



Sausalito confronts historic inequities, considers affordable housing  
on its waterfront

*J.K. Dineen, San Francisco Chronicle, August 5, 2020*

“For 32 years, Sausalito has protected its scrappy industrial waterfront, banning both housing and offices in the 225-acre Marinship district, which stretches for about a mile north of downtown.

“Hundreds of maritime workers and artists live and toil on the water, a world apart from the glass towers visible across the bay.

“But with the Black Lives Matter movement forcing cities to confront historic racial, social, and economic inequality, Sausalito officials are debating whether some land in Marinship might be appropriate for low-income or senior housing. In July, during a contentious, eight-hour meeting that focused on both racial justice and a new, 20-year general plan...the City Council voted 4-1 to erase language that barred land-based housing there.

“Sausalito resident John DiRe, a retired engineer, said that instead of relaxing the zoning to allow for residential development, the city should expand the district’s light industrial space, which generates about 41% of the city’s business taxes. He said the new general plan should seek to convert office space allowed in the 1970s and ’80s to arts and light industry.

“But the question of who is benefiting from the busy Sausalito waterfront is especially charged, given its history as a jobs center for Black World War II. More than 2,200 Black workers, mostly transplants from the South, migrated to Marin County during the war, working to pump out 92 cargo ships in about five years. But while Blacks were allowed to work alongside whites in Sausalito, they were barred from buying or renting property there, and instead were housed in Marin City, an unincorporated area a mile northwest of the shipyards.

“If some housing is allowed in the Marinship, the question of where exactly it would go is sure to be controversial. The city’s traditional hillside neighborhoods are largely built-out and the flatlands that stretch along the waterfront represent some of the only large parcels on which new housing could be constructed.”

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