

A Vision for Our City

Chick-Fil-A, Chipotle, and CVC are three businesses that have recently petitioned the Vallejo Planning Commission to do business in the city of Vallejo. What does LGBT have to do with the Vallejo Planning Commission and its decision to grant the permits? There seem to be members on the Vallejo Planning that feel it is more important to keep Chick-Fil-A, specifically, out of our city because of their political position on same-sex marriage.

On June 2, 7:00 pm in the city council chamber, I sat in the audience and listened to a Planning Commissioner recommend to the citizens of Vallejo to **not** allow Chick-Fil-A to do business in our city because of a political bias. One of our local pastors in attendance made a very insightful statement when he said it didn't matter to him if a person is Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual or Transgender (**LGBT**) or even Christian; if Chick-Fil-A wants to do business in our city and that business will improve the quality of life, Vallejo should welcome them.

It would seem that after experiencing bankruptcy our city officials would roll out the welcome mat to companies wanting to do business in Vallejo. For the life of me, I could not understand why our commissioners would make it so hard for companies to come to Vallejo. For example, WinCo, an employee owned company wanted to come to Vallejo, they had a location on Redwood Street in Vallejo. Because of all the bureaucratic red tape in getting city approval they decided to forego a store in Vallejo.

Could it be that *outsiders* have a greater vision for our city than those that are in official positions that represent us? That evening, a commissioner said that Vallejo was not a destination city and that most of the customers who would frequent the proposed businesses would come from local citizens. So what if that is true? To me, the

greater problem seems to be that our commissioner is short-sighted and not aware that Vallejo is the *Jewel of the Northbay*. Vallejo is poised to meet the needs of the millions of vacationers that come through our city, even if it is *on their way* to other locations. We need to remind the Commission that Vallejo is on the move! It strategically sits between three main highway arteries: I-80, I-780, H29 and 37, that require people to come through our city. Are we ready? We should be. This is an awesome opportunity to grow!

We need to remind our commissioners that Vallejo is the often overlooked, hidden diamond of the San Francisco Bay Area. Vallejo sits on a hill between San Francisco to the south and the Napa Valley Wine Country to the north, two of the most visited tourist destinations in the world.

If Vallejo is ever going to thrive, we, its people, have got to see ourselves as something other than what the newspapers and nay-sayers have led us to believe. Vallejo is a college town! How about that! We are the home of the California Maritime Academy, the #3 Mechanical Engineering university in the United States; Touro University of Mare Island - the #1 Osteopathic Medical university in the world. Solano Community College and Sonoma State University have placed satellite campuses in our city for both our youth and adult populations, providing localized access to higher education – a launching opportunity for the betterment of all our citizens.

Most recently, to add to the brilliance of this city, our school district just received a 6-million dollar grant to provide equity, excellence, and relevant education to our children and young people in our schools (Wall-to-Wall Academies). The faith community consistently joins hands with our school administrators, business leaders, and local government officials to bring equity and excellence to education, and provide a model for other school districts to follow.

Yes, Mr. & Ms. Commissioner – Vallejo *is* a destination city. Our business community is working together with the Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau, along with the Vallejo City Council, to give vacationers and travelers more reasons to stop in our city making Vallejo a destination city. Why is it that a few of us can see it and our designated leaders can't?

Mare Island is a potential economic engine that can build a strong financial foundation for continued future growth. That is beautiful waterfront property this is used for recreation. Mare Island's golf course, the oldest golf course west of the Mississippi, is just one of three beautiful spaces for the enthusiast. Hiddenbrook and Blue Rock Springs golf course are PGA-quality greens.

Six flags amusement park has over 1.2 million visitors a year; and with the 360-Project on the way, we're looking forward to potentially adding another attraction to encourage tourism in Vallejo.

To top it off, we have one of the best climates in all of Northern California. And remember, people take the ferry to San Francisco from Vallejo's pier – not Fairfield or Napa.

Recently, Vallejo was known all over the world as the first bankrupt city in the United States. Today, we are the first city to come out of bankruptcy. The question we should be asking ourselves is, "Now what: what does a city do after it has been bankrupt?"

Well, for sure we don't live in the past. And we don't continually put ourselves down by saying what we are not! I propose that we begin again with a resilience to build ourselves stronger and not repeat mistakes. How?

- With our votes we've appointed commissioners and other officials to have *our* best interest in mind – all of us, not just the interests of a few. So as leaders, we petition you, commissioners, to make decisions that reflect the greater good of us all – and that is for business and commerce to be allowed to grow in Vallejo.
- We need to work together, Government, Education, Business, Religious leadership, and LBGT – together. A city divided against itself cannot stand.
- That being said, understand that you can be great all by yourself and try to save the day or *we* can come together and work as a **TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More)** and change the world.

Submitted By - Transformation Vallejo