

# Woes that plague Franich made other developer quit

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Problems like the ones Watsonville attorney Tony Franich has encountered in trying to annex his 72-acre apple orchard to Watsonville contributed to the demise more than a year ago of a smaller, but similar, annexation proposal.

Franich has stayed the course in a years-long battle to annex his land, his most recent move being to seek legislative help against the court decision that overturned a 1982 approval

of the annexation by the Local Agency Formation Commission. But the would-be developer of a 20-acre parcel not far from the Franich property saw a financial quagmire on the horizon and threw in the towel.

The developer — Lester, Roach and Gardiner — until about a year ago had an option to buy property at the end of Bronte, Almond, Cynthia and Delta streets from Village Associates, of which Watsonville real-estate agent Bill Burgstrom is managing partner.

Watsonville Planning Director Bud Carney said most of the property, like the Franich land, is within the city's sphere of influence, the area designated by LAFCO as Watsonville's region of future growth.

The Village Associates land

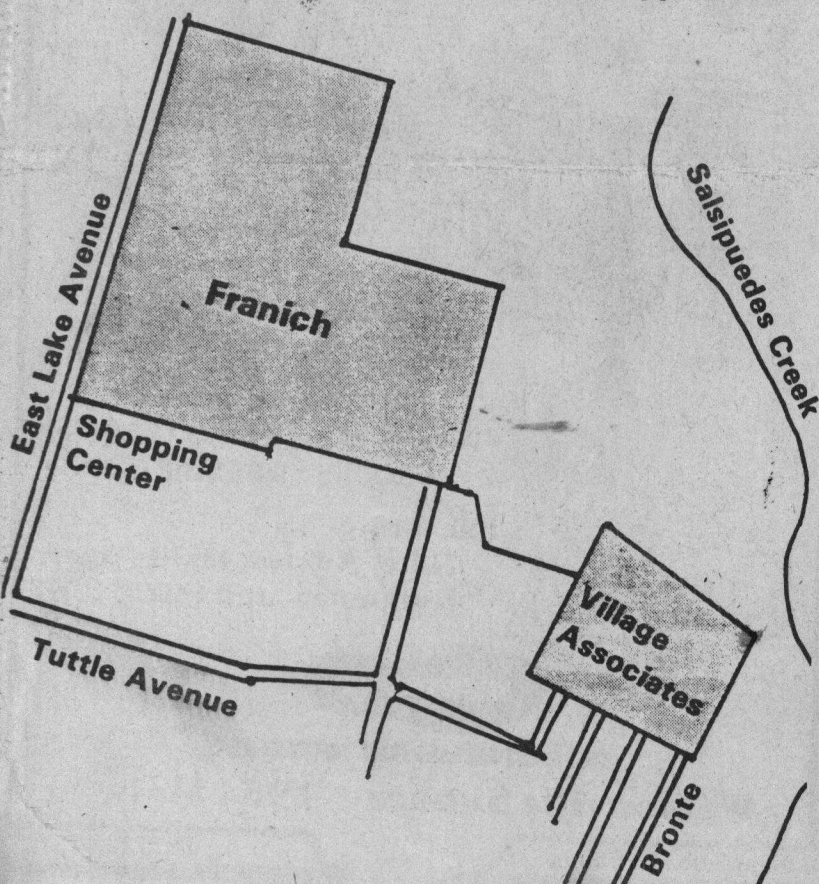
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is one of several proposed annexations in the city's as-yet-uncompleted new General Plan and is scheduled for review at Wednesday's meeting of the General Plan steering committee. The meeting is at 5 p.m. in the Civil Defense room at City Hall.

According to John Fry of CDM, the company hired by Lester, Roach and Gardiner to manage the project, the developer's original plan had included a three-story senior-citizen apartment complex.

A revised plan for a residential development targeted 150

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single-family homes and apartments for the land, which was much less dense than a proposal on which a 1986 environmental impact report was based. About 20 percent of the units were expected to be "affordable," Fry said.

The plan was redesigned to the less-dense alternative because market studies indicated there was not enough demand for the units of the first plan, Fry said.

As far as the city was concerned, Carney said, the revised proposal did not require a new EIR, but did require a new set of plans before the project could proceed.

"We're still waiting for the plans," Carney said.

Fry said those plans were never completed.

The parcel's proximity to Bay Village — the retirement community whose residents were at the time vehemently opposing a park in their neighborhood — coupled with the problems Franich was having, brought Lester, Roach and Gardiner to the realization that the future looked less than rosy for its own project, Fry said.

"It became apparent that it

was going to take far more money and time and probably ruin its (the project's) financial feasibility," Fry said.

Like the Franich land, the Village Associates parcel has an agricultural zoning designation aimed at protecting agricultural lands from development. An annexation proposal would probably have a tough time getting past LAFCO, the body that Franich is also trying to avoid, because of its current membership.

Lester, Roach and Gardiner took everything into consideration, including the \$125,000 Fry said was already spent in various studies, and decided to drop the project and its options on the land.