

## **City planners approve housing projects**

### **Large development in southwest and small one in northeast clear hurdles**

By JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Oct. 7, 2005

Bakersfield Planning Commissioners approved Old River Ranch Thursday night -- a southwest housing development half the size of Delano.

Developers Mike and Greg Petrini sold commissioners on the project with a glossy PowerPoint presentation.

Old River Ranch would include 7,000 homes, 1,000 apartments and 877,000 square feet of commercial space on 1,833 acres between Allen Road and Old River Road south of Panama Lane.

Those are the numbers.

But it was the promise of bike trails, pedestrian access to stores and parks, school sites and financial support for city parks, fire and police services that sold the commission on the large development.

"It's a very responsible project and it will be a good addition to the town," said commissioner Russell Johnson.

It also helped that the Petrini brothers offered to let the city tinker in each segment of their project.

Every section of the project must come back to the city for design review before it is built.

Commissioner Ted Blockley said that rule will help ensure that the attractive promises the Petrinis made in their presentation on Thursday are actually built.

Also, on Thursday, the planning commission approved a "jigsaw puzzle piece" of 35 homes that will fit into the middle of an established neighborhood near Panorama Drive in northeast Bakersfield.

The project, off of Crescent Drive, would develop eight acres currently filled with weeds and an abandoned radio tower building.

The land is surrounded on all sides by existing homes and apartments.

Neighbors said they want to see the land developed, but they don't want to be choked by construction dust, have neighbors peering over their back fences or lose their views of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

"Since this is literally in my back yard I had to take a pretty close look at it," said neighbor Don Johnson. "Six feet from that fence there could be a two-story house looking into my back yard."

Ben Lingo, representing the developer, said they want what's best for what is now a nice, established neighborhood.

"In many ways what we want, and the development team wants, and what the neighbors want, is the same thing," Lingo said. "We want something that is going to be very nice."

Commissioners said filling in this chunk of unpleasant field with development is a good idea, and approved the project.

Both projects will now go to the City Council for approval.

## **Democrats Attack Bill to Boost Refineries**

By H. Josef Herbert, Associated Press Writer  
S.F. Chronicle, Friday, October 7, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) -- A new Republican-crafted energy bill, prompted by the hurricane devastation and high fuel prices, came under sharp attack Friday from Democrats who called it a sop to rich oil companies that would do little to curb gasoline or natural gas costs, while hurting the environment.

Supporters argue the measure is needed to spur construction of new refineries. The House was expected to vote on it later in the day.

In an attempt to ease approval of the bill, Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, removed a particularly contentious provision Friday that would have implemented clean air regulation changes long sought by the Bush administration. It would have allowed not only refineries, but also coal-burning power plants and other industries to expand and make changes without adding pollution controls even if emissions increase.

Still, Democrats and a few Republicans lambasted the legislation as debate opened on the House floor.

It does nothing to curb oil use by requiring more fuel efficient cars or promoting alternative energy sources, said Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass. He called it "a leave-no-oilman-behind bill."

Attempts to add requirements that automakers increase vehicle fuel economy and a measure aimed at producing more natural gas were thwarted by GOP leaders who strictly limited the ability by lawmakers to amend the bill.

"Natural gas is an issue this (Congress) needs to deal with," said Rep. John Peterson, R-Pa., who was prevented under House rules for the bill from offering a proposal that would have opened offshore natural gas resources to drilling.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita shut down more than a dozen refineries and disrupted natural gas supplies. Gasoline prices soared and huge increases in heating bills are expected this winter for users of both gas and fuel oil.

Barton says vulnerabilities in the fuel supply system exposed by the hurricanes show that the country needs to build more refineries, especially away from the Gulf Coast region. No refineries have been built in the United States since 1976 as the industry has consolidated to fewer, but larger facilities.

The GOP legislation also would limit to six the different blends of gasoline and diesel fuel that refiners would be required to produce, reversing a trend of using so-called "boutique" fuels to satisfy clean air demands. And it would give the federal government greater say in siting a refinery and pipeline. It also calls on the president to designate military bases or other federal property where a refinery might be built.

"The bill weakens state and federal environmental standards ... and gives a break to wealthy oil companies while doing little or nothing to affect oil prices," Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y., said in a letter Thursday to colleagues.

With prices soaring, "oil companies now have all the profits and incentives they need to build new refineries" without government help, he maintained.

Barton countered that it will give industry more "certainty" that a refinery project will not be delayed "without lessening any environmental law now on the books. ... The bill sets in motion a chain of events for lowering gas prices for Americans."

Among the groups trying to kill the bill were the National League of Cities, nine state attorneys general, most environmental organizations and groups representing state officials in charge of implementing federal clean air requirements. They said the bill would hinder their ability to ensure clean and healthy air.

Environmentalists also have argued that the limit to six gasoline types could jeopardize the requirement for use of low-sulfur diesel fuel. The low-sulfur diesel regulations have been touted by the Bush administration as one of the Environmental Protection Agency's most significant accomplishments.

In 1981, the United States had 325 refineries capable of producing 18.6 million barrels a day. Today there are fewer than half that number, producing 16.9 million barrels daily. Still, refining capacity has been increasing, though not dramatically, for the last decade. Imports have made up the difference as demand has continued to increase.

---

The bill number is H.R. 3893. Additional information can be found at

[thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov) <<http://thomas.loc.gov>>

## **Senators Point to New Orleans Health Risks**

By John Heilprin, Associated Press Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Thursday, October 6, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Bush administration was accused Thursday by senators in both parties of minimizing health hazards from the toxic soup left by Hurricane Katrina, just as they said it did with air pollution in New York from the Sept. 11 attacks.

More than a month after the storm, compounded by Hurricane Rita, Environmental Protection Agency officials said 1 million people lack clean drinking water around New Orleans. Some 70 million tons of hazardous waste remain on the Gulf Coast.

While EPA officials have warned of serious health hazards from bacteria, chemicals and metals in the region's floodwaters and sediment, they haven't taken a position on New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin's aggressive push to reopen the city.

"EPA may not be providing people with the clear information they need," said Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. "EPA should be clear about the actual risks when people return to the affected areas for more than one day."

A week ago, on a visit to the Gulf Coast, EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson stopped short of judging Nagin's plan to allow certain New Orleans residents and business people back into the city. Johnson said it created "a myriad" of potential health concerns, and the agency was "very concerned about the opening of those parts of the city."

Republican members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee also were skeptical of post-Katrina work being done by EPA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers.

"The people of New Orleans need to feel safe, need to feel like there's a plan," said Sen. David Vitter, R-La.

The committee's chairman, Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., expressed skepticism about the two-page government handouts on environmental and public health risks that EPA helped compile.

"It bothers me a little bit," Inhofe said. "How many people are going to see the report?"

EPA Deputy Administrator Marcus Peacock said thousands of copies are being delivered door-to-door, at relief centers and other public places.

But Peacock acknowledged "room for improvement" in handling the Katrina cleanup and recovery. Agency workers first helped save 800 people's lives, then shifted to contaminant monitoring before focusing on long-range cleanups.

"We've been through a sprint, and now we're staging a marathon," he said. EPA is now assessing 54 Superfund toxic waste sites in the paths of Katrina and Rita. So far, Peacock said, there have been no signs of chemicals released or ruptures in the waste containers.

Samples of floodwater and sediment in the Gulf Region have shown high levels of bacteria, fecal contamination, metals, fuel oils, arsenic and lead. Air monitoring has shown high levels of ethylene and glycol. EPA said the results are "snapshots" that can quickly change.

Sen. James Jeffords, I-Vt., called the government's response to Katrina "apparent chaos."

Some recalled the Bush administration's response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, when the White House directed EPA officials to minimize the health risk posed by the cloud of smoke from the World Trade Center collapse. Within 10 days of those attacks, EPA issued five news releases reassuring the public about air quality without testing for contaminants such as PCBs and dioxin.

It was only nine months later — after respiratory ailments began showing up in workers cleaning up the debris and residents of lower Manhattan and Brooklyn — that EPA could point to any scientific evidence, saying then that air quality had returned to pre-Sept. 11 levels.

"I hope that we're not seeing history repeat itself," said Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J.

---

On the Net:

Senate:

EPA:

<http://epw.senate.gov/index.cfm> <http://epw.senate.gov/index.cfm>

<http://www.epa.gov> <http://www.epa.gov>

## **AF's Crows Landing plan for cargo planes up in air**

### **Air quality, development among the concerns listed**

By Tim Moran, staff writer

Modesto Bee, Friday, Oct. 7, 2005

The Air Force proposal to use the Crows Landing Air Facility to train pilots on giant transport planes has drawn discussion but not much information on Stanislaus County's West Side.

The Air Force surprised county officials two weeks ago with a plan to use part of the site, formerly a Navy air training base, for C-17 Globemaster III take-off and landing exercises.

"The issue has raised a lot of questions throughout the community," Patterson Mayor David Keller said. "It's something we all need to give some thought and consideration to."

Questions include what kind of noise the big planes would generate and how flights would affect air quality.

The C-17 Globemaster is a huge cargo plane capable of transporting heavy equipment and troops around the world. No planes would be based at the Crows Landing facility, but the training exercises would take place around the clock, seven days a week, according to county officials who heard the Air Force proposal.

The Air Force would invest \$37 million in the facility, including building and staffing a fire station, reinforcing the runway it would use and improving sewer and water services. The project would employ fewer than 40 workers, mostly civilians staffing the fire station.

Stanislaus County Supervisor Jim DeMartini, whose district includes the West Side, gave a brief description of the project to the Patterson City Council on Tuesday. He is scheduled to talk to the Newman City Council on Tuesday.

Keller said following the meeting this week that he wanted to make sure the planes steer away from the city limit. He added that he hoped the Air Force plans would not impinge on the county's plans to develop a business park at the site.

Noise was another concern.

"Personally, I'd like to see test flights at night. Are they going to wake up the entire town?" Keller asked. "They should run the planes all day and see if it wakes us up."

Rick Sanford of the Boeing Co., which manufactures the C-17, said it is quieter than the transport planes it replaced, the C-5 and C-141.

The C-17's Pratt & Whitney engines are the same as those used on 757 commercial airliners, Sanford said, although there are four of them on the C-17 compared with two on the 757.

Air pollution from the big planes is another concern. When it was operating in Atwater, Castle Air Force Base's flight operations annually cranked out 1,200 tons of nitrous oxide, 1,735 tons of carbon monoxide and 1,300 tons of other volatile gases, according to estimates from air regulators at the time. Castle was a flight training facility for B-52 bomber crews.

The B-52 has eight engines rather than four and was designed in the 1950s. The C-17 went into service in the mid-1990s and uses much cleaner technology, Sanford said.

"It's a much more modern, commercial, off-the-shelf engine," he said. "It's a source of pride for our aircraft."

Still, the San Joaquin Valley has some of the worst air in the nation, and regulators are struggling to bring air quality back into compliance with federal standards.

Tom Jordan, a special projects administrator for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said that the Air Force has contacted the district about the Crows Landing proposal.

Any federal agency coming into an area that is in noncompliance for air quality has to show that the project is consistent with regional air quality goals, Jordan said. If they aren't, they have to take action to improve air quality in another area to offset the pollution.

AF would have to deal with regs

In the case of large projects, that can take the form of a cash payment to the air district, which could be used for projects such as buying old polluting cars to get them off the road or converting school buses from diesel to a cleaner technology.

The federal agency itself prepares the document spelling out whether it conforms with air quality goals and also approves the report, Jordan said. The air district can comment on the document, but it doesn't have approval authority, Jordan said.

So if the Air Force decides that the C-17 doesn't conform to the district's goal, it has to offset the pollution. But if it decides it does conform, no offsets are necessary.

The air district hasn't seen the emissions data from the Air Force on the Crows Landing project, Jordan said.

"As we get more information, we will know more," he said.

Supervisor DeMartini emphasized that talks with the Air Force have been preliminary, and no deal has been made. But he added that the facility southeast of Patterson will at some point be used as an airport of some kind.

He urged Patterson officials to avoid planning development toward the air facility, to avoid conflicts with air traffic.

Various proposals for the county-owned facility have been floated over the past few years, including use as an air cargo port, taking commercial cargo traffic that would normally go to the Bay Area; as a home for California Department of Forestry planes now based in Hollister; and as a general aviation airport.

Supervisor DeMartini said he felt the Air Force could coexist with the county's proposed business park. "Our priority interest is as an industrial park, and we told them it could not interfere with our plans for a business park," he said.

The Air Force declined an invitation to participate in a town hall meeting, saying it is premature, DeMartini said.

The Newman City Council meets at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the council chambers, 1200 Main St.

## **Neighbors Urge L.A. Port to Rethink Rail Yard Plan**

**More than 300 jam a Long Beach meeting. Residents say pollution from trucks serving the proposed facility would threaten their health.**

By Deborah Schoch, Times Staff Writer  
L.A. Times, Friday, Oct. 7, 2005

More than 300 harbor-area residents who fear worsening air pollution lambasted the Port of Los Angeles' plans for a new rail yard at a public meeting Thursday night.

Residents charged that the port was dumping the 183-acre facility in a lower-income area in Wilmington and west Long Beach that is close to homes and schools. They challenged the port to rethink its plans, warning that the 1 million diesel-burning trucks that would transport goods to and from the yard each year would pose a serious health threat to residents. The area is being turned into a sacrificial lamb, said Councilwoman Tonia Reyes Uranga, who represents west Long Beach.

"The project will take the area's already bad air-quality level to a level that will be deadly for our children," she said, adding that her own children, who were born in the area, suffer from respiratory problems.

"I am outraged that families of limited means are spending more on medical bills and medicine than on books and milk," she said, sparking spirited applause.

"We're all people on the wrong side of town," said Marlene Sanchez, who has lived in west Long Beach since 1974. A rail yard would never be proposed for wealthier parts of the city, she said.

Project critic John Cross noted that his grandson attends Hudson Elementary School, which is 200 yards from the proposed yard, and will attend high school down the street, so he would be exposed to fumes from the diesel-burning trucks, ships and trains serving the port. Diesel fumes, a carcinogen, are also known to exacerbate asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

"We're not a Third World country that you can walk on and step on!" Cross called out to port officials, drawing loud cheers and more applause.

The debate is the first significant port controversy to confront Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who has named a new Harbor Commission and pledged to clean up port smog.

He has also promised to pay more attention to Wilmington, where residents have long complained that they suffer far more than their share of air pollution, traffic and noise. Wilmington's residents are largely Latino and less affluent than residents of San Pedro, which has received the bulk of the port's funding for community revitalization.

Residents and port businesses are scrutinizing the rail debate for clues to how Villaraigosa will deal with rapidly rising anger over escalating port pollution.

BNSF Railway officials promise to make the rail yard a national model for "green" technology by using the country's first electric cranes and clean-burning yard equipment fueled by liquefied natural gas.

They say that once the yard is built, cargo containers could be loaded onto rail cars that would move inland on the Alameda Corridor. Much of that cargo currently travels north by truck on the Long Beach Freeway, generating diesel pollution and clogging the antiquated roadway.

But residents complain that trucks would still make 1 million trips annually between docked ships and the new yard, boosting air pollution for five public schools and hundreds of homes.

Thursday's meeting at Silverado Park in Long Beach was the first of two sessions in which residents could comment on what they want the Port of Los Angeles to examine in the upcoming study of the yard's potential environmental affects. The second meeting will be at 6 p.m. Oct. 13

at Banning's Landing in Wilmington.

The crowd filled the park's small, overheated community meeting room, leaving most people standing along walls or outside as the meeting began.

Some residents complained that port officials had given confusing information about the meeting. Although it was scheduled to start at 6 p.m., the port had sent 70,000 postcards to residents in Wilmington and San Pedro that listed the starting time as 5 p.m. .

The port held an informal open house starting at 5 p.m., but did not begin taking public comment until nearly 7 p.m.

Harbor Commission President S. David Freeman could not attend Thursday's meeting because of a conflict with a dinner hosted by the Port of Los Angeles for the executive committee of the International Assn. of Ports and Harbors. Commission Vice President Jerilyn Lopez Mendoza showed up shortly after 9 p.m., after the port dinner.

The meeting was a good beginning she said. "I was impressed with the level of passion and knowledge that the community brought to the table," Lopez Mendoza said. "I hope port staff will take their comments to heart."

[Letter to the Sacramento Bee, Friday, Oct. 7, 2005:](#)

### **Clean air and refineries**

Re "Clean air mischief," editorial, Oct. 5: U.S. Rep. Joe Barton's GAS Act doesn't "delay until 2015 existing smog cleanup deadlines." It lets a city ask for time to deal with pollution that blows in from other places before economic sanctions begin destroying jobs. And the bill simply does not "repeal the requirement that industries install modern pollution control devices."

What the GAS Act mostly does is increase refinery capacity in America. Doing nothing was the strategy followed for 30 years, but two hurricanes and a lot of \$3.50 gasoline have exposed some flaws in the do-nothing plan.

We need more refineries because those who work for a living need gasoline to get to their jobs. For many the higher cost of gasoline comes out of the grocery budget. Relatively few of them are advising us to do nothing.

Larry Neal, Washington, D.C.  
Deputy Staff Director, House Energy and Commerce Committee