

## DEVELOPMENT

# Will third time be the charm for Esperanza Hills project?

340-home plan north of Yorba Linda back for another try at approval

By Alicia Robinson

arobinson@scng.com  
@ARobWriter on Twitter

9/9/10

For anyone watching the progress of the Esperanza Hills development, proposed on unincorporated county land tucked between Yorba Linda and Chino Hills State Park, the latest happenings may instill déjà vu.

Approved Aug. 22 by the Orange County Planning Commission, plans for the 340-home, large-lot neighborhood are headed to county supervisors, who already have signed off on them twice since 2015. But a group of resi-

PROJECT » PAGE 9



STAFF FILE PHOTO

The Esperanza Hills north of Yorba Linda near Stonehaven Drive is where a 340-home development has been proposed.

## Project

FROM PAGE 3

dents raised a host of objections to the project, a lower court, and then an appeals court, agreed with several of their concerns.

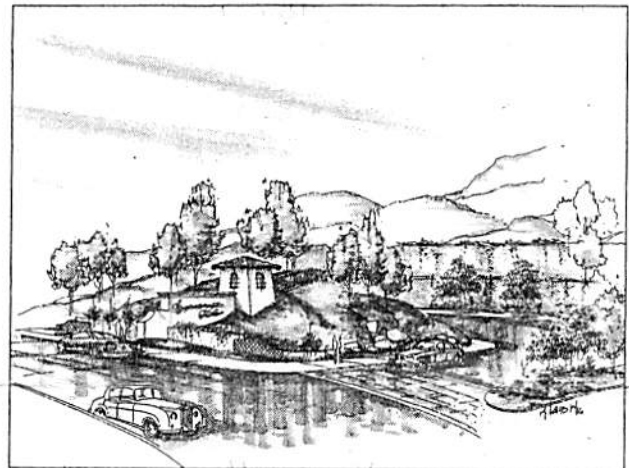
So Scottsdale, Arizona-based developer Doug Wymore made changes and his project is headed for a final decision by the county Sept. 25. The appellate case is still pending.

Residents and at least one county supervisor say their biggest concern — that new and existing residents could be trapped in a traffic jam while fleeing a fast-moving wildfire — still hasn't been adequately addressed.

"That area will burn again," said Yorba Linda resident Brian Gass, who lives immediately west of where Esperanza Hills is proposed. "People will die in the next fire."

Wymore couldn't be reached for comment, but he told planning commissioners last month that gravity-fed fire hydrants, which would still work if pumping facilities fail, were added to the project and fire-resistant landscaping was expanded at the Orange County Fire Authority's behest.

Besides the gated community's main entrance off Stonehaven Drive, the neighborhood would have a second access for pub-



DOUGLAS G. WYMORE

A rendering shows what the entrance would look like to the 340-home Esperanza Hills development.

lic safety to get in and residents to leave in an emergency. Wymore has said his attempts to create a second entry point for residents' daily use failed when he couldn't reach agreements with Yorba Linda officials or the developer of the adjacent Cielo Vista neighborhood.

Since Wymore proposed the project in 2012, residents have voiced objections to the potential impact on wildlife, loss of scenic views, and the strain additional residents could put on roads and services.

Gass, however, said NIMBY-ism isn't at the heart of his objections; he's even willing to have a second permanent access from the new development onto San Antonio Road, where he lives. He and others have pointed to

the 2008 Freeway Complex fire, which burned the land where homes are now proposed, as well as three fires that have occurred in the region in the past year.

Yorba Linda Mayor Gene Hernandez said city officials hope to annex the development later, but it's not their turn to weigh in yet.

County Supervisor Todd Spitzer, whose district includes Yorba Linda, said even with Wymore's changes to the project, he remains concerned about fire safety and neighborhood evacuation plans. He cast the sole vote against the development last year.

"I just think this is the wrong project," he said. "Not only do I believe it's unsafe, but it obviously doesn't have community support."