

Salt pond development a real threat to Redwood City's Port

By mike jacob

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Redwood City is one of a handful of California cities blessed with a seaport — one that is a vital component of the Bay Area's regional and international economy. However, a massive housing development proposed for the salt ponds adjacent to the Port of Redwood City poses a direct threat to the port's operations and its long-term viability.

Locating homes and schools next to the port's heavy-duty industrial activities is simply bad planning; not just because it threatens the operations of one of our regional ports, but also because of the impacts on the future residents and schoolchildren of the city. The homes, schools and recreational facilities needed for 25,000 residents proposed for the salt ponds across Seaport Boulevard from the port are simply not compatible with bulk cargo operations.

In its 2008 Strategic Assessment, the Port of Redwood City envisioned the greatest threat to the port of "encroaching residential, recreational, and commercial office waterfront space" because "adjacent homeowners and commercial office tenants would complain about the port's tenants' noise, lights, and dust."

The Port's assessments are not hyperbole.

We know from development near other West Coast ports that encroachment by new, inconsistent uses raises costs, restricts cargo operations and threatens marine terminal operations:

- Nuisance lawsuits have been filed by neighboring residents against the Port of Los Angeles in an attempt to stop maritime operations at marine facilities that have been operated in the same locations for over a century.
- At the Port of Seattle, residential encroachment threatens marine terminal operations and mobility by making it nearly impossible to complete necessary supporting road and infrastructure improvements.
- In San Diego, a development scheme touted as "compatible" with port operations threatened to bring that port's 10th Avenue bulk operations terminal to its knees. After a court battle, voters rejected a developer's initiative and rejected incompatible uses.

What's similar about all of these cases is the resultant slowing of economic development to a crawl. The introduction of incompatible uses ultimately costs ports and their local economies millions of dollars of lost revenues, thousands of lost jobs and, ironically, fewer sources of funds for environmental remediation projects.

What's at risk for the city and our regional economy? Port area businesses provide approximately 600 jobs, and generate \$4.5 million annual revenue to state and local municipalities, including \$1.4 million directly to Redwood City. But it's not just tax revenues and jobs at stake. As the only port operating in the South Bay, Redwood City is a crucial bulk cargo point of entry for the entire Bay Area and Northern California.

If new housing constrains Redwood City's port operations, more cargo will ultimately have to be shipped through the Ports of Stockton and Sacramento, with higher social and environmental costs. For each ship that no longer calls at Redwood City, hundreds of trucks will have to carry the contents hundred of additional miles, causing more traffic congestion, diesel truck exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions.

Simply put, residential development near port operations does not make sense for the port, for its customers or for the quality of life of future Redwood City residents.

There are only a few select places in California with the deep water access and appropriate landside facilities necessary to support a successful port operation. Redwood City is one of those places, and has been since the 1850s. We all know that once a port is gone, it's gone for good. That cannot be allowed to happen in Redwood City, or we will have lost a key piece of our regional economy and our state's deepwater maritime access — forever.

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The Pacific Merchant Shipping Association is a maritime trade association representing ocean carriers and marine terminal operators on the West Coast, and doing business at all of California's public ports. PMSA has offices in Long Beach, San Francisco and Seattle.