



Alliance for Environmental Leadership

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## Placer County Proposes to Industrialize Western Placer Farmland

***Is this what we want? Does it make economic or social sense?***

By The Alliance for Environmental Leadership

A County of Placer proposal will convert 8,497 acres of primarily wetland and farmland to 80% surface parking and 20% new buildings. The area is known as the Sunset Area Plan, and it includes the proposed Placer Ranch development. It is located on 13.9 square miles of prairie grassland, west of Highway 65, between Roseville and Lincoln in Placer County.

The proposed development has three main parts: low density, single family suburban homes, large industrial campuses, and a university. While none of these things are inherently bad, the proposed design will not support quality of life needs and will not be environmentally or financially sustainable for the County. For example:

- 5,827 low density housing units will skirt a smelly landfill
- 21.8 jobs will be added for every one unit of housing produced - creating a jobs/housing balance that will exacerbate Placer County's housing crisis
- 71,096 primarily low wage jobs will not be supported by public transit or affordable homes for workers
- Hwy 65 will be congested with at least 895,317 new daily vehicle trips
- Only \$.04 and \$.65 cents will be generated for each dollar needed to maintain services in the residential areas - imposing a burden on existing taxpayers
- The county's largest remaining continuous vernal pool habitat will be destroyed
- A regional retail district twice the size of the Galleria, Fountains, and adjacent box stores combined will compete with existing retail in Lincoln, Rocklin and Roseville.

We propose something better. Join us in designing our community's future with a Citizen-Initiated Smart Growth Plan for West Placer.

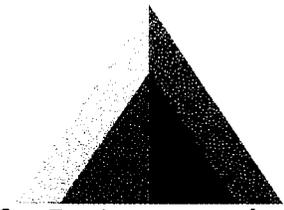
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### Issue by Issue

#### Land Use, Sustainable Development & Transit

Can you imagine 5,827 housing units and three schools skirting a smelly landfill? Mostly single family low density homes, they will be socially isolating and water and energy intensive. Developments like this only generate between 4% to 65% of the tax revenue needed to maintain public infrastructure. All county taxpayers will be paying for it for the project's lifetime.



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### **Impact to Natural Resources**

Approximately 70% of the site is important farmland and contains high density vernal pool habitat. The project incorporates no carbon neutral impact or net positive design requirements and no transit for reducing car trips and greenhouse gas emissions. With no provisions or plans for rapid transit, 895,317 new daily vehicle trips will congest highway 65. All the pavement will create an immense heat island that will float into the mountains, raising the temperatures in the Sierra's wild landscapes.

### **Future Markets & Designing for the Future**

Technological advancements are rapidly changing the way we live, work, and play and our values about how we live. A plan designed around cars rather than community builds in technological and cultural obsolescence. Home buyers and companies are now valuing access to social life and amenities over location.

Large industrial parcels intend to attract large industrial campuses. Regional and national markets for industrial properties are saturated with suppliers, and not buyers. To attract them, local governments subsidize corporations in many ways, with tax breaks, cheap power and waving fees. To supply cheap power to these sites, our cooperative energy source, Pioneer Energy, will be exploited.

### **Fair Housing & Growth Inducement**

We all want to work near where we live. For every job in the SIA, only 1 in 22 workers will live nearby. The regional standard is 1 housing unit for every 2 jobs. This will cause workers to drive farther to get to work and spend up to 30% of their income on transportation. Only 10% of the proposed housing units will be affordable enough for 57% of Placer residents. If the development team does not want to meet the 10% minimum, they can pay a fee of \$4,000/unit— not even equal to year of rent! Collectively, this project will push our poorest neighbors closer to homelessness and raise housing costs for all.

### **Ecology & Climate Change**

We have already destroyed 88% of vernal pools in Placer County. With this project, we will destroy the largest continual vernal pool ecosystem remaining. (It makes up 17% of what we have left.) Three-fourths of the site is classified as important farmland, with 94% native grasses and forbs. We have not yet determined the effects on carbon sequestration and the value of ecosystem services, but do not expect encouraging results.

### **Public Subsidies of Private Development**

When a developer does a new project, they pay fees to mitigate, or offset, the negative impacts their project produces. Placer County fees are the lowest in California and taxpayer dollars are used to fill in the gap between the estimated costs and the true costs. This means that the development is subsidized by the taxes we pay. In the case of the Sunset Area Plan, the dominant landowners are two of the nation's biggest developers, Eli Broad and Angelo Tsakopoulos, worth \$6.7 billion and \$600 million respectively. The county has already fronted \$5 million to develop the plans for their land.

As a county we can do better, as united citizens we know we can propose better.

**Join us in designing for our Citizen-Initiated Smart Growth Plan,  
or follow along for updates and events:  
Alliance for Environmental Leadership  
[facebook.com/allianceforenviroleadership](https://facebook.com/allianceforenviroleadership)**



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January 7, 2019

Dear Editor:

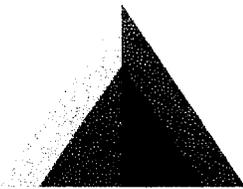
Development projects should benefit local populations. What makes a fair distribution of these benefits? Over the next few decades, Placer County's current plans will cause our County to absorb 50% of all the growth anticipated in the six-county Sacramento Region. Our population will double and then double again by 2050. This poses risks to our quality of life and well-being of the local population and the environment. Growth in Placer County must maintain the quality of life we cherish, including safeguarding our environment through wisely investing taxes collected from our families and businesses.

I am a member of the Alliance for Environmental Leadership (AEL), a coalition of local organizations, that informs citizens about development projects that have the potential to adversely impact our climate, our quality of life, social justice and species survival in our region. We respond to these developments proactively, through bringing viable alternatives and fresh thought and science into the public conversation.

We are concerned that unsustainable growth increases our county population while destroying what we and our new neighbors value about living here- access to beautiful natural spaces, less traffic than the Bay Area, and the small town rural feel. Rampant suburban sprawl, continual construction of new massive regional retail centers and risky trades with developers replace our best assets with an outdated anywhere-America sense of place.

A case in point is the County of Placer's new proposal to update the Sunset Area Community Plan, allowing conversion of 13.9 square miles of West Placer farm and prairie lands into an employment center/industrial park. According to the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the project, as proposed, it will cause significant and unmitigatable harm to the environment. It would bring us:

- 5,827 low-density housing high cost housing units which will skirt a smelly landfill
- 71,096 possible new primarily low-earner jobs without public transit or homes for workers
- Congestion on Hwy 65 with at least 895,317 new daily vehicle trips
- Public subsidies of new growth. The developments will generate tax income of between \$.04 and \$.65 cents for each dollar needed for maintenance of facilities in the new growth area - imposing burdens on existing taxpayers
- Destroy the County's largest remaining continuous vernal pool habitat



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- A jobs/housing imbalance: There will be 21.8 new jobs for each housing unit constructed. This will cause competition for housing and drive up housing costs; exacerbating our housing crisis.

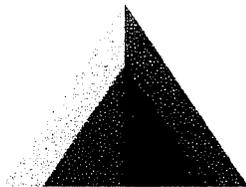
The proposed project will:

1. Add 579,522 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent greenhouse gases (GHG) a year into our atmosphere at full build-out. This will endanger state GHG reduction targets. Pave over 5505 acres of carbon-sequestering grassland and replace it with a massive heat island.
2. Generate 825,000 new daily vehicular trips on local roadways, while providing no public transit.
3. Evict and possibly cause local extinction of birds, amphibians, and insects that are already Federally listed endangered species.
4. Exacerbate our housing affordability crisis by making it easier to build high-end single-family homes than affordable alternatives.
5. Require deep public subsidies in the planning and operation of the area - diverting funds away from existing communities.
6. Fill in the headwaters of two watersheds, causing loss of fisheries, streams and vernal pool wetlands among other impacts.

The Alliance for Environmental Leadership believes we need to ask the big questions about this growth agenda: What is our County leadership doing and why are they doing it? Who benefits?

We're inviting citizens to learn about the County's Sunset Area Plan and how our community life will be impacted should the Board of Supervisors approve it. We also invite citizens to participate in our creation of the Citizen-Initiated Smart Growth Plan, a new vision for social and environmentally-sustainable development in our region.

Currently, the public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Sunset Industrial Growth Area and public comments will be accepted until February 22, 2019. Citizens have only a few weeks to prepare our comments on this project and there are many other projects (of comparable size) soon to come to the public for comment.



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Come learn more about how to participate in local land use, environmental and social justice matters. Active citizens create communities that serve them and give us happy places to live. The Alliance for Environmental Leadership's next Citizen's workshop is January 17, 2019 at Moonrakers Brewery in Auburn. Join us at 6:00 PM!

To find out about our AEL workshops and information about proposed projects, email [allianceforenviroleadership@gmail.com](mailto:allianceforenviroleadership@gmail.com) or check out our facebook page, [facebook.com/allianceforenviroleadership](https://facebook.com/allianceforenviroleadership).

Together we're a stronger voice for a sustainable future.

Sincerely:

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