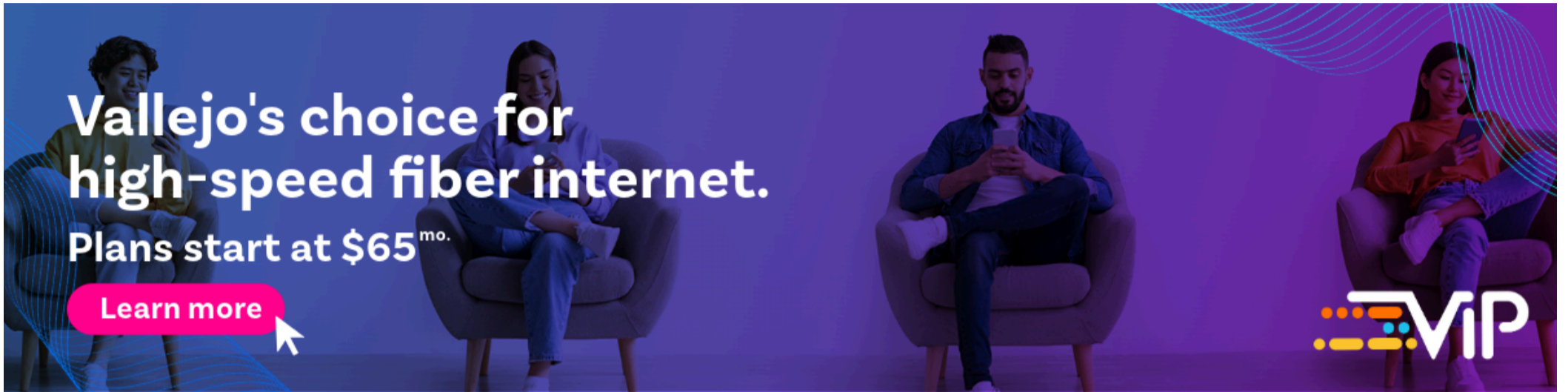


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Suisun City manager addresses concerns about city's expansion plan

Posted by Gretchen Smail May 15, 2026

City Manager Bret Prebula discussed data center rumors, the project's timeline, and calls for a citywide advisory vote.

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California Forever CEO Jan Sramek stands outside of a county Board of Supervisors meeting in 2024. Sramek is now looking to Suisun City to annex his company's land. Photo by Gretchen Zimmermann.

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SUISUN CITY – Suisun City Manager Bret Prebula fielded questions and addressed concerns about the city's [expansion plan](#) to annex land owned by [California Forever](#) during a call organized by the Progressive Democrats of Benicia on Tuesday night.

Prebula, who was formerly the finance director and assistant city manager for Benicia before becoming Suisun City manager in April 2024, explained that Suisun City has seen virtually no meaningful growth for 50 years.

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He said the city's growth stalled due to the [building of the Highway 12 bypass](#) that cut off Suisun City from Fairfield in 1984 and the state [dissolving redevelopment agencies](#) in 2012, which cut off the city's primary funds for new construction.



Suisun City Manager Bret Prebula. Photo vis Suisun City.

Prebula said Suisun City currently operates with a \$33 million general fund — a little over half of Benicia's general fund, despite the two cities having similar population sizes.

To keep the city above water, the City Council came up with a "three-pronged approach" to try to save the city, Prebula said. First, the city passed a tax measure that added a 1.75% transaction use tax. Next, the city started to develop 14 different infill projects on vacant or underutilized land which include developing a 34-acre site for homes and repurposing a "park and ride" lot for mixed use.

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The sales tax and urban infill bought the city a few more years, but the City Council needs "something else" to make the city sustainable long term, Prebula said.

"Something else" ended up being California Forever. Last year, the City Council started exploring annexing 22,000 acres of land owned by the billionaire-backed group. California Forever previously sought to rezone the land to build a new city of 400,000 residents via a ballot initiative in 2024. The group later withdrew the petition after a [scathing impact assessment and dismal polling](#).

California Forever submitted a formal application for development to Suisun City in October 2025.

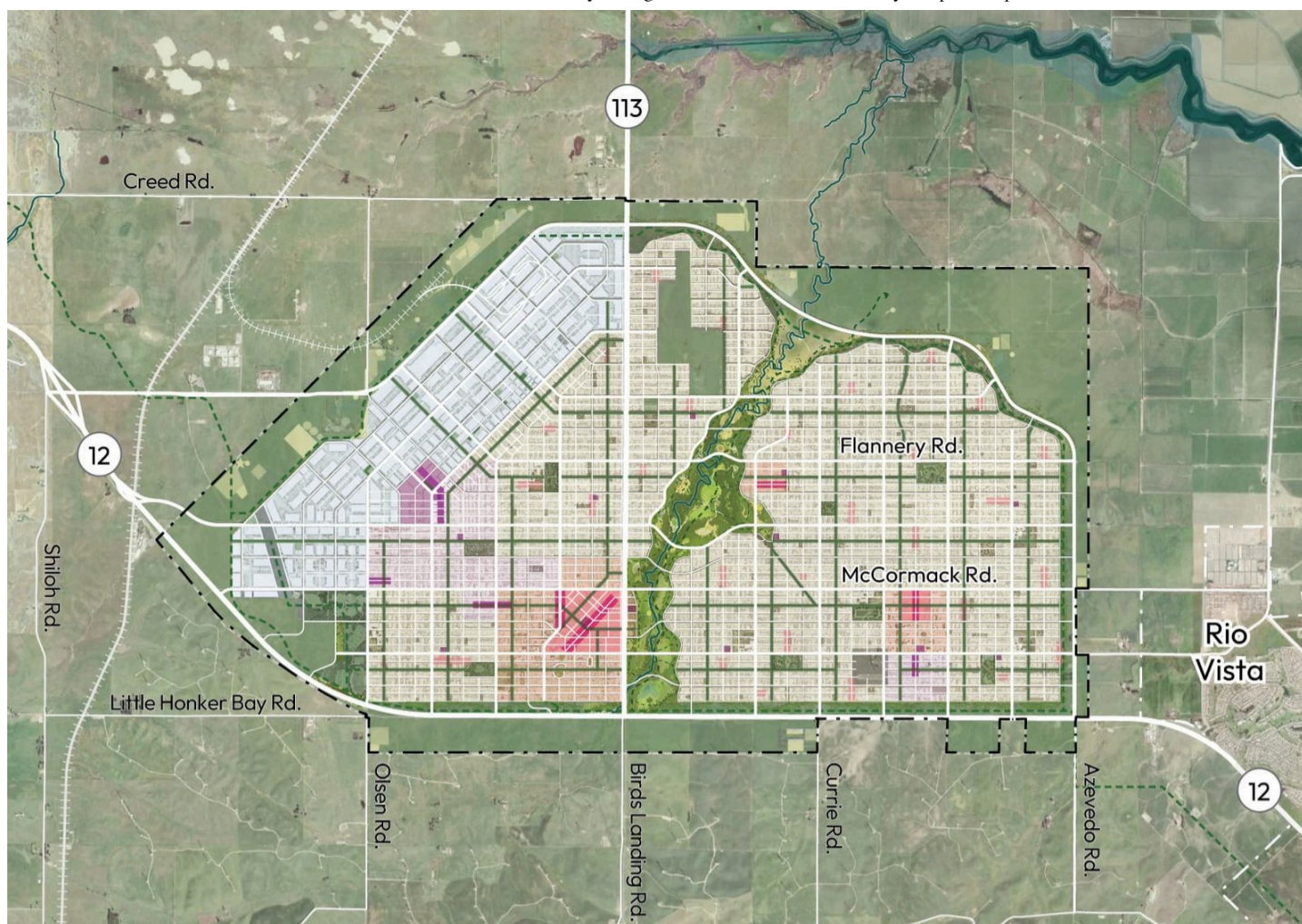
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The proposed project would involve Suisun City absorbing the land to build a walkable, medium-density community on 15,737 acres. The project would take several decades, with the hopes of bringing in around 150,000 new residents within the next 20 years.



A drawing of the proposed development area under the Suisun expansion plan. The area in light blue would be the industrial sector. Photo courtesy of California Forever.

Deputy City Manager Jim Bermudez, who also participated in the call, said the California Environmental Quality Act process for the project started in fall 2025 to study how it would impact water quality, transportation, and also operating costs of the area.

The first draft of the environmental impact report is expected to be published this fall, Bermudez said. At that point, the public will be invited to comment on the report's findings and on the project.

The city is aiming to have the environmental impact report certified by winter 2026, and then they'll hold project approval hearings in spring 2027. Bermudez said they're looking at 2027 or 2028 for approval from the Solano Local Agency Formation Commission, which is the county body that decides the boundaries of each city.

Prebula said he sees the plan as a promising option for Suisun's City's longevity.

"Suisun City needs growth, it needs industry," Prebula said, adding that the county does as well.

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Many residents, including Rio Vista's city manager, have raised concerns about the project. One persistent rumor is that [California Forever is going to build data centers](#) in the city's proposed industrial area.

Prebula acknowledged that "data centers are allowed by zoning in their project right now." But he emphasized that the Suisun City Council "has no desire for data centers."

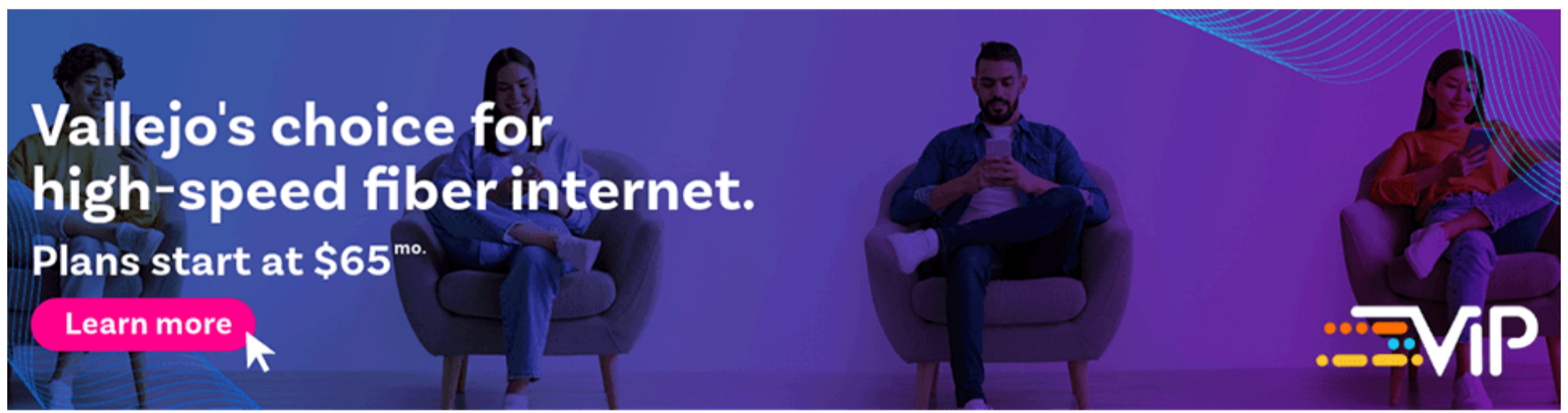
He added that the City Council has the ability to "clamp down" on any data center proposals during development agreement negotiations.

"I have never, in the 18 months of doing this, talked to a data center or hyperscale company about any part of the specific expansion plan," he said.

Instead, Prebula said they want to work with advanced manufacturing companies, which are companies that use new technologies like artificial intelligence and robotics to improve the precision and speed of manufacturing. He said they recently toured a factory owned by [Hadrian](#), an aerospace and defense manufacturing company that uses AI software to run its factories. He also said they're also looking at "Lockheed Martin-style of companies, but not Lockheed themselves."

Community concerns about California Forever's plans have persisted for years after a [2023 New York Times article](#) uncovered that a group of Silicon Valley investors were behind the secret purchases of over 60,000 acres of farmland near Travis Air Force Base.

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Now with the California Forever project running through Suisun City rather than the county, activist groups like Solano Together and California ForNever [are calling for a citywide advisory vote](#) to let Suisun City voters weigh in on the expansion plan.

Prebula acknowledged California Forever did not approach the community in the right way initially.

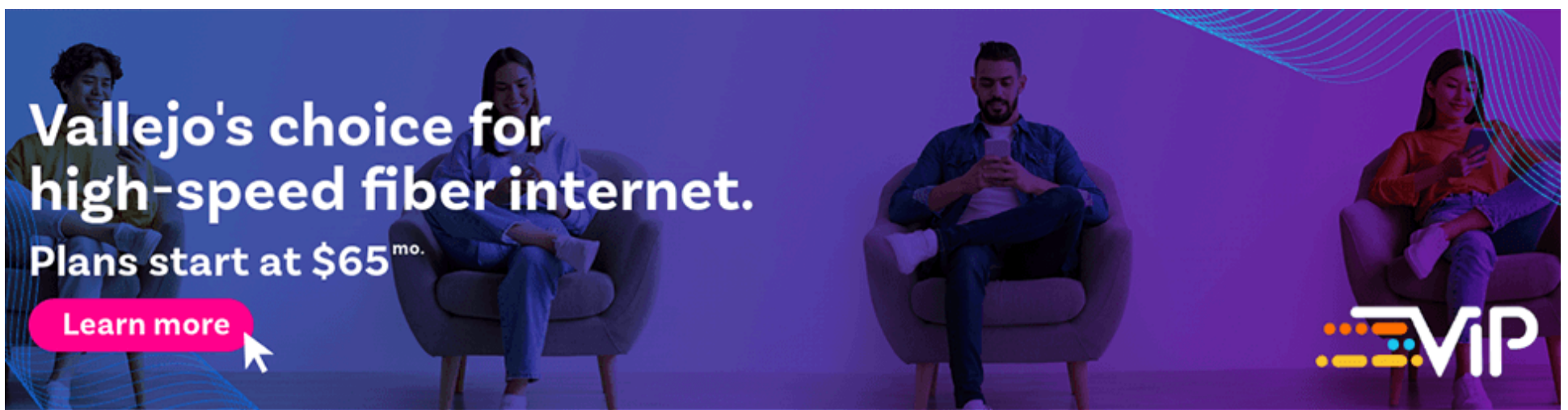
"Do I think they came into this years ago when they started buying property in the right way? My answer to that is no," said Prebula. "Many people, including myself and Jim, have told them that was not the way to come into the community."

But Prebula said he's "agnostic" on the idea of an advisory vote because there are benefits and drawbacks of doing them.

"They're expensive if done on the off-cycle ... and you get the opposition spending a lot of money to say one thing, and then you get the proponents spending a lot of money in the other [direction]," said Prebula. "It ends up being a lot of whose message gets louder and more spread out, and who spends more money."

He said that he prefers that they continue to hold smaller community forums about the project, rather than hold a vote that provides "a data point that can be expensive, but not really helpful."

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Regarding Travis Air Force Base, Prebula said that they were “going to do everything humanly possible” to protect the military base, and set the expansion zone far from the city and the base.

He also briefly discussed California Forever’s plan to [revitalize the shipbuilding industry](#) in the county by building a new hub near Collinsville.

“Shipbuilding is the county’s jurisdiction, it’s important to know,” Prebula said. He said that area would not be annexed, and Collinsville would remain a county unincorporated area. He said that if that aspect of California Forever’s project does move forward, the city would work with the county to build infrastructure that goes to Collinsville.

This would include widening Highway 12. [Environmentalists have raised concerns](#) that widening any of the highways in the area would negatively impact the surrounding marshlands and preservation areas.

“A community of this size is going to have to expand Highway 12, I mean that’s a given,” said Bermudez.

But Bermudez said that the environmental impact report would include a list of mitigation requirements that would be imposed on the developer.

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Prebula acknowledged that this was an ambitious and fast-moving project, so he understood why there was a lot of community concern.

“We’re essentially becoming Vallejo on steroids, as far as size goes,” Prebula said.

But he emphasized that the City Council was just looking at voting on the project’s first phase of a 20-year buildout with a target of 150,000 residents, not a 400,000-resident city like California Forever originally pitched in 2023. He said anything built beyond that would trigger another environmental review, along with new maps and water and transportation analysis.

"We put that speed bump in intentionally because if [California Forever] doesn't prove out well, and if the Council says 150,000 is enough, they can't go anywhere," Prebula said. "There is no guarantee for them beyond that."

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Gretchen Smail

Gretchen Smail is a fellow with the California Local News Fellowship program. She grew up in Vallejo and focuses on health and science reporting.

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