

Serrano plans westward expansion

By Mike Roberts, Village Life staff writer

[11.26.08] **135 homes planned above archery range and golf course** Tucked away to the west of Silva Valley Parkway and north of Serrano Parkway, Serrano's modestly named "Village D1" borders Silva Valley Elementary School on the south and west, and the southwest corner of Oak Ridge High School.

In early November residents received a letter from Kirk Bone, Serrano's director of Governmental Relations, informing them of plans to expand their neighborhood onto two equally humbly named parcels, "Lot C" and "Lot D," to the west and south of their village.

The letter included a map showing Lot C spread out along the oak covered ridge - aptly named "Oak Ridge" - between Silva Valley Parkway and El Dorado Hills Boulevard, above the original Village D1 on the east, and the archery range and fire station on the west.

During a tour of the two parcels, Bone told Village Life that Lot C construction would not begin for at least two years.

The southern access to Lot C is on Boundary Oaks Drive, a gated entrance eight-tenths of a mile up Serrano Parkway from El Dorado Hills Boulevard. The neighborhood will extend north along Oak Ridge on an extension of Boundary Oaks Drive, tying back into Village D1 at the northern end of Meadow Wood Drive, where a gravel fire road currently provides access to the eastern portion of the ridge.

The wishbone-shaped Lot D parcel begins at Estero Way, a cul-de-sac off Boundary Oaks Drive, and continues south along a descending ridgeline, paralleling Serrano Parkway for roughly 1,500 feet before veering sharply right along the eastern boundary of the former golf course. It connects with Olson Lane behind El Dorado Hills Fire Station 85.

Both lots are included in Serrano's specific plan. A tentative subdivision map was approved by the county in 1997. Both have been resubmitted to the county.

The projects were put on hold after naturally occurring asbestos was discovered at Oak Ridge High School in 1998. Since then, the county Air Quality Management District has adopted rules for removing NOA and controlling the potentially harmful dust during construction. Standards for testing and site monitoring have also been established.

"They've done a tremendous job of defining what needs to happen in areas that test positive," said Bone. "That made us comfortable moving forward with the project at this time."

Geologic tests conducted in Lot C found "actionable" levels of asbestos in two of 14 samples, triggering the requirement for asbestos mitigation measures. Trace levels were found in five samples. Seven samples were asbestos free.

The Air Quality Management District approved Serrano's dust mitigation and air monitoring plans for Lot C in February. "We plan on meeting or exceeding every mitigation measure," said Bone.

A designated air-monitoring officer will oversee the plan and collect samples. A geologist will also be on hand during all earth-moving activities. If he spots any naturally occurring asbestos, all work stops until it can be fully mitigated.

To ensure that no unsafe levels of asbestos-laden dust blow off the construction site, two air-monitoring

stations will be placed at Lot C's downwind fence line, with a third at the upwind fence.

The air monitoring plan also calls for selected workers in the dustiest areas to wear battery powered personal air monitors.

All earth moving activities will be stopped if winds get over 25-MPH twice within 30 minutes. The combined costs of air-monitoring and the geologist is estimated at \$3,000 per day.

Viewscape concerns Lot C's 65 homes will be situated in the trees beneath the ridgeline on either side of Boundary Oaks Drive, with wooded open space buffers beneath them on both sides of the ridge.

Although many of the homes will likely be visible from Silva Valley Parkway to the east and El Dorado Hills Boulevard to the west, Bone insists that the project will not disrupt the integrity of the viewscape.

“The ridge is heavily wooded, with a fairly well defined peak,” he said. “The homes will be nestled in the oaks beneath the ridgeline. What you'll see on the ridgeline will be oak trees, just like today.”

Previous Serrano view homes were built on flatter-topped hills with little or no oak canopy, he said, making the homes much more pronounced on the horizon.

Plans for Lot D's 70 homes are progressing more slowly. No geologic testing has been conducted yet, but Bone said Serrano is proceeding as if full asbestos mitigation will be required.

Because the Lot D ridgeline is much less wooded, the homes will be more visible, especially from Serrano Parkway.

Bone defended Serrano's view lots. “Our specific plan talks all about putting homes up high where there's a view,” he said. “We do our best to ensure that the design of the homes complements the terrain in this often challenging topography.”

Lot C's topography includes a lot of oak trees. Serrano's specific plan allows removal of 477 acres of oak canopy, said Bone.

By carefully situating home sites to save as many trees as possible, Serrano will be well under the maximum allowed in the specific plan, even after Lots C and D are constructed, said Bone. “So we're in pretty good shape.”

Lot D will be mass graded, with home sizes consistent with adjacent homes in Village D1. Lot C will feature individually graded lots with larger custom homes.

The new neighborhoods will be included in the Serrano El Dorado Owners Association, with custom home designs controlled by Serrano's Architectural Committee.

Why proceed with development now, when the real estate industry is moribund? “Our development agreement expires in 2009,” said Bone. “Getting these two projects approved will enable us to develop them consistent with our specific plan.”

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SERRANO'S Village D1 was one of the earliest projects in the development which, more than any other, defines El Dorado Hills. This view, looking west from a high point in Serrano, shows the Ridgeview neighborhood in the distance, Village D1 in the foreground and a pristine Oak Ridge between. Serrano has announced plans for 65 new lots nestled among the oaks beneath the ridgeline along Oak Ridge, retaining a green horizon, similar to Ridgeview. *Village Life photo by Mike Roberts*