

RIVERSIDE: La Sierra land measure headed for ballot

An issue that would preserve open space and lift development restrictions has qualified to go before voters.

BY ALICIA ROBINSON / STAFF WRITER

Published: June 21, 2014 Updated: 7:12 p.m.

A measure that would preserve some open space and lift development restrictions in Riverside's La Sierra area will go before city voters this fall.

Now that the Riverside County Registrar of Voters has qualified the measure, the final step is a City Council vote to place the measure on the Nov. 4 ballot. That is expected to happen Tuesday.

After that, residents can expect vigorous campaigning for and against the measure. Supporters have spent nearly \$275,000 in just the first three months of this year, and opponents are seeking volunteers to knock on voters' doors.

The initiative would affect two undeveloped areas on the city's west end, the La Sierra hills and the La Sierra lands. The areas comprise 1,300 acres that are protected by two voter-approved growth-control measures, Proposition R and Measure C.

The November measure would preserve the 650-acre hills area as open space and increase the number of homes allowed on the 650-acre La Sierra lands area. Officials have said about 562 homes now could be built on the entire 1,300 acres, and the measure would permit up to 1,950 homes on 400 acres of the lands.

Proponents describe the proposal as smart, planned growth paired with preservation of a beloved recreation area. Critics say it would allow excessive development that would ruin the area's rural character and harm an adjacent wildlife area.

"We live in a large, large city but we have the atmosphere and the feeling that we're practically a small town," said Caryl Fisher, who has lived in La Sierra for 40 years.

She expressed a common complaint, that the petitions for the ballot measure were deceptive when they mentioned “saving the hills” because the measure actually would increase the amount of allowed development.

Terry Manley, the developer behind the ballot issue, said he doesn’t see what’s deceptive about a measure that spells out what it would do right away.

“If you read nothing but the 75-word ballot label, it is crystal clear that this initiative proposes to make approximately 900 acres into permanent open space and it restricts development on the remaining 400 acres,” he said.

Manley said proponents will be working through the summer to spread their message, “which we believe is clear, we believe it is transparent and we believe it is in the best interests of the city of Riverside.”

They can expect to face an organized grass-roots opposition, with former councilwoman and La Sierra resident Laura Densmore helping to lead it.

“The public isn’t stupid,” Densmore said. “They just need to have the facts in front of them, and I think that’s our job.”

Contact the writer: 951-368-9461 or arobinson@pe.com

COLOR

B&W

PRESERVE AND DEVELOP?

A November ballot measure in Riverside would change development restrictions on 1,300 acres in the La Sierra area to allow more than three times as many homes as are now permitted. The measure also would permanently preserve half the land as open space.



PRESERVE AND DEVELOP?

A November ballot measure in Riverside would change development restrictions on 1,300 acres in the La Sierra area to allow more than three times as many homes as are now permitted. The measure also would permanently preserve half the land as open space.



FILE NAME: R_mmp_062214_PE_W_LASIERRA

STORY NO: PE_W_LASIERRA

2 col x 36p0 (41 lines)

ART DEPT. CONTACT:

CHRIS at 9634

Sign off	ART	REPORTS	DESIGN EDITOR	COPY DESK
	X	X	X	X