

## The Davis Enterprise

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### *Special to The Enterprise*

A good decision requires an informed electorate. That's why the No on X campaign has meticulously cited applicable environmental documents and city studies to support our arguments against Covell Village.

Unfortunately, the Yes on X campaign has not applied the same standard. It paid Davis citizens \$75 each to be in focus groups to find the advertising images and phrases that would most appeal, not what would best educate. Honest discussion is suffocated by a flood of mailers that are deceptive, speak in half-truths or are false. None has honestly addressed the three main unanswered issues: traffic impacts, financial risk and failure to provide houses that people who work in Davis can afford.

People in East Davis are genuinely alarmed about Covell Village. They fear sacrificing the neighborhood they love, where they have built their lives, to the subdivision's traffic. The EIR is clear: Traffic on Pole Line and Covell will double. Traffic impacts will be felt miles from the project. Every intersection on Covell except two from Road 98 west of Davis to the Mace overcrossing will need a traffic light. The Mace overcrossing would be at 97 percent of capacity.

How does the Covell Village Company morally justify breaking the promises made in the corridor plan to the people of East Davis when the Pole Line Road overcrossing was built — that their neighborhood, or any neighborhood, would never be sacrificed for the sake of a new subdivision?

Covell Village claims its subdivision would be financially good for Davis. Yet the city's own Budget and Finance Commission refused to support it as too risky. Why does Covell Village conceal that fact that the project still requires the "temporary" park tax to be made permanent, otherwise its balance sheet slips into the red and must be subsidized by taxpayers? Who would pay the millions of dollars in infrastructure costs?

Covell Village tries hard to coax us into believing their houses would be affordable. But their numbers change depending on the audience. Average home prices quoted to prospective homebuyers are lower than those told to city and business leaders concerned about revenue. We deserve straight talk.

The truth is, Covell Village utterly fails to provide houses that most Davis people can buy. Using the city's own numbers, 92 percent of the for-sale housing would cost more than most Davis families can afford; the average home would cost about \$700,000. Covell Village is not designed for people who work in Davis.

But these are not the only efforts to mislead:

\* Good for schools? "\$60 million for schools" is clearly designed to give the impression the developers are making a gift to the schools. In truth, the money would come from taxes levied on Covell Village homes. Not one dime is for existing students, teachers or programs.

\* Neighborhood shopping? At the League of Women Voters debate, the developers promised walkable neighborhood shopping, exclusively. Subsequently we learn their "neighborhood shopping" is Trader Joe's. Trader Joe's is a regional draw that would generate significant traffic. Trader Joe's could come to Davis sooner, and bring the city more taxes, if located in one of the city's three viable sites rather than Covell Village.

\* Solar energy? This is nothing more than a marketing gimmick. The proposed solar units are only a fraction of the average-sized units already in Davis. Why delete the most obvious energy saver — solar water heating — or fail to include solar on commercial or apartments? The Sierra Club opposes the subdivision.

\* Fire station? Nothing in the development agreement requires the city to operate a fire station. Even if it did, after the first few years the city couldn't afford to operate it without increasing taxes or cutting services.

\* Smart planning? Covell Village has spent thousands to create the illusion the subdivision would be similar to Village Homes because it has the same well-known designer. However, Covell Village is primarily selling lots — not houses. Its advertised designer would not be designing most of the buildings.

Covell Village is no Village Homes. It is six times larger and twice as dense. Village Homes did not create traffic nightmares and financial risks; it consists of small, inexpensive, ecologically designed homes, not million-dollar mansions on small lots.

At 1,864 units, Covell Village is the largest subdivision ever proposed in the history of Davis. Almost half of Covell Village would be built in the 100-year flood plain.

Covell Village is a developer-driven subdivision. It is in direct conflict with our citizen-based General Plan. Further, the developers can later renegotiate any part of the development agreement. Smart planning should be based on the concept that Davis growth reflect the community's vision and meet the community's needs. The Davis Planning Commission would not approve Covell Village.

Recently, the Yes on X campaign has resorted to desperate scare tactics: Approve Covell Village or the county will let Sacramento developers build. This is completely untrue. The county would lose millions of dollars in property taxes from Davis and incur millions of dollars in expenses to provide services such as sewer hookups.

Before you vote, ask yourself these questions. Why would you vote to inflict traffic, noise and air pollution on your neighborhood? Are you willing to spend even more time in your car? Should the city be at financial risk because of this subdivision? Do you think Davis needs hundreds of additional million dollar houses while failing to provide houses average Davis citizens can afford?

We think not. For the future of Davis, vote no on Measure X.

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