

LODE PLANNERS REJECT SUBDIVISION APPLICATION — SIX YEARS AFTER FILING

Del Verde Estates stagnates

Six years after it was proposed, the 91-home Del Verde Estates subdivision has disappeared from the Calaveras County books.



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SAN ANDREAS - In a sign of the times, the Calaveras County Planning Commission on Thursday denied an application for a 91-home subdivision in the heart of suburban Valley Springs because proponents hadn't made any progress on the project in four years.

The Del Verde Estates proposal is nestled between two of the county's prime housing tracts: La Contenta to the north and Rancho Calaveras to the south.

Although a proposed residential neighborhood at the site dates back at least to the 1990s, the current Del Verde Estates application was filed in 2005, said Calaveras County Planner Gina Kathan.

Kathan said that the original applicant, an entity known as Valley Springs, CA LLC, worked on various studies of trees and traffic until 2007. Then, four years passed with no contact from either the original applicant or the current owners, Kathan said. "Until two days ago," Kathan said.

A representative from a company that calls itself E & F Financial Services called to say that the firm now owns the property, Kathan said. Kathan said she then also got a call from Jay Oman, a land use consultant who formerly represented Valley Springs, CA LLC and said he is now representing E & F Financial Services.

Kathan said both callers asked to have the matter pulled from this week's Planning Commission agenda to give them time to revive the project.

"I told them they had no legal standing to pull it from the agenda," Kathan said.

Kathan said that under law, the application belongs to Valley Springs, CA LLC and that no one had submitted written evidence that Valley Springs, CA LLC had passed its development application on to any new owner.

Oman appeared at Thursday's hearing to say that his current clients, who bought the property several years ago at a foreclosure auction, had only recently been alerted that the application might be terminated for inactivity.

"It seems that everything was going to a different address," Oman said.

Said Kathan: "The applicant failed to update us with any new addresses, phone numbers."

Oman said the foreclosure crisis made it difficult for his current client to keep up with paperwork. "They had taken back between 20 and 30 properties throughout California. When they got this letter, they acted on it," he said of a notice for Thursday's meeting.

Kathan noted that the \$5,600 fee paid by the original applicant was long ago expended on staff time, studies, mailings, and paperwork. She said that even if the current application is denied, the property owners can always submit a new application, although the current fee schedule means it would cost them \$16,910 to do so.

Oman made a final plea to keep the application open. "We do feel we have certain rights," he said.

The Planning Commission was not swayed. Members voted 4-0, with Chairwoman Suzanne Kuehl absent, to deny the application and get it off the books, as staff had recommended.

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