

Local news

Developer buys prime SV acreage

Scotts Valley - 1990 2-10-96

By ROBIN MUSITELLI

Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY — A golf course with swank homes flanking it on the rolling hills of Glenwood Estates has twice been proposed and twice shot down.

Now a new developer, Charles "Chop" Keenan of Palo Alto, is betting on horses instead of golf balls.

Keenan, whose Santa Cruz Cinema 9 building rejuvenated downtown Santa Cruz, has purchased Glenwood Estates, 254 acres of hills and meadows on the north end of Scotts Valley.

Although he has not yet submitted a formal application to Scotts Valley officials, he plans to build between 255 and 285 homes.

If approved, it would be the biggest real estate project in Scotts Valley's 30-year history.

As with previous failed proposals, however, the development is sure to be fought by neighbors and residents who question whether there is enough water and whether too many homes are contemplated.

Keenan's proposal is to put homes on 75 acres, clustered in eight or nine "neighborhoods" of 20 to 40 homes.

The homes would be tucked in the valleys, leaving the surrounding hills undeveloped.

Land would be provided for a community park and a middle school.

If approved, it would be the biggest real estate project in Scotts Valley's 30-year history.

A horse barn, corral and trails for horses and hikers are included. The trails would run from the homes to the open spaces.

Horses would continue to graze the hillsides, which helps spread the spineflower, a wildflower that was an obstacle to previous development plans, Keenan said. But there would be fewer horses than now are pastured on the property, and they would be excluded from creek areas along the valley floor.

But the 18-hole golf course included in the two previous development proposals for the land is gone.

Keenan said environmental regulations that protect wetlands on the property made the golf course unfeasible. As with the golf course plan, his proposal leaves two-thirds of the property in open space, but more natural.

"I think it's just a little more respectful of the natural state of affairs out there," he said.

Keenan said he expects up to 75 homes could be built each year beginning in 1997. Each of the homes is expected to be 2,200 to 3,000 square feet on

lots varying from 6,000 to 10,000 square feet and to sell for about \$325,000 to \$425,000.

Keenan said he is buying the land from Ashington, a California corporation set up by the Dutch bank that owns the property. He declined to say how much he was paying for the land, except to confirm it was in the range of \$10 million.

The previous would-be developer, the Brusa Corp., spent eight years and \$18 million trying to get permission build 276 homes around an 18-hole golf course before losing the land in foreclosure.

Scotts Valley Planning Director Bob Hanna said he was disappointed that Keenan had given up on a golf course. But without the golf course, Hanna noted, the development can be clustered away from the wetlands and spineflower.

Hanna said Keenan's plan to "use the typography" and put homes in the valley where they will have "less impact and be less visible is probably a good idea."

Hanna said he expects a development application to be submitted around March.

Already, a new citizen watch group has formed to bird-dog the proposal. Water is the biggest issue, said Tina Ebrahimi, co-chair of the Scotts Valley Citizens for Responsible Growth.

The new group is the result of a merger between Scotts Valley Area Residents for Better City Planning, which was able to halt Brusa's plans, and the Scotts Valley Citizens for Responsible Growth, which organized last fall against an affordable housing complex in Skypark.

"If there are water concerns in the city, I think the development shouldn't go in," said Ebrahimi. "Do we have enough for the amount of development Scotts Valley wants to see?"

Ebrahimi said the group has not yet taken a position on Keenan's proposal, but would monitor its progress.

Keenan acknowledged that water, along with traffic, school capacity, the wetlands and spineflower are the "biggest hotspots."

"The water issue is out there," agreed Hanna. "There are folks out there who say there is a potential water problem and there is evidence of water levels dropping. But the (Scotts Valley) water district says there is a lot of capacity and has plans to increase and protect the water supply."