

Supervisors favor less residential growth in Angwin

Angwin land changes

 Areas proposed for redesignation from urban residential



SOURCE: Napa County

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Five years after initially pledging to address the residential development potential of two parts of Angwin, a majority of the Napa County Board of Supervisors agreed Tuesday that more housing units are ill-suited for those areas in the rural community atop Howell Mountain.

Stripping the development potential of those two parcels would be a major victory for anti-development residents in Angwin, including the group Save Rural Angwin, and a potential

financial blow to Pacific Union College, which owns the parcels and had been involved with in-depth discussions with developers over the last decade to sell the land for housing developments.

The board took no formal action Tuesday, but a majority of the supervisors told county Planning Director David Morrison to begin drafting options for how to change the parcels' land-use designations in the General Plan.

The parcels have urban residential designations now, but the majority felt a mix of agricultural, commercial and public institutional designations was the superior option for the future of Angwin. But no consensus could be reached on which areas should have which designations, and the majority of the board would have to vote to approve any changes in the future.

The parcels involved in Tuesday's discussion are located north of Pacific Union College, west of Howell Mountain Road and south of the commercial plaza in Angwin. Napa County voters rejected a ballot measure in November 2012 that would have removed the urban residential designations and replaced them with agricultural or public institutional designations. Sixty percent of voters cast ballots against the measure.

Two separate parcels in Angwin have been approved for 191 homes, so long as they have a mix of affordable units, but neither Save Rural Angwin nor any member of the Board of Supervisors proposed changing that.

If approved by a three-member majority, the land-use changes would cause the two parcels discussed Tuesday to lose their ability to hold housing units, but Supervisor Diane Dillon noted the board could vote to restore that right later — if the college brings forth a detailed plan justifying that request.

Until then, Dillon said the urban residential designation just invites attention from real estate developers, and she wanted the planning of Angwin's future to shift to a growth-averse emphasis.

“The college can come in with a plan and change some or all of that in the future, and would have to convince the board of the need to do so, and the board could vote to do so,” Dillon said. “Urban residential and all the zoning that comes with it is not the place we want to start in Angwin. (It) is not the designation that should be happening six miles from Silverado Trail up a narrow, winding road.”

Supervisors Brad Wagenknecht and Keith Caldwell agreed to some degree with Dillon, but felt that the two parcels should retain a mix of designations — not urban residential — to give the college flexibility to expand its campus if it needs to. Supervisor Mark Luce also expressed support for public institutional in some areas.

Supervisor Bill Dodd sharply disagreed with his fellow board members, however, and directed some criticism toward members of Save Rural Angwin at Tuesday's hearing. The college has been located in Angwin since 1909, and has been the largest land owner since then.

It has gradually sold off property over decades, including land now containing the homes of SRA members, Dodd said. He called the general plan designations in Angwin one of the most significant property rights issues in his time on the Board of Supervisors.

“If it were not for the need of the college for a little more dough along the way, you all would not be living there,” Dodd said.

Dodd said his comments don’t mean he would necessarily support a residential development project, but he feels the proper time to consider the land-use rights for the property would be once a project has been proposed. That’s not the case currently, but Dodd said moving ahead with changing the land-use designation anyway “is just not fair.”

PUC President Heather Knight said in a statement following Tuesday’s hearing that she was anticipating continuing to work with the county on the land-use issues.

“PUC continues to be committed to working collaboratively with the Board of Supervisors to achieve a win-win scenario for the college, the Angwin community and Napa County in regard to determining the appropriate land-use designations for lands privately owned and utilized by the college,” Knight said.

Volker Eisele, a member of Save Rural Angwin, said his group was anxious to see action taken on the majority’s comments.

“There’s no deadline for this,” Eisele said. “It’s a little bit disappointing we didn’t have a conclusion on anything. Things in politics take time.”