

Redevelopment: A tool to build a better Lodi

The City of Lodi has many needs, from more affordable housing to fixing aging buildings and stimulating business on Cherokee Lane. The City constantly examines the range of services it provides and how to pay for and improve them. Like every other California city, Lodi has a tool available to reach some of those unmet needs, but unlike most other cities, it's unused at the moment. That tool is redevelopment, which allows cities to keep a greater share of property taxes paid when values climb.

State redevelopment law allows the city to use tax generated from higher property values to pay for repairs and improvements that would otherwise require higher fees on ratepayers or drain funds from other city services. With a redevelopment plan, Lodi would keep five times as much property tax generated by higher values than without, freeing up more money for services such as police protection and park maintenance. Redevelopment does not raise taxes, it merely changes the way a portion of the tax revenue is distributed.

Four of the county's six other cities have active redevelopment agencies, ranging from the largest, Stockton, to one of smallest, Ripon (population 14,575).

At 6 p.m. Thursday, July 19, the Lodi City Council will have a special meeting at the Lodi Boys & Girls Club, 275 E. Poplar St., to discuss the possibility of creating a redevelopment project in Lodi. In the meantime, the following may help answer some questions you may have about the process:

Question: What's in it for me?

Answer: If you own property within a redevelopment area, redevelopment funds could go toward street and sidewalk upgrades, underground pipe repairs, and assistance programs to improve your home, building or surrounding properties. State law requires redevelopment agencies spend at least 20 percent of their funds on affordable housing. The list of eligible programs hasn't been established yet, so your participation is valuable as the community considers how redevelopment may benefit Lodi.

Question: Where is the redevelopment area?

Answer: If the City Council decides to pursue a redevelopment project, that



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will be something decided with the public's help. A 2002 proposal, which identified most of east Lodi within a proposed project area, may be a starting point in the discussion. Sales tax collections, an indicator of economic strength, have actually declined in that geographic area in recent years.

Question: Isn't this just more government?

Answer: It is a separate agency, but it's still the Lodi City Council members who make the decisions, such as how money is spent, after the public has its say in an open meeting.

Question: Could the redevelopment agency take my home on behalf of a private developer?

Answer: Not in Lodi. The city has an ordinance that prohibits it from using eminent domain powers to seize property for a private party's benefit. If a redevelopment project is adopted, it will be set up with that prohibition in place, something a future City Council could not reverse without a lengthy process and public input.

Question: Didn't the city already try this in 2002?

Answer: Almost. The process started and then stopped after a citizen's group forced the issue to the ballot. The Lodi City Council decided the time wasn't right and dropped the matter. But had the project moved forward, the Lodi Redevelopment Agency would be receiving roughly \$500,000 a year for local projects.

Question: How soon can I expect to see changes in my neighborhood?

Answer: It won't be overnight. The city receives additional dollars only when property values increase. But over time, as more redevelopment funds are invested, the beneficial effect should be compounded.

For more information, contact the City Manager's office: 333-6700.

