

**Excerpts from Address by  
Rev. Dr. Jim Keck  
Congregational Church of San Mateo  
June 9, 2004**

**PIA's public forum to promote San Mateo County's trust for affordable housing.**

Good government strives to protect the vulnerable. And make no mistake we are all vulnerable to forces beyond our control. So good government—government by the people for the people—helps create “a web of mutual obligations, shared values and purposes, trust and wholeness in our community.”

*Really* good government will strive to protect the *economically* vulnerable. It knows that the economically vulnerable are exposed to an ugly chain reaction – if you can barely afford your apartment, then you can barely afford your car, and maybe you can just keep your health insurance and barely get your child in preschool. The economically vulnerable teeter on the edge, and if anything goes wrong - say you get sick for a couple of weeks – the chain reaction starts: You can lose the job, fail to make rent, have to drop your health insurance, pull your child out of preschool.

So really good government strives to find multiple ways to defuse that chain reaction.

**And here's the thing about our county, the cost of housing is so high that it creates a surprisingly large population of the economically vulnerable. Surprising because it is no longer just the so-called working poor who are exposed to that potential chain reaction, now even firemen, teachers, merchants can't quite make it here.**

**So really good government must start to find creative and effective ways to produce affordable housing...**

[San Mateo County] Supervisors [Rose Jacobs] Gibson and [Richard] Gordon understand that we must seek regional answers to such an intractable problem as affordable housing and that collaborations between city and county, and partnerships between the public and private sector, will be the key, and they have progressed with determination and without delay.

Too often, when leaders talk about the need for “partnership” or “collaboration” it is merely a form of evasion. You talk about partnerships when you are not willing to step up to the plate yourself, and “collaboration” can be a euphemism for “Let the other guy go show some guts first.” But supervisors Gibson and Gordon talk about creative partnerships and then step forward themselves - that's leadership. We all need to create partnerships and then step forward ourselves...