

BREA-LA HABRA STAR-PROGRESS

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MADRONA MANEUVERS

Development of Carbon
Canyon remains
a contentious issue
five years after
the Freeway fire.

The key players:

A few people have
not the better part

The Madrona site

When the fire finally exhausted itself, 29,000 acres in Santa Ana Canyon were scorched.

Ash floated down on the surrounding cities. For miles, breathing the air was like standing over a fire pit. Hundreds of homes burned, and millions of dollars of property – from furniture to family heirlooms – was destroyed.

One week from Saturday will mark the five-year anniversary of the Freeway Complex Fire, the horrific merging of two blazes that burned vast portions of north Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

Among the fire's collateral damage was the proposed Canyon Crest housing development, with 165 single-family homes slated to be spread over 367.5 acres of Carbon Canyon, a likely property-tax boon for Brea.

The project, controversial for myriad reasons, had been ill-fated long before the Freeway Complex Fire, having germinated as a potential development in 1999. After numerous false starts and community contention, the project had made its way through the Planning Commission by June 2008.

A few months later, the inferno blackened the earth and threatened Canyon Crest.

Now, five years later, it seems as if the fire were only an ellipsis in the development's time line.

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Columnist Terri Daxon examines the march toward Madrona. SEE PAGE 6

The Madrona project site



Fire ravages Carbon Canyon in 2008.

Fire hazards

The city, the developers and the opponents all agree that it is a matter of when – not if – another fire will rip through the Carbon Canyon area and threaten the Madrona housing development. But the city contends that a fire-safety plan will keep people out of harm's way. Opponents say the plan is inadequate.

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of a decade anticipating the battle of the Madrona development that is soon to take place.

Claire Schlotterbeck, executive director of Hills for Everyone, opposes the Madrona project.

Mayor Ron Garcia will steer the City Council through the long, complex and likely contentious process.

Planning Director David Crabtree has dealt with developers to ensure that the project met criteria.

Fiscal impact

Project value: \$260 million
 Construction-related costs: \$86 million
 Annual city benefit (net): \$403,900
 20-year benefit (compounded net): \$9.3 million
 Jobs created during construction: 935
 Labor costs: \$67 million
 Total economic output: \$155 million
 Source: City of Brea