

[Fresno Bee editorial, Wed., Dec. 11, 2013:](#)
Westlake will help area west of Highway 99

A look around Fresno and Clovis proves the popularity of master planned development. People like the walking and cycling trails and being near schools and retail shops. With our region finally recovering from the Great Recession, home values are climbing again — most noticeably in master planned areas.

The newest proposal coming through the pipeline is Westlake, a 430-acre community west of Highway 99 that eventually would have 2,600 single-family homes and apartment units, a population of about 8,000 and a central lake.

We believe that Westlake is the right project at the right time for this area of Fresno — and for the community at large.

Others disagree. They say that the Granville Homes development is premature because the area lacks the proper roads to handle a large increase in traffic. Critics also say that the envisioned community — bounded by Gettysburg, Garfield, Shields and Grantland avenues in the Central Unified School District — is a classic example of urban sprawl and will increase air pollution.

We note this criticism because poor planning and developer influence have contributed to many of the problems Fresno is dealing with today, and we have seriously weighed the concerns of those who are opposed to Westlake.

But the project's benefits far outweigh its negatives, especially in light of the fact that the project area has ample water.

This part of Fresno is in dire need of private investment and upscale housing. Through the decades, our leaders have failed the area by failing to properly plan its transition from being county farmland to becoming the city's new western edge. Ranch-style residences, typically on 3-acre plots, are interspersed among entry-level housing tracts. Roads are inadequate, bus service doesn't extend to everyone and some people travel great distances to shop or attend school.

Westlake is an opportunity to bring much-needed amenities and cohesion to the area. Its walking trails, for example, will be available for use to the public. The planned stores will cut down travel for shoppers and, lest it be forgotten, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District's indirect-source fee adopted in 2005 requires builders to reduce pollution caused by new development or pay stiff fees to fund mitigation programs.

The Westlake proposal has the blessing of Mayor Ashley Swearingin's planners and in November it won the support of the Fresno Planning Commission. It deserves the go-ahead from the Fresno City Council at Thursday's meeting.