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Will Hardin Valley ever return to former pastoral setting?

By **FRED DOLISLAGER**
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Knoxville's Hardin Valley residents have had their unfair share of hardships lately. Our rural community seems to be under attack by greedy land developers and all levels of government.

Perhaps it is easy for those who don't live in this area to see Hardin Valley as nothing more than a source of revenue, but it's not OK when individuals get their rights stepped on, and no compassion can be found in the county government.

In Hardin Valley, it's no secret that everybody wants our land. First, it was the Tennessee Department of Transportation's Orange Route planned through our valley, devouring huge amounts of land and bringing decades of construction upheaval, pollution and sprawl. The proposed route threatens the health of hundreds of our children by its proximity to the elementary school and the new high school.

Next, the county decided to replace the existing two-lane section of Hardin Valley Road from Pellissippi Parkway to the elementary school with another two-lane road that provided some subdivisions with a left-turn lane. Several families lost property along this road for little gain.

What about the high school? We are in desperate need of it, but the school we were promised - 2,100 students - now could be cut to 1,300 students. The poor handling of the budget has led to ridiculous proposals to cut costs.

The county government gives lip service to the notion of better education for our students, but year after year, our schools grow more over-crowded and less equipped for the job.

Not only are developers lusting after privately owned land, but now the Tennessee Valley Authority has been brazenly approached to do a land swap of the 250-acre Hickory Bend Recreation Area. Hickory Bend is clearly designated as a sensitive resource management area in the Melton Hill Land Management Plan.

This land could have become a marina and lake-front home sites for the wealthy. No more lake access for the average fisherman. Who wants our public land?

There are at least five new large subdivisions going up in Hardin Valley right now. Don't get me wrong. Nobody is forcing landowners to sell. Or are they? Here's where the persecution gets personal. The blasting and construction around a market on Hardin Valley Road has caused problems with the septic system. The county won't pay for the damage, and neither will the construction company. The proprietors have limited options. Either they pay for the repairs or they may lose their business. Where's the compassion? Who wants their lease ended?

Hardin Valley is the last bastion of pastoral beauty in West Knoxville. Many of us came here to enjoy peace and quiet and elbow room. Even so, we are willing to embrace change especially when it means new schools for our children.

What we are not willing to tolerate are uncompassionate land grabs enabled by TVA and TDOT and propagated by our local government at the expense of our close-knit community.

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