

Point San Pedro Road neighborhoods may form special assessment district

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Residents living near a 4.5-mile stretch of Point San Pedro Road in San Rafael and unincorporated Marin County may decide whether to form a special assessment district to fund median beautification as soon as March.

The Point San Pedro Medians Committee, a neighborhood group proposing the assessment district that would encompass about 2,500 homes, has raised more than \$67,000 from about 215 neighbors for engineering work and an election, said Andrew Perry, committee chairman. If approved by a majority of voters, the 30-year tax would cost households about \$68 per year, although a consultant is still determining the exact amount, Perry said.

"This road will never be fixed up unless we do this," Perry said. "We have the ability to take our tax dollars in our own hands and actually designate where they go. It's probably the biggest single benefit we'll get because we'll actually see where the money goes every time we drive to and from our houses."

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



A sign soliciting funds stands 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)

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

The San Rafael City Council recently approved a contract with Willdan Financial Services for engineering work that will help nail down the details of the proposed tax. That contract, as well as work attorneys must do in preparation for the election, will cost about \$50,000 -- an amount the \$67,000 Perry's group has collected will more than cover.

The remaining money will go to a neighborhood education campaign, which includes yard signs, as well as actual median improvement, Perry said. Ballots are expected to go out by mail in early March.

Residents defeated a similar initiative in the late 1990s, but Perry's group has focused on getting as many people in the neighborhood involved as possible,

capping individual donations at \$5,000 so more neighbors will become stakeholders in the project.

"If you get a couple individuals that pay the money, then the community's not invested in the project," Perry said.

Should residents approve the district, the project will likely go before the City Council by April, Public Works Director Nader

Mansourian said. San Rafael isn't contributing any cash at this point, but city employees have been working on the project, 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.

"The city has done another partnership in the ... Peacock Gap -- it was very successful," Mansourian said. Meanwhile, both city and county officials are trying to coordinate the timing of possible median improvements with a \$2 million road repaving project planned for Point San Pedro Road in 2012, Supervisor Susan Adams said.

"If the medians need to be re-piped for irrigation, you want that to happen before we put the new roads down," Adams said.

A sewage pipe replacement project underway is scheduled for completion in February or March, Mansourian said.

"This is a really great example of public-private partnership working together for the public good," said Adams, who secured \$10,000 in county community service funds for the project. "I'm actually feeling pretty optimistic about this one. The median coalition has done an incredible job with outreach. This has been a great grassroots effort."

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