

# Chamber holds off on Ponte Vista OK

## Development:

San Pedro Peninsula members want more details on traffic mitigation and other matters before they'll issue an opinion.

Chamber of commerce leaders throughout the South Bay have rushed to endorse the 2,300-home Ponte Vista project on Western in the past several months.

But it seems the development is a little too hot in San Pedro, where chamber officials have decided to hold off issuing an opinion on the hometown project until a final environmental review is finished by the city of Los Angeles later this year.

Chamber board chairman Anthony Santich said chamber officials needed a more intensive approach because the project is so close to home.

"I think we've studied it a lot more closely than the other chambers have," he said. "It's going to have the most impact on San Pedro."

Board member Anthony Pirozzi said the chamber is not rushing to make a judgment on the project.

"I like the approach we took because we're looking at facts and data. We tried to take the emotion out of it," Pirozzi said.

The judicious process has led to a new policy for the San Pedro Peninsula Chamber of Commerce on such issues, said chamber CEO Camilla Townsend. San Pedro's other major development

— the proposed waterfront development — will also get the same cautious treatment, she said.

"We feel, why should we jump the gun?" Townsend said. "We want to be very studied and focused on the issues here."

The chamber has hired a consultant to help board members wade through the Ponte Vista development's voluminous traffic studies.

"We're definitely going to take a position on it," Santich said. "I think if we would have had more information about it and not bits and piece's, maybe we could have taken one side or the other."

The chamber's formal letter of comment to city planners, though, does include a number of recommendations for the project, including ensuring that traffic improvements be in place before residents move in, providing a "clean-air" shuttle service for residents and developing on-site baseball fields for Eastview Little League.

Few issues have been as contentious in San Pedro as Ponte Vista, which has been widely criticized for its proposed residential density.

While many residents cringe at the idea of adding more traffic to Western Avenue, supporters say the development also brings much needed new housing stock to the area — and welcome retail dollars.

Chambers in neighboring Lomita and Harbor City/Harbor Gateway, as well as the South Bay Chambers of Commerce, have already endorsed the project, saying it will bring \$100 million to area businesses each year. The Wilmington chamber has also come on board.

"Ponte Vista at San Pedro will enrich the community by bringing significant local spending, creating new jobs and providing public benefits such as a 6-acre public park on the site," said Wilmington chamber President Patrick Wilson in a prepared statement

But in San Pedro, the impacts of the development are still being hashed out.

"This is one of the biggest (issues) I've seen," Townsend said. "But I think our position is a good one. We definitely feel the project has economic benefits for the community. But there also are quality of life issues."

From now on, she said, the chamber's policy will be to use the EIR process as a method of responding to such major issues facing the community.

"We said this is too soon," Townsend said. "Our comments will be reflected in the final EIR and we want to see how they're going to address those issues" before issuing an opinion.

A study group was formed by the chamber to review the Ponte Vista plan, including the various traffic issues.

"Our goal was to retain as much objectivity as possible and thoroughly understand the positive points as well as the points of concern," Townsend said in a written statement explaining the chamber's position.

"There is no doubt that this project would have a profound economic impact on the area," she said. "However, the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce cannot be myopic to the economic benefits, if the quality of life in San Pedro could be compromised.

"The chamber's position is that it is too early in the process to be for or against such an important community project without more clarification on many key issues."

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