



How Power is Influencing Sonoma County

By Christina Hill, Marissa Land, Stephen Lim, Tai Lam, Madison
Geramoni, Daisy Cruz Santos, and Carolina Ortiz- Alvarez

Today's society is controlled by people with power and wealth. Media influence is a huge source of power, and currently there are nine newspaper outlets in Sonoma County. Of those nine, Sonoma Media Investments own seven. This concentrated ownership results in a monopoly within the county's printed media.

Sonoma Media Investments' parent company, Kenwood Investments, is a development company involved in multi-million-dollar real estate projects regionally. The chair name and managing member of Sonoma Media Investments is also involved with Kenwood Investments business operations, consulting, and political lobbying in California. Many members of Sonoma Media Investments are involved throughout the community and have interests in business, real estate, banking, tech, and connections to government officials.

We believe this situation is creating what is known in sociological literature as a growth machine. A growth machine focuses on the roles of elites and entrepreneurs in promoting and profiting from growth and development in cities. In this study we will ask the question, "How has Sonoma Media used their ownership and control of the local newspapers to enhance the interests of their local goals of urban growth and development?" We will then analyze the power held by the people, their parts in Kenwood Investments and Sonoma Media Investments, and look into how the top shareholders have an effect on land use policies in Sonoma County. The intent of this paper is to make people aware of who is in power in our county and help understand the role the growth machine plays into our everyday lives.

Growth Machine Theory

The Growth Machine theory was originally conceived by UCSB sociologist Harvey Molotch in 1976. Molotch explains how most cities reflect the interests of land-based elites. The

elite profit from land use decisions in particular areas where growth machine members are invested in or have interests in. The growth machine is made up of multiple land-based elites who root themselves in positions throughout the community, to gain power and influence in swaying land use decisions. The goal for all growth machines is the intensification of growth and development.ⁱ

Newer research has extended the understanding of a growth machine's possible effects in a community. Research findings from Adua and Lobao have suggested that cities with prominent and influential growth machine players are more likely to align their economic development policies with pro-business agendas, often resulting in a decreased emphasis on the public sector and social services for those in need.ⁱⁱ

Growth machine players often use an "ideology of value-free growth" to promote and persuade public opinion. This type of ideology argues that development is universally good; it provides more job opportunities and cultural experiences for residents, in addition to expanding the city's tax base. Anti-growth proponents usually respond with counter arguments that emphasize the high cost of new infrastructure and point out that new job opportunities created by growth are often given to outsiders. As a response to criticism, growth machines then adapt to the promotion of environmentally friendlier development projects to gain more support from the community. This adaptation has turned into the strategy of promoting "smart growth". Smart growth looks like dense residential development in urban areas, with new transportation technologies and transit systems that allow for a decrease in personal vehicle use.ⁱⁱⁱ

Kenwood Investments & Sonoma Media Investments

Kenwood Investments LLC was founded in 2000 by Darius Anderson. The company's main focus has been on real estate development and tourism for more than 15 years. Kenwood Investments has a history of bettering communities through their projects, specializing in public policy and land entitlement. The team working for Kenwood Investments is very close to Darius Anderson and is based in Sonoma County. The company formed Sonoma Media Investments to acquire newsprint publications, such as *Petaluma Argus-Courier*, *Sonoma Index-Tribune*, *Sonoma Magazine*, *North Bay Business Journal*, and the *Press Democrat*. By doing this, they succeeded in turning these struggling publications to a success.^{iv}

Sonoma Media Investments is described as an independent media company based in Sonoma County. The company was formed by local investors who wanted to focus on local journalism. In late 2011, Sonoma Media Investments (SMI) was created to purchase the Sonoma Index-Tribune and Sonoma Magazine. Along with these, SMI also bought the Press Democrat Media Group, including *The Press Democrat*, the *North Bay Business Journal*, the *Petaluma Argus-Courier*, and everything affiliated. More than 375,000 residents of the north bay engage in one or more of these publications. The company generates more than \$75 million in sales every year. Sonoma Media Investments also takes part in partnerships, for example, with the Redwood Credit Union.^v

Sonoma Media Investment Leadership

Darius Anderson

Darius Anderson is a very well-known political strategist, lobbyist, and investor in California. Darius Anderson has a passion for art and collecting baseball and Jack London

memorabilia. Darius Anderson, an Alumni of George Washington University, received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications at the University. Many of his colleagues know him as a highly successful political strategist, lobbyist, and investor who tries to help build a bridge between large corporate businesses and the government. Many people also recognize him for using his abilities to help guide very powerful and high-ranking government officials and business owners in California. In 2010, he was asked by many California government officials to be a part of the California Political Reform Act task force because he was a very skilled lobbyist. He has lobbied for many very high profiled companies such as PG&E during the Sonoma County wildfires.^{vi}

After graduating from George Washington University, from 1993 to 1998, Darius Anderson served as the Chief of Staff for a Yucaipa company and the Vice President of External Affairs for Ralph's, a corporate grocery store in the Southern California Area. [2]^{vii} Currently, Darius Anderson is the Chief Executive Officer and Founder of Kenwood Investments and Platinum Advisors. [2] Kenwood Investments is a local California investment firm created by Darius Anderson and some of his colleagues to help improve and expand local businesses and brands in California. Platinum Advisors is a government affair lobbying firm that helps corporate businesses express their interests and goals to the government. The lobbying services that Platinum Advisors provide are for real estate project development, procurement, public affairs, and strategic consulting. [2] Darius Anderson is the current Managing Member and Chairman of the Board of Advisors for Sonoma Media Investment. Sonoma Media is a media company that controls and owns a significant portion of media and newspaper companies in Sonoma County.

Other than serving in Executive positions in companies such as Kenwood Investment, Sonoma Media Investment, and Platinum Advisors. Darius Anderson also serves as the Chair for

many committees and councils, such as the National Advisory Council of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

There have been some critical pieces written about Darius Anderson, challenging his public reputation as being a philanthropist and questioning his morality. An article featured in the *Bohemian* titled "Graton Expectations: How lobbyist and media investor Darius Anderson and a senator's son gambled and lost their bid for a big casino payday" exposes fraudulent behavior by Anderson and Douglas Boxer toward the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. According to the article, Anderson and Boxer approached the tribe's chairman and "proposed that the newly empowered tribal nation hire Platinum Advisors to help it acquire reservation land and start a business to make it self-sufficient." They convinced the tribe to start a casino project, however, instead of guiding them through business decisions that would benefit the tribe they pushed decisions that benefitted themselves. This includes attempting to convince the tribe to build their casino on the wetlands near Highway 37, even though the area has been under conservation efforts for years and would be a disastrous developmental decision. The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria sued Anderson and Boxer, with the judge's ruling in favor of the tribe, and finding that they had "fraudulently induced the tribe to contract their services." The courts ruled for Anderson's company, Kenwood No. 2 "to pay the tribe's attorney fees and costs of \$725,657.48, and to receive nothing for itself."^{viii}

Another piece featured in the *Bohemian* titled "Charity Case: Investigating PG&E-funded Rebuild North Bay Foundation" revealed that Darius Anderson's charity, Rebuild North Bay Foundation, operates "more as a lobbyist than a disaster relief group." While the organization has contributed to some charitable acts for fire victims, it has done more networking with

businesspeople and government officials to perform lobbying activities for special interests and issues.^{ix}

Steve Falk

Steve Falk was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he started his career in the newspaper industry by working for local newspaper companies in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. After working for many years for local newspaper companies in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, in 1982, Steve Falk was offered a position to work at Gannett Westchester Rockland Newspaper, a major newspaper company in New York. During his time with the company, Steve Falk was able to accomplish many things; one of his most significant accomplishments during his time with Gannett Westchester Rockland Newspaper was when he was able to help guide a small start-up newspaper company that we all know today as USA Today.^x

Five years later, after joining Gannett Westchester Rockland Newspaper in 1987, Steve Falk joined the *San Francisco Chronicle*; during his time with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Steve Falk held many important positions within the newspaper company. During his time, he served as Vice President of Sales and Marketing and Director of circulation. After gaining a lot of experience and recognition for his role at the San Francisco Chronicle, Steve Falk was later named the San Francisco Newspaper Agency CEO in 1996. Then in 2003, he was named a Publisher and the President of the San Francisco Chronicle. During his time, he also served as the President and Vice President of the San Francisco and Oakland Chambers of Commerce from 2005 to 2012.

In 2012 Steve Falk, along with many other investors, decided to purchase the local Sonoma County Newspaper company *The Press Democrat*.^{xi} Currently, Steve Falk serves as the CEO of Sonoma Media Investment and as a Publisher for *The Press Democrat*.

Bill Hooper

Bill Hooper graduated from CSU Sacramento and currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer of Sonoma Media Investment and President of Kenwood Investment. Before becoming the Chief Operating Officer of Sonoma Media Investment and President of Kenwood Investment back in 2010. Bill Hooper worked for Clear Channel Outdoors Advertising Association for nearly 26 years, but before that, he worked for Foster and Kleiser Real Estate company, where he started his career after graduating from CSU Sacramento. During his time with Clear Channel Outdoors Advertising Association, Bill Hooper served as the President of the Advertising Association.

When he was with Foster and Kleiser Real Estate company he held many different leadership positions in the company. During his time with Foster and Kleiser Real Estate company, some of the positions he worked in during his time were the Senior Manager and the Executive Vice President of Real Estate and Governmental Affairs. Outside of his professional career, Bill Hooper has held many other leadership positions in the Bay Area community. He has served as a board member for the San Francisco and Oakland Chambers of Commerce, San Leandro Chambers of Commerce, Outdoor Advertising Association of America, and Committee for a Drug-Free California.^{xii} Bill Hooper, along with Darius Anderson, Steve Falk, Douglas Bosco, and their companies Sonoma Media Investment and Kenwood Investments, came

together back in 2012 to officially purchase the local Sonoma County Newspaper company *The Press Democrat*.^{xiii}

One of the criticisms that people had with Bill Hooper when he joined Darius Anderson, Steve Falk, and Douglas Bosco in buying *The Press Democrat* was that people feared that he was going to use the newspaper company platform to help promote the development of housing projects around Sonoma County. With Bill Hooper being the current CEO of Kenwood Investment people feared that he was going to use the Press Democrat to convince citizens to help him push for some of his projects such as a Napa hotel that Hooper and Kenwood Investment have invested in but have been unable to develop successfully. According to the *Sonoma Index-Tribune* article, “Sonoma’s West Napa hotel project review delayed again” by Christian Kallen, talked about Kenwood Investment’s Napa hotel projects being delayed. People believe that with Bill Hooper being one of the owners of *The Press Democrat* that he could use the Newspaper company to push development projects and prevent them from being delayed.^{xiv}

Douglas Bosco

Douglas Bosco is a very well-known politician and a lawyer that specializes in environmental laws and legislation in specializing around the Sonoma County area. Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1946, he lived in California for a large majority of his life. In 1968 and 1971, he obtained his Bachelor of Arts Degree and Juris Doctor Degree from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. From 1978 to 1982 he was a member of the California State Legislature, where he fought and helped pass many environmental legislations that protected the environment. One of the most notable legislation that he helped pass was California Renewable Resources Investment Act, California Wilderness Act, etc.^{xv} From 1982 to 1990, he represented

California in Congress by serving as a member of the United States House of Representatives by representing California's first district.

After spending time representing California in Congress and being a part of California's State Legislator, Douglas Bosco also became a member of the California Industrial Welfare Commission, where he used his skills and knowledge in law and politics to help create and regulate regulations pertaining to many industrial workers' work environments and standards in California. In 2003 Governor Gray Davis nominated Douglas Bosco to the Governor's Judicial Nominations Committee and assigned him to be the Chairman of the State Coastal Conservancy.^{xvi} He was also an investor in a north bay company called Northwestern Pacific, a Railroad company that he and one of his colleagues on Capitol Hill help negotiated a lease that helped the company pay nothing for lease land for 100 years.^{xvii} Douglas Bosco is currently the Chief Financial Officer and General Counsel for Sonoma Media Investment.

Norma Person

Norma Person is the widow of Evert Person, the former publisher of *The Press Democrat* and the leader of the post-world war two group in Sonoma County. Norma Person's Husband Evert Person was known by many in the Sonoma County area for being the person who sold the local newspaper *The Press Democrat* to the New York Times back in 1985. Many in the Sonoma County area believed that like her late husband Evert Person, Norma Person also had a very contributing role in the sale of the local newspaper company to the New York Times because Norma Person during this time was the acting President of the Ernest L. and Ruth W. Finely Foundation. The Finely's played a significant role in creating *The Press Democrat* because they started a newspaper in Sonoma County called the Evening Press and bought another local

newspaper company called the Sonoma Democrat newspaper. After creating and purchasing these newspapers, they merged the two and created the Press Democrat. Norma Person is well known in the Sonoma County area for her support in location institutions such as Sonoma State University and Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital. Norma Person was also recognized for her role in starting groups and organizations in Sonoma County, such as the Redwood Empire Food Bank and the Finely Community Center in Santa Rosa. Norma Person currently serves as an adviser to the Sonoma Media Investment on their Board of Advisers and the President of the Ernest L. and Ruth W. Finely Foundation.^{xviii}

Jean Schulz

Jean Schulz, known by many, is the widow of the late Charles “Sparky” Schultz, famously known as the creator of the Peanuts comic. However, before his marriage to Jean Schultz, Charles Schulz was previously married to another woman from 1951- 1972 and conceived four children together. One year after his split with his previous wife, Charles Schultz married Jean Schulz. Born in Mannheim, Germany, to a British family who owned a Berlitz language school, Jean Schulz was convinced by her family and guardians to leave her home in Germany at a young age and pursue a better life in America.^{xix}

After her late husband Charles Schulz’s passing in 2000, she has kept his legacy alive through his Peanuts comic. Since her husband’s passing Jean Schulz has become a very influential and involved figure in the Sonoma County community. She has become supportive to the area by donating funds to institutions such as Sonoma State University and helping the institution create the Schulz Information Center. With the help of Jean Schulz, the Schulz Information Center at Sonoma State University has become one of the top academic libraries in

California. She is also the co-founder of the Community Foundation of Sonoma County. This foundation was created in 1983 to help manage charitable funds that are used to help support specific causes in the community. Currently, Jean Schulz serves as the Chairwoman for the Charles Schulz Creative Association, President of the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center, and an adviser to the Sonoma Media Investment on their Board of Advisers.^{xx}

Sandy Weill

Sanford I. Weill or known by many of his friends and colleagues as Sandy Weill, is the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland. Born on March 16, 1933, in Brooklyn, New York, his family owned a dress-making business. After going to college and graduating from Cornell University, he became a Wall Street broker at the firm Bear Stearns. Later, Sandy Weill moved on and started working at Burnham & Company, where he continued to improve his stockbroker skills. During his time at the firm, he became close friends with three of his colleagues Arthur Carter, Roger Berlind, and Peter Potoma, with whom he later joined to create a firm. Many people on Wall Street knew Sandy Weill as the person who created one of the most powerful mergers in Wall Street history when he merged a small firm Shearson with American Express. But in 1998, Sandy Weill did it again, but this time he formed one of the biggest mergers in history when he convinced the CEO of Travelers and Citicorp to merge and create Citigroup, which Sandy Weill, later, became the CEO of the company.^{xxi} During his time as the CEO of Citigroup, he became the 2002 Chief Executive of the Year. But in 2003, when Citigroup took a very hard hit, Sandy Weill stepped down as the CEO of the company and was succeeded by a protege of his, Chuck Prince.

In 2010 Sandy Weill and his wife Joan decided to move to Sonoma County and make this community their new home. Since his time here, he has contributed a lot to the community, one of the things that he did was donated nearly 12 million dollars to Sonoma State University to help finish constructing the Green Music Center, and he also used his connections during his time on Wall Street to help the institution gain sponsorship from Mastercard for an outdoor pavilion at the Green Music Center.^{xxii} Since stepping down as the CEO of Citigroup, Sandy Weill has become somewhat of a philanthropist and uses his wealth to help many causes he was passionate about. In 2016 Sandy Weill and his wife Joan donated 185 million dollars to UCSF to help create the Weill Institute for Neuroscience at the university to help advance the research for Alzheimer's, ALS, Huntington's disease, etc.^{xxiii} But other than being a philanthropist for scientific research Sandy Weill also currently serves as an adviser to the Sonoma Media Investment as their Board of Adviser.

Methodology

In the first part of our investigation, we researched the growth machine theory and the Sonoma Media Investment leadership team. We looked into management: Darius Anderson, Steve Falk, Bill Hooper, Douglas Bosco, and the board of advisors: Bill Jasper, Gary Nelson, Norma Pearson, Jean Schulz, Les Vadasz, and Sandy Weill. Each group member was assigned one person to research. To answer our research question, we collected and analyzed newspaper articles from as many of Sonoma Media Investments' papers as possible. We collected articles that showed promotion of growth and development in Sonoma County, ranging from 2018 to 2021. We searched for articles from *The Press Democrat*, *Sonoma Index-Tribune*, *Sonoma County Gazette*, and *The North Bay Business Journal*. After collecting the articles, we analyzed

them to find common tactics used to promote growth. We then conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with local officials and analyzed the answers.

Interview Procedure

We performed in-depth interviews with people in Sonoma County who work in local government, or other similar positions, and offered an informative opinion on Sonoma Media and its influence on local growth and development. We emailed people from the Sonoma County District Board of Supervisors, city council members, Permit Sonoma, environmental organizations, real estate, and newspaper editors for a phone interview. A total of 12 interviews were conducted. To gather qualitative data, we designed a 5-question questionnaire that included open ended questions to give the participants flexibility to answer the questions in an informative manner.

Newspaper Article Data Collection and Analysis

Our goal was to collect SMI owned newspaper articles that essentially promoted growth. Our original search started off with all seven newspaper outlets, however, we were only able to find articles from four of the outlets. Our data was collected from the *North Bay Business Journal*, *The Press Democrat*, *Sonoma Index-Tribune*, and the *Sonoma Gazette*. We collected 24 articles in total. All articles collected discuss different ideas that the community and investors have to promote growth in Sonoma County. In addition to this, we analyzed the articles for common tactics and found that *The Press Democrat* and *Sonoma-Index Tribune* use editorials and endorsements to promote growth.

The North Bay Business Journal has several articles that discuss how developers are buying land that originally belonged to apartment complexes that are now being covered into gated communities. The article titled “More than 220 apartments slated for the site of burned Fountaingrove Inn Santa Rosa” states that investors believe that it is better off to build hotels. Angela Ferro has been the owner of the Fountaingrove property, and he states that after taking a hard look at the hotel market, Sonoma County tourism tallied 6900 hotel rooms countrywide. They believe that reconstructing the homes in Fountaingrove will not bring as much growth as the hotel market. It seems that the hotel industry has become a source of growth for investors.

Billionaire Ron Burkle, founder of the Yuciapa Companies, has recently purchased 358 acres in Kenwood with the plans of developing a resort on Hood Mountain in Sonoma. Burkle is very well known in the industry of grocery as he is an investor in companies like Ralphs and Food for Less. Furthermore, the article also states that Ron Burkle was a very successful and well-known person in the development industry because of how much he admired and liked to inaugurate nature and building. He was someone who wanted to bring building and development and incorporate it into nature.

Along with the growth in hotels, Santa Rosa has planned to construct several low-income areas that would primarily help the economy with low income and homeless people. With the potential idea of building 400 plus affordable homes the economy should potentially increase. According to the article “Nonprofit home builder plans to build 400-plus affordable North Bay units” states that Santa Rosa has nearly 700 million in affordable housing in their form over the course of approximately 10 years.

The Press Democrat as well as the *Sonoma Gazette* both talk about the development of affordable housing and investments in the SMART train. According to one PD article, “Large

affordable housing complex rises on eastern edge of Rohnert Park...The 218-unit Parkside project, located at the corner of Petaluma Hill Road and Keiser Avenue just north of Sonoma State University, was approved in February 2018 and will serve those in the very low- and low-income brackets based on the area's median income". Half of these apartments are set to be available for individuals that make on average \$38,000 per and families of four with an average income of \$54,000. "It's been a commitment to provide affordable housing since the beginning of Rohnert Park," she said. "Affordable housing is in such dire need right now and we can't be the only city committed to doing it. It takes not just the commitment, but actually producing it. We all have to pitch in and build housing that we can live in."

According to an article in the *Sonoma Gazette*, the city of Sonoma was voting on renewing the existing Urban Growth Boundary for another 20 years, with the renewing of the existing Urban Growth Boundary. This would essentially allow for protection of open space and farmland, prevent sprawl, promote city centered growth where public services already exist, encourage diverse community, support affordable housing, and keep the voice of voters central in deciding the city's future.

With the growth in affordable homes, Sonoma has also planned to invest \$5M towards the SMART rail extension to the town of Windsor. This would have positive impacts on air quality from the estimated greenhouse gas emission reductions from the Windsor Extension that were instrumental in the proposal so high. Also, affordable housing in a central location with ease of access to public transit results in a significant reduction in the number of vehicle miles traveled by people in cars.

According to David Rabbitt, Sonoma County Supervisor, and member of the SMART and Renewable Enterprise District Board of Directors, "This project is a true win-win-win, and it

underscores the importance of multi-agency collaboration. Having a clear understanding of how the transportation network is tied to economic development and how all of these components work together, enabled us to successfully compete for funding.”

Editorials and Endorsements

Both *The Press Democrat* and *Sonoma Index-Tribune* use editorials and endorsements to promote growth, especially during voting season. One PD editorial titled “Yes on DD: upgrade county roads and transit systems” was printed to support and encourage voters to vote yes on this measure. Improving transportation systems and upgrading roads is one way to increase land value and support for future growth. Another PD editorial titled “Make downtown Santa Rosa a place to live” promotes denser residential development in the downtown area as a way to make it more livable. The article states, “More people living downtown would spur more economic development, helping counteract some of the nationwide decline in retail exemplified by the closing of Sears in the Santa Rosa Plaza.”

Sonoma Index-Tribune featured two specific endorsements during last year’s voting season that would support future development. First, they endorsed a ‘No on Measure W’, which would keep in place the urban growth boundary and make it more difficult for new development. Editors claimed that if the measure passed, it would make it more difficult for new affordable housing to be built, which is what they argue is what the city needs the most. They also argue that if the measure doesn’t pass, the UGB would still be in place. The second endorsement was a ‘Yes on Measure I’, which would support a sales tax extension and benefit SMART transit. *Sonoma Index-Tribune* aimed to sway public opinion to support measure I, even though multiple concerned Sonoma residents wrote in and vocally opposed the measure.

Interview Data Results (12)

We were able to interview twelve people from different positions around the county. Positions included people from environmental organizations, Permit Sonoma planning commission, city council, the Board of Supervisors (BOS), and local community groups.

Interviewees included:

Board of Supervisors: 2

City council members: 3

Permit Sonoma/Planning Commission: 4

Sonoma Local Agency Formation Commission: 1

North Valley Municipal Advisory Council: 1

Environmentalists: 1

Question 1: What stakeholders and/or organizations have the most influence on Sonoma County land use policy, particularly with respect to market-rate (multi-family) housing projects and large commercial development (commercial = wineries, hotels, resorts, etc)

Elected leaders (city, county, BOS)	Community/ Public/ residents	One specific organization/ Sector	Multiple organizations / Sectors	Boards and commissions
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Question 2: What role does Sonoma Media Investments newspaper group play in shaping land use policy in Sonoma County? To your knowledge, what policies do they most strongly promote in their papers? Do you view them as Pro-Growth?

Yes, they play a role	No, they don't play a role	Unsure/ Other	Yes they are pro-growth	No they are not pro-growth	No answer/ Unsure/ Other
//	////	//////	////	///	////

Question 3: What influence do you see in the paper's land use perspective from the fact that the Board of Advisors Chair/Managing member (Darius Anderson) and the Chief Operating Officer (Bill Hooper) - as well as other leaders are active participants in real estate development in the County and regionally?

Is there a conflict here that should be managed? * If so, how?

Yes, there's a conflict	No, there's no conflict	I don't know/ Unsure/ Other
//	////	////

Question 4: How would you describe the dominant forces in current Sonoma County land use policy - what are the goals and who is driving them?

Agriculture	Environmentalists	Developers	Elected officials	Other	Multiple forces mentioned
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Question 5: Do you have any last comments or thoughts on the subject?

No	////////
Yes	////

Interview Results Discussion

Answers seemed to vary for the question about what organizations have the most influence over Sonoma County land use policy. The general consensus from everyone interviewed was that there are multiple organizations that influence the county's decisions; nobody named just one organization or group in particular. Local government leaders from both the city and county were mentioned 3 times (city council/BOS). Five people mentioned local residents/the general public in their answers. Special interest groups like the Farm Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, and environmentalists were also mentioned multiple times.

Answers for question 2 regarding SMI's newspapers' influence on land use policy, were also quite varied. 4 out of 12 people said that they don't believe the newspapers have influence, while 2 out of the 12 people stated they do believe the papers have influence. The consensus of those who think the newspapers have influence was that their role is to inform the public of current issues, and that they have the power to control what is covered and what is not. The rest of the answers were a bit ambiguous and complex. One interviewee stated, "Development doesn't happen in a vacuum. You have to have all players on board for it to happen. One part doesn't work without the other parts, they are all interconnected."

Four people said they viewed the paper as being pro-growth, while 3 said they are not pro-growth; again, many people's answers were ambiguous or multifaceted. Multiple people said the papers support development and the business side of things. While people did not mention any policies specifically promoted in the newspapers' editorial slants, there were comments about strategies and actions the paper might do. Strategies of omission, presenting one-sided articles, and silence about certain issues were mentioned in multiple interviews. The environmentalist stated that they try to be very careful when speaking with journalists, because they usually present them in a dark light, or unsupportive of all development, when that simply isn't the case. They also stated that *The Press Democrat* did not publish any articles covering urban growth boundaries in the previous voting season, which is an important measure the voters should know about.

For question 3, only 2 out of 12 people strongly stated that there is a conflict that should be managed, while 5 out of 12 people stated there is no conflict. One Board of Supervisors explained that there is a firewall that disconnects the editorial board, ownership, and newsroom,

preventing any direct influence from the owners. The remaining 5 people said they were unsure or said that there is potential to be a conflict, or that it could be seen as a conflict, but because it is a private enterprise there is no legal conflict that is present.

One city council member strongly defended SMI's owners, saying that "anyone can buy the papers if they wanted to." One interviewee stated, "They are a private company and yet it serves this utterly public function." Another said, "There could be a conflict. It depends on how the people use their positions. Is it a good marketing tool? Yes, if they decide to use it as such. It's really up to their discretion and how they decide to use their knowledge and background in the particular position they are in." Some solutions were suggested to manage the situation.

One solution suggested was to figure out a way to fund local media, so it doesn't have to be owned by one large company; an idea was to allocate a portion of the county's resiliency funds to independent media groups since they play such a vital role in informing the public of local issues. Another solution suggested was to elect people in government positions that would not be swayed by money, along with more organization and activism to incite change. One last solution, which was mentioned by multiple people, was transparency and education about who finances and owns the media. It was discussed that many consumers of the media do not look too deeply into who is presenting the news, what other interests they are involved in, or biases they might have. It was also noted that we all, as human beings, have biases, and although those in the news business put efforts to suppress their bias, there is no way to turn it off completely. It is important for people to educate themselves and have the awareness of these things when consuming news from different outlets and sources.

9 out of 12 people interviewed mentioned multiple forces and people driving Sonoma County land use policies. Clearly it is a multifaceted and complex issue. The forces most mentioned were agriculture, the environment, and housing. 50% of people interviewed mentioned the Farm Bureau specifically, 25% mentioned developers, environmentalists, and local community groups as the people driving the forces behind land use policies. Since Sonoma County comprises both urban and unincorporated areas, the goals and forces discussed varied. Goals discussed for agricultural forces were the ability to farm freely with little restriction, and policies that facilitate growth and production.

Goals discussed for environmental forces included climate smart development and more government regulation for such land use. Goals for housing forces included increasing density, affordability, and building a specific number of housing units laid out by the general plan within a certain time frame.

7 out of 12 people had no last comments or thoughts about the subject. 4 people had something else to say. One person explained that water usage and rights is going to be a growing force that influences future land use policies. One person wanted to reiterate that development is good as long as it is good for the community, not just one specific sector. One person emphasized how influential public opinion and the community are in land use decisions made by the county. The last comment was reiterating how difficult it is to run projects throughout the county.

Final Discussion

Here we will revisit our original research question, "How has Sonoma Media used their ownership and control of the local newspapers to enhance the interests of the local growth machine's goals of urban growth and development?" Our group's hypothesis was that SMI leaders were a part of a well-defined growth machine in Sonoma County, and that we would find clear evidence through biased editorial articles and coverage as support, in addition to a strong consensus among members of the community. What we have found is that this issue is much more complex than the original and well-defined "Pro-Growth" versus "No-Growth" arena that existed many years ago. There seems to be a consensus that everyone in the county supports growth, and as one city councilmember stated, "Politics are different now, newspaper politics are not that different from how they've always been, but the things that get argued about are different." The discussion around development has changed from "should there be more development?" to "how will this development impact the community?"

Our collection of newspaper articles showed support of growth and development through endorsements of specific measures and editorial support for growth in the downtown Santa Rosa area. Our interviews revealed tactics of omission and one-sided stories being used by SMI newspapers, especially with *The Press Democrat*.

One interviewee discussed how "the information that we hear about with major projects is from the letters to the editor, but you have to be invested with the project to even be able to write about it, and not all of them are printed." Multiple people stated that the newspapers traditionally have supported business and development. Based on these findings, the monopoly that SMI has on the newspapers seems to have some effect on what information is passed down

to the public. While the concentration of ownership of the local media concerned us, many interviewees pointed out that there's technically no legal conflict of interest here because it is a private enterprise.

Our interviews also widened the parameters of our hypothesis that the leaders of Sonoma Media Investments were the primary players of Sonoma County's Growth Machine and opened the arena for numerous others to enter. Dominant players mentioned multiple times throughout our interviews included the Farm Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, elected officials, environmental groups, developers, and the public. Sonoma Media Investments, and associated members, were not specifically named enough times to be significant. Technological advances, like the internet, have brought in more voices of influence from throughout the community. Sites like Facebook and Nextdoor have provided a platform for residents to voice their concerns and discuss their opinions on local issues; many people are turning to different sources for their news today than the traditional route of paper print. It is clear that public opinion has been a growing influence of power that can really determine Sonoma County's land use decisions.

Goals for the county include climate-friendly development and growth, with denser housing in downtown areas near worksites and transit systems, and affordable housing. Attempts to maximize profits through development decisions is a byproduct of living in a capitalistic society, where every resource is treated like a commodity. The seeking of wealth and power is consistent with traditional American values. As the times are changing, technology is advancing and connecting us to more opportunities to educate ourselves on the inner workings of our communities. As discussed earlier, it is important for us to educate ourselves as much as we can

as consumers of media and news. It is vital that we open our eyes to the realities of this capitalistic society that allows wealth and power to be accumulated to the point of inequality and monopolization. Awareness, organization, and continued advocacy of community concerns and needs from the public is what will make our communities true reflections of democracy, watering down the influence of wealthy and well-connected elites.

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