

Valley Children's Museum Finds a Home

Five years ago I attended a workshop to plan a City Center for San Ramon. It was about three City Center's ago, and about the fourth or fifth in the many cycles of City Center plans San Ramon has started and dropped over the last dozen years.

This one had something different, a Children's Museum. A new organization had just started up, the [Valley Children's Museum](#), to bring an interactive museum for children to the Tri-Valley. Councilwoman Nancy Tatarka was active in this start up organization, which was to become its downfall in San Ramon. Political squabbling among Councilmembers tainted anything that any of the "Gang of Three" supported.

One of the last acts of the Gang was to prepare an agreement with the VCM to lease land in the proposed Civic Center for the Children's Museum. The design developed by the architects hired by the City included a building for the VCM attached to a new 50,000 square ft. library. Opponents were irate at the size of the library, the design of the building, the inclusion of the Children's Museum, and the cost of the whole project. The VCM did a classy and wise thing and asked to have the item continued to a future date. Two weeks later, two new Councilmembers were sworn in.

The VCM took the high road, and it lead not to San Ramon but to Dublin. In the meantime many of the folks who opposed the VCM when it looked like Nancy Tatarka's pet project, are now major supporters. Some are even on the Board of Directors. After this initial setback the VCM continued to expand its vision and look for a permanent site.

When San Ramon waffled three years ago, Dublin jumped in. "Who wouldn't want this in their City," Mayor Janet Lockhart asked the crowd of luminaries at Sybase headquarters on April 27, 2006. Mayors of Pleasanton, Livermore, Danville, and yes, even H. Abram Wilson of San Ramon, attended the event and spoke highly of having this exciting facility in the Tri-Valley.

Dublin lucked out because the Army offered to swap some land near Dougherty Road for development on another part of their property, and that opened up a perfect spot to plop the Children's Museum into. The Dublin City Council had no reservations about approving the Children's Museum in a new park in the new development. Sybase became the first major sponsor, presenting the VCM with a \$25,000 check at the April 27th announcement.

San Ramon lost its chance to provide this great service to the Tri-Valley because of political myopia. But the location in Dublin will be more central, easily accessible from Livermore, Danville, Pleasanton, and San Ramon, as well as communities further away. If the VCM waited until San Ramon got its act together to build the long-promised City Center, the children playing in the interactive exhibits at Sybase this evening would be in their dotage.

Asked when the expected ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival) would be for the Museum to open, Board President Rick Beaumont said the VCM will be sending out Requests for Proposals (RFP) for construction of the 10,000 to 20,000 sq. ft. building, by late summer or early fall. Beaumont estimates the Museum could open in three years.

Thank you Dublin for stepping in where San Ramon failed.