



Save Our City kicks off disinformation campaign

SAVE OUR CITY (SOC), A "HISTORIC coalition that represents a broad spectrum of the community," has formed to oppose the Residents' Initiative to Fight Traffic (RIFT) referendum on the fall ballot. If approved, RIFT would place an annual 75,000-square-foot cap on commercial development in the city for 15 years which, in turn, would reduce traffic increases.

At a press kickoff Wednesday at John Adams Middle School, Planning Commission Vice-Chair, Terry O'Day, Co-Chair of SOC, said "RIFT will not reduce traffic and robs our schools of \$1 million a year" — a reference to the city's current \$7.2-million school facilities subsidy.

A "No on RIFT" handout warned that "public safety funds and \$1.3 million dollars in affordable housing monies would (also) be lost if RIFT passes." Using figures from a report on RIFT's projected traffic and fiscal impacts presented at a June 24 City Council study session, SOC speakers offered up the "worse case scenario" by reeling off the grimmest of fiscal prognostications for the year 2023 — 15 years away — as if they were today's real figures.

Nobody can predict the economy a decade and a half from now. If so, I'll hire them to manage my stock portfolio. But, for the sake of debate — even if RIFT were to result in reduced projected development fees and other property revenue, the impacts on the current, flush \$524.7-million city budget are a fraction of a percentage.

Extending out 15 years, when the city budget may top \$1 billion annually, any reduction in projected revenues would still be a drop in the bucket. Of course, nobody wants to talk about the negative impact our horrendous traffic already has on tourism, sales tax and business revenues.

SOC literature claims RIFT "will encourage developers to demolish affordable apartments and replace them with expensive condos ..." More storytelling and scare tactics? RIFT has nothing to do with residential housing. However, it's in the best interest of anti-RIFT pro-growthers to predict the direst of calamities.

It also appears that some good citizens are being misled. Do the education and affordable housing advocates, teachers and public safety union leaders at the event who groundlessly predicted financial meltdown really think it will happen let alone believe this community would tolerate the firing of police and fire personnel or cuts in housing and educational support?

SOC is counting chickens before they hatch. They're guilty of "robbing" money that isn't even there. And by SOC's logic, if restricting development reduces city revenues to crisis levels, then accelerating development will increase revenues. So, bring on the high-rises, industrial parks and let 'em build, build, build and watch the money roll in!

SOC claims RIFT won't reduce traffic because it only caps commercial development. However, what they ignore is the basic fact that with less development, there's less traffic. Hint: it's why undeveloped areas

don't have traffic problems.

Despite all their doom and gloom, the City Attorney's impartial ballot analysis of the RIFT proposition contains no finding of any fiscal impact on the city. It appears that the weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth over draconian cuts in essential city services based on a fantasy economy are being used to frighten voters and deceive the public.

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I agree. RIFT isn't perfect. But, after years of bad planning and deliberately counter-productive traffic management policies that have contributed to gridlock and congestion, at least something is being done about limiting excessive development and the traffic it generates.

City Hall isn't listening to most of us who say "enough, already!" In fact, city politicians and staff are so determined to have their way, even the proposed update to the city's general plan urges substantially increased development and even more traffic mismanagement. This ballot proposition process is necessary to "take back our community" from a city government gone bonkers.

SOC pro-growth leaders bragged about the organization's "diverse constituency" by mentioning the homeowners and renters, religious leaders, historic preservationists, environmentalists, doctors, nurses, parents, police and firefighters who oppose RIFT. Of course, real estate, big business interests and developers behind SOC weren't discussed.

Where is SOC's money coming from? When asked about campaign financial statements, O'Day responded they didn't have them because he didn't think they were due, yet. However, RIFT supporters there handed out their current campaign statements detailing "Yes on RIFT's" contributions and expenditures.

Despite having already spent thousands of dollars for polling and hiring public relations professionals, I'm betting the family Prius that SOC is in no hurry to disclose which businesses, hotels, developers, real estate professionals and special interests are footing the bill.

Hundreds of millions of dollars of developer money are at stake over the next 15 years. The gloves are off and this promises to be a no-holds-barred, bare knuckle brawl. You've been warned. Watch for low blows.

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