

The Region

Reject La Sierra Plans, Many Residents Urge

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Some longtime Riverside residents say they were disappointed that the City Council did not soundly reject a developer's proposal to build more than 700 homes in the Rancho La Sierra area.

The council Tuesday evening postponed a decision on the proposal after listening to more than 20 residents speak against the plan for more than two hours. One resident spoke in favor of it.

The panel voted 5 to 0 to form an advisory committee to present recommendations in about four months. Councilman Frank Schiavone was absent, and Councilman Ed Adkison abstained because his engineering firm has worked for the developer, the Davis Group of Encino.

Critics say the proposal, which calls for 729 homes on 445 acres of the River Ranch property and preserves about 750 acres, violates voter-approved land-use initiatives Proposition R, from 1978, and Measure C, from 1987.

"A no vote would have been the right vote as far as I'm concerned. It is illegal," said Yolanda Garland, who has lived in the area for 35 years.

K.D. Gunther, a fourth-generation Riverside resident, said the council should have pursued county Supervisor Bob Buster's suggestion to turn the area into a park. Instead, the proposed development is still viable, he said.

However, council members did seem to appreciate residents' concerns.

"The one thing I think has been made very clear this evening by the residents who live around there ... is this particular concept is not ready for prime time," said Councilwoman Joy Defenbaugh before the vote. "It's too dense. There are too many homes here."

An attorney representing the developer declined comment after the council's decision.

Those seeking to join the advisory committee should call (909) 826-5991.