

# Re-imagining California

*A Sustainable Future for the Golden State*

*Fort Baker Leadership Summits* | SPRING 2009



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*February - March - April 2009*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In spring 2009, forty California leaders from business, academia, philanthropy, government, and nonprofit organizations gathered in Sausalito for the Fort Baker Leadership Summits, named for the national park where the series of three summits was held. Together we focused on the obstacles and complexity in adopting a comprehensive action plan to guide California toward sustainability.

Through a process developed and facilitated by consultants from GreenYourManagement, Inc., the group was introduced to advanced “systems thinking” tools for managing complexity. The experience demonstrated that to attain sustainability California needs policies and an infrastructure that reflect the interrelationship of economy, environment, education, and equity, rather than continue to address these issues in fragmented “silos.”

The summits generated many ideas that have been distilled into specific recommendations intended for our state's leaders to build on and implement. The three initiatives for “Re-Imagining California” are discussed on pages 6-10. They are:

1. Establish an alliance representing business, environmental, and social equity leaders, and public officials to develop and advance a Sustainability Agenda for the future of California.
2. Once the state's vision, goals, and metrics for sustainability are in place, use them as the basis for developing and implementing a Sustainability Agenda in each region of California.
3. Implement a statewide communications program to build public understanding of and involvement in sustainability and a shared vision of economic vitality, environmental health, and fairness for all Californians.

An outcome of the summits is the Fort Baker Leadership Group (FBLG), an alliance of diverse, engaged, and influential Californians to advocate these recommendations. Our goal is to have California's elected leaders adopt a long-term, comprehensive, integrated plan of action to achieve sustainability.

## RE-IMAGINING CALIFORNIA

2009 may be remembered as the year California decided to change course.

California's economy, the eighth largest in the world, is on the brink of bankruptcy. With the state awash in red ink, and California's 58 counties, 480 cities, and 2,300 special districts, each with its own mission and bureaucracy in crisis mode, many see the collapse of the status quo as an opportunity to set a new direction—one focused on long term sustainability.

Building a sustainable future for California won't be found only by consolidating local agencies, eliminating inefficiencies, re-districting, or even long-term budget reform. But, as several forward-acting nations have demonstrated, a sustainable future begins with a commitment to a shared vision for economic prosperity based in environmental health, and to creating the conditions for broad public participation in decisions affecting the lives and future of all citizens. In effect, what is required is that sustainability becomes the galvanizing principle for future policy making in California.

Acting together to protect our children's future, we face a choice: Change course soon enough and on a scale large enough to ward off the worst impacts of inaction, or business as usual.

## FINDING A NEW WAY—INTEGRATED PLANNING

In 2009 WELL Network, a nonpartisan organization, convened the Fort Baker Leadership Summits at the Institute at the Golden Gate in Sausalito, California. Forty business executives, policymakers, scientists, academics, and foundation and nonprofit leaders participated in three summits over three months. Through a systems-thinking process developed and facilitated by Jane Lorand and Bruce McKenzie of GreenYourManagement, Inc., the invited participants explored how to overcome the fragmented policymaking and planning that stand in the way of a sustainable future for California.

There was broad agreement that despite policy inroads to address global warming and raise fuel efficiency standards, California isn't making sufficient progress toward sustainability in the time frame required for a healthy, thriving state. The group found that some of the obstacles stem from a lack of integrated thinking about interrelated issues. Fragmentation, complexity, and a lack of a common vision and guiding principles are among the root causes of our state's stagnation. Water, waste, pollution, climate change, energy, and economic growth, though interrelated, lack integrated planning and management.

Another key conclusion of the Fort Baker Leadership Summits is the need for greater transparency in government decision making. The processes by which public funding is allocated keep many communities—particularly the poor—from fairly sharing in jobs, transportation, and other public benefits. With people of color the new majority in California, creating new paths to engaging their participation in decision making is critical to building a fair and healthy future for us all.

## LOOKING FOR MODELS

WELL Network was formed in 2003 by women concerned about environmental decline, and how toxic chemicals pervasive in products and our environment risk our families' health. In educating women about the unavoidable presence of chemicals in our bodies and the need to bring about reforms, we found that regulating chemicals one by one wouldn't begin to solve the problem. Systemic change would be necessary.

Research by Resource Renewal Institute, a nonprofit think tank in San Francisco, led WELL to explore how other countries have decoupled economic growth and environmental degradation. In many places, "green plans" created with wide public input, transparency, and the direct participation of business, industry, and the nonprofit sectors provide a roadmap toward sustainability, while maintaining economic competitiveness and environmental health.

Despite the complexity of environmental problems and the diverse interests of stakeholders in the "green planning" process, governments including New Zealand, The Netherlands, and the European Union have adopted such long-term integrated planning and improved the health of the environment, generated innovation and opportunity for the business sector, and provided greater accountability and transparency throughout government.

WELL Network is committed to advancing such collaborative, integrated, long-term planning in California. The Fort Baker Leadership Summits were part of that effort.

Common among all models for successful integrated planning is a shared vision and guiding principles for a sustainable future. Those adopted by summit participants can be found on page 14.

## INITIATIVES FOR “RE-IMAGINING CALIFORNIA”

“Re-imagining California, Creating a Future for the Golden State,” describes three initiatives that emerged from the summits, to which the Fort Baker Leadership Group and others who recognize the need to change course in California, have committed their ongoing support.

We ask our state leaders to:

- 1 **Establish a diverse alliance to develop and advance a Sustainability Agenda for California.**

### *What’s happening now?*

There is no single vision for a sustainable California or operating plan for California’s future. The government relies on funded advocates pitted against each other to provoke policy change or to maintain the status quo. Agencies charged with managing the environment and natural resources operate in silos and don’t have an opportunity to consider the collective impacts of policies and practices across departments. Although more than half of Californians are people of color, they often are underrepresented in decisions affecting them.

### *What’s needed?*

- ▶ A systems approach to developing a Sustainability Agenda that sets goals for improving the state’s long-term economic and environmental health.
- ▶ Actions linking short-term practices and long-term impacts.
- ▶ Indices designed to measure improvement in three areas: environmental health, economic prosperity, and fair and equitable access to jobs and resources for all Californians.

### ***What must California do?***

- ▶ Establish a diverse alliance representing business, environment, scientific, and social equity organizations, and state, regional, and local officials whose mission is to create a Sustainability Agenda for the future of California.
- ▶ Adopt a vision and guiding principles such as those drafted at the Fort Baker Leadership Summits. (See page 14.)
- ▶ Map the existing sustainability landscape.
- ▶ Determine what the missing pieces are and set goals.
- ▶ Develop a plan of action.
- ▶ Provide benchmarks based on sustainability principles.
- ▶ Adopt goals and metrics through legislation, regulation, or Executive Order.

### ***What will it look like if we succeed?***

- ▶ Collaboration and cross-pollination among business, environmental, and social equity sectors lead to innovation, jobs, and increased prosperity.
- ▶ California's governing agencies manage public resources guided by a common, overarching vision and defined principles for environmental restoration and sustainability.
- ▶ Business, Environmental, and Social Equity indices are applied as measures of progress.
- ▶ Underrepresented communities have consistent input into decisions and public investments.
- ▶ California is a leader in competitiveness, green jobs, and environmental health.

- 2 Once the state's vision, goals, and metrics are in place, use them as the basis for developing and implementing a Sustainability Agenda in each region of California.

### *What's happening now?*

Recognizing the interrelationship between air quality, growth, transportation, traffic, and environmental and public health, the California Legislature adopted SB 375. The bill requires regions to develop sustainability plans to meet strict air quality goals designed to lower carbon emissions that cause climate change. California regions have until 2010 to come up with plans in order to qualify for millions of dollars in transportation funds and avoid penalties.

In the absence of sustainability models, guidelines, and metrics (beyond air quality), regions are at a loss to develop meaningful, equitable, transformative sustainability plans.

There's a lack of transparency in the process by which transportation funds are currently distributed. The interests of urban and low-income residents dependent on public transportation aren't well represented in the process by which projects are sited and funded.

Past transportation investments have tended to perpetuate suburban sprawl, traffic congestion, and the destruction of farmland and California's dwindling natural habitats. Criteria for transportation investments must encourage practices and methods for a sustainable future.

### *What's needed?*

- ▶ Working models and incentives for regions to develop their Sustainability Agenda.
- ▶ A sustainability template that provides minimum standards, technical assistance, and guiding principles, whose goal is to promote sustainable business practices and opportunities for green jobs, access to transportation for all Californians, and the environmental health dimensions of SB 375, so that transportation investments become more equitable and sustainable.



### *What must California do?*

- ▶ Establish a coordinating mechanism, such as the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, to encourage collaboration and integrated planning among state, regional, and local agencies. Such regional efforts would be designed to put power back into local governments, with incentives and technical assistance from the state to lift people out of poverty, create jobs, and build an economy with a smaller carbon/environmental footprint.
- ▶ Lower barriers to participation by poor communities by building local leadership capacity and improving communication.

### *What will it look like if we succeed?*

- ▶ California would model a more collaborative form of governance, built on a common vision.
- ▶ The regions, with their distinct and complex characteristics—watersheds, foodsheds, ecology, population trends, and economic generators—become the building blocks for sustainability statewide.
- ▶ An innovation in one field fosters a new way of thinking in another field that encourages collaboration and new possibilities across sectors of business, environment, and equity.
- ▶ California is enriched by the perspectives of all residents, including currently under-represented communities and young adults.
- ▶ There is a shared public understanding of how the system works, fair access to participation in decision-making forums, and indicators for how the whole of society is doing that are widely disseminated and easily understood.

**3 Implement a statewide communications program to build public understanding of and involvement in sustainability, the challenges we face, and a shared vision of economic vitality, environmental health, and fairness for all Californians.**

***What's happening now?***

California's diverse geography, population, and existing power structures are obstacles to galvanizing a shared identity and common goals among Californians. Sustainability principles aren't currently made visible nor integrated into programs such as health, education, environment, food, or transportation.

***What's needed?***

- ▶ An integrated, statewide effort to teach, inspire, and reward behaviors that promote sustainability.

***What must California do?***

- ▶ Develop integrated curricula for California schools to teach sustainability.
- ▶ Create leadership training and opportunities for youth.
- ▶ Provide incentives and rewards for business, organizations, institutions, and individuals that innovate and model behaviors that promote sustainability.
- ▶ Launch a statewide communications campaign to promote understanding and actions that make sustainability "cool."
- ▶ Employ new communication and new media to reach Californians, particularly youth.

***What will it look like if we succeed?***

- ▶ Californians take personal responsibility for the environment and a sustainable future.
- ▶ There is a higher level of political engagement.
- ▶ There is greater "green" economic activity.
- ▶ Economic, environmental, and equity indicators improve.
- ▶ Environmental health and social equity are valued equally with the economy.
- ▶ Sustainability is a "binding force" among Californians.

## A CALL FOR CHANGE

The Fort Baker Leadership Group recognizes that California's problems are complex. We are promoting these initiatives as a starting point for change. Like the kind of planning they call for, the initiatives are integrated and of equal importance. Our goal is to have them adopted by the governor and the state Legislature in 2011, to be implemented immediately.

In developing these initiatives, the Fort Baker Leadership Group is building a movement with business, nonprofit, and community leaders calling for California to make sustainability the galvanizing principle for future policies. This principle cuts across the political, geographic, and economic differences that have brought California to a state of crisis, and offers hope for an economically secure, environmentally healthy future for all Californians.

## WHERE IS CALIFORNIA NOW?

The summits identified the need to examine how well integrated California's legislation and policy are currently. A subcommittee of the Fort Baker Leadership Group commissioned a "gap analysis" from Dominican University's Environmental Finance Center. A gap analysis examines and portrays the difference between a current situation and the ideal. The gap analysis features brief descriptions of California's current comprehensive legislation:

- ▶ **AB32:** Requires the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop regulations and market mechanisms to reduce California's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.
- ▶ **SB375:** Legislative companion to AB32, focuses on issues of transportation and growth, and mandates regional and local sustainability plans.
- ▶ **CEQA:** Requires local and state agencies to assess the environmental impact of development projects and plans.
- ▶ **Green Chemistry Initiative:** Develops policy options around an evaluation of the health effects of chemicals and possible alternatives with a science-based, systematic, comprehensive approach.
- ▶ **Blueprint Planning Program:** Aids local transportation agencies by providing support through grants and improved modeling capacity, thereby enhancing their ability to perform integrated transportation and land use planning.
- ▶ **State Water Plan:** The state's blueprint for integrated water management and sustainability—statewide and regional.

The analysis includes an overview of pertinent legislation including the European Union's REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation, and Restriction of Chemicals) and Environmental Action Program; The Netherlands National Environmental Policy Plan; the New Zealand Resource Management Act; and the Singapore Green Plan.

### *Gaps*

The analysis shows that a number of policy issues critical to California's sustainability are largely absent from current legislation, including a systemic approach, long-term health protection, security of energy supply, funding mechanisms to pay for legislative mandates, natural resource improvement, and the precautionary principle. Social equity is addressed in both the Blueprint Planning Program (which concentrates on transportation planning) and the State Water Plan, but is largely absent from the other comprehensive California legislation, plans, and policies.

### *Redundancy*

There are numerous, though not identical, redundancies in the legislation reviewed thus far. Five of the six bills analyzed address resource use and protection, energy conservation, and air quality. To take air quality as an example, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is primarily concerned with mitigating EPA-criteria air pollutants, AB32 and SB375 focus on greenhouse gas emissions, the Green Chemistry Initiative focuses on toxic air emissions, and the Blueprint Planning Program looks at reducing transportation-related air emissions.

### *Complexity*

Established in 1970, CEQA is the grandmother of California environmental legislation. As California grows, so does CEQA, which has been reassessed and amended to fit circumstances far beyond its original charter. The act did not originally include greenhouse gases in its purview. As a result, in planning for growth, community planning and development must now comply with CEQA, AB32, and SB375.

Given the voluminous changes and updates to such legislation (the 2009 CEQA statute is 228 pages, not counting appendices), research into state policy is daunting. Currently, no process exists for comparing one piece of legislation to another to highlight redundancies.

California legislation is continually evolving, leading to multiple plans and regulations that deal with parts of the same issue. Additionally, because no single piece of legislation covers the state's long-term sustainability, cumbersome new language is often awkwardly grafted onto older legislation.

The initial gap analysis does not address the budget impacts of redundancy. We have some idea of the cost to state government of implementing AB32 and SB 375, but not the overall cost to cities and counties, or whether the long-term benefits outweigh the short-term costs.

## *Facing the Future*

California's climate is changing. Any effort toward sustainability needs to address both adapting to climate change and mitigating its negative impacts. Virtually none of the existing legislation does this. The links between climate change and national security (predictions include climate refugees, food supplies affected, and increased wildfires, droughts, and storm severity) further complicate efforts toward a comprehensive and integrated plan.

California has a history of comprehensive planning initiatives that started off strong and then faded, including the California Performance Report, AB857 Environmental Goals and Policy Report, and the Bay Delta Conservation Plan. Thus, a deeper analysis is needed to examine how to overcome barriers to moving forward.

A full gap analysis will include other California legislation, plans, policies, and initiatives including:

- ▶ SB732, which supplements SB375 to meet the goals of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006.
- ▶ California Transportation Plan
- ▶ AB857 Environmental Goals and Policy Report
- ▶ California Regional Progress Report

The gap analysis points out the complexity of California's governing system and the interrelated nature of policy. Research continues to provide a fuller analysis to serve as a tool to guide the public policy debate.

## FORT BAKER LEADERSHIP SUMMITS

### *Vision Statement*

The course correction California makes will give every Californian a stake in a less fearful, more certain future in which all Californians take responsibility for the quality of life for present and future generations.

In this future, we breathe clean air, drink clean water, and fairly share in the benefits of a zero-waste, energy-secure economy, where it is understood that everyone has an active role to play in creating healthy communities, restoring natural resources, and ensuring social equity.

In our vision, we act as national and global citizens to meet the challenges of climate change. We hold ourselves, along with the earth's leaders, accountable for the environmental and social consequences of our actions.

As we look out over our beautiful state, we envision Californians connected to caring, self-organizing communities. The working relationships among our communities and the public and private sectors are based on transparency and mutual respect.

We are proud to teach our children the skills and values that will help realize this vision, and prepare them to take part in a future that has been made more secure through our commitment to one another's well being. It is a future of promise.

### *Guiding Principles*

1. Protect California's air, water, soil, and ocean from further harm; repair the damage that has already been done.
2. Build a vibrant economy around healthy ecosystems, creating conditions to optimize the well-being of all life.
3. Implement cohesive and integrated planning practices that bring government, industry, nonprofits, and the public to the same table for long-term, systemic planning for California's future.
4. Develop integrated indicators that both measure progress and signal any unintended consequences of policies addressing such interdependent issues as water, energy, waste, environmental health, pollution, climate change, and the economy.
5. Publicly account for the long-term, systemic consequences of our commercial, social, and environmental practices so that Californians can identify the true costs of any given policy or practice.
6. Eliminate waste through full life-cycle design.
7. Assess the impacts of decisions and policies using the three E's: Environment, Social Equity, and Economy.
8. Demonstrate transparency and actively promote the participation of diverse communities in decision making.
9. Educate Californians about the interdependent natural systems crucial to our survival—water, energy, waste, environmental health, pollution, climate change, and the economy.
10. Invest in strong, local communities, supporting residents to take every possible step toward our shared health and safety.

## WELL NETWORK

WELL Network is a nonprofit, non-partisan, women-led organization formed in 2003 to bring attention to shortsighted and poorly coordinated policies that have enabled pollution, toxic chemicals, and global warming to put the health of our families at risk. Our members include women who are business leaders, professionals, philanthropists, and decision makers within their communities. WELL Network produced the Fort Baker Leadership Summits in 2009 and regularly sponsors symposia, workshops, and publications that draw on innovation and best practices for sustainability. Our network includes experts and thought leaders in green planning—a long term, comprehensive and integrated approach to sustainability used internationally for more than two decades. We are a resource to policy makers and others committed to charting a sustainable future for California. [www.wellnetwork.org](http://www.wellnetwork.org)

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