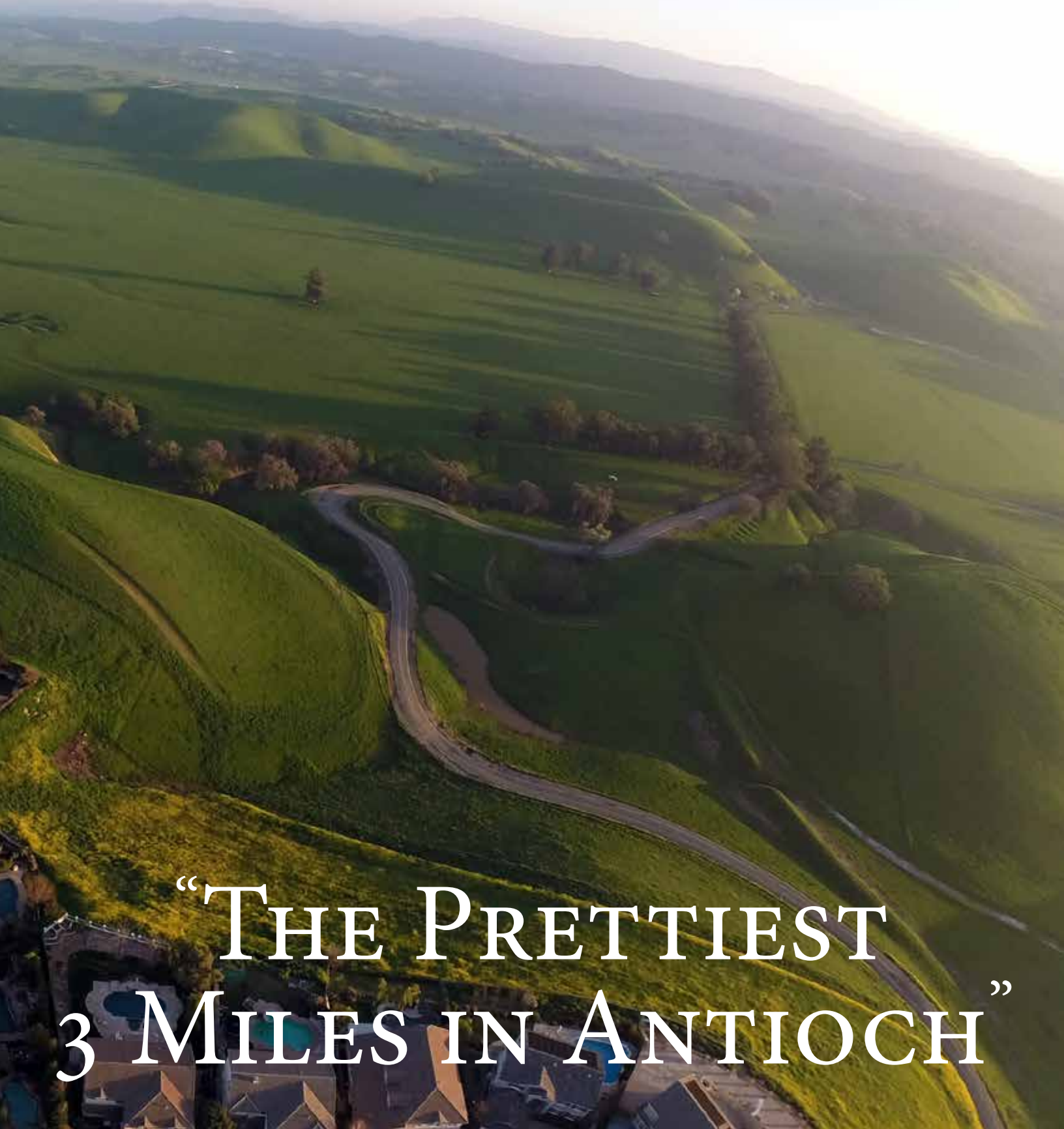
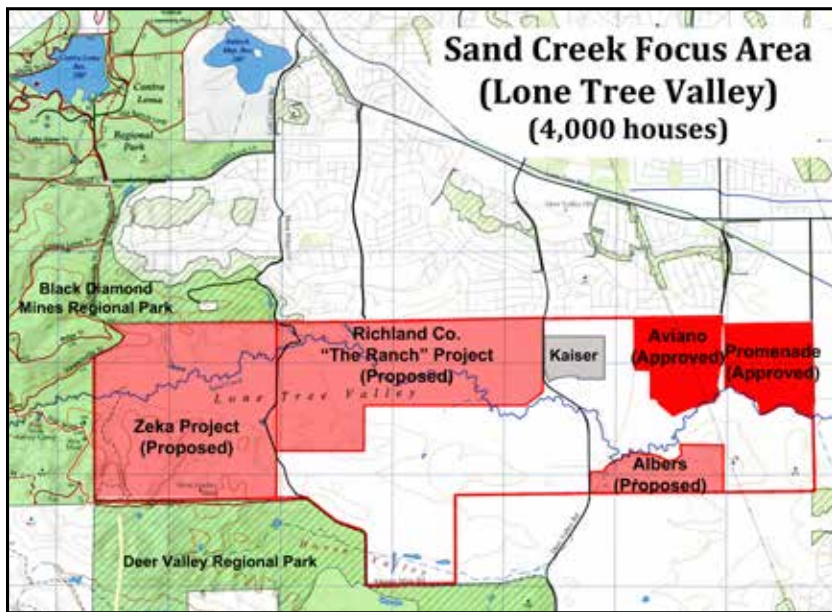


WHAT'S HAPPENING *in Sand Creek & Empire Mine Road?*



“THE PRETTIEST
3 MILES IN ANTIOCH”

SAVE SAND CREEK? FROM WHAT?



4,000 HOUSES THREATENED THE SAND CREEK FOCUS AREA

There have been confusing things taking place in Antioch over the past year, including two recently adopted growth control ballot initiatives in the Sand Creek area between Kaiser Hospital and the Black Diamond Mines hills.

For almost 20 years, Antioch residents and environmental groups have opposed development in the Sand Creek area, especially west of Empire Mine Road. The city was considering 4,000 or more houses throughout the Sand Creek area. The Kaiser Hospital was built, and two developments have been approved east of the hospital (Aviano and Promenade). They haven't been constructed yet.

In 2015, developer Richland Communities started discussing a 1,700-unit "The Ranch" project across Deer Valley Road from Kaiser, and the city began an update of the 2003 General Plan, including the "Sand Creek Focus Area." Unfortunately, it would have increased development numbers even more.

Antioch residents, Save Mount Diablo, and other community groups organized the Antioch Community to Save Sand Creek Coalition. We developed a mailing list of more than 10,000 voters, educated the public, held community forums, and conducted polling.

Under legal threat, the update of the Sand Creek Focus Area was tabled by the city in January 2018. Richland started environmental review for "The Ranch" project. The Community Coalition had already started drafting a growth control ballot measure.

THE COMMUNITY COALITION'S "LET ANTIOCH VOTERS DECIDE" GROWTH CONTROL INITIATIVE

In March, we began signature gathering for our "Let Antioch Voters Decide" growth control measure, which would have restricted development on 1,850 acres west of Deer Valley Road. Our volunteers were outside Safeway, Walmart, and elsewhere collecting signatures.

WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY COALITION INITIATIVE DO?

- Designates 1,850 acres west of Deer Valley Road as the initiative area and zones it Rural Residential, Agriculture, and Open Space.
- Limits development in the Sand Creek area between Kaiser Hospital and Black Diamond Mines, where the city was proposing thousands of houses.
- Requires Antioch voter approval to allow more intensive development. It "Lets Antioch Voters Decide" if they want to allow bigger developments.
- Permanently requires voter approval of amendments to the urban limit line. The current Antioch Urban Limit Line is only voter approved until December 2020. Our measure would continue to require voter approval for any changes.

DEVELOPER RICHLAND COMMUNITIES' "WEST SAND CREEK" INITIATIVE

In May, the developer, Richland Communities began signature gathering for its own "West Sand Creek" initiative. It was very clever. It didn't simply confuse things or try to block the Coalition's initiative. It copied most of our measure; restricted 1,200 acres instead of 1,850; and also approved a smaller, improved version of Richland's project; down from 1,700 houses now to 1,177.

Both the Coalition and Richland needed signatures from 10 percent of Antioch's 51,000 registered voters to qualify their measures. Richland was able to catch up with our mostly volunteer coalition by using paid signature gatherers. Both our volunteers and Richland's paid signature gatherers were using the same messages: "Save Sand Creek," "Reduce traffic," "Save Our Hills."

We needed about 5,100 valid signatures. The Community Coalition and Richland each collected 9,000 to 10,000 signatures. In July, both measures qualified but Richland's had a timing advantage. It would qualify for the November 2018 ballot. The coalition initiative would be on the November 2020 ballot. Even though the community would have preferred no houses or very few, suddenly, instead of competing with each other, Richland's initiative was an insurance measure, in case ours failed. It could have also taken effect sooner, in 2018.

Antioch City Council Members

Wright, Thorpe, and Wilson Supported the Community and Adopted Our Initiative



Mayor
**Sean
Wright**



Mayor
Pro Tem
**Lamar
Thorpe**



Council
Member
**Monica
Wilson**

Mayor Sean Wright, Councilmember Monica Wilson, and Mayor Pro Tem Lamar Thorpe are conservation heroes. They provided excellent leadership in supporting the community, and finding a compromise between two major initiatives and between the Community Coalition and a developer. They adopted the Community Coalition initiative on August 28 and restricted development west of Deer Valley Road.

Councilwoman Lori Ogorchock Opposed the Community and Opposed Adopting Our Initiative. Councilman Tony Tiscareno Did Not Support Us Either.

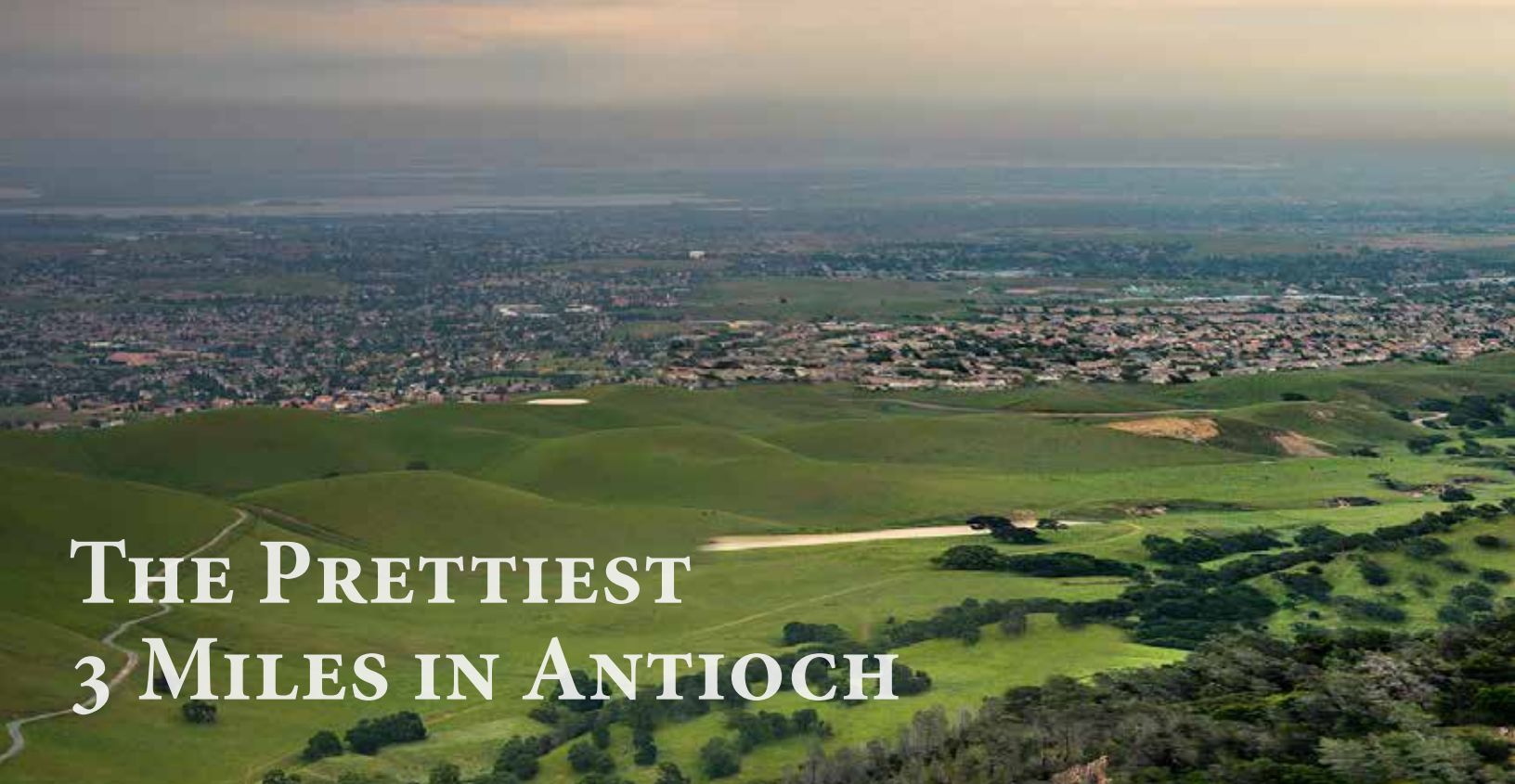


Council
Member
**Lori
Ogorchock**



Council
Member
**Tony
Tiscareno**

Councilwoman Lori Ogorchock voted “NO” against the community’s wishes, against the Coalition’s initiative, and especially against southeast Antioch, despite thousands of signatures of Antioch residents. She vocally supports development on the Zeka property, the most sensitive part of the Sand Creek area. Councilman Tony Tiscareno was absent and didn’t vote on the Community Coalition initiative, although he had been critical of the Coalition and our initiative. He also supports development on the Zeka property. Both Ogorchock and Tiscareno work for the same real estate firm.



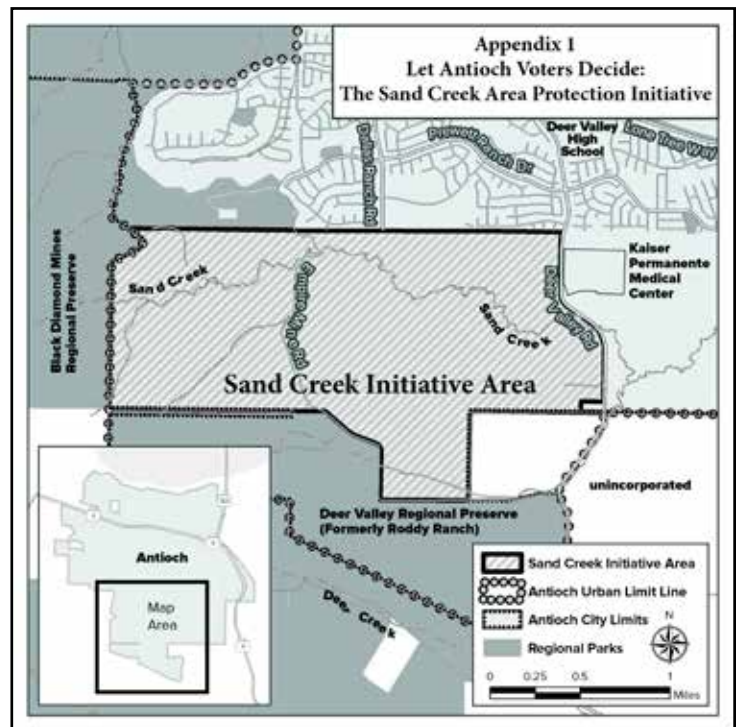
THE PRETTIEST 3 MILES IN ANTIOCH

ADOPTION OR ELECTION?

An initiative petition is direct democracy, citizens making law. But elections are expensive. So if a petition has enough signatures, the decision-making body (in this case the Antioch City Council) has two options: 1) Place the measure on the next election ballot, or 2) Adopt the measure directly into law.

It's easy to think political decisions are simple and city councils should just do the right thing. But it's not that simple. Some city council members preferred as much development as possible (Councilmembers Lori Ogorchock and Tony Tiscareno). Some were okay with some restrictions and some development (Mayor Sean Wright, Mayor Pro Tem Lamar Thorpe, and Councilmember Monica Wilson). But they all had to consider legal liability, the chances the city might get sued, and conflicting stakeholders.

A year ago, would you have thought the Antioch City Council would support restricting development? Lobbying was intense. Legal threats were intense—mostly from the Zeka Group—Louisa Kao's investment scheme to develop the square mile west of Empire Mine Road. On July 24, the City Council adopted Richland's initiative, restricting development on 1,200 acres. On August 28, the City Council adopted the Community Coalition's initiative.



The Antioch Community to Save Sand Creek Coalition's initiative map, which would have protected all of the Sand Creek area west of Deer Valley Road and would not have allowed any large-scale development without a vote of Antioch residents.



TOP OF PAGE:

Aerial view of the Sand Creek area from Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, with Antioch in the distance. Photo by Stephen Joseph.

BOTTOM LEFT:

Aerial view of the Sand Creek area from Antioch, with Black Diamond Mines and Mount Diablo in the distance. Photo by Stephen Joseph.



Stephen Joseph



The Richland initiative map, which is similar to the Coalition's initiative map, except that it allows an improved version of "The Ranch" development project, now reduced in units, protecting the hills and providing a wide, protected creek corridor.

WHAT'S NEXT? LAWSUIT?

Both Richland's and the Coalition's initiatives might be challenged legally, most likely by the development speculators of the Zeka Group. They've missed their chance for a referendum, in which you collect 10 percent of registered voter signatures to place the council's adoption of one or both initiatives on the ballot. Unlike an initiative, for which you have six months to qualify, for a referendum you have just 30 days. It's too late for a referendum.

One or both initiatives could be challenged legally. The deadline for challenging Richland's initiative is in October. The deadline for challenging the Community Coalition's initiative is in November.

Both initiatives amend the Antioch General Plan, and not always consistently. Both initiatives allow for technical corrections. In the next few months, the two initiative sponsors, and the city, will have to work out and clarify the inconsistencies.

Richland's "The Ranch" project is now part of the General Plan. It is likely to move forward because Richland's initiative included a development agreement guaranteeing Richland's rights. However, the project must still complete environmental review and receive other city council and agency approvals.



Michael Amoroza

A view of the Sand Creek area with Mount Diablo in the distance.

THE SAND CREEK AREA IS BEAUTIFUL

The initiative area is beautiful ranch land and open space next to Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve and Deer Valley Regional Park. It's crossed by sinuous Sand Creek, which supports endangered species; it's part of a wildlife corridor from Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve to Los Vaqueros Watershed. It's home to many rare plants and animals, including golden eagles and burrowing owls, plus more common species like bobcats, deer, and coyotes.

It includes big rock outcroppings, ponds, and springs. An oak savanna with huge, old oaks separates the Lone Tree Valley/Sand Creek area from Horse Valley and Deer Valley Regional Park. The Zeka property and the southwestern part of the Sand Creek area are also a bad place for development because of underlying coal mines—two coal mining towns were located on the Zeka parcel. Do we allow more development and impact the public's investment in our parks, or do we expand our parks?

ANTIOCH'S POPULATION HAS DOUBLED IN THE PAST 30 YEARS TO 115,000 PEOPLE

There has been a huge amount of residential development. The city has a large imbalance, with many more houses than jobs, creating a lot of traffic. Many of the desirable natural, open space and historic qualities of the city have been lost. Much of what remains is in danger. Our quality of life is threatened.

Substantial additional sprawl development would be harmful to Antioch residents. It would destroy agriculture, wildlife habitat, streams, and scenic views. More sprawl development at the city's edge would make traffic worse in existing neighborhoods, on Lone Tree Way, and on Highway 4. It would increase air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Services such as police, fire, and schools would be stretched for existing Antioch residents to serve new areas.

The city's southern hills and valleys are the scenic backdrop for the city, and their loss would damage property values. More housing would also compete with existing property values.

HISTORY

In 1992, the city added a four-mile-long area to its southeast border and called it Future Urban Area #1 (FUA #1). The strip is crossed by Empire Mine Road and Deer Valley Road.

The 2003 General Plan renamed FUA #1 as the "Sand Creek Focus Area" and directed the city to create a "Specific Plan" there—at times the area was discussed as a location for 12,000; 8,000; or 4,000 houses. When residents and community groups organized to oppose the Specific Plan, it was tabled. No Specific Plan was ever completed.

East of Deer Valley Road, Kaiser Hospital was constructed, and two developments were approved: Aviano and Promenade/Vineyards at Sand Creek, which is just about to break ground.

In 2015, developer Richland Communities started discussing a 1,700-unit project across the road from Kaiser, and the city began an update of the 2003 General Plan, including the "Sand Creek Focus Area." Once again, residents and community groups opposed the plan, and under legal threat, it was tabled again by the city.

In 2018, a Community Coalition of Antioch residents and organizations, including Save Mount Diablo, Sierra Club, Greenbelt Alliance, and California Native Plant Society, drafted and then qualified an initiative to restrict development on 1,850 acres west of Deer Valley Road. Developer Richland Communities qualified its own "West Sand Creek" initiative, restricting 1,200 acres instead of 1,850 and approving a smaller, improved version of Richland's "The Ranch" project, with 1,177 houses instead of 1,700.

The Antioch City Council approved Richland's initiative in July, and then approved the Community Coalition's initiative in August.

TIMELINE

THANKS TO OUR
AMAZING VOLUNTEERS!

1992

The 2,800-acre Future Urban Area #1 (the Sand Creek area) is added to Antioch.

2002/2003

A Specific Plan covering the Sand Creek area is started but not completed.

2005

The Urban Limit Line is created—but can be changed in 2020. Roddy Ranch development is envisioned south of the Sand Creek area.

2013

The East Bay Regional Park District acquires most of the Roddy Ranch development area, with Zeka Ranch (the westernmost square mile of the Sand Creek area) now surrounded on three sides by protected land.

2015

“The Ranch” preliminary plans are submitted for a project of almost 1,700 units; a General Plan Update that includes the Sand Creek area starts.

2016

The process continues for “The Ranch” and the Sand Creek area update. Grassroots organizing begins.

2017

The Antioch Community to Save Sand Creek Coalition is formed; the Sand Creek area update process is tabled; the Coalition drafts our Let Antioch Voters Decide: The Sand Creek Area Protection Initiative.

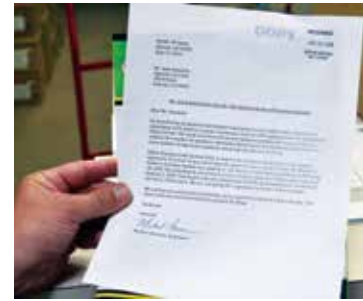
2018

The Coalition submits our initiative to the city of Antioch and begins signature collection to qualify for the ballot; “The Ranch” project applicants submit their own initiative, improve their project proposal, and begin collecting signatures. Both initiatives qualify for the ballot and are adopted by the Antioch City Council (late July for “The Ranch,” late August for the Coalition’s).

November 26, 2018

The statute of limitations on a possible lawsuit challenging the Coalition’s initiative will run out.

To the right, from top to bottom: Volunteers gathering signatures for our petition, submitting the petitions to the Antioch City Clerk, and celebrating three months of hard work at a pizza party.



Let Antioch Voters Decide



Antioch Community to
Save Sand Creek Coalition

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Antioch, CA 94509

FPPC # 1404058

LetAntiochVotersDecide.org

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Antioch Community to Save Sand Creek Coalition

WHO WE ARE

Antioch Community to Save Sand Creek is a coalition of Antioch residents and environmental groups, including Save Mount Diablo, California Native Plant Society, Greenbelt Alliance, and Sierra Club. We want to keep our community informed about what's going on.

