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Cameron Park subdivision OK'd

Some neighbors contend the project will lead to urbanization of rural area

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A cluster-style residential development on rural land in the Cameron Park area will go forward despite objections by neighboring property owners who characterized the project as a step toward urbanization.

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors last week approved the Summerbrook development. The project calls for 29 lots on 90 acres off Green Valley Road, about 500 feet west of the Bass Lake Road intersection. About 35 acres will remain as open space, providing a buffer between the homes and most of the neighboring parcels.

Though the proposed 1.3- to 2.2-acre lots are large by suburban standards, neighboring property owners argued that such a development is not compatible with the area's rural character.

Owners of adjoining parcels raise horses and livestock, and two share a private shooting range.

Residents also complained that allowing the higher-density development would contribute to traffic congestion on Green Valley Road, a popular route for people traveling to Folsom or south Placer County.

"The closure of Folsom Dam Road has given us a respite," said Bruce Malm, but that will end when the new bridge downstream of the dam opens next year. He urged the board to retain zoning requiring parcels of at least 5 or 10 acres for the Summerbrook property.

If denser development were allowed, Malm predicted, Green Valley Road in 20 years would look like Sacramento's Stockton Boulevard.

But the supervisors argued that the proximity to Green Valley Road and higher-density neighborhoods was reason to allow the project.

"If it were anywhere else in the county, it wouldn't work," said Supervisor Ron Briggs. "But here, you're on Green Valley Road."

Briggs said he feared that if the Summerbrook project were denied, a developer five or 10 years from now might persuade a future board to approve an apartment complex.

"This one was hard, because I generally draw the line (against smaller parcels) north of Green Valley Road," he said.

In exchange for dedicating 35 acres as open space, the developer will receive a density bonus, amounting to 11 more homes than typically allowed under the zoning.

Developer Brian Holloway said measures would be taken to avoid conflicts between Summerbrook residents and neighboring property owners.

The existence of the shooting range would be disclosed in real estate documents and referenced in the development's covenants, conditions and restrictions, he said. In addition, Holloway said he would provide copies of the disclosure documents to the owners of the shooting range.

Holloway also said a 7-foot-high "animal friendly" fence would be installed between the subdivision and neighboring properties. It would consist of 2-inch heavy metal squares that would be difficult for children to climb but wouldn't harm animals. He said it would be topped with barbed wire.

Area residents said they also were concerned about the destruction of historical features on the property, including 700 feet of stacked rock wall.

Although the developer said the wall would be protected except at locations where it crosses public improvements, residents said they feared a significant portion would be lost.

Supervisor Helen Baumann asked what effect the development would have on agricultural lands.

Agricultural Commissioner Bill Stephans said state Department of Conservation maps indicated that 15 percent to 18 percent of the acreage was choice soil that would be lost for agricultural use.

The board approved the project on a 4-1 vote, with Baumann opposed.

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