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Living on the edge of the city

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Residents at the end of Folsom's reach have grown accustomed to the cacophony from their El Dorado Hills neighbors.

Heavy machinery, construction workers, road crews and lots of early morning noise have become a way of life for residents of Empire Ranch, a high-rent subdivision on the far east end of Folsom.

"It's very noisy during the day," Kevin Bassham, a 38-year-old Empire Ranch resident said. "They're supposed to start at 7 a.m. every day, but it seems like we always have tractors working in front of our house early in the morning."

Bassham and his neighbors are but a piece of a larger puzzle created by an invisible line that separates a city, a special district and two counties.

Projects just feet from Bassham's front yard include construction of a primary El Dorado Hills access parkway, a sound wall, the Promontory Park and the potential of hundreds of new homes constructed on the golden hills overlooking his roof.

As borders between Folsom and El Dorado Hills bulge from an influx of urban escapees looking for a stuccoed Nirvana, area governments are spending extra time building working relationships while protecting their own sphere of influence.

Folsom, a city at the eastern end of Sacramento County, and El Dorado Hills, an area comprised of three community services district at the western end of El Dorado County, have created partnerships in form of joint-power authorities to share plans n if not intimate details.

The Promontory Park has unified some Empire Ranch residents with homeowners in The Promontory in a fight against El Dorado Hills Community Services District's plans for a community park that includes 70-foot light towers. The lighted fields would sit on once golden hills, below residents in The Promontory, but above Empire Ranch.

"In that past I've met with their parks director, but we've never shared park designs before. What we're doing for our community. What they're doing with their community... this is the first time any park has been built this close to the county line. They haven't had any parks this close, although they did build a golf course," said El Dorado Hills Community Services District general manager Wayne Lowery.

A community services district's primary agenda is to provide parks for its residents, although the El Dorado Hills CSD has grown to incorporate other city-like responsibilities, such as waste management.

The differences between the governmental scopes have not prevented Lowery's district and Folsom from attempting cooperation.

Folsom assistant city manager Will Kempton said one such successful project has been the connection between Empire Ranch Road and Sophia Parkway, the thoroughfare that runs through Bassham's front yard.

"It has gone on very well," Kempton said. "We've not only been able to keep the two jurisdictions working together, but we've been able to bring in private sectors with the developers with the construction of the roads."



matthew self/THE Telegraph A bog runs through it: A wetlands preserve is all that separates Bassham's Folsom neighborhood from massive El Dorado Hills construction projects.

However, Kempton said the most recent plans for Promontory Park came as a surprise. He said Folsom primarily works with El Dorado County and not the community services districts, so details came late in the game.

"It's a matter of course in government. Any time an agency attempts to do something, there's an environmental impact report that's circulated and we usually get an opportunity to comment on projects that are going on. We saw a plan (for Promontory Park) that just showed a park at particular location. It's not unusual that community would have a park that size. It's the CSD, not the county, and we have not been apprised of the development," he said.

He said it's only recently that "we have been brought into discussions in light of concerns with our residents."

It's not necessarily a power play by either neighboring entity as much as it's a race to control their given sphere of influence.

Folsom has designs on property south of Highway 50, which bumps up against another El Dorado Hills community, tiny Springfield Meadows Community Services District.

Highway 50 and White Rock Road, situated between Latrobe Road and the county line, define Springfield Meadows. Its sphere of influence pales in comparison to El Dorado Hills CSD, but it has done nothing in their hopes of influencing what is built due west of them.

Kathy Smith, a director on the SMCSO board, explained last month her community's concerns about residential neighborhoods that could crowd them on a hill above their district. Drainage is their primary concern, the quaint notion of rural living with city amenities all but gone since the original members first moved into the area 20 years ago.

Folsom Measure W, an attempt to amend the city's charter to include requirements to master plan development, to incorporate that development into the general plan and to require developers to build all required infrastructure, goes before Folsom voters on Tuesday.

Back at Empire Ranch, Bassham said he's just trying to look at the positives. He said he's worried about the sound, but has hopes the sound wall and the eventual disappearance of construction will make his neighborhood quiet once again.

"It's pretty neat outside at night when we can hear the coyotes," he said.

John Willis, a 38-year-old satellite dealership owner, lives two doors down from Bassham. He's hoping the land adjacent to his property is filled with million dollar homes, which would raise the value of his home. After paying a \$65,000 premium for his golf-course lot, he's prepared himself for anything.

"People are going to do what they do," he said. "Whatever the city wants, it's going to be what it is."

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