

# Marin Voice: County leaders can do more to fight Marin City development plan

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Commentary, Opinion



*Marchers including Nancy Reed in front and Betty Price, both of Marin City, carry a save out city sign as march up Drake Avenue after a rally at Rocky Graham Park to*

*protest a new housing development planned for Marin City in Marin City, Calif. on Saturday, Oct. 29, 2022. (Sherry LaVars/Marin Independent Journal)*

It is an event that only happens every 33 years. Last month, the religious holidays of Good Friday, Ramadan and Passover occurred on the same weekend.

It was a time of reflection. We are connected spiritually and morally in the struggle to maintain the dignity of our fellow human beings. We spoke about what it truly means to be people of faith.

Faith is not only about worship. It is about service, sacrifice and a communion of people standing for those who have been wronged and harmed. In Judaism, Islam and Christianity, caring for one's neighbors and speaking out for justice and equity are central tenets.

That same day, Marin City residents, through the work of the Save Our City coalition, came together and held a Good Friday rally and prayer service. We prayed, sang and took note of what we perceive to be an unjust, ongoing act of racially influenced actions of inequality. The results are the present economic and social disparities that exist between Marin City and the rest of Marin County.

Recently, a developer has manipulated the system of laws to scapegoat Marin City for housing in Marin County. While over 45% of the housing in Marin City is publicly supported housing (one of the highest percentages in the Bay Area), it has nevertheless been targeted as the location for a five-story building of 74 units. The project is intended to be across from where children play. It has almost no parking and the location, as well as the density, will significantly impede the only escape route from the area in the event of a natural disaster. The complex will be built for the profit of nonresidents of Marin City.

It is being done with eerily familiar and weak arguments from those who have the power and authority to do something.

Members of the Marin Board of Supervisors only said that their hands are tied by state laws. I believe they know it is unjust, but they supposedly cannot think of anything other than approving the developer's low-cost loan and allowing the Marin Housing Authority to approve Section 8 housing vouchers for only 25 of the 74 units.

Most Christians recognize this argument because, in the story of Easter, the Sanhedrin council said it found no fault with Jesus, but they caved into the crowd (Luke 23:1-7). It lacked courage and failed to stand up for right. The innocent suffered.

Sometimes, politicians engage in the practice of writing laws to limit people's personal and community autonomy while finding ways to allow rich and powerful people to get around these laws. They focus on the broader community concerns without focusing on their real jobs – representing the specific and lived experiences of the people who reside in the districts they serve, especially when these districts are inhabited by people of color.

Faith will not be silent. Hope will not let us simply give up. What will we do in the face of injustice? We can't hide in our houses of worship and remember our own communities' suffering and seek a deeper communion with God while our tax money and politicians are acting in morally bankrupt and dangerous ways. What does it mean to be a person of faith if not to raise your voice when you see wrong is being done to our fellow human beings?

The political and social acts of cowardice and acquiescence to power continue. We must stand, shout and mobilize to change the false narrative of Marin City, which is being used as yet another scapegoat for the sins of avarice, pride and greed.

I believe the planned complex has no redemptive possibilities. The housing authority should reject approval for the Section 8 vouchers. The supervisors must reconsider the vote for the loan. They should stop saying things are “in the works.” Those we have elected should stand up and speak truth to power.

It is not that hard to stand up and say this is wrong. Join me every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. in the Senior City Center to participate in the response. Faith is more than words. It is action.

*The Rev. Floyd Thompkins, of Novato, is the pastor of Saint Andrew Presbyterian Church in Marin City.*