

Sacramento Business Journal Article

A battle over development in El Dorado Hills centers around a beloved but defunct golf course.

The former Executive Golf Course, about 98 acres east of El Dorado Hills Boulevard just north of Highway 50, would be redeveloped for housing in the heart of the 341-acre Central El Dorado Hills development.

The project's developer, Parker Development Co., believes the course is a logical place to add more high-density residential and new public parks to complement its neighboring Serrano project.

Opponents, though, say the development would eliminate a vital piece of open space where few options exist to create such space.

"The community was built around the property, and it's been open space forever," said Terry Crumpley, current president of the El Dorado Hills Community Services District. Crumpley and other El Dorado Hills residents are involved in an effort — called United Neighborhoods of EDH — to stop development on the golf course site.

Central El Dorado Hills, now in the comment period on its environmental impact report, is planned for up to 1,000 residential units over two sites. One, Pedregal, is west of El Dorado Hills Boulevard and north of Wilson Boulevard. The other, including the shuttered golf course site, is Serrano Westside.

Serrano Westside would have about 800 residential units and 130 acres of open space. Those residential units include 330 high-density units and some attached medium-density units. Tom Howard, a project manager at Parker, said El Dorado Hills lacks those types of options and has a graying population that wants them.

Parker's plan also includes public parks at the north and south ends of the former golf course. Crumpley said the community services district is beginning a process to come up with another vision for the golf course. But Howard and Kirk Bone, a director of government relations for Parker, said the district doesn't have a plan or the money to implement it.

To Crumpley and other residents, Parker could boost its standing by removing the golf course property from its development. That would remove a lot of opposition, said longtime resident John Hidaahl. Working with the community services department, United Neighborhoods of EDH and others would boost support for what they hope is a nonprofit foundation to operate a park on the former golf course site.

Current El Dorado Hills residents already weighed in with Measure E, a November advisory vote on whether the golf course should be re-zoned for residential development as the Central El Dorado Hills plans required. With turnout of over 40 percent, or 9,057 votes, the "no" side garnered more than 91 percent.

Bone acknowledges that voters expressed their opinion, but said the measure was political theater. Absent specifics on what would be in its place, he said, most voters in any situation will prefer to keep something undeveloped.

Parker Development maintains it is defending a project that's been in the works for years. "We consider this to be a poster child of infill development," Howard said.