

Residents raise \$53,000 for Point San Pedro Road median project

Jessica Bernstein-Wax

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A sign soliciting funds stands in the median of Point San Pedro Road in San Rafael. (IJ photo/Frankie Frost)

A neighborhood group has raised more than \$53,000 from 160 residents as part of a median beautification effort planned for a 4.5-mile stretch of Point San Pedro Road in San Rafael and unincorporated Marin County.

For about a year, the Point San Pedro Medians Committee has been meeting with county and city officials about possible improvements to the road's medians, which have deteriorated over the past three decades to their brown, weed-strewn state, said Andrew Perry, committee chairman.

"This is a beautiful roadway, and there's weeds growing down the middle of the road," said Perry, who lives in an unincorporated portion of the neighborhood. "It hasn't really had the proper attention."

San Rafael and Marin County first built the



Westbound traffic is framed by weeds in the median of Point San Pedro Road just west of Royal Court in San Rafael. Money is being raised to improve the looks of the median. (IJ photo/Frankie Frost)

medians in 1969 but turned off the water during a severe drought in the late 1970s, Perry said. When they turned the water back on several years later, many of the pipes and sprinklers were broken.

A water truck traveled up and down the road and manually irrigated the medians thereafter, but officials eventually stopped that service too, Perry said.

Perry's group has raised the money to pay for engineering work needed to form a special assessment district and is working with San Rafael to hire a firm for the job.

To move forward, the project ultimately needs City Council approval. A majority of the approximately 2,500 homes in the proposed district - which runs from the Montecito Shopping Center to Biscayne Drive near China Camp State Park - must also vote in favor of the 30-year tax, expected to cost each household about \$68 a year. Those costs would cover the initial improvements as well as maintenance, Perry said.

Residents defeated a similar initiative in the late 1990s, but Perry said there's more community involvement this time - and the medians also look worse now.

"I would be the first one to say, 'I don't want any more taxes,' but if you look at the current state É they're never going to have money to allocate to something like a median again," Perry said. "The money is legally bound to only that project. Once we vote yes, the politicians can't touch the money - it can only go to the medians for 30 years."

Perry said his group is focusing on drought-resistant landscaping and likes the medians along Bridgeway in Sausalito, Tamalpais Avenue in Corte Madera and Tiburon Boulevard in Tiburon.

"The residents want to do it, and I'm all for it," Mayor Al Boro said. "We don't have money that we can put into this project. They're raising the funds to maintain it as well. We will help them with the engineering."

San Rafael has yet to put out a request for proposals from engineering firms but hopes to do so in the next couple of months, City Manager Ken Nordhoff said. City officials also plan to meet with Marin County employees to make an official decision on which agency will take the lead, he said.

Earlier this year, the nearby Peacock Gap neighborhood spruced up its own medians after residents agreed to pay \$200 up front for a total of about \$80,000 and let their annual assessments increase to cover ongoing maintenance of the medians along Peacock, Riviera, San Marino and Biscayne drives.

"Those look great, and it was actually a process where leadership out there was very involved and raised the funds - they paid for the improvement and maintenance," Nordhoff said. "It's a great illustration of public-private partnership."

Forming a special district takes time and involves a number of legal steps, he added, noting that the process for Point San Pedro Road will take at least a year should it go forward.

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Contact Jessica Bernstein-Wax at jbernstein-wax@marinij.com