

Letter: Naysayers' wasting EDC time, money

To the community,

Like in today's national political climate, the "flamethrowers" causing a stir tend to be the minority with the loudest voices. Few who support or are indifferent reach out to send their praise for the ideals that are legitimately making their way through the system. As such, we are seeing a similar situation play out on a local level in El Dorado County (EDC).

As our Dollar General development in Georgetown makes its way through EDC's approval process, we get to see first hand the inner workings of role and responsibility local government plays in the protection and improvement of the community. The "Historic Design Guide", put in place to preserve the history of the town was created to guide responsible development, not stifle it. It was created to ensure that responsible development improves the community.

EDC's role is to review a project for its adherence to the historic guidelines and ordinances, not to pick economic winners and losers. Our great nation was founded on many freedoms, including the freedom of enterprise so that we as citizens, can open a business of our choosing and let the market decide if it succeeds or fails. To that end, the EDC Planning Commission approved the Dollar General development in Georgetown with a resounding 4-1 vote. The approval was of no surprise as the development strictly adhered to EDC's and the state of California's historic and development guidelines. Unfortunately, EDC's approval was appealed by a local citizen.

The pending appeal of the project to the Board of Supervisors cited that the appeal was filed "on the grounds that the

project violates the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the applicable general plans and zoning laws, and that the comments submitted to the Planning Commission contained accurate statements of significant legal violations that were not addressed at the hearing." This statement contains no specific information to support those claims and has been continuously disproven with fact and expert testimony at several previous Planning Commission hearings.

During testimony at the most recent hearings, the appellant and corresponding political lobbyists, raised concerns specifically relating to the design and conceptual approval of the alternative septic system, EDC's ability to approve such a system per state regulations and the particulars of the methods of mitigation for storm water runoff with regards to the effect on the nearby creek. Despite very specific factual counter testimony by EDC engineering staff, citing specific technical details of the systems in question and how they work, the appellant continues to waste taxpayer dollars by bringing claims of fraud and legal violations. It is also prudent to note that EDC's experts and our own consultants have put their licenses on the line when they review and approve the plans we create.

As the staff at EDC can attest, our team has worked tirelessly to create a better project for the community. We have gone back to the drawing board not less than six times to create an elevation that meets and exceeds the historic guidelines. We have met with dozens of community representatives and groups in Georgetown to try and create a better project whether it's through better lighting, design, landscaping, etc.

The amount of money spent by EDC on dealing with frivolous appeals is wasteful at best. I think we could all agree that those funds would be better spent fixing real problems faced by the residents of the local communities. For example, in Georgetown itself, the local fire station is made of mostly volunteers who use aging and outdated equipment to protect the

residents paid firefighters and a new fire truck could and would help protect the upcountry way of life.

There continues to be a lot of support for the project, but in today's world we hide behind our smart phones and computers and hastily type negative responses and attack anyone with a different opinion, rather than debating it in a fair and respectful way. There will always be people on either side of every ticket who support or don't support a political project or point of view, but it seems to be built into our current political culture that it's ok to tear people or things down, simply because you don't understand them or like them.

Over the past few decades, the Georgetown area has suffered economically through the loss of much of its industry and numerous jobs, while the Northern California region has prospered. We can all agree that our project will help the economy in Georgetown. We recently had an economic update study done to survey the prosperity of nearby stores where Dollar General had recently opened. We found that before Dollar General opened, local merchants were concerned about the impact to their businesses, but have conversely seen no negative impact to their sales. We had this study done on our own accord to show our commitment to the prosperity of the community.

As I mentioned before, change can be a tough pill to swallow for some and this has proven itself on several occasions when other developments came to the area. When the gas station, El Dorado Savings Bank and Mar-Val were proposed in Georgetown, there was a similar reaction to those projects as there has been towards Dollar General coming to town yet in the time they have since been open and have been embraced by the community as a benefit.

Respectfully,

Joshua Simon, president SimonCRE – proposed developer of the

Dollar General in Georgetown