

TURNING SWORDS

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INTO PLOUGHSHARES: A VISIONARY BLUEPRINT FOR CONCORD

When military bases shut down, communities face a daunting task. How can they overcome the loss of military jobs and capitalize on new opportunities? Base re-use plans can revitalize communities—or they can result in under-used and unsafe sites, as competing visions and complex layers of bureaucracy bog down the process. In early 2012, however, the City of Concord demonstrated how to do it right. After six years of work, the City Council unanimously approved a visionary plan for the shuttered 5,000-acre Concord Naval Weapons Station. This comprehensive blueprint lays

the foundation for strengthening the city's economy and enhancing its quality of life by creating a development with walkable neighborhoods, affordable homes near transit and services, local construction jobs and open space that everyone can enjoy.

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The Community Coalition for a Sustainable Concord (CCSC)—a groundbreaking alliance of housing, labor, faith-based, neighborhood and environmental organizations—has been at the center of this effort. The Coalition (which includes CNWS Neighborhood Alliance, East Bay Housing Organizations, Contra Costa Building Trades Council, Greenbelt Alliance, Public Advocates and Save Mount Diablo) emerged when initial plans for the eight-square-mile site were heading in the wrong direction—toward the same costly sprawl that drove the housing bust and kicked off the Great Recession. The coalition worked closely with elected officials and city staff, and along with hundreds of community members, it turned out to dozens of public meetings to build a shared vision.

As cities throughout the Bay Area undertake similar large-scale development projects, Concord points the way to success. Transparency, community engagement and consensus-building led to a plan that:

- **Promotes healthy, walkable neighborhoods** by clustering a vibrant mix of townhomes and apartments, workplaces, shops, schools and other amenities near public transit.
- **Creates complete communities by integrating 3,000 homes** (25% of all new housing) that will be affordable to lower-income families, veterans, seniors and teachers.
- **Provides economic opportunities** through policies that will draw 40% of the workforce from local tradespeople and encourage the use of proven apprenticeship programs for youth and veterans.
- **Preserves nearly 70% of the area as parks and open space**—3,500 acres, which is three times the size of Golden Gate Park.

Certainly, challenges remain and the project will take many years. As site clean-up and land transfers proceed, the Coalition will continue to make sure that labor standards, environmental restoration and affordable housing policies stay on course. As we continue to work together to bring this shared vision to life, other communities in the Bay Area can draw on the lessons from Concord to show how collaboration can ensure that large-scale redevelopment projects serve diverse community needs.

EBHO is the coordinator of the Coalition for a Sustainable Concord, founded in 2007.

By the Community Coalition for a Sustainable Concord

