

“Tassajara Parks” proposed housing development

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s)

Q. What is Tassajara Parks?

A. Tassajara Parks is a high-density development of 125 homes that is proposed to be **built outside the county’s Urban Limit Line** and next to Tassajara Hills Elementary School on Camino Tassajara.

Q. What is the Urban Limit Line (“ULL”)

A. Contra Costa’s ULL is a boundary approved by an overwhelming majority of the county’s voters that prohibits urban development outside the line. It is designed to preserve the county’s agricultural land and open space for the enjoyment of today’s residents and future generations’ sustainability.

Q. How then can the Tassajara Parks development then take place if the ULL prohibits development outside the line?

A. If a proposed development exceeds 30 acres, a county election with an affirmative vote is needed to approve any 30+ acre development outside the ULL. If the development is 30 acres or less, than an affirmative vote of 4 of the 5 county supervisors who must cite at least one of seven possible “findings” can approve a development. Tassajara Parks claims to be 30 acres (in reality, closer to 50+ acres).

Q. Is there a “finding” that the county supervisors could cite to approve Tassajara Parks?

A. The only possible finding that could be cited is that a “Preservation Agreement” between the county and the cities exist. The developer of Tassajara Parks has proposed a so-called preservation agreement to be entered into by the cities of San Ramon, Danville, East Bay Regional Parks and the County that would purportedly preserve the rest of Tassajara Valley from development.

Q. A preservation agreement sounds like a good idea to me. What could be wrong with that?

A. The preservation agreement actually provides a road map for future development because it explicitly states that a developer who donates at least 500 acres of land and writes a \$4 million dollar check to the county can develop 30 acre parcels outside the ULL. Neither the 500 acres nor the \$4 million dollar donation need be in or earmarked for the Tassajara Valley.

Q. I was told that the preservation agreement when signed by the county and the cities will be “permanent” and stop future development

A. The preservation agreement is not a legally binding document. It is merely an expression of feel good sentiments at a particular time. As one legal opinion stated: **“Nothing bars any signatory agency (i.e., the cities or county) from unilaterally repudiating or otherwise withdrawing from the agreement, without penalty.”** The preservation agreement **“does not “preserve” any lands that are not already subject to the maximum degree of protection from urban development afforded by law, and even if it did, it is not enforceable in any meaningful sense.”**

Q. Contra Costa County is experiencing rapid growth and people need places to live. Shouldn't homes be built outside the ULL to accommodate that growth?

A. The county's Planning and Development Department just concluded a required 10 year study to determine if there was enough buildable space **within** the ULL. That study concluded that there was sufficient buildable space to accommodate growth through 2036. The study's findings were reported and accepted by the supervisors in December, 2016.

Q. Besides this road map for future development in Tassajara Valley and other areas in the county outside the ULL, how will Tassajara Parks affect me?

A. There will be many effects including:

- a) **increased** traffic congestion, commute times, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from an additional 250 vehicles on Camino Tassajara that will be commuting, dropping children off at the three elementary schools and the one middle school, and numerous other trips for shopping, after school activities, etc.,
- b) **increased** school population with possible overcrowding of classrooms,
- c) **destruction** of a watershed that provides ground water recharge to rural residents of Tassajara Valley,
- d) **destruction** of wetlands and grasslands that provide a habitat for animal wildlife,
- e) **destruction** of the pastoral and agricultural heritage of Tassajara Valley through urbanization,
- f) **elimination** of the beautiful vistas we enjoy today.

Q. Are there any other groups or organizations opposing Tassajara Parks?

A. Besides numerous individual residents of the Valley, organizations opposed to Tassajara Parks include, among others, the Town of Danville, the Greenbelt Alliance, Save Open Space Danville (SOS), The Sierra Club, East Bay Municipal Utility District, the Tassajara Valley Preservation Association, etc.

Q. Are there any groups or organizations in favor of Tassajara Parks?

A. Other than the developer, we know of no organizations that have spoken in favor of this development.

Q. What can I do to stop Tassajara Parks?

A. Write to our county supervisors and express your opposition to this project. Write also to the San Ramon city council members whose vote is needed to initiate the Preservation Agreement. Tell them that you want them to enforce the Urban Limit Line that was overwhelmingly approved by county voters. In particular, contact Diane Burgis, the newly elected supervisor for our District 3. When voters make their voices heard, elected officials respond. Their e-mail addresses are shown below.

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For more information, visit www.tassajaravalleypa.org.