

EDITORIAL

Creek Clean-up

Kudos to the 183 community volunteers who removed 1,972 gallons of trash and recyclables from Livermore waterways, as well as the 80 volunteers who teamed up in a separate cleanup effort at creek locations in Dublin.

A thumbs down to those who threw the trash in the waterways in the first place.

The creek cleanups preceded International Coastal Cleanup Day, the world's largest volunteer effort to clean up trash and debris from beaches, bays, creeks, rivers and lakes.

According to organizers of the creek clean-up, removing trash and debris from creeks improves the beauty of neighborhoods and helps protect both water quality and aquatic habitat in the creeks, which flow to the Bay. Litter and other pollutants carried into storm drains by wind, water and human activity, end up in the Bay where it harms fish, birds and marine animals.

In addition to preventing pollution, the clean-ups also help prepare the local waterways to handle increased flows during the rainy season.

It is commendable that there are those who step up to keep communities clean. However, too many people seem not to care or notice the problem.

Hopefully there will come a day, when everyone takes responsibility for disposing of trash and debris in a responsible manner and we can celebrate the beauty of our beaches and waterways without first having to clean them up.

CEQA

(continued from page one)

thors from the Sacramento area.

Originally SB 743 applied only to one project, a new arena for the Sacramento Kings of the NBA, to be located in downtown Sacramento. However, at Brown's urging, Steinberg blended in some of the points in another of his bills, SB 731. Those provisions will apply to certain infill projects throughout the state, as designated by local governments in qualified areas.

For example, the bill would mandate that parking and aesthetics standards not be considered as significant impacts on the environment in urban areas, which are places with at least 50,000 population. Those projects must be on an infill site and within a transit priority area, as defined in the bill.

Steinberg said that suits over aesthetics and parking "are most commonly used as CEQA litigation hooks to slow or terminate a new development project."

Another aim of the bill is to modernize the statewide measurements against which traffic impacts are assessed

corridor," which is one with service no more than (transit arriving) 15 minutes apart during commute hours.

An example of an eventual infill zone in the Valley could be Dublin, which prides itself on transit-oriented development. The city built high density housing near two BART stations. Wheels' Rapid buses, which run every 15 minutes along Dublin Boulevard, run on weekdays, and connect to Livermore.

However, Dublin has not yet reached 50,000 population, which would qualify it as an urban area. However, at 46,000 in the 2010 census, and continued rapid growth, that time may come soon.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OBJECTS

The bill also sets out a 270-day period for the courts to hear CEQA suits on projects. This provision drew strong objection in a letter to Brown on Sept. 17 from the California Judicial Council.

The 270-day clock begins running even before a lawsuit is filed, at the time that begins a process known as

Pleasanton Council Votes to Exempt Housing In Hacienda from Cap on Square Footage

Properties already rezoned for housing in the Hacienda Business Park won't be counted against the square footage cap on development in the business park.

At issue was whether the square footage for housing should be subtracted from the overall cap of 9.9 million square foot of development allowed in Hacienda as part of the agreement between the city and the business park.

Since 2010, the city has rezoned seven sites for housing in the business park as part of a lawsuit settlement. The rezoned sites could use 900,000 square feet of space. There is 1.7 million square feet of office space remaining to be built under the cap. If the housing were not exempt, that would leave 774,364 square feet for business development.

The Housing Element EIR evaluated the impacts of both the increased residential development and the allowed office space square footage in the park and found that there is more than adequate infrastructure

and circulation capacity to accommodate both. Areas of the park have been redesigned to make room for the housing.

The vote to support staff recommendation to exempt the housing was 4 to 1 with Karla Brown opposed.

Brown said that she wanted clarification about traffic impacts and on how the creation of jobs would impact the number of homes assigned to the city by ABAG as part of its Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA).

ABAG assigns RHNA numbers to all cities and counties in the Bay Area. The housing does not have to be built. However, each jurisdiction is required to zone land to accommodate the housing.

While there was some discussion during the evening about the potential to increase housing, Brown said she wasn't comfortable that the information was adequate for her to support exempting housing from the cap.

Brown was concerned that retaining the square footage in the business park for jobs would result in the city being assigned additional housing. Brown said that based on the formula used in real estate, looking at the square footage available, there would be another 5100 jobs created in Hacienda. That could mean 3400 more houses the city may have to absorb. That is twice the number we are looking at on the eastside. Where would we put them? "I want to know the strategy for dealing with increased housing," stated Brown.

James Paxson, general manager of the Hacienda Business Park, addressed the council stating the need to retain the square footage for office development. "The issue of clarity is very important." He noted that the business park paid for the infrastructure. It maintains a large part of the infrastructure normally maintained by the city. Hacienda is unique in that any development there does not impact what the city has to provide for

infrastructure. "That cannot be said about any other location in the city."

Paxson said that all of the square footage designated for office development is needed in order for Hacienda to remain competitive. "We are very successful at capturing employment in key sectors such as technical and professional services, health care, biomedical and advanced manufacturing. Of the remaining square footage, 774,000 is already called for by existing projects with approvals. As the economy starts to recover, we need the space to continue capturing these key sectors."

Brian Dolan, director of community development, was asked if retaining all of the office space would result in the need to rezone for additional housing. He stated, "I don't believe that is the case." He said that the more urban areas were given larger numbers during the last RHNA round. He said that no set formula is used to determine RHNA numbers. It is impossible to predict the impact on future housing numbers.

Dolan noted that Hacienda is designated for and uniquely equipped to accommodate a mix of both residential and office development due to its proximity to transit. Adding the residential development to the park and then reducing the amount of allowed office space in the park damages the competitiveness of Hacienda in the Bay Area market by limiting its potential growth and evolution.

Dolan noted that if the California Center property were not expressly excluded from the overall Hacienda cap, the internal Hacienda Business Park Owners Association approval of the California Center project would be void, and the project would not go forward.

Mayor Jerry Thorne added that at some point when determining RHNA numbers, there will be consideration given to the importance of job centers near transit that will allow people to take BART to and from

their jobs. He did feel that jobs do influence the housing numbers. "We should never let RHNA drive our decisions on creating jobs."

City Manager Nelson Fialho pointed out that housing in Hacienda represents infill development. It is less costly to build, because it doesn't include the costs associated with greenfield development. All of the infrastructure is in place.

Becky Dennis said that the issue is the actual need for affordable housing. "We aren't there yet. The city is generating more need for affordable housing than it is providing. The model for development sees more and more self-contained jobs and housing sites combined." She supported exempting housing from the cap.

David Miller was concerned about overcrowded schools that would result if housing numbers were increased.

Frank Brandes stated that it was imperative for Hacienda to remain competitive. Apartments were never envisioned there. He did not want the cap for office development lowered by counting the housing.

Mayor Thorne stated that the state meddling in local land use could become a deterrent to job creation because of the concern about housing numbers. He did not want that to happen. "We need to create jobs to help the country out of the recession. We also need to keep the state from meddling in local issues."

Councilmembers Jerry Pentin and Kathy Narum agreed with the need to retain square footage for jobs. Narum pointed out that the decision to exempt housing from the cap relates only to the seven properties that have already been rezoned. "We are not opening up Hacienda to build a lot more housing."

Cheryl Cook-Kallio noted that the city's general plan emphasizes transit oriented development. Hacienda is the only true location for TOD in the city. "We need to create the business opportunities to pay our bills."