the nation's—and the world's—fastest-growing metropolitan areas.





On June 22, 2008, a small fire in Owl Canyon spread to adjacent Buckeye Canyon and grew rapidly through the evening hours, threatening homes on Brisbane's high streets. Firefighters started a backfire along the City's western edge and succeeded in halting the inferno's advance.



North County Fire Authority and CAL FIRE firefighters worked together successfully to turn back the inferno and save the City.

Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in San Mateo County. Thirty police officers from neighboring communities also arrived to help chief Tom Hitchcock and the Brisbane officers with evacuations and traffic control. Brisbane's Community Emergency Volunteers put their hours of training to work supplementing fire, police, and Public Works crews.

Remarkably, the fire caused no injuries or property loss. A helicopter carrying an eight-member CAL FIRE team had made its way through the smoke during the night and found a clearing at the top of the mountain. The crew jumped to the ground and quickly set backfires that prevented the flames that scaled the canyon wall from traversing the summit and engulfing the houses on Brisbane's high streets. More than three hundred acres burned before firefighters managed to contain the blaze the next day. The Brisbane Star spoke for City residents when it said, "To them, and all the firefighters and police officers who have dedicated themselves to our protection, we owe our most grateful debt of gratitude." Under the circumstances, no amount of thanks seemed enough.

On June 28, City Engineer, Public Works Director, and, since 2006, Emergency Services Director Randy Breault held a debriefing at the Brisbane Marina in lieu of the annual evacuation drill scheduled for that day. Residents compared their recent experiences, which underscored the necessity of removing shrubs and brushes

from the areas surrounding their homes and of keeping evacuation "grab bags" handy with medical supplies and important papers. Follow-up study on the fire led to the Council's appropriation in November of \$15,000 to clear vegetation and construct a second firebreak across the ridge west of Kings Road and Trinity Road. There was also a special reserve fund set aside for constructing fire buffers.

Among those closely following the fire fighting effort was fire safety inspector Angelina Marie Ciucci of the North County Fire Authority (NCFA). The daughter of Don Ciucci, a retired NCFA deputy fire chief, Angelina had served Brisbane since May 2006 and had inspired the popular Firefighter's Storytime event at the Brisbane Library. Just six months after joining the NCFA, however, twenty-seven-year-old Angelina was diagnosed with melanoma, a dangerous skin cancer. On October 29, just four months after the Owl Canyon Fire, the cancer claimed her life. Firefighter's Storytime lived on as a monthly event at which a firefighter sat down with children in the library, read them a story, and then escorted them outside for a tour of a real fire engine. Soon the police department followed suit, sending an officer to the library every month to read to children and, just as important, to remind them that police officers are approachable, friendly, and interested in helping them.



Brisbane's remodeled City Hall, with a modern Community Meeting Room and seismic upgrades, officially opened on December 1, 2008, and was dedicated on December 23. (L to R: State Senator Leland Yee, Mayor Michael Barnes cutting the ribbon, Council Members Sepi Richardson and Clarke Conway, and Assistant to the City Manager Wendy Ricks) One had to look twice to recognize the older, box-shaped building around which architects had designed what seemed to be a wholly new structure.



The Council holds its first session in City Hall's new Community Meeting Room, December 2008.

Voters Approve Business License Fee Increases for Public Improvements; Council Votes Set-Aside for New Library; Water & Sewer Rate Hikes Still Necessary

The Brisbane Library was San Mateo County's smallest and, as advocates put it, was "bursting at the seams." Prospects for future relief appeared on November 8, 2008, when approximately 70 percent of voters approved Measure T. This measure, which the Council had considered a year before but which required a two-thirds approval by the voters, raised license fees on businesses generating more than \$10 million in annual gross receipts. The bulk

of the anticipated \$450,000 in increased revenue would go toward capital improvements such as sewer, water, and storm drain improvements. But on December 15, at the request of Christy York, Michael Schumann, and Jennifer Bousquet of the Committee for a New Library and Kevin Fryer of Friends of the Brisbane Library, the Council set aside the first \$50,000 raised through Measure T to fund the planning and design of a new Brisbane public library. The completed library was likely to cost about \$4 million, City Manager Clay Holstine estimated, but the decision to commit \$50,000 was an important statement about the City's wishes and priorities.

Unfortunately, the increased business license fee revenues did not cover the ongoing costs of upgrading Brisbane's water and sewer systems, and after council deliberations in July and public hearings in September, council members approved a 17 percent rate increase. Average bimonthly increases per household amounted to \$9.09 for a water bill and \$13.93 for a sewer bill. The new revenues would keep the system operational, but additional increases would likely be necessary in the future. As had been the case with prior rate hikes, qualifying low-income residents were exempted.

Newly Renovated City Hall Opens

A new municipal bond issue—\$2 million to supplement \$5 million already raised—brought the renovations of City Hall near to completion. On Friday, November 21, 2008, crews began moving the City's offices from the fourteen-month sojourn at 140 Valley Drive back across the street to 50 Park Place. Renovations were not quite finished when staff reported for work on Tuesday, but just a few weeks' work on the police department remained.

The City Hall had been strengthened to withstand earthquakes and fitted with an entirely new heating and air conditioning system, much appreciated by City staff. Even more appreciated was adequate room in which to work. At the temporary quarters on Valley Drive, recalled Senior Civil Engineer Karen Kinser, "Finance was sitting in a desk right next to Public Works, right next to the Building Department—they were all kind of on top of each other." The remodel opened up a second floor for the Parks and Recreation Department, the Archives Room, and Brisbane's Chamber of Commerce. Soon the police department had training rooms and lockers on the second floor and long-awaited secure evidence and interview rooms on the first.

The renovations had been more than internal. City Hall now had two enclosed external towers providing entrances, handicapped access, staircases, and an elevator. Attractive metal grillwork on the exterior walls broke the former monotony of the tilt-up construction. And water-saving landscaping that the City dubbed a "rain garden" demonstrated how run-off could be captured and filtered through an attractive

garden on its way to the storm drain system. The rain garden helped complete the transformation of the utilitarian Johnson Controls building into something considerably more inviting. Randy Breault summarized the architects' challenge. "The struggle was to make City Hall look like it is in fact a seat of government, but to recognize the unique nature of Brisbane in that we didn't need a gilded dome."

Complementing the City Hall was the new Community Meeting Room, a former warehouse for Johnson Controls and a welcomed alternative to the Community Center under the library for council meetings. The move made the Community Center more available for other uses and made council meetings more accessible to citizens. "It is crucial that they are able to understand the business going on," explained Breault. "They can see it with their own eyes and they don't have to sit in the back of a room that has funny corners to it and you can't hear or see the Council."

About 150 citizens attended the official opening on December 1, when Mayor Michael Barnes cut the ribbon before moving next door to the Community Meeting Room for the inaugural meeting. Always robust, politics in Brisbane now had more elbow room in a setting appropriate to the energy with which the City's residents had always approached their decision-making. On the agenda that evening was the Council's election of a new mayor, Sepi Richardson, and Richardson's swearing in by San Mateo County Superior Court Judge Susan Etezadi who, like Richardson, had grown up in Iran before coming to the United States.

Artist's Perspective Draws International Attention to Brisbane

It was a historic occasion for Brisbane as its City Council undertook the people's business in Brisbane's fourth City Hall since incorporation, not counting the temporary sojourn at 140 Valley Drive. It also seemed an opportune moment for artist Beth Grossman to start a dialogue about having and sharing power through an exhibit titled *Seats of Power* that opened on March 18, 2009. It started with Grossman spending many hours sitting in chairs at numerous council meetings, progressed to the

phrase “seats of power,” and from there evolved into an unprecedented and novel engagement with Brisbane officials that drew international attention to the City and its governance.

Grossman started by imagining what the seats in the Council’s meeting rooms would say if only they could speak—what accumulated wisdom they held and might reveal. Then she thought, “What would be funnier than if I could actually convince our City Council and our Fire and Police Chiefs to let me photograph their butts and then I turn those photographs into upholstery, and I use that cloth to upholster some chair seats and put them up on the wall in the conference room?”

Grossman’s good relations with City Hall enabled her to pressure and cajole officials into participating. “None of them wanted to be the one who wouldn’t do it,” she remarked, “and it worked!” Participants accepted the idea because they shared Grossman’s larger goal—that of encouraging citizens to visit their new City Hall, to help them understand that their elected and salaried leaders were human and approachable, to feel welcome at Brisbane’s “seat of power,” and, above all, to experience power not as a hierarchical but as a democratic process that required their participation. Grossman hoped the exhibit would spur questions like “How are you powerful in your life? What do you want to see happen in our City and how are you going to go about that?”

To that end, Grossman set up a throne where citizens sat and explored those questions. Documentary filmmaker David Brown captured their replies as well as City officials’ musings about their first involvement with public service. Some puns were unavoidable, as when police commander Lisa Macias asserted that “You have to work your way up from the bottom.” But the exhibit’s success lay in the larger meaning of Steve Waldo’s comment on seeing his own upholstered posterior: “This is a view I don’t normally get.” Seats of Power was covered by media outlets in every part of the country, as well as—appropriately enough—“down under” in Australia.

A bittersweet counterpoint to the success of Seats of Power in Brisbane’s art world was Kevin Fryer’s announcement in February 2009 that the recession would make that season’s “Live

at Mission Blue” concert series, the fifth since the series started in 2005, the last. The City was committed to continuing its sponsorship, but private backers had dried up. “It’s just really difficult times,” explained Clay Holstine.” Fortunately, Fryer was able to stage a benefit concert for Friends of the Brisbane Library in 2010 and bring back a new, though less ambitious, concert series in 2011.

As Recession Lingers, Brisbane Looks Closely at Budget; Trims Costs

City Manager Holstine had other worries about finances in the winter of 2008-2009. Brisbane depended on a small segment of its business community for the majority of its revenue. More than 76 percent of sales tax revenue came from its top five businesses, with Van Waters & Rogers providing 18 percent of the City’s General Fund revenues alone. Hotel tax revenue, another important income source, never reached the levels many had predicted in the late 1990s. Despite Brisbane’s proximity to SFO, the “9/11” terrorist attacks, combined with the “dot.com bust” of that era, the more recent recession, and new communication and media technologies that enabled long-distance conferencing, reduced the necessity of business travel. “It’s so much easier to have a meeting over a computer,” Stuart Schillinger observed.

Conditions were hardly dire. Brisbane had more than \$7 million in reserves as well as a “rainy day” fund of one-time revenues. The Council had drawn on this latter fund to provide \$400,000 for the final renovations of City Hall. But if economic conditions did not improve, staff anticipated that the City would be running an annual deficit of \$3 million by 2014. Brisbane’s Fire Department was already manning its engines with three firefighters instead of the usual four, and the Council had frozen seven full-time positions out of ninety. It planned to freeze several more over the next few years through attrition.

As another cost-saving measure, in April 2009 the City began sharing a Director of Parks and Recreation position with nearby Burlingame. Jim Skeels filled both positions until mid-2011, when he went full-time with Burlingame and Brisbane opted not to fill the position. Brisbane’s aim was

to reduce spending by about \$2 million from 2008-2009 levels, keeping in mind community values and priorities. “Though it may be raining,” announced the Brisbane City News and Star in February 2009, “past policies and practices are providing the City an umbrella to protect us from getting too wet. We have the potential to make it through these days and become a stronger community if we remember our basic values: to care for each other, connect with others in the community, and stay involved while important decisions are being made.”

While drawing on inner strengths, Brisbane also turned to its national representatives for help. Tom Lantos had passed away in February 2008, so in March 2009 Brisbane paid a call on new U.S. Representative Jackie Speier, along with U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein. The City brought an \$8 million request to fund sewer and water infrastructure and pay for repaving of Bayshore Boulevard. But progress on the federal assistance front was increasingly uncertain as the crisis in the financial markets and the subsequent bailout of banks and insurance companies sharpened differences among national lawmakers about the merits of stimulus spending. In the end, Brisbane’s request went unheeded.

November 2, 2010: School Parcel Tax Measure Falls Just Short of Required Two-Thirds Approval; March 8, 2011, Measure Succeeds

In May 2009 Finance Director Schillinger presented his biennial budget projection for 2009-2011 to the Council, which he characterized as “an austerity budget.” Council members and City staff combed through every item for ways to economize. Funding for some programs like the swimming pool might have been cut in other cities, but Brisbane residents valued them more highly. The City and the Jefferson Union High School District had jointly funded bus transportation for Brisbane students for years. By 2010, however, the school district could no longer afford to pay its share, so Brisbane chartered a nonprofit to continue the service that fall.

Since 1996, Brisbane had provided up to \$67,000 annually to Jefferson Union High School District for Advanced Placement classes,

computer labs, extended library hours, and a late bus for after-school activities. Now, those funds were going solely to keep the after-school bus service going. Students paid the same fee that they had paid before, \$2 per day for a round trip to Terra Nova or Oceana High Schools. “From the perspective of a parent and a student,” said superintendent Michael Crilly, “nothing has changed. But I know that things are getting difficult for cities, too, so I don’t know how much longer that can go on.”

On November 2, 2010, a school parcel tax of \$96 per year for the Jefferson Union High School District was narrowly defeated—it fell just 0.17 percent shy of the required 66 percent voter approval. A disheartened superintendent Crilly had worked hard for the tax and now faced “a shortened instructional calendar, no summer school, and counselor layoffs.” In early 2011 he announced that he would retire at the end of the school year after forty years of service. Just two months later, on May 3, 2011, the San Mateo High School District had the same result—a majority approved, but the vote fell short of the two-thirds required by Proposition 13. In June, Thomas Minshew, a Terra Nova High School graduate who had returned as the school’s principal, took on the challenge of school administration in tough times when he succeeded Crilly as the district’s new superintendent.

Brisbane School District superintendent Toni Presta, who had succeeded Steve Waterman in June 2008, also faced a tightening budget. Despite spending reductions of \$900,000 between 2007 and 2010, the school district faced a nearly \$1 million deficit for the 2011-2012 school year. When deeper cuts, including furlough days for staff, failed to close the gap, Presta considered reducing custodial staff, closing libraries, sharing principals, eliminating classroom aides, and increasing class sizes at Panorama Elementary, Brisbane Elementary, and Lipman Middle Schools. The district could also close one of its schools. In the meantime, the Bayshore and Brisbane School Districts decided to share Presta as a superintendent during the 2011-2012 school year, mostly as a cost-savings measure but also to prepare for a possible merger, a move that would require voter approval.

Brisbane Department Heads



Jim Skeels came to Brisbane in December 1999 to head the City's Parks and Recreation Department. He arrived while the Mission Blue Center and the community pool were both under construction and presided over a burgeoning array of activities, from the marina to the Silverspot Cooperative Nursery School and an award-winning concert series in the Community Park. "People are very, very fortunate here, that so much is available to them," he said. Skeels retired in 2011.



John Swiecki succeeded Bill Prince as Brisbane's Community Development Director in 2010. Among the many challenges facing Swiecki was helping the community work through its many heartfelt and often competing visions for Brisbane's Baylands area.



Randy Breault, Brisbane's City Engineer/Public Works Director, and, since 2006, also Emergency Services Director, has served Brisbane in many capacities since joining the City's staff in spring 2001.

Brisbane Department Heads



Police Chief Lisa Macias began her law enforcement career in 1989 as a police/fire dispatcher and held many assignments on her way to Police Commander in 2006, and then Police Chief, replacing retiring Tom Hitchcock. Chief Hitchcock administered the oath of office to his replacement on July 6, 2010.



Stuart Schillinger wears many hats in Brisbane's administration. He came to the City in 2001 as Finance Director and in a few years also became Administrative Services Director. A few years after that he was also named Deputy City Manager. And when Jim Skeels retired in 2011, Schillinger took on Skeels's responsibilities as director of Parks and Recreation. Schillinger also serves as City staff representation to the Open Space and Ecology Committee. Working closely with the City Council, Brisbane's employees stretched themselves to keep delivering services to residents in the toughest economic climate California had seen since the 1930s.



Ron Myers became Fire Chief for the City of Brisbane in 2002 when the cities of Brisbane, Daly City and Pacifica were consolidated to form the North County Fire Authority under a Joint Powers Authority agreement that continues today. The primary objective for this effort was to provide a cost-effective and efficient delivery of Fire Department emergency and non-emergency services to an area of approximately 60 square miles serving a population of over 185,000 residents.

In March 1999 Brisbane voters had opted to shoulder a school parcel tax of \$74. In 2005 they had approved raising the tax to \$96 to allow the school district to keep art, music, and reading programs as well as avoid increasing class sizes. On March 8, 2011, amid fears that Lipman Middle School's production of *My Fair Lady* might be the last such offering, 68 percent of Brisbane voters approved a parcel tax increase to \$119, providing \$378,420 annually to the Brisbane School District through 2016. It was a strong show of support for education—particularly for arts and music education—but it remained to be seen how long Brisbane could hold up under the weight of state budget problems and a stalled national economy.

City Hall Tightens Belt

“Providing Quality Services” had long been City Hall's motto. It was a sincere objective and consonant with the expectation that City services would continue to be delivered with the usual competence and cheer. But the bar was higher than that—more would have to be done with less. On June 15 the Council adopted a suggestion from City staff to forego cost of living increases for the next two fiscal years. In addition, some department head positions were eliminated and their functions consolidated. Finance Director Stuart Schillinger, for instance, took over some of Jim Skeels's duties as Parks and Recreation Director while also serving as Brisbane's Administrative Services Director and Deputy City Manager. And Ted Warburton, Harbormaster at the Brisbane Marina, took on management of the City's pool and aquatic programs.

Wind Test Results on Baylands Disappoint CREBL and Sustainable Energy Advocates

On the Baylands, Brisbane had hoped that plans initiated by a resident-formed Committee for Renewable Energy for the Baylands (CREBL) for wind-generated electric power would allow the City to do more with less in a more positive way. After a year of gathering data from a test tower, however, energy consultant KEMA reported that the winds coming down the mountains to the Baylands were not strong enough to warrant installing wind turbines. This was a

disappointment to CREBL's founders, former Brisbane Mayor Anja Miller and former Council Member Tony Attard. But Miller remained optimistic that new, “egg-beater” turbine designs might work effectively with less wind than propeller turbines, and that solar panels could also supplement the area's power needs.

Attard had stayed out of Brisbane politics after the 1989 recall vote and controversy over the Civic Center. Ten years later, however, he had returned at Council Member Clara Johnson's request to support installation of solar heating for Brisbane's community pool. He had then returned to his mostly private involvement with environmental issues before deciding once again to go to City Hall in 2006 to hear a presentation on the Baylands by Universal Paragon Corporation (UPC). There he heard Anja Miller speak up for the importance of including clean energy production as an integral part of any development at the site. After the meeting, he suggested to her that they work together on it. “Clean energy production, so close to San Francisco—that would be amazing,” he said enthusiastically.

Attard and Miller founded CREBL in 2006 to promote alternatives to fossil fuel power sources. They publicized the cause by distributing multicolored, wind-propelled pinwheels that Brisbane residents could install in their front yards or in planters as a demonstration of support. In 2010 CREBL presented to the City Council a Renewable Energy Alternative to the developer's proposal for full study in the forthcoming Environmental Impact Report. CREBL's overall approach was to promote renewable energy sources and businesses, safeguard open spaces for recreation, and portray the Baylands—which Anja Miller more specifically termed the “Bayfill”—as a site for positive environmental initiatives rather than simply the mitigation of development's negative effects.

As required by the California Environmental Quality Act, the draft Environmental Impact Report for the proposed Baylands development also considered the environmental implications of undertaking no project at all. In addition, the Council orchestrated a public process for creating a Community Preferred Alternative that would be studied to the same depth as the

plan submitted by UPC. The “guiding principles” that emerged from the process included large amounts of open space south of Visitacion Creek, which roughly bisected the 660-acre site on an east-west line; sustainability as a foundation for development and open space; wetlands restoration along the creek and lagoon; community amenities and regional attraction; variety in structures; retention of views to the Bay; on-site energy production; and a variety of transportation modes, including pedestrian and bicycle access. The volatile matter of residential housing was not specifically mentioned in these principles. The City preferred to work with UPC on the hopeful presumption that the company’s plans and the City’s aims would find a satisfactory middle ground without a conflict about residential housing.

Two-term Council Member and two-time Mayor Michael Barnes believed that Baylands development held great promise for Brisbane’s future, provided that the volatile housing issue could be held in abeyance while working out a plan otherwise acceptable to both UPC and Brisbane residents. While sharing concerns about homes built over contaminated landfills, Barnes believed that the areas of the Baylands that were not garbage landfill, specifically the land near Bayshore Boulevard, could be cleaned up sufficiently to be safe for housing.

Barnes had taken a similar compromise approach to the freight forwarding controversy in Crocker Industrial Park. He believed that Brisbane might have been able to leverage FedEx’s interest in Crocker Park into the company’s adopting hybrid technology in their trucks, thereby addressing resident’s concerns about diesel exhaust. But FedEx had decided to stay in South San Francisco, and Brisbane’s freight forwarding opponents resisted anything other than an outright ban on such businesses. In Barnes’s view, that had been a lost opportunity, and he did not wish to see the process repeated.

Barnes had many ideas about land use, services, and architectural styles that he believed developers and Brisbane could agree on. He posted them on the Internet, with a proviso that they represented his personal views and not Brisbane’s. Barnes did not mention

housing, but some of the photographs that he regarded as suitable examples included buildings with residential units. These reflected the increasing national trend in metropolitan areas to locate housing and retail functions near mass transportation to reduce greenhouse gases generated by solo commutes between homes and jobs.

Baylands Planning, Environmental Concerns, Housing Issue Shape Council Election

In the November 3, 2009, election, Brisbane voters returned Clarke Conway (570 votes) and Sepi Richardson (488) to City Hall and replaced Michael Barnes (460), who did not campaign actively, with Clifford Lentz (546), an eight-year veteran of the City’s Planning Commission who was seeking his first term on the Council. “The needs of the environment have always been embedded in my decisions,” Lentz declared in his campaign literature, “whether towards enhancing the habitat along the Bay at Sierra Point or collaborating with the Open Space and Ecology Committee regarding open space in the Baylands.” His reference to the committee seemed to indicate his opposition to housing on the Baylands. But Lentz also embraced an ambitious vision for the site. He speculated that the Baylands could become “the gold standard” for future sustainable development with “the potential to change the world.” The key lay in achieving an environmental and developmental balance.

“Confusion often accompanies complicated, involved processes,” the Brisbane City News had counseled in July 2009 regarding the Baylands plans. As it turned out, California voters’ approval of an 800-mile, high-speed rail initiative in the November 4, 2008, election led to speculation that the state might exercise its right of eminent domain and make the Baylands a major maintenance and storage area for the new trains. Subsequent rumors put the site farther south near the airport, while still later rumors questioned the entire project—its estimated 2008 cost of \$40 billion ballooned to \$99 billion in 2011. It seemed unlikely that eminent domain would settle the Baylands development conundrum.

From San Bruno Mountain to the Baylands, a Panoramic History

Brisbane ended its first half-century as dramatically as it had entered it—in a profoundly important debate about development. In the beginning, it had been about San Bruno Mountain; now it was the Baylands.

The City's early image had been that of a small town sheltering its way of life from unwanted urban intrusions, from San Francisco's garbage to the more abstract complexities of organized government. Residents had originally rejected incorporation in 1954 out of concern that becoming a city would degrade self-determination and lead to higher taxes. When they approved it seven years later, incorporation was a defensive act to prevent San Mateo County from imposing an urban renewal project, not an embrace of some larger municipal vision. Brisbane residents generally had change thrust upon them; they did not seek it out.

Given the City's proximity to an expanding San Francisco, there was plenty of intrusion to resist. Brisbane's surrounding San Bruno Mountain, timeless and predictable, afforded both a setting and a metaphor for Brisbane as a protected enclave. As the environmental movement spread in the 1970s, though, San Bruno Mountain became more than an enclave—it was also a rare and endangered habitat. It was not a great leap to begin to think of Brisbane, too, as a rare and endangered community.

Residents had not always held this view. In the 1960s some of them had favored housing developments on the mountain. But after a long struggle, opponents won a significant victory in the mid-1970s. Their victory cemented environmentalism to Brisbane's strong sense of self-determination to form a new pillar in the community. After the 1989 settlement allowing a greatly curtailed Northeast Ridge housing project to proceed, further development on San Bruno Mountain became more than just politically problematic—it was simply unthinkable, even for the new residents on "the Ridge," who quickly embraced Brisbane's vision of the mountain as a unique and vulnerable ecological treasure.

Brisbane's connection to its eastern landfill was more ambivalent than its relationship with San Bruno Mountain. In the 1960s, Brisbane citizens decided to accept, then reject, then accept and reject again, agreements with garbage companies allowing continued dumping in the Bay. Ultimately, the City rejected its role as San Francisco's—or anyone else's—garbage dump, an effort that dovetailed nicely with its



Mayor Michael Barnes took this panoramic view of the Baylands from Brisbane's hills in September 2006. In the foreground are numerous light industry and warehouse operations just east of Bayshore Boulevard, which winds northward along the far left of the image. A century ago, the waters of San Francisco Bay covered most of this area.

emerging image as a self-governing municipality and a guardian of its surrounding natural resources.

To the north of Sierra Point and the Brisbane Lagoon, the six-hundred-acre Baylands hosted a large waste-recycling business, a lumberyard, numerous repair shops and other small businesses, and acres of former rail yards and landfill. Though enormously important to Brisbane's future, the area seemed removed from City life, like some far-off storage facility or seldom-used outbuilding in a corner of the backyard. One could live an engaged and useful life in Brisbane without ever going there. It was not pristine habitat, by any stretch. But it was valuable property, and its owner, Universal Paragon Corporation, sought to turn it to more profitable uses.

The prospect of Baylands development conjured up ghosts from Brisbane's stormy past, especially conflicts between the need for revenue and the desire to preserve a threatened way of life. Despite some ongoing tensions, that issue had largely been settled on San Bruno Mountain. But the City was still struggling to find a solution in its eastern lands, with ideas ranging from renewable energy plants to mixed-use development combining mass transit, retail, entertainment, recreation, and perhaps even residential uses.

Here was momentous change, thrust once more upon the City's residents to ponder. They had not asked for it. But their attitude had evolved over the years into something quite different from mere defensiveness. Environmentalism, successfully implemented and taken to heart, had given new purpose to Brisbane's traditional feisty strength. Change had arrived and Brisbane was at the heart of it, not to resist but to shape it in accordance with citizens' core values and their visions for a dynamic future.

UPC Announces Intention for Housing in Baylands Plans

Early in February 2011, UPC delivered to Brisbane an updated, mixed-use proposal that included more than 4,400 new residences as part of a complex development that concentrated jobs, residences, retail, and entertainment around a transit hub. After being held back by eight years of diagrams, workshops, presentations, and reviews, the issue of housing was now fully in play. “Universal Paragon’s proposal lays all the company’s cards on the table,” opined San Jose Mercury News reporter Julia Scott, “but Brisbane locals hold all the aces.”

The General Plan barred housing on the Baylands, so voters would have to approve any amendment to the plan to allow residential construction on the site. John Swiecki, hired by Brisbane in 2005 to manage the Baylands project, doubted the viability of the UPC plan. “I find it highly, highly improbable,” he said. Meanwhile, all parties awaited the arrival of the draft Environmental Review Report, expected in fall 2012, that would spell out the extent and nature of Baylands contamination and the degree to which any hazards could be mitigated to allow for various kinds of development, including housing. “At the end of the day,” said Swiecki, “it’s going to be subject to voter approval. I expect that. The property owner expects that.”

Governor Jerry Brown Proposes Elimination of Redevelopment Agencies; Local Governments Plan for Further Loss of Funds

On November 3, 2009, there were other things to vote on as well. At least two-thirds of Brisbane voters joined their counterparts in five other Peninsula cities to approve an increase in the hotel tax rate. Municipalities along the Peninsula needed funding, but the recession was putting many taxpayers close to the breaking point. “As a result,” explained the San Francisco Chronicle, “many cities are turning to nontraditional tax sources that they hope are more palatable to residents.” In 2010 California voters approved Proposition 22, which kept the state from dipping into local transportation and redevelopment funds to manage its own budget needs.

Proposition 22 aimed to settle that old dispute once and for all. But in January 2011 Governor Jerry Brown proposed eliminating municipal redevelopment agencies altogether, which would make it possible for the state to divert billions of dollars away from local development agencies to schools and other state public services. Brown’s controversial proposal created new anxieties for local officials. Brisbane managed the uncertainties with its usual fiscal prudence, though prudence alone seemed inadequate to shield the City from some hard decisions appearing on the horizon. Brisbane dipped into reserves to keep vital and valued services going while reducing the number of firefighters by 25 percent, eliminating two police officer positions, leaving three maintenance positions unfilled, and planning to trim six department head and upper management positions by 2013.

Lisa Macias Succeeds Retiring Tom Hitchcock as Brisbane’s Police Chief

Police Chief Tom Hitchcock retired in the summer of 2010 and was succeeded by twenty-one-year Brisbane Police Department veteran and Brisbane resident Lisa Macias, who was born and raised in the City, started as a police/fire dispatcher in 1989, and worked her way up to commander in 2006. Hitchcock, Macias’s mentor, swore her in at City Hall on July 6, 2010, before nearly 250 well-wishers. “Whatever assignment you gave her as she was promoted through the ranks,” said Hitchcock, “she was always the star. She outshone everyone else.”

Grant Pays for New Street Lighting; Mold Damage Closes Firehouse

In the general environment of budget stringency, Brisbane officials deftly obtained grants and loans for special projects. New “cobra head” LED street lighting was slated for installation in central Brisbane starting in early July 2010, though the decorative lighting on Visitacion Avenue and in the Northeast Ridge remained. The energy-saving retrofit was funded by a federal stimulus loan through the California Energy Commission. Brisbane expected to pay it back over fifteen years from savings generated by the new lights. Among the locations to be illuminated by the new lights was the corner of San Bruno and

Mariposa, where the historic Allemand Hotel's renovation was nearing completion.

The future of Brisbane's eighteen-year-old fire station on Bayshore Boulevard was less certain: undetected leaks in the roof over the years had led to severe mold problems. Firefighters relocated to temporary quarters in nearby trailers while the City weighed its options. Brisbane firefighters continued to work with their colleagues in the North County Fire Authority to provide services, most notably responding to the September 9, 2010, San Bruno natural gas pipeline explosion that killed eight people and destroyed dozens of houses. The emergency in San Bruno helped put Brisbane's mold damage in perspective; nevertheless, fixing the problem appeared to be more costly than rebuilding, and the timing could not have been worse.

Long-time Commercial Resident Van Waters & Rogers to Relocate, Causing 18.5 Percent Drop in Revenue to City; Voters Approve Business License Fee Hike for Recycling Company, Recology

In spring 2011, Brisbane confirmed year-long rumors that Van Waters & Rogers would soon relocate to Visalia, California, three hundred miles to the southeast. VWR stood to gain millions of dollars in state tax credits by hiring new employees in rural Visalia. Losing VWR's tax revenues had always been a distinct—if distant—possibility; now, Brisbane was staring at an 18.5 percent drop in its General Fund revenues. VWR did not respond to the City's inquiries, so the Council held a hearing on May 10 to see what could be done. In the end, despite interventions by U.S. Representative Jackie Speier, State Treasurer Bill Lockyer, and State Assembly Member Jerry Hill, the answer seemed to be, "not much."

Still, some hope arose from the northern end of the Baylands where Recology, a recycling and waste management company, wished to expand in order to meet new San Francisco recycling goals. Recology cited a 1932 ordinance granting it exclusive rights to process the City's garbage, but proponents of a new ballot proposition were now trying to break Recology's monopoly,

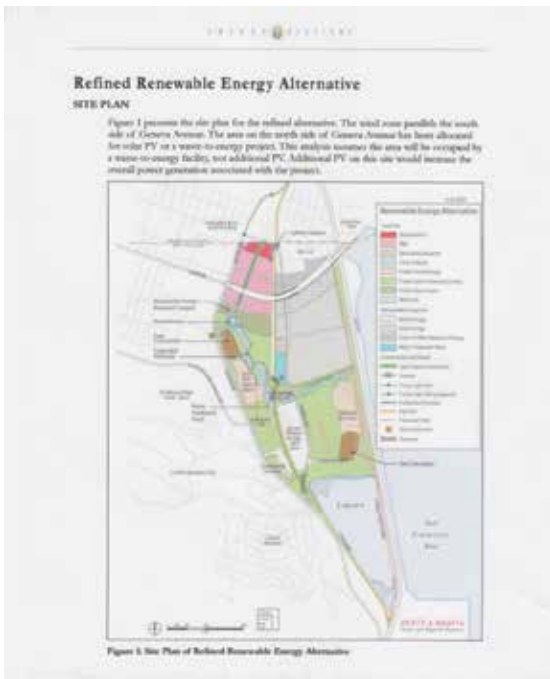
hoping that competition would reduce costs. If the company prevailed, it would have to expand southward, and part of its business fees would go to Brisbane. San Francisco's voters would decide Recology's historic claim in June 2012. Hoping for a favorable outcome for Recology, on November 8, 2011, a large majority of Brisbane voters—77.5 percent—approved Measure J. The measure increased the business license tax "up to \$3 million per year" on "certain recycling establishments that recycle 100,000 tons or more of material during any single calendar year." As it turned out, San Francisco voters decided to preserve the status quo with Recology, thus allowing Brisbane to anticipate that increased revenues from its recently passed Measure J would help make up for the loss of VWR.

Meanwhile, Cliff Lentz and Clarke Conway of the City Council's Economic Development Subcommittee stepped up efforts to attract businesses compatible with Brisbane's values of sustainability, and City staff continued to tighten the municipal belt. Fred Smith, who had served Brisbane for thirty-five years as an elected official and as a City administrator, retired in September 2010, and senior planner Tim Tune also retired at the end of 2011 after twenty-five years of service. Brisbane did not replace them or fill any of the eighteen positions vacated since 2008. The drain on the City's financial reservoir was being slowed.

State Assembly Abolishes Redevelopment Agencies to Recoup Local Funds for Statewide Needs

A new concern arose on June 29, 2011, when Governor Brown signed a bill making good on his proposal to abolish local redevelopment agencies and recoup their funds for meeting statewide needs. "AB 1x 26" dissolved all of California's nearly four hundred redevelopment agencies. Several plaintiffs, including the California League of Cities, challenged the law, but on December 29, 2011, the California Supreme Court upheld the RDA dissolution as constitutional, and by February 1, 2012, the dissolution was effected.

In Brisbane, redevelopment funds had supported or partially supported the marina construction, freeway access and infrastructure for Sierra Point, the Community Park site



As the likelihood of Baylands development increased, Brisbane worked to clarify various alternatives and keep its citizens informed about relative costs and implications for the City's future. These three Baylands schematics show 1) the Specific Plan submitted by United Paragon Corporation; 2) the Community Alternative to that plan; and 3) a Renewable Energy Alternative plan.

its obligations and responsibilities in a newly complicated legal and fiscal environment.

Brisbane Celebrates 50th Anniversary; Council Election Results Reflect Baylands Concerns; Council Veteran Ray Miller and New Member Terry O'Connell Join Conway, Richardson, Lentz

On September 10, 2011, residents and guests gathered at the Radisson Hotel on Sierra Point to celebrate Brisbane's fiftieth anniversary. Mayor Cy Bologoff welcomed some 250 attendees to an evening of camaraderie and good cheer that was welcome relief from trying times. It was perhaps one of Bologoff's most enjoyable—and among his final—duties as mayor. On November 8, voters would choose two candidates from a field of three seeking to fill open positions on the Council. Steve Waldo had not run, and Bologoff hoped to stay on the Council for another term. Veteran Ray

acquisition, senior housing, affordable housing and first-time homebuyers' programs, the fire station, a Park-n-Ride lot, and the Tunnel Avenue Bridge replacement. Now, Brisbane became the "successor agency" to that RDA, taking on

Miller joined the council race, along with Terry O'Connell, an environmentalist and past board member of San Bruno Mountain Watch who was making her first bid for public office.

At an October 11 "Candidates' Forum," Miller, O'Connell, and Bologoff gave their views on Brisbane's immediate budgetary problems and long-term issues such as the Baylands. When asked if they thought the site could simply become wetlands instead of being developed, Miller and O'Connell agreed that such an outcome was desirable but not practical—Brisbane did not have the money to purchase the property from UPC. Bologoff agreed but also believed that the wetlands outcome wouldn't be so good "for the poor guy who's got \$100 million involved." On November 8, voters chose to send Miller and O'Connell to the Council (602 and 487 votes, respectively, to Bologoff's 413). They joined Cliff Lentz, Sepi Richardson, and Clarke Conway as the Council faced perhaps the most daunting combination of crisis and challenge in the City's history.

The crisis was economic, and the challenge once again was development. Funds from every traditional source—federal and state government, taxes, business and license fees, grants, and now redevelopment agencies—had diminished or disappeared. Not filling open positions had shrunk the City's staff and sorely stretched current employees without ensuring against the possibility of outright layoffs. Brisbane's finances had been wisely allocated and prudently managed, but the enervating Great Recession, with its taproot still drawing the life force out of Americans' real estate assets, would linger locally long after the national economy showed signs of recovery. Brisbane's looming fiscal crisis would greatly tax council members' political skills, reminiscent of the Council's challenge in 1978 following voter approval of Proposition 13.

Brisbane's development challenges included finding new uses for Crocker Industrial Park in an era that favored Internet over brick-and-mortar commerce. Some, like new Council Member Terry O'Connell, suggested attracting "green" businesses. Others, like Brisbane Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Mitch Bull, reminded prospective business tenants that Brisbane was part of San Francisco's Foreign Trade Zone, and that they might qualify for reduced

tariffs on imported goods by locating in Brisbane.

But the largest development challenge of all spread out northward toward San Francisco on Brisbane's map— the Baylands, a huge territory that was gritty, sprawling, and unkempt. If one could simply lift central Brisbane and its residential areas off the map and plop them down in the Baylands, the vast brownfield would easily contain it—twice over. Filled alike with potential and pollution, the Baylands offered Brisbane some decidedly mixed choices. The City would have to sort those out, with previous councils having established a firm precedent of following majority voter opinion on similar issues, such as housing in the quarry.

Most residents seemed in strong agreement with Ray Miller, who described UPC's proposal to include 4,434 residential units in its Baylands development plans as "outrageous and clearly contradictory to our small-town character." Those were fighting words. And Miller, veteran of the Northeast Ridge controversy, was back in the fight. More than 4,000 new homes would much more than double, perhaps even triple, Brisbane's population—a prospect fraught with enormous consequences for the little City.

Twenty years earlier, Miller and two other council members had stood up to personal lawsuits by the Northeast Ridge developer. "We have lawyers, too," he had declared. The council members and Brisbane, which also was sued, had won their case. The Baylands were a different territory in a different time, and Brisbane had become a different City. But some things in town stayed the same. Some had even grown stronger, like the core values of self-determination and environmental preservation embedded in Brisbane's civic culture. Over many years and struggles, the City's unique history had woven these two together, inextricably, into a firm conviction undergirding Brisbane's well-known "feistiness." In Brisbane, self-determination and environmental preservation had effectively become a single, compelling principle—self-preservation. Those who had helped make Brisbane what it was were very proud of that, and no less willing than ever to fight for it.

Notes on Sources

A city's history is, above all else, a story about its people and the institutions they create to help manage the tasks of daily life and realize shared goals. Many of these institutions focus on resolving differences, clarifying values and achieving consensus. Others focus on education, recreation, transportation, business development, safety and basic services, and planning for the future. All leave records, of varying depth and quality, which help lay the foundation for a story—a history.

No two cities are the same, but the height and breadth of any city's history depend on a solid documentary foundation. Brisbane has a keen sense of its history and an appreciation of the importance of keeping thorough records. This history relied on those documents as well as on numerous other sources, including individuals' memories. Just as important, it relied on the enthusiasm and cooperation of Brisbane's citizens, whose lives and decisions comprise a history that no book, including this one, can ever fully capture. Good records, poet Robert Frost might have said, make good history. The documents used in preparing this narrative were good and, in a spirit of gratitude, are described below.

Oral History Interviews supplemented by additional interviews on specific issues were a prime source of information. Interviewees all generously offered their time and their recall.

Full interviews were conducted with the following persons: Tony Attard, Michael Barnes, Bonnie Bologoff, Cyril "Cy" Bologoff, Randy Breault, Mitch Bull, Clarke Conway, Bob Dettmer, Dolores Gomez, John Gomez, Clay Holstine, Clara Johnson, Brad Kerwin, Karen Kinser, Robin Leiter, Clifford Lentz, Ken McIntyre, Anja Miller, Ray Miller, Carole Nelson, Lee Panza, William Prince, Sepi Richardson, Michele Salmon, Stuart Schillinger, Jim Skeels, Fred Smith, John Swiecki, Hal Toppel, Steven Waldo and Alison Wilson.

Additional interviews were conducted with Tom Adams, Jessica Aloft, Ann Broadwell, John Christopher Burr, Michael Crilly, Dana Dillworth, Kevin Fryer, Beth Grossman, Tom Hitchcock, Judy Ng, Camille Olivier Salmon, Jess Salmon, Jeri Sulley, Jim Thompson and Tim Tune.

The Brisbane City Council Meeting Minutes proved an invaluable source and were readily accessible (and easily searched) in transcribed form. They are housed as bound volumes in City Hall.

The Brisbane Archives serve as a collective memory bank for the city and contain documents on a wide range of issues and events. The Raymond and Anja Miller Collection proved especially thorough and useful. The Lumen Drake Collection also was helpful for the earlier years of the narrative.

Newspapers, magazines & newsletters contain much data on the city's daily life and events over the years. Many of these sources will be difficult to access in coming years as print journalism yields ground to other media. The Brisbane Archives contain a comprehensive newspaper clippings file. Online archives yielded other pertinent articles. Sources included: Brisbane Bee, Brisbane City News, Brisbane Star, California Coast & Ocean, Daly City Record, The Independent, The San Bruno Mountain Watch, Pacifica Coastside Chronicle, Peninsula Independent, Peninsula Weekly, The Progress, San Francisco Chronicle, the San Francisco Examiner, San Jose Mercury News and the San Mateo County Times.

Books relating to Brisbane's history:

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Born of Fire: In Praise of Brisbane Volunteers (Brisbane, CA: City of Brisbane, 1992)

Dolores Gomez and Christy Thilmany, *Images of America: Brisbane* (San Francisco, CA: Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

Sam Hasegawa, Brisbane, *City of Stars: The First Twenty-Five Years, 1961-1986* (Sausalito CA: Oral History Associates, Inc., 1989).

Reports and papers included:

California EPA Department of Toxic Substances Control, "Final Remedial Action Plan Approval Record," PG&E Martin Service Center, June 7, 1993, http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/regulators/deliverable_documents/5567494034/rap.pdf.

Robert F. Cleveland, Jr. and Jerry L. Ulcek, "Questions and Answers about Biological Effects and Potential Hazards of Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields," *OET Bulletin* 56, Federal Communications Commission, Washington, D.C., August 1999, 26-27.

CREBL, "Renewable Energy Concept Alternative for Brisbane Baylands," submitted to Brisbane Community Development Director John Swiecki, January 3, 2011.

Jason Hanly-Forde, George Homsy, Katherine Lieberknecht, and Remington Stone, "Transfer of Developmental Rights Programs: Using the Market for Compensation and Preservation." <http://government.cce.cornell.edu/doc/html/Transfer%20of%20Development%20Rights%20Programs.htm>.

Gail Makinen, Coordinator, "Report for Congress: The Economic Effects of 9/11: A Retrospective Assessment," September 27, 2002, Congressional Research Service, Washington, D.C. (<http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/RL31617.pdf>).

Elna E. Miller, "The 2 AM decision," Graduate seminar paper presented at Sacramento State College, May 24, 1990 (courtesy of Ray Miller).

APPENDIX

Council Election History

Election Date	Those in BOLD were elected (or recalled)		
9/12/61	John E. Turner	625	Mayor 1961-1963
	Jess C. Salmon	534	
	Ernest D. Conway	512	
	James E. "Red" Williams	391	
	Edward A. Schwenderlauf	375	
	John De Marco	354	
	Adolph (Jack) Grabovsky	322	
	Jane Fitting	242	
	Julius Stern	235	
	Jasper (Jack) Tripp	214	
	William T. Mozzetti	192	
	Laura M. Johnson	146	
	Edward L. Pflighaar	135	
	John "Jack" Pryshepa	118	
	Lewis Curtis	114	
Julius Verniest	83		
4/10/62	James E. "Red" Williams	512	Mayor 1963-1965
	Ernest D. Conway	500	
	Edward A. Schwenderlauf	418	
	John Pryshepa	188	
4/14/64	John E. Turner	447	Mayor 1965-1966
	Jess C. Salmon	370	
	Dale E. With	298	
	John L. Bell	225	
	Paul S. Schmidt	175	
	John "Jack" Pryshepa	39	
	L.W. Dyer	1	
Feb-65	Dale E. With		Mayor 1967-1968
	<i>(Appointed to fill Vacancy due to John Turner's resignation)</i>		
4/12/66	Robert W. McLennan	370	Mayor 1969-1970
	John L. Bell	340	Mayor 1968-1969
	Edward A. Schwenderlauf	334	Mayor 1966-1967
	Ernest D. Conway	333	
	James E. "Red" Williams	319	
	Frederick A. Schmidt	182	
	William F. Strassburger	149	
	David H. With	105	
	Louis C. Walker, Jr.	85	
	Paty W. Sharp	70	
	Julius Lum	2	
Waldy King	1		

Election Date

Those in BOLD were elected (or recalled)

5/2/67	<i>Recall</i>	Jess C. Salmon (Not recalled)	Y-335 N-585	
4/19/68		S. J. Guardino	523	Mayor 1970-1971
		Jess C. Salmon	473	
		Dale E. With	428	
		Ernest D. Conway	415	
		David H. With	234	
4/14/70		Julius Stern	401	Mayor 1971-1972
		William E. "Bill" Lawrence	383	Mayor 1972-1973
		Nick Cook	363	
		James E. "Red" Williams	341	
		David L. Torvik	255	
		John L. Bell	243	
		L. T. Clark	181	
4/11/72		S. J. Guardino	384	Mayor 1973-1974
		Jess C. Salmon	340	
		Paul F. Goercke	332	
		Thomas A. Bayne	294	
		Frank "H" Doolin	244	
		L. T. Clark	148	
		William C. Jacka	17	
		Ronald F. Harroun	10	
9/4/73	<i>Recall</i>	William E. "Bill" Lawrence	Y-525 N-373	
		Jess C. Salmon	Y-558 N-339	
		Julius Stern	Y-535 N-362	
11/27/73	<i>Short term (2)</i>	Anja K. Miller	436	Mayor 1974-1975
		Art Montenegro, Jr.	302	Mayor 1975-1976
		Jeannine D. Hodge	284	
		Charles H. Stanyan, Jr.	249	
		Charles E. Kemp	152	
		Laura M. Johnson	117	
		Maryann C. Nebel	62	
		L. T. Clark	61	
		Charles Whalen	31	
	<i>Long term (1)</i>	Paul F. Goercke	306	
		Joseph N. Thompson	246	
		Thomas A. Bayne	172	
		Patrick A. Kirby	145	
3/5/74	<i>Canvass rejected</i>			
6/4/74		Anja K. Miller	397	
		Art Montenegro, Jr.	312	
		Joseph N. Thompson	308	Mayor 1976-1977
		Jeannine D. Hodge	307	
		Charles H. Stanyan, Jr	301	
		James "Red" E. Williams	278	
		Patrick W. Bell	189	
		John C. Burr	119	
		Laura M. Johnson	113	
		Donald H. Bradshaw	62	

Election Date	Those in BOLD were elected (or recalled)		
11/5/74	Jeannine D. Hodge	450	
	Walter F. Peters, Jr.	393	
	L. T. Clark	87	
	<i>To fill vacancy due to resignation of S.J. Guardino</i>		
3/2/76	Jeannine D. Hodge	446	Mayor 1978-1979
	Paul F. Goercke	391	Mayor 1977-1978
	Geraldine L. Bolter	174	
	Sidney A. Madden	63	
3/8/77	Donald H. Bradshaw	228	Mayor 1979-1980
	Joseph W. Kerska	195	
	L. T. Clark	48	
	Paul Ellison	21	
<i>To fill vacancy due to resignation of Art Montenegro, Jr.</i>			
3/7/78	Donald H. Bradshaw	342	
	Art Montenegro, Jr.	307	Mayor 1981-1982
	Fred Smith	297	Mayor 1980-1981
	William E. (Bill) Lawrence	254	
	Joseph W. Kerska	208	
	Heidi H. Dupre	155	
	Edna M. Ruggiero	87	
4/3/79	<i>Recall of Five Members of City Council</i>		
	Donald H. Bradshaw	Y-284 N-410	
	Paul Goercke	Y-275 N-417	
	Jeannine D. Hodge	Y-293 N-397	
	Arthur Montenegro, Jr.	Y-282 N-411	
	Fred Smith	Y-289 N-400	
	<i>(Recall Not Successful)</i>		
4/8/80	Jeannine D. Hodge	407	Mayor 1983-1984
	William E. (Bill) Lawrence	321	Mayor 1982-1983
	Heidi H. Dupre	141	
	Jim Tannlund	138	
	Verna Ober	103	
4/13/82	Fred Smith	226	Mayor 1985-1986
	Donald H. Bradshaw	206	Mayor 1984-1985
	Arthur Montenegro, Jr.	204	
	Verna Ober	115	
	Heidi H. Dupre	89	
4/10/84	Jeannine D. Hodge	600	
	Ray Miller	579	Mayor 1986-1987
	William E. "Bill" Lawrence	291	
11/5/85	Fred Smith	618	Mayor 1988-1989
	Lewis E. Graham	584	Mayor 1987-1988
	Tony Attard	575	
	Art Montenegro, Jr.	347	
	Denis J. O'Sullivan	342	
	Allen Ray Schnibben	316	

Election Date

Those in BOLD were elected (or recalled)

11/3/87	Ray Miller	531	Mayor 1989-1990
	Susan M. Nielson	517	
	John Bell	428	
5/9/89 <i>Recall</i>	Susan M. Neilson	Y-596 N-593	
	Tony Attard	Y-593 N-587	
	Lewis E. Graham	Y-597 N-581	
	Fred Smith	Y-582 N-596	
6/5/89 <i>Recount</i>	Susan M. Neilson	Resigned **	
<i>**First considered recalled by 3 votes. She requested a recount which decided that she had won by one vote. Former Mayors sued to nullify the recount and judge ruled in favor of Former Mayors. Judge allowed her to continue to serve while she appealed decision. Because of uproar she decided to resign.)</i>			
8/8/89	Steve Waldo	390	
	Brad Kerwin	290	
	Lee Panza	288	
	Jay Kushner	282	
	Leonard Iniguez	171	
	Fred Jaramillo	159	
	Donald H. Bradshaw	143	
	<i>To fill vacancies due to recall of Tony Attard and Lewis E. Graham</i>		
11/7/89	Steve Waldo	448	Mayor 1990-1991
	Lee Panza	406	Mayor 1992-1993
	Brad Kerwin	375	Mayor 1991-1992
	Heidi H. Dupre	316	
	Don H. Bradshaw	237	
	Leonard Iniguez	210	
2/6/90	Clara Johnson	254	
	Heidi H. Dupre	80	
	Don Shoecraft	64	
	Jay Kushner	37	
<i>To fill vacancy due to Susan Neilson's resignation</i>			
11/5/91	Ray Miller	466	Mayor 1994-1995
	Clara Johnson	442	Mayor 1993-1994
	Heidi H. Dupre	213	
11/2/93	Clarke Conway	520	Mayor 1996-1997
	Steve Waldo	511	Mayor 1995-1996
	Lee Panza	466	
	Brad Kerwin	456	
	Dana Dillworth	453	
	John C. Burr	446	
11/7/95	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	571	Mayor 1998-1999
	Sepi Richardson	398	
	Dean Jennings	276	
	Louie Ladow	213	
11/4/97	Clarke Conway	550	Mayor 2000-2001
	Steve Waldo	475	Mayor 1999-2000
	Lee Panza	386	Mayor 1997-1998
	Michael Barnes	266	
	Heidi H. Dupre	186	

Election Date**Those in BOLD were elected (or recalled)**

11/2/99	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	530	Mayor 2002-2003
	Clara Johnson	466	Mayor 2001-2002
	Sepi Richardson	405	
	Daniel Licon	114	
11/6/01	Lee Panza	561	
	Michael Barnes	463	Mayor 2003-2004
	Sepi Richardson	457	Mayor 2004-2005
	Haji Jameel	425	
	Dana Dillworth	376	
	Ken McCall	316	
11/8/03	Clara Johnson	Appointed	
	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Appointed	Mayor 2005-2006
<i>No election due to two nominations for two seats</i>			
11/8/05	Clarke Conway	699	
	Sepi Richardson	627	Mayor 2008-2009
	Michael Barnes	529	Mayor 2007-2008
	Michael Schumann	510	
	Dana Dillworth	452	
	Haji Jameel	338	
	David Gangloff	245	
	Ron Colognna	120	
	Joe Pelayo	109	
	Steve Waldo	879	Mayor 2006-2007
	<i>Ran un-opposed to fill vacancy due to Clara Johnson's resignation</i>		
11/6/07	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	460	Mayor 2010-2011
	Steve Waldo	368	
	Roberto Martinez	192	
11/3/09	Clarke Conway	570	Mayor 2009-2010
	Cliff Lentz	546	Mayor 2011-2012
	Sepi Richardson	488	
	Michael Barnes	460	
	Emile Manara	137	
11/8/11	Ray Miller	602	Mayor 2012-2013
	Terry O'Connell	487	
	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	413	

APPENDIX

Council Members List

Brisbane Council Members: Mayor is in BOLD

1961	Ed Schwenderlauf	Ernest Conway	Jess Salmon	James Williams	John Turner
1962	Ed Schwenderlauf	Ernest Conway	Jess Salmon	James Williams	John Turner
1963	Ed Schwenderlauf	Ernest Conway	Jess Salmon	James Williams	John Turner
1964	Ed Schwenderlauf	Ernest Conway	Jess Salmon	James Williams	John Turner
1965	Ed Schwenderlauf	Ernest Conway	Jess Salmon	James Williams	John Turner
1966	Ed Schwenderlauf	Ernest Conway	Jess Salmon	James Williams	John Turner
1967	Ed Schwenderlauf	John Bell	Jess Salmon	Robert McLennan	Dale With
1968	Ed Schwenderlauf	John Bell	Jess Salmon	Robert McLennan	Dale With
1969	Ed Schwenderlauf	John Bell	Jess Salmon	Robert McLennan	S.J. Guardino
1970	Ed Schwenderlauf	John Bell	Jess Salmon	Robert McLennan	S.J. Guardino
1971	Bill Lawrence	Julius Stern	Jess Salmon	Nick Cook	S.J. Guardino
1972	Bill Lawrence	Julius Stern	Jess Salmon	Nick Cook	S.J. Guardino
1973	Bill Lawrence	Julius Stern	Jess Salmon	James Williams	S.J. Guardino
1974	Paul Goercke	Anja Miller	Art Montenegro	James Williams	S.J. Guardino
1975	Paul Goercke	Anja Miller	Art Montenegro	Jeannine Hodge	Joe Thompson
1976	Paul Goercke	Anja Miller	Art Montenegro	Jeannine Hodge	Joe Thompson
1977	Paul Goercke	Anja Miller	Vacancy	Jeannine Hodge	Joe Thompson
1978	Paul Goercke	Anja Miller	Don Bradshaw	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1979	Paul Goercke	Art Montenegro	Don Bradshaw	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1980	Paul Goercke	Art Montenegro	Don Bradshaw	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1981	Bill Lawrence	Art Montenegro	Don Bradshaw	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1982	Bill Lawrence	Art Montenegro	Don Bradshaw	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1983	Bill Lawrence	Art Montenegro	Don Bradshaw	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1984	Ray Miller	Art Montenegro	Don Bradshaw	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1985	Ray Miller	Art Montenegro	Don Bradshaw	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1986	Ray Miller	Tony Attard	Lou Graham	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1987	Ray Miller	Tony Attard	Lou Graham	Jeannine Hodge	Fred Smith
1988	Ray Miller	Tony Attard	Lou Graham	Susan Nielsen	Fred Smith
1989	Ray Miller	Tony Attard	Lou Graham	Susan Nielsen	Fred Smith
1990	Ray Miller	Brad Kerwin	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
1991	Ray Miller	Brad Kerwin	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
1992	Ray Miller	Brad Kerwin	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
1993	Ray Miller	Brad Kerwin	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
1994	Ray Miller	Clarke Conway	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
1995	Ray Miller	Clarke Conway	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
1996	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Clarke Conway	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Sepi Richardson
1997	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Clarke Conway	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Sepi Richardson
1998	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Clarke Conway	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Sepi Richardson
1999	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Clarke Conway	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Sepi Richardson
2000	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Clarke Conway	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
2001	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Clarke Conway	Steve Waldo	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
2002	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Michael Barnes	Sepi Richardson	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
2003	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Michael Barnes	Sepi Richardson	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
2004	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Michael Barnes	Sepi Richardson	Lee Panza	Clara Johnson
2005	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Michael Barnes	Sepi Richardson	Lee Panza	Vacancy
2006	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Michael Barnes	Sepi Richardson	Steve Waldo	Clarke Conway
2007	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Michael Barnes	Sepi Richardson	Steve Waldo	Clarke Conway
2008	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Michael Barnes	Sepi Richardson	Steve Waldo	Clarke Conway
2009	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Michael Barnes	Sepi Richardson	Steve Waldo	Clarke Conway
2010	Cyril G. "Cy" Bologoff	Cliff Lentz	Sepi Richardson	Steve Waldo	Clarke Conway
2011	Ray Miller	Cliff Lentz	Sepi Richardson	Terry O'Connell	Clarke Conway

