

Cowboy country: Placerville on top 20 Best in the West list

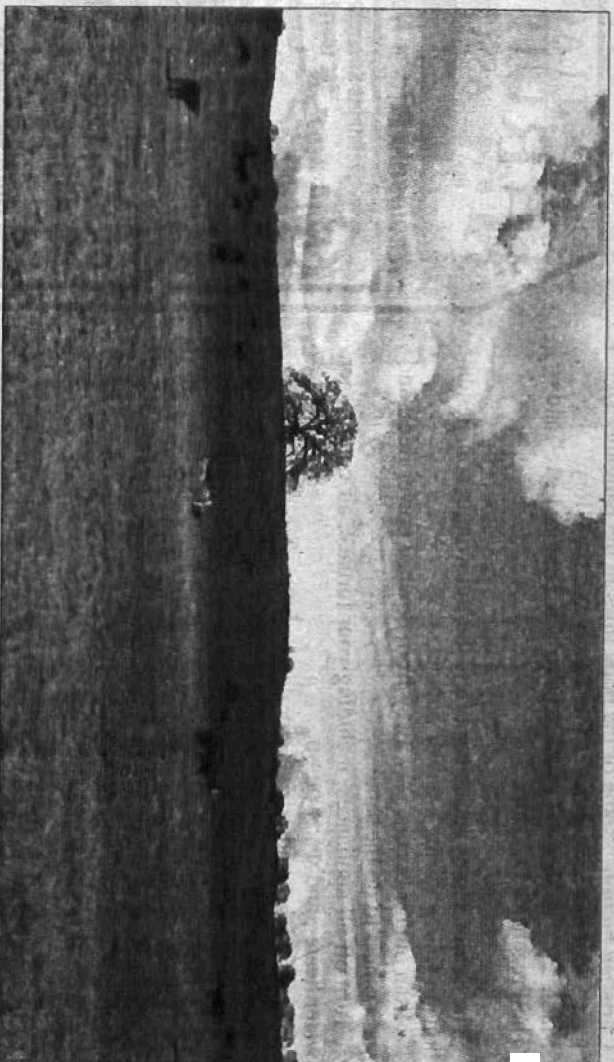
By Wendy Schultz

Democrat staff writer

A healthy respect for history and heritage, abundant recreational leisure and outdoor activities, a strong sense of community, a free-spirited, rugged independence and authentic cowboy culture and charm are the reasons Placerville was chosen as one of the top 20 places to live in the West by American Cowboy magazine.

Joining the likes of Cave Creek, Ariz.; Bozeman, Mont.; and Bandera, Texas, Placerville is noted for its Gold Rush history in the April/May issue of American Cowboy in the first annual list of the top 20 places to

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CATTLE from the Forni Ranch along Highway 49 south of El Dorado enjoy the Saturday sunshine and green grass. Democrat photo by Pat Dollins

TOP 20

plant your feet and put down roots if you are a Western enthusiast.

"When we were looking for the best places to live in the West, Placerville jumped to the top of the list," said article author Tom Wilmes. "There are a few remaining outposts where the true Western spirit still thrives. History is alive in Placerville and the town illustrates the core values of the cowboy life."

Kathleen Dodge, executive director of the El Dorado/Lake Tahoe Film and Media Office was the magazine's contact for the article. "If you're a horseman there are so many great horse

trails here and then I told them about the history and the Western movies filmed here and the reenactors like Davey "Doc" Wiser. There was just so much to share."

Highlighted in each of the 20 selections are places for Western history buffs to visit and things for cowboys to do. Marshall Gold Discovery Historic State Park, Placerville Hardware and the 7Up Ranch Bed and Breakfast are included as places of interest in Placerville, while a photograph of the grasslands at the Grace Foundation, a horse rescue organization in Latrobe, is featured.

"It's very promising that a

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magazine like American Cowboy Magazine wrote about us," said Dodge, "and we have so much to offer that they sounded interested in doing another article."

American Cowboy Magazine is published for devotees of the West and covers all aspects of the Western lifestyle, including entertainment, personalities, travel, rodeo action, human interest, art, poetry, fashion, food, horsemanship and history. To view the magazine, you can visit www.americancowboy.com or www.cowboy.com.

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Mo. Flat Road project estimates questioned

By Noel Stack

City editor

A project redesign for the Diamond Springs Parkway could drop the price tag by \$9 million.

It's good news from a budget standpoint but uneasy news for El Dorado County supervisors who just adopted a five-year capital improvement program trusting that cost estimates for road projects were accurate.

"If we're that far off on this project how many other projects are we off on?" Supervisor

Rusty Dupray asked.

John Lambeth, representing Granite Grado Ventures — the company hoping to build two shopping centers in the Missouri Flat Road area — said the redesign hasn't received the blessing from the El Dorado County Department of Transportation but appeared optimistic that it would.

Staff is reviewing the design proposal, DOT Director Richard Shepard said.

The Diamond Springs

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MO. FLAT

Parkway is part of the newest five-year capital improvement program. Construction depends heavily on a developer advance, originally estimated at \$31.5 million and now, Lambeth said, estimated at about \$22 million.

"It's a design we considered as one of the alternatives," Shepard explained. "What is new about it is the donation of right of way, which would significantly reduce the cost, and the coordinated construction of it (the road and the shopping center)."

Supervisor Norma Santiago, championing the retail projects that would bring jobs and sales tax dollars to the county, said she wanted to see building and planning processes streamlined to get things going.

"I don't want to miss out on this opportunity," Santiago said.

The supervisors said they also didn't want to miss the opportunity to review cost estimates of other road projects in the county's program, with acting Development Services Director David Storer suggesting an April 22 discussion.

DOT bases its cost estimates on

engineers' reports for each project, using today's dollars, Shepard said.

Santiago joined Supervisors Jack Sweeney and Ron Briggs in adopting the most recent five-year capital improvement program earlier this year, specifically identifying the extension of Headington Road from Missouri Flat Road to El Dorado Road as a project to be added with funding, an estimated \$10 million, to be determined. This is the second project needed to realize Granite Grado's retail centers.

The board majority's action lost the votes of Supervisors Dupray and Helen Baumann, both of whom said they felt that the west end of El Dorado County was cut short in the program.

The Diamond Springs Parkway is a connector that takes traffic from Missouri Flat Road to Highway 49 without using Pleasant Valley Road. The plan for retail at the parkway's intersection with Highway 49 also depends on moving Waste Connections' materials recovery facility to another area.

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"We haven't seen anything out there to keep that from happening," Lambeth said of the facility move.

The proposed site for a new state-of-the-art waste facility is located off Industrial Drive in the Diamond Springs business park.

Sweeney said the new facility will look nothing like the current facility, which he described as an "old building that was a welding machine shop."

"It was poor at best," Sweeney said. "It wasn't designed for this purpose."

Plans and details for the projects, including updated cost estimates, will be available soon, Lambeth said. The developments will address "an existing pent-up demand" for retail in the area, he added, and Granite Grado expects to begin construction as soon as all the pieces fall into place.

"Less than two years away," Lambeth said of the El Dorado Crossing retail center off Headington Road, "we're talking about getting phase I open."

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