



A shakeup that's good for Vallejo

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It was welcome news to hear that Touro University hopes to take development of the north end of Mare Island into its own, presumed capable hands.

Touro and a consortium of developers plan to be before the City Council in about a week to unveil plans for a university village, details to come later.

This move bypasses master Mare Island developer Lennar Mare Island, which lost its exclusive rights to develop the north part of the island in April.

Lennar should view this move by Touro as a wake-up call. Several council members have told the Times-Herald they are frustrated with the pace of business development by Lennar. They are concerned about hearing from too many businesses that claim they have tried to locate on Mare Island, only to be thwarted by Lennar.

One of those businesses, Coeur Scientific Inc., is a bio-tech company. Company founder Angelo Iatridis complains he has tried for five years to relocate to Mare Island, yet Lennar was unable in that time to find a suitable location.

Touro's new development group, however, sees Coeur Scientific Inc. as an ideal partner for the kind of business development it is seeking.

Lennar enjoys a good reputation as housing development specialists, and the housing portion of Mare Island is doing well. It's in the business and industrial development where trouble continues. Too many stories exist of businesses that gave up trying to relocate, believing they were strung along needlessly by Lennar and dismissed with either "It's not a good fit" or "We're still studying it."

It may be a matter of expertise, but Lennar must improve its reputation with companies seeking to move to Mare Island. The master plan shows far more than just housing, and the revenue-generating businesses are essential to this city's economy.

Not surprisingly, Lennar officials have their noses a bit out of joint at the news Touro and other developers are moving ahead without them. Spokesman Jason Keadjian warned that the expensive, complicated procedure of the Navy transfer process requires the experience of Lennar. And the city staff, too, states it would prefer Lennar retain exclusivity.

But few things work best when left to a monopoly. Without competition, complacency sets in and wheels can turn too slowly.

As Councilwoman Stephanie Gomes put it: "I like the idea of mixing it up with developers out there."

So do we. We look forward to seeing Touro's full plan and welcome this news as a much-needed shake-up in Vallejo business development.