

Shepherd Canyon Highway that Almost Was



State Assemblyman Ken Meade

Standing here amidst this beautiful natural landscape it is hard to imagine that tranquil Shepherd Canyon came very close to vanishing under concrete. With the growing popularity of the automobile in the 1950s and the phasing out of the Sacramento Northern Railroad, CALTRANS saw Shepherd Canyon as a prime location for Route 77, which would have connected Contra Costa County to Oakland. Route 77 would have run through the canyon as an extension of Park Boulevard with an interchange at Highway 13.

Community activism played a key role in persuading government officials to protect the canyon. Residents were concerned that the new freeway was planned in spite of the fact that Highway 24 was just two miles north. They also wanted to protect the canyon and to encourage alternative modes of transportation. In 1972, Assembly Member Ken Meade officially protected the canyon from freeway development with the introduction of Assembly Bill 561.

With the downfall of the freeway plan, the Shepherd Canyon Corridor Plan was shaped by volunteers and is now the guiding document that is used in preserving the canyon.



The Shepherd Canyon Corridor Plan provided a vision for Shepherd Canyon after the highway plan was cancelled.

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