

Measure W soundly defeated in San Ramon

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SAN RAMON – San Ramon voters have overwhelmingly rejected Measure W.

With all precincts reporting election results early Wednesday, the measure had won less than 30 percent of the vote.

The measure – the city's general plan update – became controversial when the city wanted to include about 1,600 acres of the agricultural Tassajara Valley and about 600 acres to the west into its urban growth boundaries, irking environmental groups and wary residents who see moving the line as a green light for more homes and traffic.

San Ramon officials say their desire to extend their city's urban growth boundary – a planning tool to determine where a city cuts off urban development – is because they are concerned Contra Costa County may decide to allow development there.

Measure W supporters contend Contra Costa County-approved development in the Tassajara Valley is a possibility, and point to the New Farm project – a 185-unit housing development that is being proposed outside the county's urban limit line in that area. In October, the county approved a three-year contract for a firm to work on the environmental documents for that project. The project itself, however, has not been approved.

The county's urban limit line could be moved or changed if the right project came along to help fill county coffers, Measure W supporters warned.

The update also asked voters to approve zoning changes near the Danville border to allow mixed-use development in that area, and also to extend the city's hillside protection ordinance.

The general plan update does not change the zoning for the Tassajara Valley. Additions and what could possibly be zoned for that area would be laid out in another city document, the Eastside Specific Plan, which would go through multiple public hearings before approval.

Both sides say the urban growth boundary has come down to an issue of who San Ramon voters trust. City officials say San Ramon and not the county knows what is best for its residents and therefore should have control over areas that would directly impact them. Opponents say San Ramon has no need to move the line unless it has intentions to develop.

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