

Published October 21st, 2015

Developer Must Yield for Story Poles in Burton Valley

By Cathy Tyson



View from the end of Lucas Drive to the Soldier Field Partners development in Burton Valley. Photo C. Tyson

said. "I want to go on record to try and stop this trend; it's not a good one. We need them so everyone can understand what we are deciding upon."

The developer erected the poles as promised on the perimeter of the site for three of the estate-size homes for planning commissioners to view, prior to their next review of the project.

Attorney for the applicant, Alan Moore of Gagen McCoy, reminded the commissioners that story poles had been erected many times in the past for this project, and poles will need to go up again for the Phase II review, presumably in the near future. Full design plans are necessary for a Phase II Hillside Development Permit, which covers aesthetics, height, architecture, colors, materials, lighting and landscaping.

Responding to comments from neighbors who have complained that the development is not compatible with the existing homes in the area, Moore said that's true, it's not compatible, "it's meant to be a new neighborhood." Already approved design guidelines specify large custom estate homes on large lots to be clustered on the southern corner of the property.

"Look at this through a different prism, the land is zoned LR-10, one home per 10 acres." Moore also pointed out that two-thirds of the land on the 88-acre parcel will remain open space.

Expressing a willingness to talk with neighbors about particular features of the homes, he added, "We'll work with you, but we have a vested right to move forward." The framework for the eight-home subdivision, including the lot layout, has already been approved in the design guidelines.

The expansive homes, 10,318 square feet for the lot 4 house, 9,927 for the lot 6 house, and 9,416 for the lot 7 house will be located between the Lucas Drive extension and south of Lucas Court at the tail end of the J-shaped parcel. The majority of the land extends north, on the hillside behind traditional ranch-style homes on Lucas Drive.

The subdivision has a long history dating back to an original application in 2004; after an appeal, it was ultimately approved by the City Council on a split vote with a series of conditions of approval in 2006. Construction is already underway for roadway improvements. The Phase I permits for lots 1, 2 and 3 have already been approved, but presuming Phase I permits for lots 4, 6 and 7 get approved, all of the homes still have to go through the review process to get Phase II approval.

Building a house in Lafayette is not for the faint of heart. With its original application now 11 years old, local developer Soldier Field Partners encountered a small speed bump on the way to Phase I development permits for lots 4, 6 and 7 of an eight-home subdivision called Lucas Ranch Estates. The homes will be clustered on roughly one-third of the 87.9-acre parcel, with the balance of the land remaining undeveloped, except for public trails.

Planning commissioners called for story poles to be erected to illustrate the size, mass and visibility of these three homes on the edge of Burton Valley.

"It just seems silly," said planning commissioner Jeanne Ateljevich at a meeting in late September, explaining the obvious need to see how big a structure is prior to approving it.

Chair Tom Chastain agreed. "I'm not make any findings unless I can see the story poles," he

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA