
Campaign for Bay Area Localization

**** Redefining Progress ** Bay Localize ****
**** Business Alliance for Local Living Economies ** International Forum on Globalization ****
****Center for Sustainable Economy ****

ATTN: Reporters and Editors on Holiday Retail Beat
For Immediate Release: Tuesday, November 21, 2006

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BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS AGREE: LOCAL IS BETTER FOR THE ECONOMY

Climate change, peak oil, and gaping trade deficit make rapid transition a priority

Oakland, California – As Bay Area residents gear up for the Thanksgiving feast and the holiday shopping season, a new coalition of business and environmental organizations is calling on elected officials and business leaders to strengthen our regional economy through localization. While most people have grown accustomed to Thanksgiving meals grown thousands of miles away and holiday presents that come from China, the Campaign for Bay Area Localization says that the long-term health and sustainability of our region depends on creating an economy grounded in the local production of food, manufactured goods, energy, and financial capital.

In a 30-page strategy paper released this week, Redefining Progress, Bay Localize, Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, the International Forum on Globalization, and the Center for Sustainable Economy warn that rising fossil fuel costs, climate change impacts, growing international instability, and massive trade deficit pose real risks to the region. The paper, available online at www.regionalprogress.org, urges elected officials and business leaders to work closely to transform the Bay Area economy from one utterly dependent on imported food, energy, manufactured goods, and financial capital to one that is more self-reliant.

The Localization Campaign's paper, titled *Building a Resilient and Equitable Bay Area*, defines economic localization as "the process by which a region, county, city, or even neighborhood frees itself from an overdependence on the global economy and invests in its own resources to produce a significant portion of the goods, services, food, and energy it consumes from its local endowment of financial, natural, and human capital." The Campaign's economic localization strategy—which calls for altering taxes, subsidies, procurement and investment policies, and economic development programs—has already been endorsed by two dozen prominent non-profit organizations and government agencies.

“Imminent shortages of cheap fossil fuels, outsourced jobs, international debt, and rising insecurity demand a swift transition to an economy based on renewable energy and local supplies of manufactured goods, food, and financial capital,” says Dr. John Talberth, Director of the Sustainability Indicators Program at Redefining Progress. “Within the Bay Area, we have the talent and natural resources to make this happen in a way that protects the fragile Bay environment, equitably distributes benefits to its diverse population, and stabilizes our economic base. We hope elected officials and business leaders will join us to make this transition happen now, before the costs of inaction make the transition far more difficult.”

In its strategy paper, the Campaign identifies five Bay Area economic sectors that should be a priority for localization: food, energy, transportation, housing, manufacturing, and finance. Of these, the Campaign cites food as the most promising for short term localization, and applauds recent decisions by Kaiser Permanente and the City of Oakland to procure a greater proportion of their food from local farmers.

“The Bay Area is blessed with nearly 600,000 acres of farmland, along with extensive rooftop and urban green spaces, that could serve the region’s population a diversity of fresh foods,” says Aaron Lehmer, Network Coordinator for Bay Localize. “Coupled with seafood from our coasts and expanded partnerships with Central Valley farmers, there is no reason for the Bay Area to be importing well over half of its food supplies from distant producers who rely on heavy doses of chemical pesticides, preservatives, and fossil fuel energy to send their food here.”

To accomplish the transformation to a localized Bay Area economy, the Campaign has identified dozens of public governance and private sector initiatives. In many cases, these simply entail removal of the impediments to localization caused by skewed trade policies, misdirected taxes and subsidies, and other public policies that promote export led development and discourage production to meet local needs.

“Localization will evolve naturally and rapidly if we level the playing field so that local producers can compete with heavily subsidized corporations,” says Don Shaffer, Executive Director for Business Alliance for Local Living Economies. “Public procurement contracts that demand the cheapest goods but fail to consider social or environmental costs can be replaced by contracts that show preference for local goods and services. The practice of granting land use exemptions for Big Box retailers can be halted. What many people fail to realize is that the globalized economy did not happen naturally—in many cases it was force fed to us by these kinds of policies, which can now be reversed.”

The Campaign points out that the leadership of Bay Area governments is needed to speed the transition. It is calling on federal, state, and local agencies to adopt localization as a primary policy objective, study the potential for replacing imports with locally produced goods and services, and identify changes in taxes, subsidies, expenditure patterns, procurement practices, and public investments.

“Localization in the Bay Area will take coordination at every level of government,” says Suzanne York, Research Director at the International Forum on Globalization. “Our elected officials in Congress must reverse harmful trade agreements that fail to protect workers, the environment, or the Bay Area’s economic security. State and local officials must change transportation and land use policies to promote a compact urban landscape and not sprawl. At the local level, economic development must cease to be a zero sum gain whereby one city’s gains are another’s losses, and, instead, reflect the kind of cooperation needed to make this large scale transformation happen in a timely manner.”

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