
Moorpark Growth in a Neat Package?

Hidden Creek Ranch Development Too Much Too Soon

Wednesday, August 28, 1996

By: ROSEANN MIKOS

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The editorial in the August 15, 1996 issue of *The Star*, applauding the proposed Hidden Creek Ranch (Messenger) Development as "Moorpark Growth in a Neat Package," is premature at best—just as is the whole notion of having this development at all in Moorpark at this time in Moorpark's life.

It is clear to most Moorparkers who have diligently followed the issue that three of the four planning commissioners as well as your editorial board have fallen—hook, line, and sinker—for what the developer advocate has told you about this project! If the commissioners and you had seriously evaluated what is proposed based on the facts presented in the studies, on the principles outlined in California Planning Law, and in Ventura County's Guidelines for Orderly Development—especially in light of what else is **already** on the books for additional Moorpark development, it is virtually inconceivable that you could favor this project at this time.

URBAN SPRAWL

The proposed Hidden Creek "neat package" is actually a classic example of urban sprawl—it jumps outside city boundaries before development within the existing city is complete! California land use planning law strongly discourages this kind of leapfrog development before infilling existing city boundaries. If Moorpark did not already have almost 3000 other dwelling units under construction, approved but not yet built, or in the planning process for its existing city limits; and, if it had no "inside the city" space left on which to add new residents, then and only then would it be appropriate to even consider this or a different proposal for the beautiful open space area north of the current city limits. Take a look at the accompanying map¹ to see (1) how much other rural and open space land will be bulldozed over the next 10-15 years for this "inside the city" development and (2) how much land will be added to the City of Moorpark if annexation is allowed for this premature development proposal.

How could anyone possibly see a benefit in approving development now for Hidden Creek—the equivalent of another new city on top of our existing one—when we haven't even seen the consequences of the full "inside the city" build-out? All possible "inside the city" development should be completed first, to whatever level it is

¹ AUTHOR'S NOTE: The *Ventura County Star* chose NOT to include the provided map with the published article. It was a hand-drawn rendering of the planned building "on the books" for consideration in and near Moorpark at the time of the article. It provided a clear visual of the excessiveness of the Hidden Creek project. If you would like to see this hand-drawing, call 529-3216 or email contactme@roseann-mikos.org to have a copy faxed to you.

eventually approved, all infrastructure for it should be in place, and the city should get to see the actual results of it before converting land outside the city limits (like Hidden Creek) to further urbanization.

The Star said it is Moorpark's "destiny" to be the "designated place in Ventura County for population growth." Don't the people of Moorpark have something to say about that?!!!! You bet they do. They became a city to control their own destiny, not to have someone else's vision for Moorpark jammed down their throats. The people of Moorpark are going to rise up and demand that decision-makers listen to them. Read their lips: NO URBAN SPRAWL, KEEP OPEN SPACE, SAVE MOORPARK'S RURAL SMALL-TOWN CHARACTER.

DETRIMENTAL PROJECT IMPACTS

Now, in case people are not yet convinced that Hidden Creek is the wrong project at the wrong time, then look at all the data provided in the studies prepared, by law, to publicly disclose the detrimental (and beneficial) impacts of the proposed project, if built. The studies admit seven significant unavoidable detrimental impacts that cannot be mitigated, if this project is built as proposed. There are even more according to some analysts (like traffic and bad circulation alternatives). Admitted impacts include:

- Loss of Prime Farmlands.
- Degradation of air quality, not only from typical smog, but also even from carbon monoxide (CO).
- Loss of (open space) visual resources, including scenic viewshed from at least seven viewpoints.
- Increased light pollution
- Increased glare.
- Need for more solid waste disposal capacity than is available
- Loss of Biological Resources including loss of wildlife habitat.

It is also admitted that there is potentially not enough water supply for the projected new population. But they're not sure about that so they don't call it an unavoidable impact that cannot be mitigated. Who among you wants to take the chance of adding 10,000 new people without enough water to supply them?

Section 15042 of the CEQA guidelines, which are part of California law, state clearly that a lead agency like Moorpark "may disapprove a project if necessary in order to avoid one or more significant effects on the environment that would occur if the project were approved as proposed." So, contrary to what some would have you believe, the City of Moorpark does have the authority to flatly disapprove this project. The law also says they can approve the project in spite of all the detrimental effects if they justify (rationalize?) their approval by making findings to explain why they think the benefits of the project outweigh the liabilities. Don't me misled. The benefits of this proposal do not outweigh the liabilities.

From: Roseann Mikos (805-529-3216)

Working Title: "Moorpark Growth in a Neat Package?—A Rebuttal"

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STUDIES SUPPORT DENIAL, NOT APPROVAL

Yes, there has been a lot of study (done by consultants who prepared the studies—but not enough by the people who were supposed to read and evaluate them), and yes there have been nine public hearings (where the overwhelming majority of public comment has been against the project—not for it). However, there has been precious little discussion by the decision-makers about the pros and cons of this proposal in any of those meetings. I know, because I have been at most of them. With all due respect to the Moorpark Planning Commission, they have not done their job. And with all due respect to *The Star's* editorial board, you have not done yours either. While there was enough information presented and discussed in public to support recommending denial of the project, there was not enough to recommend approval. They (and you) made a recommendation for approval without seriously discussing all the impacts and why building the project is more important than avoiding the negative impacts it will have on Moorpark if it is built.

The Chairman of the Planning Commission announced at an early public hearing that they would take the issues a topic at a time and discuss them in detail at a series of meetings. THIS WAS NEVER DONE! Rather, only one meeting was scheduled on a topic basis—one about traffic/circulation and affordable housing. The traffic engineer in attendance at that meeting simply regurgitated what had already been inadequately stated in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and did not present any new information at all. Furthermore, he did not answer any of the many questions brought up by members of the public or by certain planning commissioners.

As for all of the many questions and concerns brought up by public agencies and the general public regarding all the other serious project impacts and problems, and ways to try to mitigate them—there has been virtually no serious public discussion about these either. Why not? Probably because the project is so big that it's not easy to wade through all the data in the detail needed to make an informed decision. It's time consuming and it's hard to do. But that's no excuse. If there's a will, there's a way.

WHAT NEXT?

There's not enough space in this column to point out more of the flaws in the Hidden Creek proposal. As many as there are, it would take up too much room to do so. And that's the very reason why the newspaper doesn't report the whole story either. Today's citizen will rarely read a long column. Everyone wants a simple answer to a complex problem and it just doesn't work that way. A whole essay about each one of the problems/issues with the project could be written—and probably should be written (with pros and cons)—to show everyone just how bad this is for Moorpark right now (or good, for those who think so). What ever happened to fair analysis? All analysis is not paralysis. We need to have everyone look at the plusses and minuses and make an informed decision.

For example, do you agree/disagree with the following, and explain why. The public benefits offered by the developer are not enough to justify ignoring the negative impacts. The project won't pay for itself and will cost Moorpark tax payers more than it brings in. The businesses proposed there would compete against Moorpark's

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current businesses so that retail profits would have to be split between them—Alas, the increased population will not be enough to support two downtowns in Moorpark. Build Hidden Creek—and neither old nor new businesses will likely thrive. Ventura County will not build this development anyhow, if the City of Moorpark says no to Hidden Creek. This project in this location should not be approved now. Rather, let the next generation decide in 20 or 30 years if they want to keep its current open space zoning or give it up to this or another urbanized development.

On August 26th, the Moorpark Planning Commission should revisit their vote of August 12th and decide to table their recommendation. They should vote again after they identify and discuss all the issues. The public deserves no less. So—"Just do it!" Please.

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