

# Real Estate News

October 20, 2015

## Both proponents, opponents urge 'no' vote on El Dorado Hills' Measure E

Advisory vote intended to convey residents' preference for future use of former golf course  
Property owner Parker Development Co. seeks rezoning for residential development  
Pastoral gateway to community seen by some as key to maintaining El Dorado Hills' image



Jamie Brockardt of Fair Oaks pulls the driver back for her tee shot at the sixth hole on the El Dorado Hills golf course in 2002. Parker Development Co., which owns the property, closed the golf course in January 2007, citing financial losses and competition. Chris Crewell Bee file

By Cathy Locke

[clocke@sacbee.com](mailto:clocke@sacbee.com)

An advisory measure on the fate of the former El Dorado Hills Golf Course has prompted another round of sharp debate over growth in the foothills.

The Nov. 3 ballot measure asks voters whether the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors should rezone 100 acres of the former 18-hole golf course to allow housing and commercial development.

The question seems simple enough, but the situation is complex enough that both the official proponents and opponents are urging a "no" vote.

"There's been a lot of confusion," said Wayne Lowery, president of the El Dorado Hills Community Services District board, which placed the advisory measure on the ballot. Lowery and three other members of the board are listed in ballot materials as proponents in favor of Measure E, but they're asking people to vote no.

They are listed as proponents because they called for the advisory vote, Lowery said, but they do not want to change the zoning. They want to preserve the golf course property as a pastoral entrance to the El Dorado Hills community and hope the advisory vote will help influence county supervisors, he said. The listed opponents say they also want residents to vote no – but only as a protest against the ballot question altogether. One of the opponents, community activist Betty January, said she actually wants the Board of Supervisors to rezone the golf course for development.

January, along with Debbie Manning, CEO of the El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce and Fritz G. Libby, president of Ethos Soccer, argue that Measure E has no authority and that the community services district is wasting taxpayer money to conduct the election.

"Voting no on Measure E sends a message against wasteful ballot box politics," states their ballot argument.

Manning said the chamber has not taken a position on the rezoning or the development proposed for the golf course site. But she added in an email that the chamber "has always been against land use by ballot box."

"We support our voter-approved general plan. If residents have opinions on land-use designations and rezoning, we encourage them to communicate with their elected county supervisors," she said.

People fell in love with it as an entrance to the community.

Wayne Lowery, president of El Dorado Hills Community Services District board, regarding former El Dorado Hills Golf Course

Parker Development Co., which owns the property, closed the golf course in January 2007, citing financial losses and competition. Shortly afterward, at the public's urging, the community services district and the county Board of Supervisors ordered a study to see whether the operation could be revived. A National Golf Foundation consultant's findings were not encouraging.

Kirk Bone, director of government relations for Parker Development, said the company in spring 2011 unveiled a plan to develop the property and presented it to the community services district board for comment. The firm filed an application with the county in November 2012, having had no response from the district board on what it was or wasn't interested in seeing in the plan, Bone said.

In spring 2013, he said, the community services district board decided it would oppose the project and wrote a letter to the Board of Supervisors.

The golf course property, north of Highway 50 and east of El Dorado Hills Boulevard, is part of the Central El Dorado Hills Specific Plan, which also includes a parcel on the west side of El Dorado Hills Boulevard. Parker Development Co.'s website describes a vision of a 257-acre master-planned community featuring a mix of residential, open space and public service land uses.

Bone said it would include 130 acres of open space and between 15 and 26 acres of parkland. The proposal calls for trails connecting the area with Parker's Serrano development, as well as a pedestrian bridge over Highway 50 to El Dorado Hills Town Center.

A survey conducted by Fairfield-based SCI Consulting Group found that two-thirds of El Dorado Hills Community Services District residents would support a parcel tax of up to \$79 to acquire the golf course property to keep it for recreation or open space. Lowery said that tax would raise \$7 million to \$10 million. However, an appraisal of the property sought by the district valued the property at \$24 million based on its value for development, Lowery said.

The Chamber of Commerce has always been against land use by ballot box.

Debbie Manning, CEO, El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce

Measure E, Lowery said, is about the desire to maintain the former golf course site for open space and recreational use, not the merits of Parker's development plan.

"I feel it is a good plan," Lowery said. "The problem is the location."

The golf course was a key feature of El Dorado Hills when the community began developing 50 years ago, he said. "People fell in love with it as an entrance to the community," Lowery said, and they don't want to see that open space filled with homes and businesses.

Parker Development's plan envisions senior housing and recreational amenities such as soccer fields, both of which would benefit the community, said January.

“It would have been wonderful if it could have stayed a golf course,” January said. “What I’m concerned about is neglected open space.”

John Hidahl, a longtime El Dorado Hills resident, is spokesman for a community group that set up the [ParksNotParker.org](http://ParksNotParker.org) website to promote a “no” vote on Measure E. He said El Dorado Hills has outgrown its community park and needs a 40- to 50-acre site for softball and soccer fields, and possibly a civic center with meeting space and a venue for the performing arts. Maintaining a pastoral gateway to El Dorado Hills is important to the community’s image and property values, he added.

Cathy Locke: [916-321-5287](tel:916-321-5287), [@lockecathy](https://www.instagram.com/lockecathy)