

Sally: Trade Provinsalia for eco-destination

Contributed by Debi Sally
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On Dec. 2, the Clearlake City Planning Commission met to take public comments on the proposed Provinsalia project. That night, I spoke on behalf of the Sierra Club Lake Group, presenting information from Chair Victoria Brandon's letter to the Planning Commission. There were many other speakers and most of us gave good, rational reasons not to approve this project. What I didn't do was express my own personal thoughts and feelings about this project. {sidebar id=113}

Let me begin by once again saying that I have a vested interest in the financial success of this city. As a local business owner who has, like some other professionals, trouble recruiting practitioners into rural practice, I am in favor of development. But, I really want to see it be healthy growth, not urban sprawl that paves a 292-acre piece of paradise and makes it into another densely populated golf community.

This is the most awesomely beautiful big chunk of land in the city! Go out to the end of Dam Road or boat down the creek and have a look for yourself! Besides, we need to encourage more development of the "inner city." We still have many empty lots and right now quite a few empty houses. It's time to think sustainable. I know it's an overused word, but it really gets to the heart of the matter. If we and our children are to have future, we need to use it and implement it.

On June 5, 2005, in San Francisco, a conference began when Gov. Schwarzenegger and participating mayors of 60 cities around the world signed an environmental action plan to reduce the state's emissions of greenhouse gases, the Urban Environmental Accords.

These leaders, recognizing the need for critical change decided upon the following actions among others:

- Adopt urban planning principles and practices that advance higher density, mixed use, walkable, bikeable and disabled-accessible neighborhoods which coordinate land use and transportation with open space systems for recreation and ecological restoration.
- Adopt a policy or implement a program that creates environmentally beneficial jobs in slums and/or low-income neighborhoods.
- Pass legislation that protects critical habitat corridors and other key habitat.

You can see the whole accords if you "Google" it. And while you're at it, have a look at www.sfenvironment.org, www.citymayors.com/environment/environment_day.html and www.coolcities.us/.

The Provinsalia project doesn't quite fit this picture. It's old hat. It's using the allure of a fading fashion and deeply embedded in the box. It's time to embrace the new ideal that will make us a prime tourist destination and a model of cool cities, keep our air clean and our stars visible, and make us proud of ourselves!

So, here's my idea. Let's turn it into an eco-destination. There can be accommodations that suit the eco-traveler, concessions, activities, education. Look how many long-term jobs that would create.

You know, Mr. Price, maybe your bosses would like the idea. It could make them lots of money and provide them with an excellent place for their meetings and family getaways. I hear you've been seen enjoying the place with your family.

Remember, the property is owned by multimillion dollar developers who don't even live in this country, let alone this county. How much do they care about us except as a means to their financial ends?

We citizens of Clearlake need to direct our growth in a way that will honor the beauty of the place in which we live. We don't want to keep others from enjoying the paradise we've found but we do want to keep it beautiful, don't we?

If you agree, please let your thoughts be known. Visit, write or e-mail our planning commissioners and City Council members right away.

Debi Sally lives in Clearlake.

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