



Tuesday, April 27, 2004

No room for mini-storage in this town

Local residents lawyer up to fight Green Valley Road facility

By Ryan Rose

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Local residents believe there is no room for a mini-storage facility on Green Valley Road.

To fight the proposed development, neighbors have formed a non-profit group and hired a lawyer in an effort to stop construction of the facility.

"The people of El Dorado Hills are not about to sit back and allow the county to make decisions about development that does not reflect what is best for the community now and for the future," said Laura Obrochta, who has been joined by her husband, Mark, in spearheading the group protesting the development.

As proposed, the mini-storage will occupy 6 acres of a 17-acre property approximately 800 feet west of the intersection of Green Valley Road and Francisco Drive. The property, visible from Telegraph Hills, the Hidden Acres quarter and the future Francisco Oaks development, has hundreds of oak trees on it.

To gain support for their fight, the group calling themselves Foothill Residents for Appropriate Land Use will hold a rally Sunday from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m. to collect signatures for a petition asking the county to rezone the storage site area as residential or parkland. The rally will be held at the development site on Green Valley Road.

"We need everyone who believes in this cause to show up at the proposed storage location and tell all your neighbors to stop by too," said the Obrochta.

For more information on FRALU events, visit their website at www.nostorage.org or email the group at nostorage@sbcglobal.net. The group is also accepting tax-deductible donations, which can be sent to 2222 Francisco Blvd. #510-230 in El Dorado Hills.

Public opposition to the mini-storage site increased after last month's vote by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors to approve the development. Only Supervisors Helen Baumann and Rusty Dupray cast dissenting votes at the March 30 meeting. The final vote was 3-2.

Originally denied in August 2003, the supervisors allowed a rehearing on the issue after the property developer, Peninsula Group Inc. threatened a lawsuit, claiming the county was limiting their development rights.

The board had previously denied two proposals from the development group. Peninsula Group Inc. did not return calls to the Telegraph by press time.

Lawyers on both sides approved a settlement agreement last month to curtail further litigation. The arrangement stipulated the county would rehear the proposal, while under no obligation to approve the plans.

County Counsel Lou Green said under the agreement developers would cede an easement on their property to the county's Department of Transportation for use in a pedestrian/bike trail. The agreement also includes a condition the remaining 11 acres would remain undeveloped as an "oak tree sanctuary."

However, had the board denied the group's proposal, Green said, litigation would have continued.

Yet in their effort to avoid lawsuits, the county may now face one from its constituents.

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