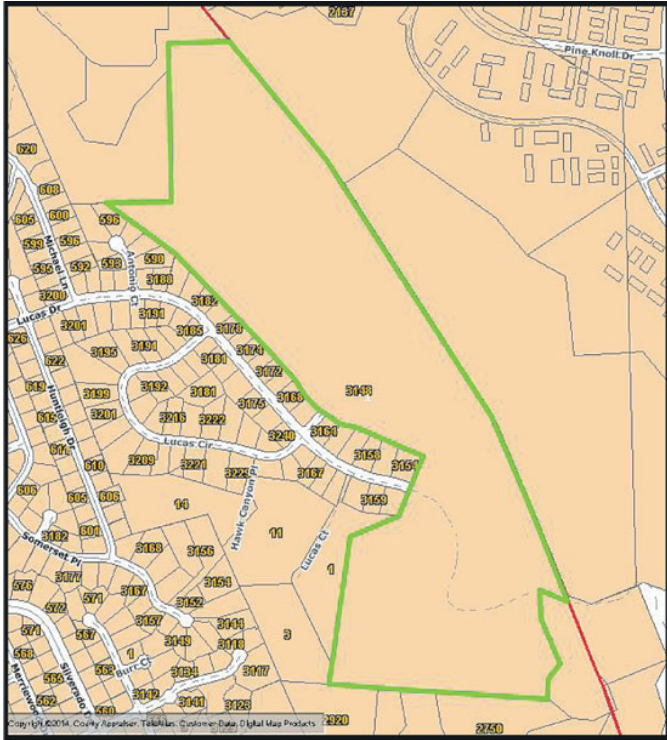


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## After Long Hiatus, Activity on Lucas Ranch

By Cathy Tyson



Map courtesy City of Lafayette Staff Report

After the original application was filed about a decade ago to develop part of an 88-acre parcel in Lafayette, there was a contentious review process that ended with a whopping 90 conditions of approval regarding development of the eight-home subdivision. Applicant Soldier Field Partners is now moving forward and its request for a permit to build a large custom home on one of the lots was recently heard by the Planning Commission.

This is a project that has been 10 years in the making. It all started with a subdivision and hillside development permit application in 2004, back when George Bush narrowly defeated John Kerry.

The final environmental impact report was approved in 2006. Later that same year an appeal of the Planning Commission's certification of the final EIR was made; then in September of 2006 the City Council held a public hearing that ultimately denied the appeal.

The piece of property known as Lucas Ranch, roughly located between Burton Valley and Rossmoor, will be mostly undeveloped - over 60 percent of the land will remain in its natural state, with the already approved lots clustered on the

southern portion of the parcel starting at the terminus of Lucas Drive.

The applicant's attorney, Allan Moore of Gagen McCoy, started out on a positive note, agreeing with the staff recommendation to shrink the size of the proposed 9,330 square foot structure. He also wanted to confirm that earlier approvals for the subdivision are not re-opened.

"No one wins if we don't all win," said architect Tim Ward, referring to reaching consensus in modifying the home to ensure privacy for nearby neighbors. Moore expressed an interest on behalf of his client to work with the neighbors, and asked to go into their back yards to see exactly what their view is and listen to their concerns.

The size of the proposed home is already an issue. While city staff couldn't specifically suggest an amount of shrinkage, the word "significant" was used.

This application for a Phase I Hillside Development Permit for siting and massing determination has a long way to go. It is the first step in a long journey; specific floor plans for the proposed home have not been drawn up or approved and a swimming pool has not been approved, although general conceptual plans were produced as part of the original subdivision approval years ago.

Full design plans are required for Phase II, and in order to approve the permit a laundry list of findings are necessary, including, to the extent feasible, "minimize the loss of privacy to surrounding residents and not unduly impact, restrict or block significant views."

The commission's task at this point in Phase I is to look at the location and bulk of the home; it considered the matter and gave the applicant time to make modifications.

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