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Residents begin community planning; Parker moves forward with project

After 91 percent of El Dorado Hills residents who voted Nov. 3 voiced their support for open space, a group of about 40 residents kept the momentum going by offering next steps at a kickoff meeting last Monday night.

The United Neighborhoods of El Dorado Hills aim to bring all 72 villages together to develop an El Dorado Hills community plan; its first challenge — a plan for the former Executive Golf Course at Serrano.

United Neighborhoods of El Dorado Hills spokesperson and District 1 supervisor candidate John Hidahl led the meeting. He explained a community plan would solidify a community vision, something that is overdue and integral to the county's long-range planning process and policies.

Resident Rachel Michelin said she modeled the idea for United Neighborhoods from the work residents have done in her Southern California hometown of Orange. She said the United Neighborhoods of Orange has proven when residents "show up" they have power.

"It can be very fragmented in El Dorado Hills," she said. "Showing up and being involved is the best way to shape public policy.

"It's a positive movement," Michelin continued. "We want to bring ideas together and we can do that not just by attending meetings, but by writing letters. We will send the message to our elected officials that we are paying attention and we want to be part of the process."

The United Neighborhoods of El Dorado Hills' mission statement reads: *a coalition of individual volunteers joining to set a vision and establish a community plan to enhance and protect our quality of life in El Dorado Hills.*

"Let's raise our profile as people who are engaged," Michelin urged. "Measure E proved we can do it. People often find things out after the fact. Let's get representatives from all groups — Little League, Four Seasons, neighborhood watch groups. Let's educate people in what's going on ... much like a community council."

A United Neighborhoods website is in the works and members are collecting names for email notifications.

The group's most pressing first campaign, Michelin said, is to have a plan for the 98-acre former Executive Golf Course, the impetus for Measure E.

"If there isn't a plan for the golf course, my concern is it will be left unattended and unirrigated and that won't last very long," Hidahl said.

A draft environmental impact report was released Friday detailing the larger 257-acre project, or the Central El Dorado Hills Specific Plan, planned by property owner Parker Development Co. The plan is a mix of residential, open space and public land uses on the golf course and beyond.

Measure E was placed on the ballot by the El Dorado Hills Community Services District's Board of Directors to send an advisory message to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, which makes final land use decisions in El Dorado Hills and other unincorporated regions in the county. The measure

was meant to be a loud call advising the supervisors that residents don't want the golf course rezoned from recreation and open space to allow for the development.

On Friday the county released a notice of availability of a draft environmental impact report for the Central El Dorado Hills Specific Plan. The Draft EIR is available for a 60-day public review period. After that the project will go to the county Planning Commission and then the Board of Supervisors. The deadline to submit written comments is 5 p.m. on Jan. 19.

"The DEIR allows all of us to make an informed and thoughtful decision about the benefits the project can prove to El Dorado Hills and the county," Parker Development's Director of Government Relations Kirk Bone told Village Life. "Among the benefits are 130 acres of open space, pedestrian and bike trails and up to 26-acres of active recreation facilities."

County staff will host an informational open house about the project and the EIR on Wednesday, Dec. 2, from 6 to 8 p.m. inside Oak Meadow Elementary School's gym, 7701 Silva Valley Parkway.

The NOA and Draft EIR are posted on the Proposed Specific Plans project webpage:

edcgov.us/LongRangePlanning/ProposedSpecificPlans/Proposed_Specific_Plans.aspx (Click on the Central El Dorado Hills tab.) Public comments may be emailed directly to cedhsp@edcgov.us.