

Silicon Valley Elites Revealed as Buyers of \$800m of Land to Build Utopian City

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After weeks of local speculation, the purchasers of 55,000 acres of northern California land have been revealed. The group Flannery Associates – backed by a cohort of Silicon Valley investors – has quietly purchased \$800m worth of agricultural and empty land, the New York Times has reported. Its goal is to build a utopian new town that will offer its thousands of residents reliable public transportation and urban living, all of which would operate using clean energy.

The project was spearheaded by Jan Sramek, a 36-year-old former trader for the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs, and is backed by prominent Silicon Valley investors including Michael Moritz, a venture capitalist; Reid Hoffman, the co-founder of LinkedIn; Laurene Powell Jobs, the founder of the philanthropic group Emerson Collective and wife of Steve Jobs; Marc Andreessen, an investor and software developer; Patrick and John Collison, the sibling co-founders of the payment processor Stripe; and the entrepreneurs Daniel Gross and Nat Friedman, the Times reported.

Though Flannery has been purchasing farmland and empty plots over the past five years it has only recently started interacting with local officials and residents, according to the Times and local reports.

Flannery has purchased land from farmers for several times more than the market value and become the biggest landowners in Solano county, an area 60 miles north-east of San Francisco. The land bought by the firm encircles Travis air force base in Fairfield, a city of about 120,000 residents and home to the Anheuser-Busch Co brewery and the Jelly Belly jelly bean factory.

Recently, Flannery has been meeting with local officials and representatives, according to the Times. It has also been sending out opinion polls to local residents to gauge their feelings on an initiative that could appear on Solano county voter's ballots, according to the

newspaper SF Gate.

“This project would include a new city with tens of thousands of new homes, a large solar energy farm, orchards with over a million new trees, and over ten thousand acres of new parks and open space,” a screenshot of the survey obtained by the newspaper reads.

The poll also asks if residents would support the project if it was placed in an area with “bad soil that only contributes 5% of the county’s agricultural production,” according to a Facebook post from Catherine Moy, the mayor of Fairfield, the closest city to Flannery’s purchases.

Despite the lofty goals set forth by Flannery, the group faces an uphill battle that will affect each step of the process of creating a new city from scratch. [The firm has sued](#) land owners who sold their land over what it describes as an “illegal price-fixing conspiracy”. Flannery would have to get the blessing of officials at the local and state levels and residents. It will also have to navigate environmental and zoning roadblocks, according to the San Francisco Chronicle.

[This article was amended on 27 August 2023 to clarify that Flannery Associates has sued land owners from whom it bought land for an alleged price-fixing conspiracy.]

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