

Brentwood leaders skeptical about open-space proposal

By Paula King, Correspondent

Posted: 05/11/16, 11:33 AM PDT | Updated: 21 hrs ago

BRENTWOOD -- Leaders here expressed concern Tuesday that a proposed county agricultural and open-space preservation policy could limit local control of the city's agricultural land and development.

Members of Contra Costa County's Local Agency Formation Commission presented the proposal to the City Council on Tuesday night. LAFCO representative Don Tatzin said that LAFCO is aimed at encouraging orderly growth, preserving ag lands and open space and discouraging urban sprawl and it also considers city boundary changes.

"We are trying to do this as a partnership," Tatzin said.

The draft plan states that "urban development should be discouraged in ag areas" and that "vacant land within urban areas should be developed before agricultural land is annexed for nonagricultural purposes."

When asked for their input, council members noted that the current plan takes away local rights and its tone sounds like leaders in Central and West Contra Costa want to dictate what happens to land and development in East County.

"There seems to be a bias against this part of the county and some of them haven't even been out here," Councilman Gene Clare said. "It comes off strongly as 'you aren't going to build out there and you are going to stay small.' We like local control out here in Brentwood. We want to control our destiny."

Brentwood Vice Mayor Joel Bryant said that he wants Brentwood to be in a stronger partnership with LAFCO on this plan. He doesn't want the plan to hinder economic development and business opportunities surrounding agriculture.

"Clearly, in Brentwood, we are agricultural at the core," he said. "We want to preserve and protect that but promote it."

Brentwood Mayor Bob Taylor noted that Brentwood already has about 980 acres of ag easements in place, so that ag land will remain that way permanently. He added that Brentwood must provide housing for people who are moving to the area.

"I farmed out here for 20 years and my biggest obstacle was the county," Taylor said. "People are coming here whether we like it or not. Don't box us in."

Fourth generation farmer and Councilman Erick Stonebarger said that the plan would have been better received if LAFCO had asked for input from the far East Contra Costa communities that it impacts most, such as Brentwood, Oakley and Discovery Bay. He said that this should have been done when it was first started in March 2015.

"It sounds like it is written by somebody who doesn't spend much time out here," Stonebarger said.

Council members plan to write a response to LAFCO regarding the policy in the next few weeks asking them to consider Brentwood's economic vitality, future local jobs, housing needs and ability to make land use decisions.

"Brentwood has done a dang good job," Taylor said. "If you put handcuffs on us, it will be a bitter fight through and through."

East Bay Times

Report: Bad roads, public transit top list of Bay Area's most-needed transportation projects

By Erin Baldassari, ebaldassari@bayareanewsgroup.com

Posted: 05/11/2016 11:35:38 AM PDT

Updated: 05/12/2016 05:47:24 AM PDT

SAN FRANCISCO -- Fixing the Bay Area's deteriorating roads and improving public transit topped the list of the region's 30 most-needed transportation projects, according to a report released today from transportation industry nonprofit TRIP.

TRIP policy and research director Rocky Moretti said the list represents projects -- comprised of mostly roadway maintenance and public transit improvements -- that will keep Bay Area residents, and the economy, moving.

"We looked at the impact on the region's economy, on the public's ability to get places and their level of mobility, and on the level of safety," Moretti said.

The region is facing a dual challenge in preserving its existing transportation network and also expanding the network to accommodate explosive growth, Moretti said. The third challenge, said Transportation California Executive Director Will Kempton, is money. Of the 30 projects identified by TRIP, only nine were listed as being fully funded.

"The region is seeing increased demands on roads and public transit, more congestion on freeways, and needs to develop alternative modes of transportation to address climate change," Kempton said. "These are huge challenges and yet, the sources of revenue that we have are not adequate to meet those significant needs."

At the top of the list was fixing the Bay Area's bad roads. TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based organization, released a nationwide report in July showing that drivers in the San Francisco and Oakland metropolitan areas spend the most on vehicle maintenance and operating costs as a result of failing roads. The report rated a whopping three-quarters of roads in the region as being in poor condition.

The bulk of the projects on the list, however, emphasized investments in public transit. The report identified \$143.9 billion in needed transit operations and capital improvements for BART, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority, Valley Transportation Authority, and AC Transit to "maintain or improve transit operations in the region." The report also outlined

specific projects, including the BART extension to San Jose, completing the Transbay Transit Center in San Francisco, creating a VTA express lane network, and adding bus rapid transit lines in Alameda and Santa Clara counties.

The report also outlined more than \$54 billion in needed investments on eight specific road- and highway-related projects in the Bay Area, some of which have funding identified. Those projects included interchange upgrades in Contra Costa, Solano and Napa counties; highway widening projects in Santa Clara, Marin and Sonoma counties; and the expansion of express lanes throughout the region.

Finally, the report cited seismic upgrades to the Golden Gate Bridge and BART's Transbay Tube, the latter of which is already funded, as essential to ensuring the integrity of the Bay Area's transportation network, and improvements to the Port of Oakland as critical to the area economy.

The projects were identified with input from Caltrans and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Moretti said.

TRIP is a nonprofit organization funded by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers, labor unions, and businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction, according to its website.

To view the TRIP report, go to

http://tripnet.org/docs/CA_Project_Green_Light_TRIP_Report_Appendix_C_May_2016.pdf

Erin Baldassari covers transportation. Contact her at 510-208-6428, or follow her on Twitter: @e_baldi.

East Bay Times

REPORT: The top 30 transportation projects to keep the Bay Area moving

By Erin Baldassari, ebaldassari@bayareanewsgroup.com

Posted: 05/11/2016 04:44:57 PM PDT

Updated: 05/11/2016 04:44:57 PM PDT

What will it take to keep the Bay Area's people and economy moving? Better roads, bridges, and transit. Here's a sampling of the top 30 transportation projects most in need of attention, according to TRIP, a transportation nonprofit organization:

- Maintain state highways, bridges and local streets throughout the region. Amount needed: \$47 billion; partially funded.
- Operating and capital improvements for BART, SF MTA, VTA, and AC Transit. Amount needed: \$143.9 billion; partially funded.
- Regional conversion of HOV lanes to express lanes. Amount needed: \$6.06 billion; partially funded.
- BART extension to San Jose Phase 2. Amount needed: \$3.96 billion; partially funded.
- Port of Oakland Army Base redevelopment to facilitate freight movement. Amount needed: \$873 million; partially funded.
- Interstate 680 and State Route 4 interchange improvements in Contra Costa County. Amount needed: \$205 million; partially funded.
- BART Transbay Tube seismic retrofit. Amount needed: \$590 million: funded and under construction.
- Interstate 80, Interstate 680 and Highway 12 interchange improvements in Solano County. Amount needed: \$580 million; not funded.
- AC Transit Bus Rapid Transit express service along International Boulevard. Amount needed: \$178 million; funded and under construction.
- Freeway improvements, including ramp metering, to reduce congestion. Amount needed: \$2.73 billion; partially funded.
- VTA express lane improvements to implement roadway pricing and convert existing HOV lanes into limited access express lanes in Santa Clara County. Amount needed: \$790 million; partially funded
- Improve operations and seismic retrofits on seven state-owned toll bridges. Amount needed: \$16 billion; partially funded.

Source: TRIP. To view the report, go to

http://tripnet.org/docs/CA_Project_Green_Light_TRIP_Report_Appendix_C_May_2016.pdf

East Bay Times

Peterson: Concord City Council's imperfect process leads to Lennar

By Gary Peterson, gpeterson@bayareanewsgroup.com

Posted: 05/12/2016 01:18:17 PM PDT | Updated: about 4 hours ago

No balloons wafted from the ceiling. There were no confetti cannons. No corks were popped Wednesday night as three Concord City Council members, considering one company, selected Lennar Urban as the first-phase master developer of the former Naval Weapons Station.

The vote was unanimous. And subdued.

"I waited a long time for this," said Councilman Dan Helix, who returned to the council specifically to select a developer and bring to fruition a process he helped start. "It's been a long trek. What I have learned is that perfection is not in the human repertoire."



File photo: Ranchers graze their cattle at Concord Naval Weapons Station now that the ammunition magazines have been emptied of all explosives. (Jim Stevens/Herald news 2001)

Let it be known the City Council proved itself certifiably human during the selection process. It allowed Lennar to remain as a semifinalist after the company was found, in an independent report, to have improperly lobbied Councilman Tim Grayson -- who then recused himself from the selection process. Grayson joined on the sidelines Vice Mayor Ron Leone, required to sit out because his house is within 500 feet of the proposed project.

Then the council allowed Catellus, the other semifinalist, to walk away out of concern it wasn't getting a fair shake.

There was the recommendation for Catellus in a draft of a staff report that turned out to have been written in vanishing ink. There were violations of the Brown Act governing open meetings.

The cumulative effect of these missteps -- if you go by the public commenters who have lined up 20-deep at recent council meetings -- was a loss of public confidence in the process and the processors. Ergo, recent recall petitions for Mayor Laura Hoffmeister and Councilman Edi Birsan.

"There has been criticism, in some cases richly deserved," said Helix, who made no secret of his displeasure when Catellus dropped out. Faced with what he believed an untenable choice between Lennar and restarting the process, Helix floated the notion of the city becoming its own master developer.

Improvements to Lennar's term sheet won Helix over. Birsan said it was "in the best interests of the city." Hoffmeister said Lennar had taken on more cost and more risk.

The commenters' mood? Take a guess.

"I just wonder if you couldn't get a better deal by starting over," former mayor Steve Weir said. "I'd dearly love to see negotiations reopened, and see more council members involved."

Other speakers cited concerns raised in connection with Lennar projects at Mare Island and Hunters Point. One questioned the firm's ethics, and the final speaker signed off with, "This is not the way I want my city to be developed."

Skepticism can be a useful tool. At one point while Lennar's term sheet was being renegotiated, the firm agreed to widen to four lanes the dangerous stretch of Willow Pass Road between Lynwood Drive and Highway 4 -- while leaving the Kinne Bridge at two lanes. The offer was disingenuous even by the standards of ham-handed negotiation ploys.

That said, several speakers at Wednesday's meeting who said they had professional experience with Lennar pinned angels wings and a halo on the company, which they said had "the highest of integrity" and was "a just and responsible choice for the city."

So ended a years-long effort of outreach, study and negotiation. Now comes the hard part: Planning and building a community that makes people forget the wildly imperfect process that brought it to life.

Do you have a column topic for Gary? Contact him at 925-952-5053 or gpeterson@bayareanewsgroup.com. Follow him at [Twitter.com/garyscribe](https://twitter.com/garyscribe).

East Bay Times

America's vanishing West: California losing most land to development

By Paul Rogers, progers@bayareanewsgroup.com

Posted: **05/17/2016** 07:49:45 AM PDT | Updated: 90 min. ago



File photograph: The Oakhurst subdivision abuts open space in Clayton, Calif. (Contra Costa Times)

By Paul Rogers

The natural landscape of the American West is gradually disappearing under a relentless march of new subdivisions, roads, oil and gas production, agricultural operations and other human development, according to a detailed mapping study released Tuesday.

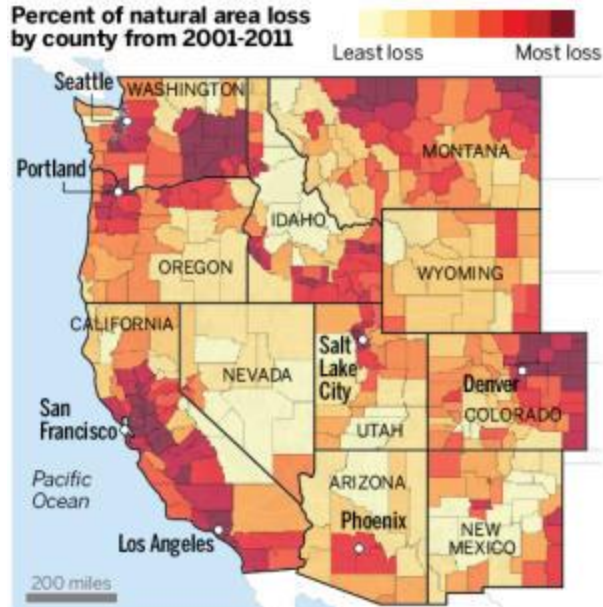
From 2001 to 2011, an area totaling 4,321 square miles -- or 15 times the size of San Jose, Oakland and San Francisco combined -- was modified by development in the 11 Western states, the report found, with California losing the most natural land, and Wyoming and Utah changing at the fastest rate.

"We are nibbling away at our wild places at a fairly rapid clip," said Mike Dombeck, former chief of the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in the 1990s.

THE DISAPPEARING WEST?

The 11 Western states are losing an area the size of a football field every 2.5 minutes to development, according to a new study.

Percent of natural area loss by county from 2001-2011



Natural area loss, in square miles

State	State size	Area modified by development		Natural area lost
		2001	2011	
California	155,554	29,856	30,641	785
Colorado	103,524	18,428	18,953	525
Wyoming	96,959	10,378	10,874	496
Washington	66,395	13,812	14,268	456
Oregon	95,718	12,431	12,843	412
Utah	82,240	8,248	8,624	376
Arizona	113,598	11,560	11,931	371
New Mexico	121,200	12,587	12,906	319
Montana	145,298	23,485	23,770	285
Idaho	82,641	11,240	11,391	151
Nevada	109,770	8,345	8,490	145

Source: Conservation Science Partners

BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

The report -- at www.disappearingwest.org -- was produced by scientists at Conservation Science Partners, a non-profit research organization based in Truckee, , who spent a year analyzing more than 30 large databases and a decade of satellite images over Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Their conclusion: Every 2.5 minutes the West loses an area of natural land the size of a football field to human development. And each year, on average it loses 432 square miles, an area nearly the size of Los Angeles.

"Protecting wild places is a very conservative thing to do because it keeps options available for the future," said Dombeck, now a board member at Conservation Science Partners. "Once you

have a subdivision put in or roads built into a wild place, it's almost impossible to turn back the clock."

To be sure, vast areas of the West, from the Sierra Nevada to Utah's Red Rock Canyons, the Olympic Peninsula and the Greater Yellowstone Area, are preserved in national parks, wilderness areas and other designations.

But only 12 percent of all the land in the 11 Western states enjoys such protections, the report found. The most is in California, where 24 percent of the state is protected, followed by Nevada at 14 percent and Utah at 13 percent. The least: New Mexico with 6 percent and Montana with 7 percent.

Careless development -- whether it is sprawling new subdivisions outside Denver or Phoenix, or vast new oil and gas fields near towns like Pinedale, Wyoming -- fragment the landscape, the report's authors said, blocking corridors for wildlife, polluting water and changing the West's singular sense of place.

"There are large landscapes that are still pretty healthy and somewhat protected because of years of conservation work in the past," said Matt Lee-Ashley, public lands director for Center for American Progress, a left-leaning think tank in Washington, D.C. that funded the study. "But with continued rates of loss, we can't think of that work being finished yet."

In California, Inland Empire counties lost the most open land. At the top of the list was San Bernardino County, which lost 60,013 acres of natural land from 2001-2011, followed by Riverside, Kern, Los Angeles and San Diego. In the Bay Area, Solano County lost the most, at 10,883 acres, followed by Contra Costa at 10,610 and Sonoma County at 9,193. San Francisco, Marin and San Mateo counties lost the least, all below 1,600 acres, while Santa Clara lost 6,225 acres and Alameda lost 5,085.

The study did not account for new parklands created over the decade. Private land trusts and parks agencies around the Bay Area have preserved tens of thousands of acres in the past 15 years, from the Santa Cruz Mountains to wetlands ringing San Francisco Bay and the rangelands of the East Bay.

Lee-Ashley, a former deputy chief of staff to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, said that the solution to preserve the broader West is for cities and states to pass zoning rules keeping development off sensitive areas, along with more funding from Congress to expand national parks and wilderness areas.

Over the past decade or so, Republican leaders in Congress, particularly members of the Tea Party movement, have blocked efforts to expand funding for parks and opposed President Obama's use of executive power to establish new national monuments.

Some Western observers say the solution isn't more federal money from Washington, D.C.

Private initiatives, like a long-standing program in which the Nature Conservancy pays rice farmers in California's Central Valley to flood their fields in the winter to provide habitat for ducks and geese, are just as important if not more so, said Shawn Regan, a spokesman for PERC, the Property and Environmental Research Center, a free-market advocacy group in Bozeman, Montana.

"There's a \$12 billion maintenance backlog in our national parks," said Regan. "We have all these public lands in the West, but we aren't doing a very good job of taking care of what we have."

Regan said private solutions include paying landowners to lease their water rights, buying development rights from landowners, and encouraging new agricultural technology, like genetically engineered crops, to allow farmers to produce more food per acre.

"We need more ways to work with private landowners, not against them," he said. "And environmentalists often discourage ways to work with private landowners to encourage conservation."

Paul Rogers covers resources and environmental issues. Contact him at 408-920-5045. Follow him at [Twitter.com/PaulRogersSJMN](https://twitter.com/PaulRogersSJMN)

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Published **May 18th, 2016**

ConFire Board Approves Complete Rebuild of Fire Station 16

By Nick Marnell

Western Lafayette residents moved one step closer to full fire service coverage May 9 when the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District board unanimously approved the total rebuild of fire station 16 on Los Arabis Road.

The fire station was seriously damaged in 1989 by the Loma Prieta earthquake and the crews worked out of a mobile home on the site for more than 20 years before the facility was shut down in 2012. When a proposed joint venture with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to build fire station 46 at the Orinda-Lafayette border collapsed, ConFire determined that rebuilding station 16 from scratch was the most appropriate solution for the western Lafayette area. The district had considered refurbishing the existing structure but decided it was not cost effective to do that.

Fire Chief Jeff Carman explained to the board why the Lafayette station was the first to be put back into service of the four stations closed by the district in 2012. "Lafayette is one of the few areas in California located in a very high fire hazard severity zone," he said. "If we had a fire in those hills it would be similar to the Oakland Hills fire. Property values are extremely high and egress routes are extremely limited." Carman stressed that the county could be devastated economically if the Lafayette area remains without adequate fire protection.

"We stand behind the chief," Lafayette fire commissioner Bill Granados said. "Rebuilding station 16 is the best thing for the district at this time."

Deputy Chief Lewis Broschard told the board that the construction estimate ranges from \$3.5 to \$4 million, including design, engineering and other soft costs, with completion likely in 18 to 24 months. ConFire will staff the station with transferred firefighters from station 1 in Walnut Creek and an additional captain, which will increase district operating costs \$1 million a year.

"I would have been fine with station 46, but we will end up with better coverage for Lafayette," board chair Candace Andersen said.

The city of Lafayette planning department and ConFire will hold a joint public meeting to receive feedback from the neighborhood on the design of the new station at 7 p.m. May 25 at the Lafayette city offices, 3675 Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Suite 240.

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Published **May 18th, 2016**

Developer Agrees to Pay Fire Service Mitigation Charge

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board May 4 authorized Fire Chief Stephen Healy to enter into an agreement with the Richfield Real Estate Corporation and the Bigbury Company, the developers of the beleaguered Palos Colorados project, to pay the district \$180,000 as a fire service mitigation fee within 60 days of the issuance of the first building permit. The developer acknowledged in the agreement that its proposed 123-unit Moraga development places an increased fire service burden on the district, which plans to apply the mitigation fee toward the purchase of a new fire engine. Only director Fred Weil voted against the agreement, citing a clause in the contract that contains an out for the developer. The out-clause will take effect if the East Bay Municipal Utility District agrees to supply water at a rate of 2,250 gallons per minute to the project, the same water flow rate that MOFD used as a standard for new development when the project was approved in 1999.

Since then, the fire codes have changed, MOFD fire marshal Kathy Leonard said. Homes are now equipped with sprinkler systems, construction rules are tougher and wildfire prevention ordinances are stronger. And no longer does EBMUD install pipes that can transport water at 2,250 gpm at the project site; current pipes allow a water flow of only 1,500 gpm, as confirmed by Andrea Pook, EBMUD spokeswoman. MOFD firefighter Anthony Stevens told the board that 1,500 gpm was more than adequate for today's firefighting needs.

Thus, Leonard insisted that the clause Weil objected to was moot. She said the district was anxious to finalize its agreement with a development fraught with years of lawsuits, delays and failed permit approvals, including unsuccessful state and federal approvals for a golf course.

The developer will also pay MOFD \$2,000 prior to the issuance of a building permit for each approved lot. The money will be used for vegetation inspections, maintenance of open space and the upkeep of fire trails, plus hard costs. "For each home, we have to do three plan reviews and two separate fire inspections," Leonard said.

The first building permit is expected to be issued before the end of fiscal year 2016-17, which is why the district executed the agreement now. The projected cost of a new fire engine is \$585,000, so with the board's approval of the mitigation fee agreement, the cost will be reduced to \$405,000.

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Published **May 18th, 2016**

Orinda Residents Demand Fair Shake from MOFD

By Nick Marnell

Orinda residents, including a district director, disrupted the Moraga-Orinda Fire District finance committee meeting May 8, demanding that perceived inequities of the tax bill allocation between the two district municipalities be rectified. "It's time the district looked at this, and made it an agenda item that can be discussed," said Steve Anderson, board president, speaking as a private citizen.

"The deal is not being played out as promised 19 years ago," said Orinda resident Steve Cohn, speaking about the terms of the 1997 Orinda Fire District and Moraga Fire District merger. "The funding paid by Orindans not going to service in Orinda is not meeting Orindans' needs." According to Cohn, in the current fiscal year Orinda residents pay \$13.8 million in taxes to MOFD while those in Moraga pay \$7.5 million. "The bottom line is, Orindans pay 65 percent of the taxes and their service costs are only about 53 percent of the total," he said, basing his service cost estimate on a total of 17 responders per shift - nine in Orinda and eight in Moraga.

Orinda resident Craig Jorgens blamed much of the inequity on the fact that property tax rates have stayed the same since the district inception but property values in Orinda have increased more than in Moraga. "It has grown over time and will continue to get worse," he said.

It is not the first time the district has heard these complaints. In 2012 an Orinda grassroots organization claimed in a presentation to both MOFD and the Orinda City Council that Orinda was paying too much for its emergency services. "In fact, a lot more money has been spent in Orinda than in Moraga," director Fred Weil said at the time, who called the group's report a fundamentally flawed polemic.

Anderson was elected to the board in 2012 and he promised to oversee frugal spending of district tax dollars, with the expectation that money saved could be used to fix Orinda's dilapidated roads. Alex Evans, MOFD Division 5 director and a founding member of an Orinda citizens' committee that pushed for the fair funding of MOFD by Orinda and Moraga, said in 2012 that any efficiencies he could find in the MOFD budget should go to fix the Orinda roads and infrastructure.

Director Brad Barber, also of Orinda, told Fire Chief Stephen Healy - who declined to comment on the claims made by the citizens - to present updated information on revenue received from and services rendered to each municipality at a future board meeting.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR **MAY 25, 2016** 12:35 PM

Denny Jackman: Allowing Riverbank to expand west is a very bad plan

When a city in Stanislaus County makes a request to urbanize thousands of acres of our best farmland and area of highest water recharge, order and logic are not two terms I would use to describe it.

How can it possibly be considered logical to intentionally expand urban mass over our best soils? One would think it logical and orderly to require Modesto, Riverbank and Stanislaus County to collectively plan urbanization along the proposed North County Corridor and onto lesser soils.

This community, this land, deserves more scrutiny than a rubber stamp from the Local Area Formation Commission. Dereliction of duty and asleep-at-the-wheel are better terms to describe LAFCO approval for massive urban expansion when we (and they) know the facts about those soil qualities and water recharge history.

Do not refer to such a request as orderly and logical. Also, please consider that existing retailers are being squeezed for market share

by Amazon and other online retailers that do not need costly storefronts that will eventually be abandoned.

We need smarter planning which includes all the concerns of a community. We need planners to plan where not to urbanize. Building over our best soils is not a wise option.

DENNY JACKMAN, MODESTO



MORE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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NEWS

MAY 26, 2016 8:32 AM

Riverbank dream of huge growth tabled amid Stanislaus LAFCO concerns

HIGHLIGHTS

Stanislaus LAFCO troubled by expansion size

Friction with Modesto also bothers panel

Issue to resurface July 27



The Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission

wants Riverbank to try mending fences with Modesto and with the Stanislaus Consolidated Fire District, and to think about seeking a little less growth, before returning to the agency on July 27 with Riverbank's growth plan. **Debbie Noda** - Modesto Bee file

BY GARTH STAPLEY
gstapley@modbee.com

Not quite so fast, Riverbank.

That's what a growth-guiding panel on Wednesday told city officials hoping to extend Riverbank's footprint 80 percent and double its population in 20 years.

"This really is a pretty huge expansion, a little more than I'm willing to go," said Jim DeMartini, a Stanislaus County supervisor. His opinion was shared by other members of the Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission, which rules when cities plan to grow.

The commission left open a door, however, for Riverbank to return July 27 and ask again. That would give Riverbank time to try mending fences with Modesto and with the Stanislaus Consolidated Fire District, and to think about seeking a little less growing action in the so-called City of Action.

“

**WHY WOULDN'T YOU FOCUS ALL YOUR
URBANIZATION AWAY FROM PRIME
FARMLAND?**

Denny Jackman, Modesto

Several speakers at Wednesday's hearing said they were shocked that Riverbank, with 2,663 acres, sought permission to broaden its sphere of influence – or potential growth area in the next couple of decades – by 1,479 acres, for a total of 4,850 acres.

“This will encourage urban sprawl, which you're supposed to discourage,” said Allen Gammon, who lives near Riverbank and whose wife, Annabel, is an alternate or nonvoting commissioner.

About 40 residents of rural Crawford Road, west of Riverbank, signed a petition asking for assurances that Riverbank's growth vision would not send more vehicles through their neighborhood.

“

**THIS WILL DO NOTHING MORE THAN TO
INCREASE THE TRAFFIC PROBLEM WE ALREADY
HAVE.**

Sherman Hoover, Crawford Road

Denny Jackman, a longtime controlled-growth advocate and former Modesto councilman, said Riverbank's plan hasn't received enough public scrutiny. It's “mind-boggling,” he said, that the city wants to add stores and thousands more residents when “we haven't recovered from the problems Crossroads (shopping center) caused when it was initially built.”

Modesto leaders for years have criticized

Riverbank for not doing enough to address traffic problems generated by drivers shopping at Crossroads, which Riverbank hopes will expand to the west side of Oakdale Road.

“The process failed us last time. I’d like not to see that happen again,” said Brad Hawn, a former Modesto councilman who now represents the public as a LAFCO commissioner.

23,485 Riverbank’s population

49,834 Potential population, under growth vision

Modesto officials additionally said Riverbank’s environmental analysis is inadequate because it was done seven years ago and much has changed since then. Modesto also is wary of Riverbank’s request to label land between the cities as an “area of concern.”

Others praised Riverbank for pursuing an orderly approach to growth. Other cities in recent years have sought permission for sphere of influence expansion and annexation at the same time.

“

“Annexation will not happen overnight,” Riverbank Mayor Richard O’Brien said. “To

control (our) destiny is what the city of Riverbank wants.”

O’Brien said in-depth environmental studies would accompany annexation requests. That made sense to county Supervisor Terry Withrow, but his motion specified that Riverbank must try working things out with Modesto and Consolidated Fire, which is concerned about having enough money to provide fire protection for more people and stores.

Joining Withrow in the unanimous vote were commissioners Amy Bublak, a Turlock councilwoman; Waterford Mayor Mike Van Winkle; Hawn; and DeMartini.

LAFCO’s July 27 meeting will start at 6 p.m. in the basement chamber at Tenth Street Place, 1010 10th St., Modesto.

Garth Stapley: 209-578-2390



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Ryan Privee ·

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LOCAL NEWS | SHASTA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Grand jury report criticizes Shasta LAFCO



By *Nathan Solis* of the *Redding Record Searchlight*

Posted: **May 29, 2016**

The most recent Shasta County report grand jury report slams the operations of LAFCO over past failures to meet deadlines and poorly managed staffing.

The report, subtitled No Laughing Matter, recognizes the Local Agency Formation Commission as an independent watchdog agency that overlooks city and special district boundaries. But

the report also said difficulties with past officers in the agency have led to lawsuits and complaints filed with the California Labor Board.

The last several years have been tumultuous for the agency, with a change in its staffing roster, a marathon blitz to complete mandatory studies and a lack of oversight for its staff.

From 2001 to 2012 the agency did not complete any of its mandatory reviews of special districts or municipal services in the county. The reviews require updating every five years for each entity, which includes sewer, water and fire districts.



LAFCO staff raced to complete about 50 reviews and finished early last year, summarized the report.

Completing the special district reviews depleted the LAFCO budget, requiring the agency to reduce staff and business hours.

The grand jury report said this reduction in hours shows the agency "is not fulfilling its purposes and programs. This is evidenced by frustrations voiced by City of Anderson staff in dealing with Shasta LAFCO during its recent land annexation" and the grand jury also ran into delays when it requested documents.

Current Executive Office George Williamson, who took the position earlier this year as a consultant, said many of the issues

raised in the report are in the process of being addressed by the agency and its staff.

Observations and recommendations from the grand jury report will be considered and the report will be addressed at a regular meeting on Thursday.

Other recommendations from the report include a review of the executive officer's performance and a revision of the budget to bring back staffing levels so the agency can resume normal businesses hours.

Also, the agency could establish a fee to charge for review updates. The agency could also revise its fee schedule, which has not been updated since 2013, according to the report.

In April commissioners with LAFCO approved a fiscal budget that projects a remaining balance of \$24,000 in the next two fiscal years. That money is expected to go back into its services.

"Shasta LAFCO appreciates the role of the grand jury in reviewing and making recommendations on local government matters, including the operations of this agency," said Williamson in an email.



About Nathan Solis

Multimedia reporter Nathan Solis has been telling stories through articles and photographs for 9 years as both a freelance writer and beat reporter in Los Angeles. Most recently he has relocated to Northern California where he reports on county issues for the Record Searchlight/Redding.com. He engages the general Shasta County community through social media, video, photographs and articles.

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