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Senior living center planned for Newport Avenue

Foothill Communities Association opposes 153-unit facility

By **ELYSSE JAMES**

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

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NORTH TUSTIN A senior living community, planned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange for the vacant lot on Newport Avenue north of 17th Street, has neighbors and the surrounding community petitioning to stop it.

The county is now exploring residents' worries about noise, parking and traffic and considering other options like single-family homes or a church and school. The findings will be released in late October.

The Foothill Communities Association has already voiced its opposition to The Springs at Bethsaida and is circulating a petition to North Tustin residents. Members hope the petition will convince the Board of Supervisors to vote against the project, on Newport Avenue between Castlegate and La Loma.

The group has about 500 signed petitions so far and will send them to Supervisor Bill Campbell, according to Rick Nelson, president of the Foothill Communities Association.

If built, the two-story facility will have 153 units with 79 for independent living and 55 assisted living. The largest building, in the center of the property, would be two stories above ground with a basement. Nineteen one and two-bedroom bungalow homes with detached garages would surround the main building. And 164 parking spaces are planned.

The petitioners opposes changing the zoning to allow for multi-family residential properties. The 7.25-acre lot is zoned for single-family homes.

Changing the zoning, say members of the Foothill Communities Association, would violate the North Tustin Specific Plan, a 1983 agreement between residents and the county Board of Supervisors determining zoning in the area. The association's letter also says the project would be incompatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Members don't want to set precedent for future zone changes, such as from residential to commercial, and also are worried that traffic on Newport Avenue would increase.

A survey by the Foothill Communities Association showed that of the 20 properties bordering the Diocese's land, 16 residents are opposed, three undecided and one in favor of the new development.

Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, which has owned the land between La Loma and Castlegate off Newport Ave. since 1956, hired Kisco Senior Living in 2006.

The company also runs BridgePoint at Los Altos, Emerald Court in Anaheim, Park Plaza in Orange, Valencia Terrace in Corona, Park Terrace in Rancho Santa Margarita and others in California, Florida, Hawaii, North Carolina and Virginia.

Once the draft environmental report is finished, residents can again voice concerns for the county to consider. Public hearings will be held at the North Tustin Advisory Committee, the Orange County Planning Commission and the county Board of Supervisors.

Information: rcboseniorliving.com or www.fcahome.org



A rendering shows the planned senior living community, called The Springs at Bethsaida, that could be built in the unincorporated area north of 17th Street at Newport Avenue.

COURTESY OF KISCO SENIOR LIVING



Melody Hanke, of the Foothill Communities Association, petitions for signatures. The group is opposed to a zone change that would allow a senior living facility to be built on Newport Avenue in the unincorporated area north of Tustin.

COURTESY OF RICHARD NELSON



Melody Hanke, left, and Diane Welch, petition for signatures. The Foothill Communities Association is opposed to a zone change that would allow a senior living facility to be built on Newport Avenue in the unincorporated area north of Tustin.

COURTESY OF RICHARD NELSON



Diane Welch, of the Foothill Communities Association, petitions for signatures. The group is opposed to a zone change that would allow a senior living facility to be built on Newport Avenue in the unincorporated area north of Tustin.

COURTESY OF RICHARD NELSON

Contact the writer: 949-553-2918 or ejames@ocregister.co

PUBLIC COMMENTS (Most recent first):

tustinsince82 wrote:

This development cannot be allowed to proceed. It will fundamentally change unincorporated Tustin forever. As kinght25 noted, the North Tustin Specific Plan was endorsed by the Board of Supervisors decades ago and should be a legally enforceable covenant as many residents of the area relied on the unincorporated nature of this area when purchasing their homes. Should that nature change, home values will certainly be negatively impacted and that detriment to homeowners is grounds for an injunction at the very least.

It is obvious that if the development proceeds, the traffic on Newport Blvd. will become untenable. Stop lights will be certainly be installed at intersections such as Ravencrest and Newport and cul-de-sacs like St. Regis will become turnabouts for errant drivers and parking lots for overflow parking from the center.

Further, if this development is allowed to be built, the lot on the corner of 17th and Newport will follow. The owner of that lot has been spotted at Board meetings recently. Next the lot at Cowan Heights and Newport will fall. The owner of that lot has been attempting to build a gas station there for years.

Every homeowner and resident of unincorporated Tustin must get active, sign the petitions and donate time and money to opposing this development. Many other options for a senior center in the general area are possible with a land swap with the unused USMC Tustin air base being the best alternative.

Residents, please get active and vocal with Supervisor Campbell and let him know that if this re-zoning and subsequent development occurs, he is through as a member of the Board of Supervisors. Visit www.fcathome.org for details about this issue and ways to proactively get involved.

10/1/2009 5:00:01 PM

knight25 wrote:

The opposition to rezoning in North Tustin is overwhelming! Just drive through the area and look at the signs! Residents purchased their homes in this area (and paid a premium) based on the understanding that the area would stay residential. The County Board of Supervisors already reached an agreement with residents in 1983 to keep the zoning single-family residential (the North Tustin Specific Plan). A decision to violate that agreement will allow for a development that is incompatible with the community, increase traffic and congestion near several schools, compromise safety, and severely damage local property values. For the County Board of Supervisors to even consider such a proposal, and violate their earlier agreement, makes one wonder if any Board member has received any recent "contributions" from the Diocese.

9/29/2009 7:44:04 AM