

Napa Valley Register

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EDITORIAL

City, county, developer need to work together on Napa Pipe

Keith Rogal has to laugh when people describe him as patient. “I never thought of myself as a patient person growing up,” he says. “I didn’t consider it one of my attributes.”

But seven years and \$70 million into the most controversial housing development proposal in county history, Rogal and his Napa Redevelopment Partners have endured.

After finally getting county Planning Commission approval for a sharply scaled-back version of the project in June, Rogal and his partners withdrew their application to revise it again this summer.

What will go before the county decision-makers in October is a far cry from the original 3,200-home concept. It’s a project with up to 945 homes and a Costco Wholesale warehouse.

Will this new Kirkland brand of housing development finally win county favor?

Critics of the project — of which many remain — hope not. While Rogal and company have shown a willingness to adapt their once more-ambitious goals, the

majority of the project’s opponents have proven utterly inflexible.

But whether it is this proposal or something else down the road, something will be built on the former Napa Pipe property.

Too much energy has been spent unrealistically trying to eradicate the possibility for any development at the site. Not enough constructive conversation has taken place on what best fits the needs of the county, city and developer.

Napa Redevelopment Partners have spent \$70 million on the project. No one walks away from that kind of real estate investment without doing something with the property.

They could sell. But who is buying that property for a purpose that doesn’t include any impact on traffic, the environment, the water supply or growth?

If it is not a Costco with 900 homes around it, it will be something else.

The county and city of Napa have not done enough to help establish what that something else should be.

The pressure to meet state housing requirements has been erased with sharply diminished allocations for the next housing cycle. That should present a greater opportunity for cooperation between city and county government as well as with the developer.

The city of Napa needs to be a bigger part of this conversation. The whole of the project may reside in unincorporated county, but the project’s impacts — water, traffic and housing in particular — are arguably greater on the city.

It is time to figure out the next steps for Napa Pipe. The current plan is set to go back before the county Planning Commission on Oct. 3. If opponents do not want a mixed-use housing development with connected big-box retail, then their focus should shift toward what it is they do want.

Because “nothing” is not a viable option.

Editorial board member Michael Haley was recused from the panel’s July meeting with Napa Redevelopment Partners and did not participate in this opinion piece.