



Patterson and Turlock have more to learn about - Modesto Bee, The (CA) - May 10, 2022 - page 1

May 10, 2022 | Modesto Bee, The (CA) | Matt Beekman and Jeani Ferrari, The Modesto Bee

Land use decisions are consequential. Municipalities can make decisions that have a lasting detrimental impact on communities' public funds, water resources, quality of life, schools, safety, and economic opportunities.

The opposite is also true. With proper planning, municipalities can utilize land use strategies that will enhance communities in a variety of ways. The Farmland Working Group is committed to promoting sound urban development, long-range planning and balanced growth.

Recently two city councils have not considered the full impact of their land use decisions, warranting greater public awareness.

Opinion label

It was troubling to learn that the city of Patterson would allow for the simultaneous development of 9,000 housing units as part of four separate housing projects resulting in nearly doubling student enrollment at Patterson Unified School District, currently at 6,200 students. Instead of taking a phased approach to ensure school facility construction keeps pace with housing construction, it appears that PUSD will be left to pursue multitrack year-round schedules to accommodate the influx of new students until school facilities are built.

It is questionable whether the current development impact fee structure will be adequate to cover full construction costs. Considering that a portion of these fees were assessed 15 years ago and the school district has not been able to secure mitigation agreements with developers to address construction timing and financial concerns, PUSD may not have adequate funds.

Another example of poor planning took place at Turlock City Council's March 22 meeting.

The council discussed moving the ACE train stop from the already approved site at the Roger K. Fall Transit Center to a location a short distance away on South Golden State Boulevard. The Altamont Corridor Express is a commuter rail service connecting Stockton and San Jose. For the past several years, ACE has been developing plans for extending rail services to Stanislaus and Merced counties.

Turlock's ACE train station at the transit center — directly linking it with Turlock's bus system and utilizing existing parking infrastructure — had already received full City Council approval, final approval on its environmental impact report in December 2021 and funding commitments by ACE for its design and infrastructure. The primary reason given for moving the train station was to spur economic development by locating the station closer to downtown and future housing.

Turlock debates moving planned ACE rail depot to downtownThe Turlock City Council discussed on March 22, 2022, whether its Altamont Corridor Express passenger station should be downtown.

Members of the public questioned the need to potentially put the entire project at risk to move it such a short distance. Economic development is a laudable goal for city councils, but the lack of understanding of the financial and legal ramifications of moving the train station at this point in time by city staff and some council members was concerning.

County Supervisor Vito Chiesa spoke at the meeting warning about Turlock, not ACE, being financially liable for the cost of a new EIR and other cost overruns, if the city decides to follow through.

Fortunately, some council members voiced concerns about the lack of information presented to make such an important decision. The agenda item was continued to a future meeting when an ACE representative could be present and more research could be done by staff.

It's worrisome that staff and some council members were ready to make such a consequential decision without adequate information, but felt they were justified because it would facilitate residential growth.

These two examples are illustrative of a lack of planning but also of misguided priorities. When municipalities prioritize new residential construction over fulfilling existing obligations — whether infrastructure, impact to schools or the fiscal consequences to residents — the impact is often long-lasting and irreparable.

Matt Beekman and Jeani **Ferrari** are members of the advocacy committee of Turlock-based Farmland Working Group.

CITATION (MLA STYLE)

and Jeani Ferrari, Matt Beekman. "Patterson and Turlock have more to learn about good planning." *Modesto Bee, The (CA)*, sec. opn_columns_blogs, 10 May 2022. *NewsBank: Access World News*, https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info%3Asid/infoweb.newsbank.com&svc_dat=AWNB&req_dat=FD4EFEC962F43B889B0A2A6759261F3&rft_val_format=info%3Aofi/ft%3Akev%3Amtx%3Actx&rft_dat=document_id%3Anews/189E92301 Accessed 23 May 2023.

Copyright (c) 2022 Modesto Bee, The