

# PLANNERS VOTE AGAINST MORE HOMES

## Bear Creek East

A housing developer coming to Stockton wishes to build a new neighborhood of 2,122 homes on 317 acres of farmland north of Stockton. Building is years out and faces opposition.



Source: city of Stockton

KORY HANSEN/  
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STOCKTON - A citizens commission has said no for now to building more homes on the edge of Stockton, a bankrupt city with hundreds of boarded-up foreclosures left over from the economic recession.

But the Stockton Planning Commission's split 4-3 vote Thursday was only advisory. The City Council early next year also will consider the Bear Creek East project, which proposes 2,100 new homes.

"This is going back to the bad old days," said opponent Eric Parfrey of Campaign for Common Ground, calling it a "half-baked" project based on poor planning and accused city staffers of "colluding" with the developer.

MCD North Stockton seeks to build on 160 acres just south of Eight Mile Road. The project is early in its planning stage, and city staffers recommended its approval.

The Planning Commission was asked to approve the plan's environmental reports. Even if it passed, the vote would not have given the developer approval to start building, which is years away because of the shaky economy.

Commissioner Kevin Hernandez initiated a vote against the project, seconded by Christopher Eley. Commissioners D'Adrea Davie and Christina Fugazi joined them.

In the minority, Steve Lopez, the commission's chairman, backed the development with Vice Chairman Antonio Garcia and Mark Kindelberger, who each said they like the plans.

Mike Locke, a former Stockton's deputy city manager and now vice president of Pennino Management Group, spoke on behalf of the developer along with attorney Michael Hakeem, who said the project reflects smart growth with a mix of commercial development, office buildings and a school connected by bike paths and walkways.

Parfrey urged the denial, saying the project doesn't honor a 5-year-old agreement struck between the city and environmentalists to encourage reinvigorating the city's downtown core rather than building on the fringes.

"If we have to sue the city of Stockton, we will do that," he said.

These homes would be added onto Stockton's 44,000 approved or anticipated new homes in and around the city's perimeter. At last count, another 400 existing homes sit vacant with boards over the windows.

The city's written reports appeared to back the developer's wishes, but their oral recommendations said something quite different.

Before the vote, Steve Chase, the city's Community Development director, asked commissioners to consider Stockton's larger picture with a "saturated" housing market.

"It's time to get real and have adult conversations about the fabric of our community," he said. "If anything, I still think we're too big for our britches and some belt-tightening is needed. If we're talking about adding lots, we'd better be talking about subtracting lots somewhere else."

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