

# San Francisco Bay Chapter



## Plan for Marin's largest public housing complex could make the County's racial disparity even worse

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**By Julia Foote**

The Sierra Club acknowledges that many national and local land use policies were designed to separate people by class and race, and that many planning, housing and development practices still reinforce those inequitable and racist outcomes. This holds true in Marin County, a place with a long history of segregation and exclusion that continues to this day.



The RACE COUNTS Project found that Marin County has the highest level of racial disparity in all of California across the issues of economic opportunity, health access, a healthy built environment, and housing. For the small percentage of black and communities of color living in Marin, it is getting more and more difficult to stay.

Marin City is one of the more racially diverse cities in the county, and much of that diversity can be attributed to Golden Gate Village, Marin's largest public housing complex with 300 units that house around 700 residents. It is worth noting that this is the only public housing project in the county that serves families.

Marin Housing Authority manages Golden Gate Village. Unfortunately, residents say they have suffered years of deferred maintenance and neglect which has led to uninhabitable conditions such as rats, black mold, exposed pipes and wiring, and collapsed ceilings. In fact, the Golden Gate Village Residents Council—the elected body who are, by law, the official representatives of village residents—conducted a

door-to-door survey of all 300 units and found that 117 units are in need of significant repair.

Residents speculate that the Housing Authority let the units fall into such terrible conditions so that they could privatize the effort to restore them. Although the residents of Golden Gate Village have proposed their own plan to revitalize their homes and benefit their community, Marin Housing Authority has contracted with a private developer by the name of Michaels Development Co. to manage the revitalization of the village. Given the prime location of Golden Gate Village up on a hill, privatizing this effort likely correlates to the financially lucrative potential of the site. It is likely that the plan will include the construction of new units, some at market rate, which could lead to gentrification of the area and displacement of existing residents.

It is a real shame that the Housing Authority has been dismissive of the resident's proposal, which includes a deep green retrofit of the existing buildings and on-the-job training for residents to make and maintain green building improvements. Additionally the proposal aims to pursue home ownership for residents through a community land trust. The resident plan strongly aligns with the Green New Deal — it upgrades all existing buildings to maximal energy efficiency; provides jobs with resources and training; provides affordable, safe, and adequate housing; builds community ownership; secures community resiliency; and counteracts systemic injustices.

Effectively, the residents' plan would empower this community to plan, implement, and administer the Green New Deal at the hyper-local level. It could serve as a template for other underserved communities in Marin and beyond. The Marin County Board of Supervisors has enthusiastically endorsed the Green New Deal, and this is an opportunity to put it into action.

Meanwhile, Michaels is behind on its contract and residents are left living with substandard conditions and uncertainty of displacement. Residents are urging the Marin Housing Authority Board of Commissioners to scrap their deal with Michaels.

## What can you do to help?

**Let the Marin County Housing Authority Commission know you support the Resident Plan, including the creation of a Community Land Trust:**

1. Contact your Supervisor by phone or email. [Find their contact information here.](#)  
(<https://www.marincounty.org/depts/bs/contact-us>)
2. Send an email to the Housing Commission ([BOS@marincounty.org](mailto:BOS@marincounty.org)) and Tenant Commissioners Homer Hall ([HHall@marinhousing.org](mailto:HHall@marinhousing.org)) and Rob Simon ([RSimon@marinhousing.org](mailto:RSimon@marinhousing.org)).

Attend a meeting of the Housing Authority and speak to the issue. Meetings are on Tuesdays at 1:30 PM, once a month. Check the [Marin County calendar](#) (<https://www.marincounty.org/main/calendar>) for the exact date each month.

If you would like more information or would like to join a group working on this issue, send an email



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