

① Are we developing into a city of Sebastarosa?

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Fear that urban sprawl will go into the Laguna

By Ron Sonenshine

Santa Rosa's urban sprawl is now just 3.5 miles from downtown Sebastopol as a new 91-lot subdivision takes shape along Fulton Avenue and Hall Road. The city is creeping westward, extending its sphere of influence and annexing land so that now only the Laguna offers a buffer zone between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, and some west county residents worry that small-town Sebastopol will soon have a city of tract homes right next door.

"They're coming," says Sebastopol City Councilman Gwen Anderson, commenting on Santa Rosa's advance along Highway 12 and Occidental and Hall roads. "I don't want to see Sebastopol consumed by Santa Rosa," she adds.

The current buffer between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa is the floodplain and agricultural land that is being eyed by developers.

"This is just speculation, but you know where those sprinklers are. I'll bet I live to see the day that houses are there instead," said Anderson, referring to land currently being irrigated with Santa Rosa wastewater.

Sebastopol's consumption by Santa Rosa is not a new threat. Back in February 1974, Sebastopol Mayor Don Shatto wrote to Schuyler Jeffries, Santa Rosa's mayor who at the time was chair of the county's Local Agency Formation Commission that governs annexation proceedings. Shatto expressed fears that further annexation by Santa Rosa "would bring a very large metropolitan city to the very edge of a small city like Sebastopol."

Four months earlier Sebastopol city officials said a program for park and open space "should be developed." But none appeared and in the interim, Santa Rosa fought land use conflicts with the county, and won.

"It was a big issue and we lost," said Supervisor Ernie Carpenter on the 1983 county battle over Fulton Road. "The city's general plan said its

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limits were 1200 feet west of Fulton Road and the county said it wasn't.

"The county position was that we needed a recognizable boundary at Fulton Road and (Santa Rosa City Manager Ken) Blackman said trust us . . ." Carpenter said.

"Where were all these people when we were trying to preserve Fulton Road?" Carpenter says now of county residents trying to save open space.

But some county officials say the latest Fulton Road development mark the end of Santa Rosa's westward march.

"They've just about annexed as far westward as they can go," says Jim Moore of the LAFCO, a county body that settled the city-county boundary dispute.

Moore adds, "I don't see that changing. The Laguna will preclude that." In the 1970s, though, resolutions were passed by both cities proclaiming Fulton Road to be off limits for either city.

Carpenter thinks Sebastopol must change the composition of LAFCO to have more influence on how and where future Santa Rosa annexations occur. That board will have one seat up for appointment next year and all eight mayors within Sonoma County select the new member, said Moore.

Carpenter warns that Santa Rosa's expansion will continue "until the smaller cities vote to change LAFCO. If they don't, then Santa Rosa might be in Sebastopol's lap."