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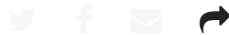
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COMMUNITY COLUMNS

Jeani Ferrari and Allen Gammon: Jobs not a good enough reason to cover up Wood Colony

BY JEANI FERRARI AND ALLEN GAMMON

UPDATED JANUARY 04, 2014 11:02 PM



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In our Summer 2007 newsletter, the Farmland Working Group questioned the validity – no, the possibility – of the Salida Now plan. We are never without concern about grandiose plans that tout jobs, jobs, jobs at the sacrifice of our superior soils.

Recently, another plan from some of the same players proposes that Modesto's road to jobs and riches is developing land west of Highway 99, specifically, the Wood

Colony area. Plan it, subdivide it, rip out the orchards, and they will come

Are *they* the same businesses that didn't come to the east side of Highway 99 for the Salida Now plan? Are *they* the same businesses that we thought would come to the thousands of acres that are ripe for development between Pelandale and Kiernan roads within Modesto's 40-year-old sphere of influence?

Nobody seems to know who these businesses are or will be.

It isn't the lust for land, including the land of the Wood Colony, that is a surprise. It is trust in a plan that has no basis in fact. There are no businesses clamoring to build in Wood Colony. There is no money within the Modesto city budget to throw at pie-in-the-sky visions. There is no logic in adding 65-foot tractor-trailer rigs to the Beckwith or Briggsmore overpass congestion. There are no fire services within Modesto that can serve an urbanized Wood Colony area. There is no basis to abandon good planning for job-generating uses of land already within the Modesto sphere of influence.

There is no logic in expanding rather than infilling when it comes to good planning.

TOP VIDEOS



See giant solar project under construction near Patterson

Patterson recently won approval from Stanislaus Local Area Formation Committee to urbanize 1,119 acres of prime farmland along the I-5 corridor. This was approved despite the recommendation against approval from county staff that correctly identified the likely inability of Patterson to adequately provide for a multitude of negative impacts – providing water, sewer capacity and alleviating resulting traffic congestion. These issues were not merely ignored but consumed by the grandiose development projections for job-generating businesses.

While there may be cause to expect that more warehouse operations will be attracted to the I-5 corridor, no such theory is valid for the Highway 99 corridor.

Wood Colony is composed of farms and farming families, some on the same land for more than 100 years. These families are part of an industry that has been the backbone of our local economy. Without that backbone, Modesto will simply become a bedroom community. In 1995, a bedroom community was what we were becoming when local planning took us all the way to the Stanislaus River. Considering these facts, it is unlikely the community, and thus our representatives, will sell the Wood Colony and us, down the river again.

The Farmland Working Group believes the city of Modesto and all cities in Stanislaus County can protect our world-class agricultural resources while diversifying and expanding our job base. Let's work together to promote infill, regional planning and the best use of our finite resources.

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