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San Bernardino Sun (San Bernardino, CA)

August 12, 2005 Friday

SECTION: NEWS**LENGTH:** 525 words**HEADLINE:** **Group trying to block** limits to development**BYLINE:** Leonor Vivanco, Staff Writer**DATELINE:** REDLANDS**BODY:**

Local business owners have banded together to block the slow-growth initiative they claim could send developers elsewhere with shoppers soon to follow.

The group of about 30 people residents, business owners, local developers, real estate agents, retail workers, and police and fire unions call themselves the Redlands Coalition.

Members say they want to defeat a ballot initiative submitted by the Redlands Association, a grass-roots group of residents, for the November election that would limit growth and land uses, and strengthen 1997's Measure U, which established principles of managed development.

"It would put a huge roadblock for people who want to come to town," said coalition member Michael Gallagher. Gallagher, owner of Gallagher Jewelers, also is running for City Council.

Developers would bypass Redlands and head for other cities because of various restrictions spelled out in the initiative, such as building-height and street traffic limits, coalition members said.

Initiative supporters say the measure would preserve the quality of life because the proposed measure would strengthen the city's General Plan and further manage growth.

No stranger to opposition, Redlands Association President Bill Cunningham said he heard the same claims made before Measure U was passed and insists they are not valid.

"All you have to do is observe how much development there has been in Redlands," said Cunningham, a former mayor.

Sales tax revenue has continued to come into the city's coffers, he said.

Also, provisions such as limiting residential street traffic are already a part of the General Plan, he said, but would be codified into the measure to prevent changes by the City Council.

The coalition points to an analysis done by the Rose Institute of State and Local Government that said the initiative could slow and curtail development.

Gallagher said if developers go to other cities to build stores, shoppers will travel there to buy items. A city

heavily dependent on sales tax for city services like police, fire and street maintenance cannot afford to let that happen, he said.

The Redlands Association has disputed the institute's analysis, which was paid for by the city and hired by the Redlands Chamber of Commerce.

The coalition is concerned about the effect the initiative could have on the "doughnut hole," an unincorporated county area surrounded by Redlands.

An agreement now in effect gives the city 90percent of the sales-tax revenue the county the remaining 10percent in exchange for providing water, sewer, police and fire services.

The report said that tax-sharing agreement could be in jeopardy if the initiative is successful.

"If we were to cut that off right now and allow sales tax to go back to San Bernardino County, it would devastate the city of Redlands," Gallagher said.

But Cunningham disagreed the doughnut hole would be affected.

"The city has binding agreements with the county that cannot be pre-empted by the initiative," he said.

Gallagher said the group is planning a grass-roots campaign and will be talking to service clubs and raising money for brochures.

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