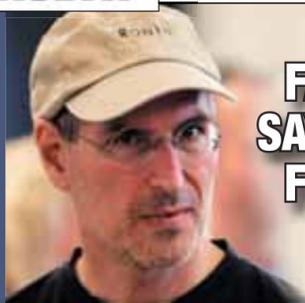




BOARD GAMES

IJWEEKEND



FASHION EXPERT SAYS CAPS ARE NOT FOR GROWN MEN

LIFESTYLES B1



TOP STORY: MONTESSORI SCHOOL PLANS CAMPUS

Santa Venetia land dispute settled

Developer to sell site, ending showdown with neighbors

By Jennifer Upshaw
Marin Independent Journal

A contentious piece of land in Santa Venetia once slated to be a subdivision is now set to become a school.

Marin Montessori School is in contract to buy the 30-acre parcel in Oxford Valley off North San Pedro Road from Kentfield developer Russell Shaw. Escrow is set to close in

June, school officials said. The purchase price was not disclosed.

School officials aim to build to "green" standards a junior high school with classrooms and multi-purpose space at the site.

The news has been welcomed by neighbors, who for years fought Shaw over, among other things, environmental concerns and traffic issues. "This is indeed a very special prop-

erty and that's part of the reason the neighbors have been concerned over the years," said Ladd Cahoon, attorney for Friends of San Pedro Mountain, a local group formed in 2001 to keep tabs on development plans.

"This proposal by Marin Montessori is generally very welcome by the Friends of San Pedro Mountain," he said.

See **SANTA VENETIA**, page A2



MARIN NEWS C1

RESERVES HELP NOVATO SCHOOLS SAVE SOME JOBS

The Novato school board this week tapped into a reserve fund to save some programs and took steps to save the jobs of a dozen teachers. The moves came as the district works to minimize the impact of proposed statewide budget cuts to reduce a massive budget deficit.

DATA ON VISITORS TO SAN QUENTIN LOST

The loss of a flash memory drive that held the names, birth dates and drivers' license numbers of more than 3,500 special clearance visitors to San Quentin State Prison has prompted officials to send out letters of warning to recent prison visitors.

MARIN SPORTS D1

MARIN BOXER MAKES STATE HALL OF FAME



An injury kept Novato's Andy Nance from fighting for the world championship, but nothing can stop him from attending his induction ceremony for the California Boxing Hall of Fame this summer.

MARIN OBITUARIES C2

Major Robert R. Buisson USAF, retired, Robert Stanley Harder, Donald Clark Hichens, Jack Kermoian Capt. SFFD, Ret., Daniel J. O'Neill, Kittrel David Peoples, Diane Janet Serchia (Tabarracci)

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WEATHER D6

Today: Partly cloudy and seasonable.

68/44



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HIGHWAY 101 IMPROVEMENT

\$66 million targeted for Novato Narrows



IJ photo/Alan Dep

A part of the Novato Narrows is shown north of the Redwood Landfill. Marin and Sonoma counties have secured about \$296 million of the \$800 million for the project, which will widen the road to six lanes.

Caltrans urges state commission to OK allocation

By Richard Halstead
Marin Independent Journal

STATE OFFICIALS have recommended allocating another \$66 million to the effort to ease traffic congestion in the Novato Narrows stretch of Highway 101.

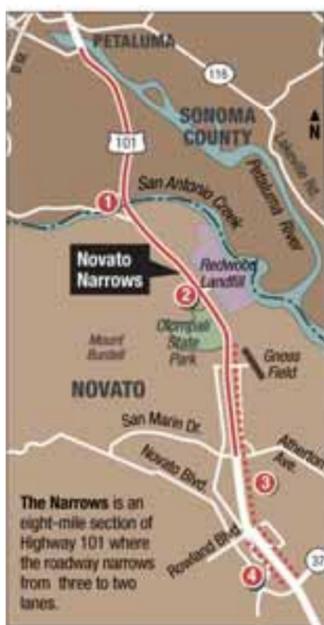
"We're thrilled. We're getting money that is pretty precious," said Dianne Steinhauser, executive director of the Transportation Authority of Marin, noting the state's massive budget deficit. "There is hardly anyone else in the Bay Area that is getting this level of funding."

Construction of new commuter lanes in the Marin portion of the Narrows could begin in 2010, Steinhauser said.

The Narrows is an eight-mile section of Highway 101 between Atherton Avenue in Novato and the Petaluma River Bridge in Sonoma County, where the roadway narrows from three to two lanes.

Due to growth in Sonoma County, a morning commute bottleneck occurs in that stretch and has been a growing source of frustration for drivers as more vehicles use the roadway. The Narrows is one of the worst morning commute pockets in the Bay Area, according to state Department of Transportation.

See **NOVATO NARROWS**, page A2



Narrows project plans

- Work on discrete sections of the project will start as money becomes available.
- 1. Construct a new section of highway at San Antonio Creek where the road regularly floods.
- 2. Improve the interchange at Redwood Landfill.
- 3. Add a northbound carpool lane from Highway 37 to a half mile north of Atherton Avenue near Olompali Park.
- 4. Add a southbound carpool lane from Rowland Boulevard to Highway 37.

IJ graphic

MORTGAGE CRISIS

Housing relief deal reached in Senate

By Kevin G. Hall
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Senate leaders late Wednesday unveiled bipartisan legislation that would provide funds for mortgage counseling, tax incentives for home buyers willing to purchase a foreclosed or newly built home and aid to states struggling with rising foreclosure rates.

> **Recession is possible, Fed chief says /C4**

"We helped Wall Street, we're all glad Bear Stearns was taken care of, but now it's our turn take care of people on Main Street," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said Wednesday evening on the Senate floor.

The Foreclosure Prevention Act is a follow-up to February's economic stimulus plan, which is intended to spark the sagging economy. Wednesday's compromise bill targets the troubled housing sector, which is at the heart of the nation's economic problems. The compromise offers some important advances, but some economists argue that it falls far

See **SENATE**, page A2

NEW STUDIES

How genes have roles in smoking, lung cancer

By Seth Borenstein
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Why do some 90-year-old chain smokers avoid lung cancer, while other people who smoke far less wind up dying of the disease? How can some people light up now and then without getting hooked, while others are addicted practically from their first puffs?

The answer, at least in part, may be in your genes.

Scientists have identified certain genetic variations that appear to make people more likely to get hooked on cigarettes and more prone to develop lung cancer.

The findings could someday lead to screening tests and customized

See **SMOKERS**, page A2

INSIDE

Bush's NATO bid rejected by allies

President Bush fails in bid to extend NATO membership to Ukraine, Georgia **A3**

Ireland stunned as Ahern steps down

Ireland leader Bertie Ahern's resignation was met with stunned disbelief **A8**



Schedule for S.F. torch relay

The six-mile Olympic Torch Relay Run scheduled Wednesday in San Francisco will begin at McCovey Cove at 1 p.m. **C3**

SANTA VENETIA: Montessori School looks good to neighbors

From page A1

An extension of the school's Corte Madera campus, which enrolls more than 200 children up to the sixth-grade equivalent, the junior high is envisioned as beginning small, with 12 to 20 children at seventh- and eighth-grade level, with a ninth year to be added later, school officials said.

Marin Montessori School is a nonprofit governed by a board of trustees and funded through tuition and fundraising.

Described as a "land-based program" based on founder Maria Montessori's vision, the junior high curriculum would emphasize the natural environment, organic agriculture, habitat restoration, community building and entrepreneurial projects.

"The big outdoors will be their textbook," said Elizabeth Larose Dunn, head of school. "A sense of stewardship for the land and the environment will be a very big part of the program."

Pending approval from the county of Marin, the school would open in 2009. County officials said an application had not yet been filed.

"They've already indicated their desire to talk to the



IJ photo/Jeff Vendsel

Mark Wallace, whose home overlooks the 30-acre Oxford Valley property in the Santa Venetia area of San Rafael, supports the Marin Montessori School's proposal to build a junior high on the property. This site sparked years of controversy over plans to build homes.

community first and we've encouraged them to do that, so it's not surprising that we haven't seen anything yet," said Jeremy Tejirian, a county planner.

Over the years Shaw had proposed up to 28 single-family home lots before scrapping the subdivision plan in late 2006 after disagreements over affordable housing allowanc-

es. The property is currently zoned for one single-family home.

Shaw, who said he is no longer developing property in Marin, said the school approached him about buying the land.

"It seemed like a good match," he said.

Mark Wallace, whose Bayhills Drive home abuts the

property, thinks so, too.

"I'm really personally enthusiastic about it — it's not like I want the land to remain vacant," Wallace said. "I just think it's wonderful that there will be such a nice organization down in the valley."

Contact Jennifer Upshaw via e-mail at jupshaw@marinij.com

SENATE: Leaders reach deal on plan to tackle mortgage crisis

From page A1

short of what's needed.

"Anything that helps on affordability is going to provide some assistance," said Brian Bethune, U.S. economist for Global Insight, a forecaster in Lexington, Mass. "The question is whether they are trying to dig out the ocean with a teaspoon."

The compromise plan would provide almost \$11 billion in tax breaks to homeowners, lenders and homebuilders. It was reached after the Senate majority and minority leaders and the top Democrat and Republican on the Banking Committee agreed on a core set of principles. When they couldn't agree, they set in place a procedure for voting on the more controversial proposals as amendments.

"Getting to this point has required compromise by all sides. This is a solid, bipartisan start to keeping families facing foreclosure in their homes, helping other families avoid foreclosures in the future, and helping communities already harmed by foreclosure to recover," said Reid and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., in a joint statement.

Over the next several days, senators will debate both the core plan and more controversial amendments, such as a Democratic plan to give judges the power to change the terms of a mortgage when a homeowner has filed for

HOUSING ACT

The core of the Foreclosure Prevention Act would:

- Increase the Federal Housing Administration's loan limit from 95 percent to 110 percent of an area's median home price. This would allow families in all areas of the country better access to FHA loans with down payments of 3.5 percent.

- Provide \$4 billion in federal aid to local governments in areas hit hardest by foreclosures and mortgage delinquencies.

- Provide \$100 billion in additional federal funding to groups that provide mortgage counseling.

- Prevent lenders from foreclosing on a home owned by a soldier within nine months of his or her return from active duty.

- Force lenders to give active-duty soldiers one year's relief from a mortgage rate that adjusts upward.

- Raise the standard income tax deduction for property taxes by \$500 for single filers and \$1,000 for families.

- Provide \$10 billion for federal tax-exempt bonds whose proceeds can be used to refinance sub-prime loans or finance first-time home purchases.

- Give a \$7,000 tax credit to purchasers of newly built homes, properties in foreclosure or those whose owners have defaulted on their mortgages. This aims to reduce the supply of homes for sale.

bankruptcy.

Current law prevents judges from reworking the terms of a home loan.

SMOKERS: Studies explore links of addiction, cancer to genes

From page A1

treatments for smokers trying to kick the habit.

The discovery by three separate teams of scientists makes the strongest case so far for the biological underpinnings of nicotine addiction and sheds more light on how genetics and lifestyle habits join forces to cause cancer.

"This is kind of a double whammy gene," said Christopher Amos, a professor of epidemiology at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and author of one of the studies. "It also makes you more likely to be dependent on smoking and less likely to quit smoking."

A smoker who inherits these genetic variations from both parents has an 80 percent greater chance of lung cancer than a smoker without the variants, the researchers reported. And that same smoker

Cancer-causing

Men account for more new tobacco-related cancer cases than women in industrial and developing countries.

New cancer cases caused by tobacco, in millions 2002

Tobacco-related All other

Industrialized countries

Men 0.9 2.7

Women 0.3 2.3

Developing countries

Men 0.7 3.1

Women 0.1 2.7

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

rectly increased the risk of lung cancer or did so indirectly, by causing more smoking.

The three studies, funded by governments in the U.S. and Europe, are being published Thursday in the journals Nature and Nature Genetics.

The scientists studied the genes of more than 35,000 white people of European descent in Europe, Canada and the United States. Blacks and Asians will be studied soon and may yield different results, scientists said.

They aren't quite sure if what they found is a set of variations in one gene or in three closely connected genes. But the gene variations govern nicotine receptors on cells.

"This is really telling us that the vulnerability to smoking and how much you smoke is clearly biologically based," said psychiatry pro-

fessor Dr. Laura Bierut of Washington University in St. Louis, a genetics and smoking expert who did not take part in the studies. She praised the research as "very intriguing."

The smoking rate among U.S. adults has dropped from 42 percent in 1965 to less than 21 percent now.

The new studies are surprising in that they point to areas of the genetic code that are not associated with pleasure and the rewards of addiction.

That may help explain why some people can quit and others fail, said Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse in Bethesda, Md., which funded one of the studies.

"It opens our eyes," Volkow said Wednesday. "Not everyone takes drugs for the same reason. Not everyone smokes cigarettes for the same reasons."



IJ photo/Frankie Frost

Traffic travels across the San Antonio Creek Bridge at the Marin/Sonoma county line. The California Transportation Commission will consider a \$66 million allocation to the widening of the stretch.

NOVATO NARROWS: Caltrans urges \$66 million for project

From page A1

Marin County Supervisor Judy Arnold, who lives in Novato, said she deals with the traffic daily during her commute to work.

"If there were no traffic, I could make it from my house to the Civic Center in about 12 minutes, and usually it takes me close to 40 minutes," Arnold said. "Anything that we can get to improve that is going to be so worth it for Marin."

Caltrans has recommended that the California Transportation Commission approve the additional \$66 million allocation when the commission meets in May. Steinhauer said she expects the commission to approve the allocation, "because the nine-county Bay Area supports this recommendation."

Marin and Sonoma counties have secured about \$296 million of the \$800 million they will need to cover the entire cost of the Narrows project, which calls for widening Highway 101 to six lanes and other improvements. But Steinhauer said work on discrete sections of the project will begin as the money becomes available.

Design work has already started on the first phase: Marin and improving the interchange at the Redwood Landfill in Novato. A carpool lane will be added in a north-

bound section of Highway 101 extending from Highway 37 to about a half-mile north of Atherton Avenue, near Olompali State Park. A southbound carpool lane will be added between Highway 37 and Rowland Boulevard.

The \$66 million allocation would pay the tab for constructing a new section of Highway 101 at San Antonio Creek. The roadway would be widened, straightened and raised to prevent the flooding that occasionally occurs there. It also would pay for the replacement of a bridge over the creek.

In January, heavy rains caused San Antonio Creek to spill over its banks and cover this section of Highway 101 with as much as 2 feet of water in stretches. The road was closed for hours in both directions from Atherton Avenue in Novato to Lakeville Highway in Petaluma.

"It happens once or twice a year," Steinhauer said. Work on the San Antonio Creek section, which will require right-of-way purchases, could begin in three years, she said.

The Narrows project also calls for replacing the Petaluma River Bridge, constructing sound walls along northern and southern segments of the project and constructing bicycle and pedestrian paths in the central segment.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com

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