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## Custom Homes Take Step Forward in Burton Valley

By Cathy Tyson



Proposed Lucas Ranch Estates rendering on lots four, six and seven from Ward Young Architects, viewed from the trail head at the end of Rohrer Drive. Image courtesy Ward Young Architects

architectural plans meet the letter of the law, there is a substantial basement on the hillside property, which is only partially subterranean, and when viewed from below, makes the home appear to be two stories tall.

Commissioner J. Allan Sayles asked if the home met the single story rule. "Yes and no," replied Senior Planner Michael Cass, describing the modifications that the applicant made and also noting that the topography is challenging; there is going to be some "under area."

"There's very little impact for the majority of the neighborhood," explained Cass, "but where there is an impact is from the Goldwyn's Property." The nearest neighbor, Bryan Goldwyn, called the home "massive" and that it boggles the mind that it qualifies as a single story home.

Conditions of approval are part of the application that was approved on a four to three vote, including a privacy study to be completed during the next phase of review along with a landscape plan that requires vegetation cascading down the hill.

"I don't believe the application for lot four meets the standard of a low one-story house," said Commissioner Will Lovitt, who had issues with the size of the 8,600 gross square foot home, adding that he also had real concerns about landscaping on the southern slope that would screen the home.

Dave George, a Burton Valley neighbor, "really feels like this is an abomination" and that this action is "gutting the hillside protection ordinance." Along with support from other neighbors, they plan to file an appeal to the city council.

"We have done everything you've asked," argued attorney for the developer, Allan Moore, ticking off reasons why commissioners should vote for approval: the city council approved lots in those locations, as well as basic footprints in 2006; homes are clustered together in order to preserve

After three large homes received three split votes, Soldier Field Partners finally received approvals for Phase I hillside development permits for three parcels in an eight-lot subdivision in Burton Valley. This hurdle is not the final authorization, simply a green light on the siting and massing of the proposed custom homes. The other five lots in the Lucas Ranch Estates subdivision are also clustered on the southern portion of the 88-acre-parcel, two-thirds of which will remain open space. The Phase I permits for lots one, two and three have been approved; there has been no application for the remaining two parcels, lot five and lot eight. Of the eight home plans, the six that have garnered Phase I approval will all still need to go through the Phase II review process.

The most controversial of the three proposed homes that were addressed at the Jan. 4 Planning Commission meeting is on lot four. The original design guidelines from 2006 call for a very low single-story home. While technically the

open space; lots are sited to minimize loss of privacy; massing has been reduced by more than 20 percent, and more.

Validating neighbors' sincere and valid comments, Moore pointed out that there is a difference between visibility and privacy, noting that adjacent homes are 300 to 500 feet away from the proposed Lucas Ranch homes.

Less prominent homes on lots six and seven were also approved on split votes. One of the planning commissioners who voted to approve lot four, Tom Chastain, clarified that the task before the next review body, the Design Review Commission, is that the house should appear as a one story house, when viewed from any direction, acknowledging that this will likely involve shrinking the size of the proposed home.

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