

# NEVADA CITY ENGINEERING, INC.

505 COYOTE STREET, SUITE B • NEVADA CITY, CALIFORNIA 95959

TELEPHONE (530) 265-6911 • FAX (530) 265-8058

[www.nevadacityengineering.com](http://www.nevadacityengineering.com)

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*Engineering • Surveying • Planning*

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## The View from Andy's Desk

February 4, 2014 - Andrew R. Cassano is a City/Regional Planner and Professional Land Surveyor with 45 years of experience in Northern California. He is CEO of Nevada City Engineering, Inc., a firm offering regional planning and permitting, land surveying, and civil engineering consulting to the private and public sector since 1978.

### Merge Your Parcels? Say What?

Over the years, we at Nevada City Engineering have worked on a lot of land divisions. Even a simple land division of turning one parcel into two new parcels has become complicated and expensive. It's no wonder then, that when a client wants to put parcels together, that is to "un-subdivide" them, we take a hard look at the idea. Most of the time, it's more valuable to own two or more building sites than to own just one. But, there are exceptions to this rule, and sometimes merging parcels makes perfect sense.

A common commercial or multi-family reason to merge parcels is to have more flexibility in site planning or redevelopment design. Remember that most property lines have zoning setbacks associated with them that need to be eliminated with new buildings that would otherwise cross property lines. And, what lender would finance a building that was partly on two different properties!

Occasionally, the same applies to folks building single family homes. Over the years, we've merged two or more lots in the rural suburbs, so the owner can build a home that would otherwise have to straddle the property line. In some subdivisions, there are blanket utility easements that run along every property, and these need to be formally abandoned by a government process to make way for the construction.

There are voter approved parcel charges on many properties, such as the fire department fee, solid waste fee, or school bond payments. For someone really happy without the multiple parcels, merging them into one might eliminate duplicate fees. For parcels with homeowners' dues though, the association might maintain multiple dues. After all, their operating budgets are based on the idea that every lot pays.

Finally, parcels can be merged strictly for conservation reasons. As creating lots causes direct and cumulative impacts, putting them back together has the opposite effect. Lot mergers can also be negotiated as part of establishing a conservation easement with a local land trust or other NGO conservation group.

In most jurisdictions, voluntary mergers are possible. This is a method where the owner formally consents to the merger and waives rights to a public hearing. We prepare a legal description of the combined property and assist with the city or county application process. Call us for our information sheet on the subject or just email me.

### We Won Awards!

We're not a firm that spends energy chasing formal awards and recognition. We're too busy doing client work, but we were honored and thrilled to receive these awards for 2013 accomplishments:

I won the "**Affiliate of the Year**" award from the Nevada County Association of REALTORS, recognizing our firm's work to serve the real estate community, including our providing this newsletter to the membership.

We won "**Project of the Year**" from the Engineers' Association of Nevada County for our work on "The Wolf Creek Lodge", the senior citizen co-housing project next to JC Penney in Grass Valley. Thanks to our peers.

**Tom Lott**, our retired civil engineering partner, who designed the Wolf Creek Village grading, drainage, and utilities, received the "**Engineer of the Year**" award. Congratulations, Tom. This is the second time you've won this award! And we still miss having you here.

### Show You're a Genius

Contact us if we can help with a land idea or issue. We'll let you know if it's feasible and at what cost.