
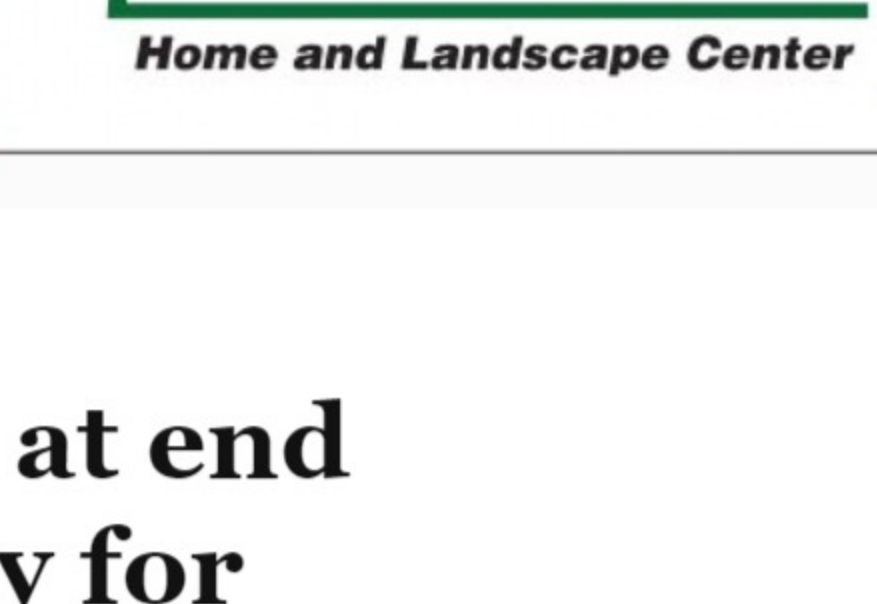


We are working hard to serve our community!



• Helpful
• Safe
• Fast

Open 8 am - 5 pm
Every Day



Home and Landscape Center

News

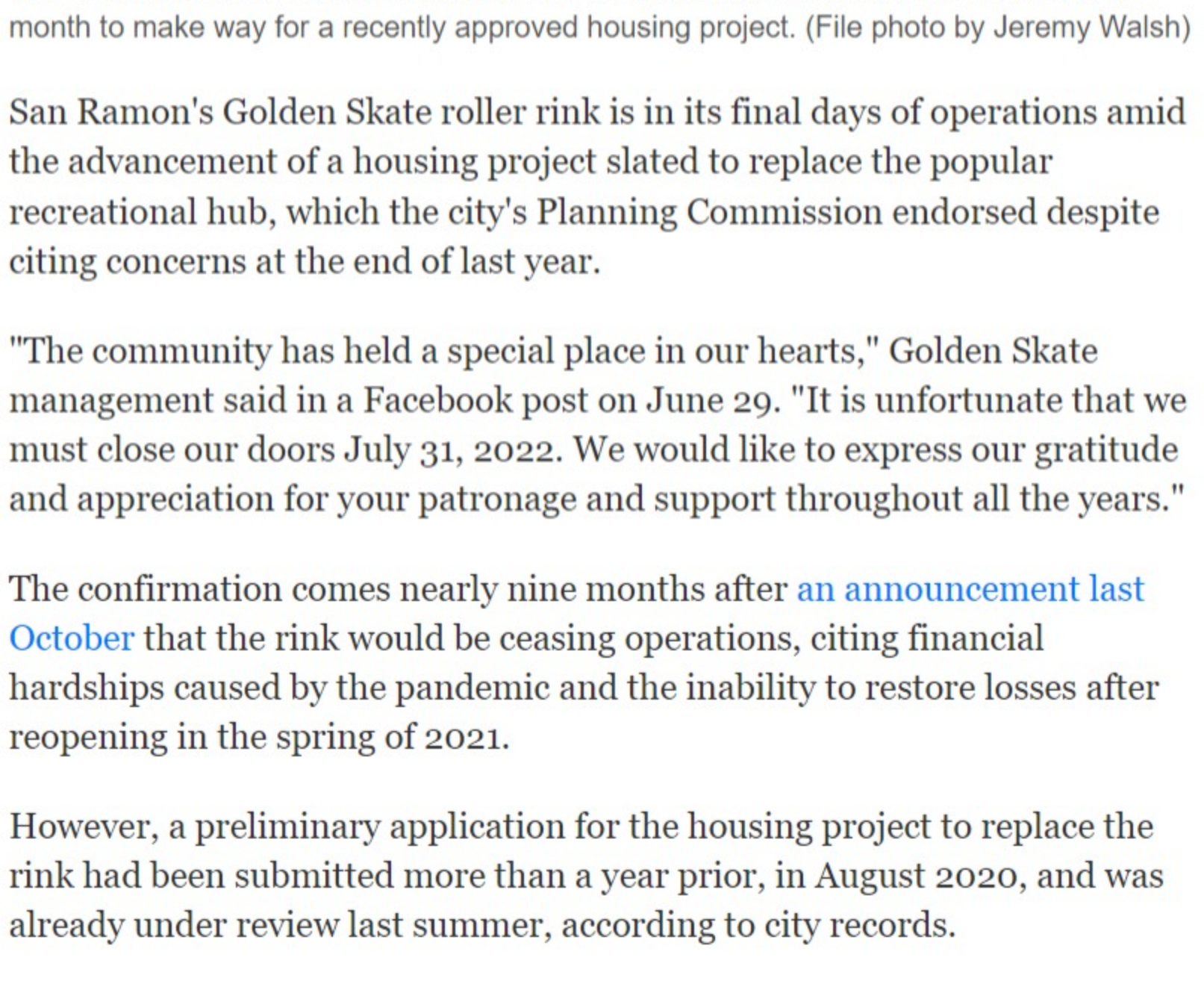
Golden Skate closing at end of month to make way for new townhomes

47-unit housing development to replace longtime roller rink on Hooper Drive

by [Jeanita Lyman](#) / [Danville San Ramon](#)



Uploaded: Thu, Jul 14, 2022, 5:07 am
Time to read: about 7 minutes



The Golden Skate roller rink in San Ramon is scheduled to shut down at the end of the month to make way for a recently approved housing project. (File photo by Jeremy Walsh)

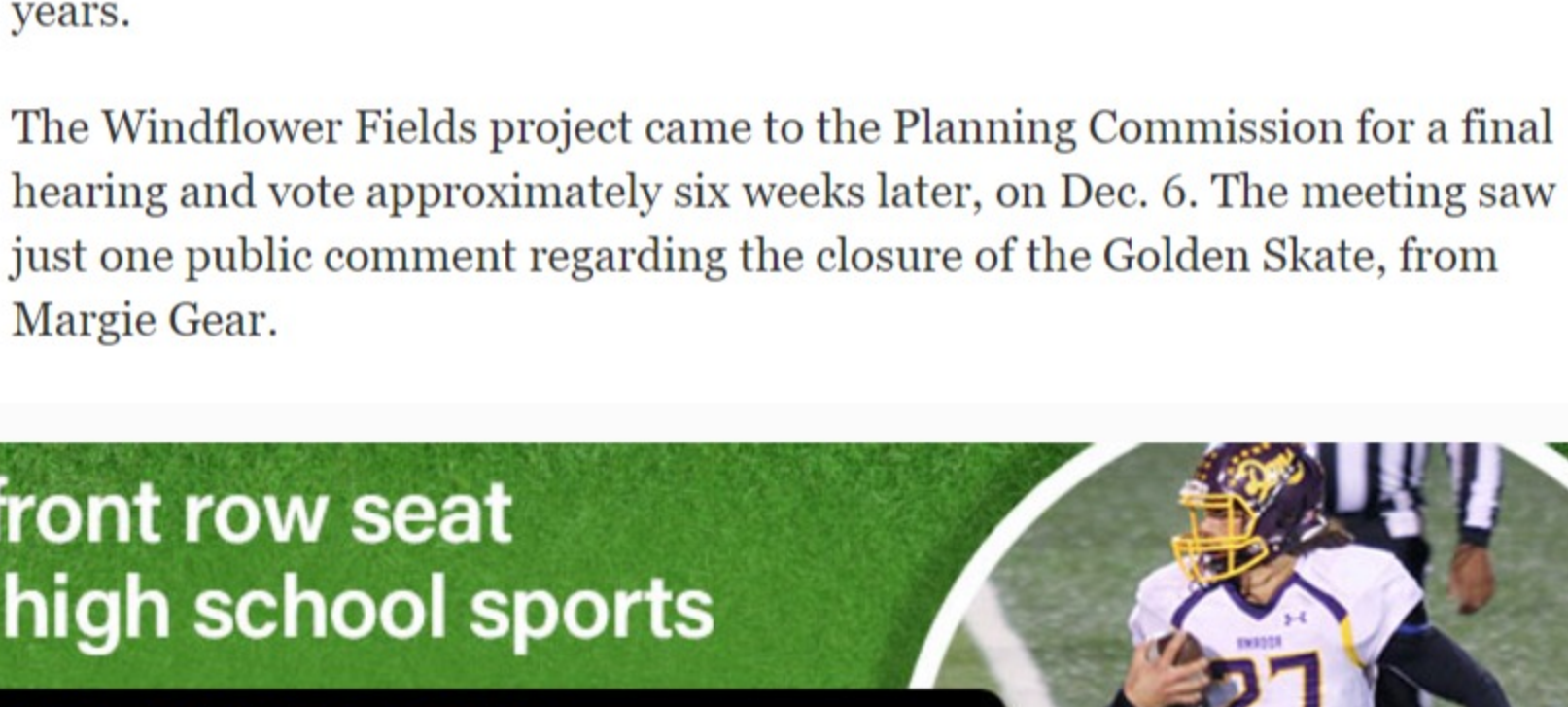
San Ramon's Golden Skate roller rink is in its final days of operations amid the advancement of a housing project slated to replace the popular recreational hub, which the city's Planning Commission endorsed despite citing concerns at the end of last year.

"The community has held a special place in our hearts," Golden Skate management said in a Facebook post on June 29. "It is unfortunate that we must close our doors July 31, 2022. We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for your patronage and support throughout all the years."

The confirmation comes nearly nine months after [an announcement last October](#) that the rink would be ceasing operations, citing financial hardships caused by the pandemic and the inability to restore losses after reopening in the spring of 2021.

However, a preliminary application for the housing project to replace the rink had been submitted more than a year prior, in August 2020, and was already under review last summer, according to city records.

The 47-unit Windflower Fields Townhomes project was approved by the San Ramon Planning Commission last December. The construction date is still to be determined, according to an annual update presented by the Planning Commission to the City Council on Tuesday. In the commission's July 2021 presentation, Windflower Fields was listed as "under review."



The housing development on the property at 2701 Hooper Drive would require demolishing the rink, which the owner, Hassan Sharifi, first bought in 1995.

"It took me many years to revive the business. Unfortunately, the enormous financial damages that we suffered due to COVID have made the continued operation of the Golden Skate uneconomical and so it is with a great deal of sadness that I must announce that The Golden Skate will cease its operations," Sharifi said.

The initial news and the recent announcement of the closing date, followed by broadcast news reports and social media circulation, garnered hundreds of reactions and comments online as people reminisced about birthday parties, first dates, and first jobs at the rink over the years, and made plans for their final visits.

Although some expressed surprise at the announcement, amid the unexpected resurgence of interest in roller skating in recent years, and popularity of '80s and '90s nostalgia, it appeared to be largely accepted as one more inevitable pandemic casualty, among a wave of others in recent years.

The Windflower Fields project came to the Planning Commission for a final hearing and vote approximately six weeks later, on Dec. 6. The meeting saw just one public comment regarding the closure of the Golden Skate, from Margie Gear.

Help sustain the local news you depend on.
Your contribution matters. Become a member today.

[Join](#)

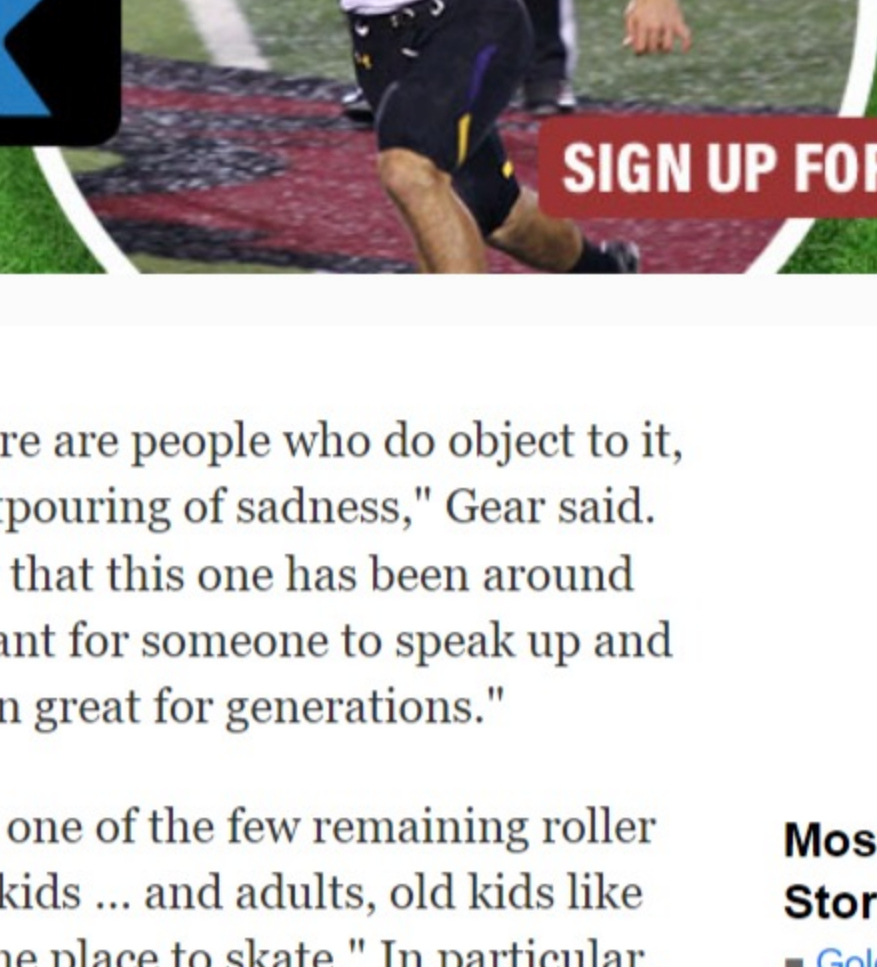
Stay informed
Get daily headlines sent straight to your inbox in our Express newsletter.

[Sign up for Express](#)

Grab a front row seat to local high school sports

TRI-VALLEY PREPS PLAYBOOK

Exclusive sports reporting sent to your inbox



SIGN UP FOR FREE

"I think it's important ... (to know) that there are people who do object to it, and the reason why there's been a large outpouring of sadness," Gear said. "There aren't many roller rinks left. I know that this one has been around for almost 50 years, and I think it's important for someone to speak up and say this has been great for the kids; it's been great for generations."

Gear noted that the Golden Skate has been one of the few remaining roller rinks in Northern California, which allow "kids ... and adults, old kids like myself, to have a forum to have a wholesome fun to skate." In particular, she pointed to the sense of community at the San Ramon rink, which includes longtime professional skaters.

"There's so much sadness. I know people in their 70s and 80s who are competing professionally with ... the Roller Skaters Association, and it's really -- there is a whole lot of grief right now," Gear said.

"It's like it was once said in a song from about the time this roller rink was built," Gear added. "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot. I think that's what's happening here"

Another unidentified speaker expressed support for the project in a public comment that night, despite noting that she was usually critical of projects coming before the commission. Dylan Casey also submitted a written comment to the commission ahead of the meeting, urging approval and development of the project on behalf of the California Renters Legal Advocacy and Education Fund.

Most Viewed Stories

- [Golden Skate closing at end of month to make way for new townhomes](#)
- [Supporting local innovation](#)
- ['Back to School Under the Stars' auction underway](#)
- ['Newsies' musical opens this weekend](#)
- [Candidates can apply for local elections starting Monday](#)

Bryan Wenter, the applicant's legal counsel, sought to highlight benefits of the project in a presentation to the commission.

"The project is in its own right a great project, which I think is also reflected in the fact that there is no public opposition to it," Wenter said. "And in addition it's a project that ... is basically not visible from San Ramon Valley Boulevard or other public vantage points, versus the higher density project that could be accomplished consistent with the existing city land-use regulations, which could be much more dense, much more visible, etcetera."

"So we believe this is a great project in its own right, in addition to the fact that it's supported and protected by state housing law," Wenter added.

Despite ultimately voting in favor of the project that night, commissioners expressed a wide range of concerns and reservations during their discussion of the item.

"This is not a good project," Commissioner Gary Alpert said. "I will vote yes because under state law I don't think we have a choice. Yes, the project meets all state laws and is consistent with the outdated and now replaced Crow Canyon Specific Plan. Everyone that worked on that plan knew it was obsolete and needed to be revised. We attempted to remove housing, we isolated an industrial corner of the plan area and were unsuccessful due to state law."

"As written in the staff report, it is not easy or even possible to deny this project without putting the city in great jeopardy," Alpert added.

Despite state housing law -- namely Senate Bill 330 -- that imposes restrictions on local officials' ability to deny applications for housing that don't pose objective health, safety or environmental concerns, Commissioner Corie Edwards said that language in the Crow Canyon Specific Plan and resolution would classify the proposed ADUs (accessory dwelling units) as fourth bedrooms, rather than individual units.

"This is a gross manipulation of state housing legislation and an effort to undermine the integrity of this commission and our city's planning process," Edwards said. "By falsely characterizing the fourth bedroom as an ADU, the product sponsors want to receive all the benefits that come from delivering a product with 34% affordability, yet this project will provide not one single unit of affordable housing."

Edwards, along with Alpert, noted that their dislike of the project before them was not a matter of being anti-development.

"I would like very much to see this site developed," Edwards said. "I invite the project sponsor to put forth a project that complies with San Ramon's planning documents and California law, and I hope this project's sponsor will do that irrespective of the outcome of tonight's hearing."

Commissioner Rick Marks said that while he would vote in favor of the project, he wanted the record to show his concerns with it, including at the planning level.

Marks noted that the area was designated as a housing overlay site under the outdated 2006 CCSP, which he said had been used as a "catch all" for property that didn't fit other categories.

"When the Crow Canyon Specific Plan was amended in 2020 and the name was changed to the San Ramon Village Specific Plan after a long review and amendment process, the Golden Skate site was, along with other sites in the area, -- designated in '06 as housing overlay -- intentionally not included as a housing site," Marks said.

"But due to a filing technicality, the property owner filed the subject application barely in time to be eligible to be processed under the rules of the 2006 plan, and is now subject to development options that the Planning Commission and City Council had thought they had eliminated in 2020," Marks added.

In September 2020, Sharifi's legal counsel sent a letter to then-mayor Bill Clarky ordering the council's request to clarify the name of the property owner, and emphasizing that Sharifi had rights to develop housing on the property under the Crow Canyon Specific Plan prior to its amendment that year.

"Windflower's filing of a Preliminary Application on August 18, 2020 provides it vested rights as of that date to lock in the rules of the current CCSP under which the longstanding Residential Overlay allows new housing development as a matter of right on various properties, including 2701 Hooper Drive," Wenter wrote in the letter dated Sept. 23 2020.

Wenter's letter went on to allege political motives in city staff's initial denial of the application submitted the previous month, requesting confirmation from Sharifi.

"Staff's position on this issue has no record in the facts or the law and we ask that you ensure staff correct the record on this critical point as soon as possible," Wenter wrote. "Indeed, staff's position is so absurd and pretextual as to appear intentionally biased against Dr. Sharifi because he has chosen to protect his property rights through the Housing Crisis Act."

At the Dec. 6 discussion ahead of their vote on the project, Marks and other commissioners also emphasized that the property in question hadn't been designated for housing for numerous reasons, including limited access to amenities and isolation from other parts of the city."

"People will not be living in a neighborhood; they'll be living in a single isolated housing development," Marks said.

Commission Chair Jean Kuznik emphasized and highlighted concerns about the use of ADUs to meet the bare minimum requirements of state affordable housing laws, rather than as an actual solution to the city's affordable housing needs.

"I think we are going to end being on record as having to approve this while we are also on record as saying -- what I heard was five people who disapprove of this," Kuznik added. "But again, I want to acknowledge that we are limited in what we can do. I am seriously concerned that people built this have found a workaround of what the law did intend."

Kuznik also noted that applicants for other projects on properties of a similar size had been able to put forth projects that incorporated affordable housing in a substantial way, in contrast with this one.

"This was not a question of could it be done," Kuznik said. "This was a question of they wouldn't do it. And I find that very troubling, and again disappointing."

Prior to the vote, commissioners reviewed the resolution to clarify language in it, at Commissioner Eric Wallis' suggestion, and to discuss conditions of approval. Alpert ultimately moved to approve the revised resolution allowing for the development of the project, "so that we can get home tonight," with a second by Wallis.

Commissioners reluctantly passed the resolution at a vote of 4-0, with Edwards abstaining.

The vote came less than a year after the rink's doors had been reopened last spring, which was just over a year after it was forced to cease operations in March 2020.

The Golden Skate is set to remain open for final visits through its July 31 closing date.

Correction: Margie Gear gave a public comment at the Dec. 6 Planning Commission meeting.

Jeanita Lyman joined the Pleasanton Weekly in September 2020 and covers the Danville and San Ramon beat. She studied journalism at Skyline College and Mills College while covering the Peninsula for the San Mateo Daily Journal, after moving back to the area in 2013. [Read more >>](#)

Follow [DanvilleSanRamon.com](#) on Twitter @ [DanvilleSanRamo](#), Facebook and on Instagram @ [for breaking news, local events, photos, videos and more.](#)

Stay informed on important city government news. Sign up for our FREE daily Express newsletter.

[Sign up](#)

Comments

Kevin Registered user
San Ramon
on Jul 14, 2022 at 10:58 am

Just got my stage 2 drought notification. Don't understand how continuing to build HIGH DENSITY housing in San Ramon takes into account water shortage. We are continually told to "cut back". At the rate of housing growth "cutting back" isn't going to do it.

We are going to have a water, electricity and sewer? shortage at this rate. We are also going to resemble Dublin aesthetically and financially.

[Report Objectionable Comment](#) | [Email Moderator](#)

Don't miss out on the discussion!

Sign up to be notified of new comments on this topic.

[Submit](#)

Post a comment

In order to encourage respectful and thoughtful discussion, commenting on stories is available to those who are registered users. If you are already a registered user and the commenting form is not below, [you need to log in](#). If you are not registered, you can do so [here](#).

Please make sure your comments are truthful, on-topic and do not disrespect another poster. Don't be snarky or belittling. All postings are subject to our [TERMS OF USE](#), and may be deleted if deemed inappropriate by our staff.

[See our announcement about requiring registration for commenting.](#)

Index

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Home News TownSquare Blogs A&E Community Calendar Home & Real Estate Express Special Pubs Obituaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send News Tips Subscribe Livermore Vine Pleasanton Weekly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About Us Contact Us Advertising Info Terms of Use Privacy Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> © 2022 DanvilleSanRamon.com All rights reserved. Embarcadero Media PR MediaRelease Sponsored content Mobile site |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|