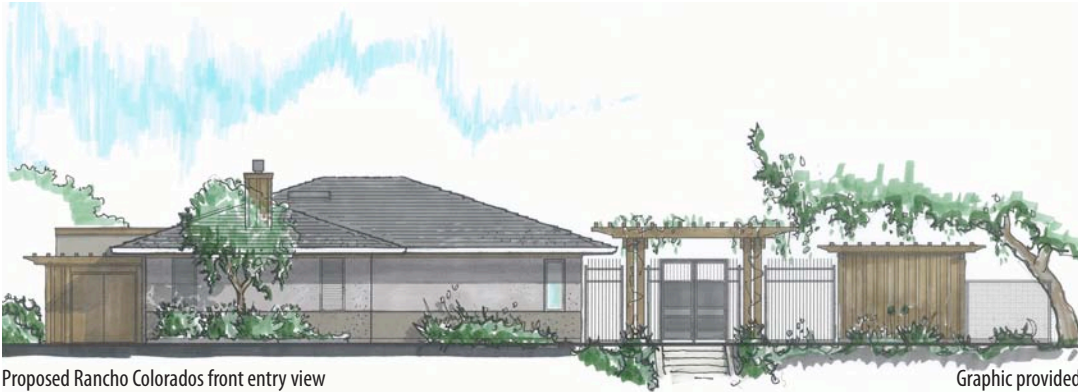


Rancho vs. The Neighbors

By Cathy Tyson



Proposed Rancho Colorados front entry view

Graphic provided

Before Burton Valley's Rancho Colorados Swim and Tennis Club (Rancho) can proceed with a proposed renovation project, the Planning Commission encouraged Rancho's Board of Directors to come to an agreement with the 18 neighbors on the private portion of Rohrer Drive. Since the main building at Rancho has been there since 1960, and is badly in need of improvement and the last request for a membership increase was way back in 1966, one would think changes to Rancho wouldn't be a problem.

Although 84% of Rancho's current 250 families approved plans last year to hire an architect to proceed with the design, adjacent to Rancho the eighteen neighboring families weren't so sure. Their major concerns aren't even about the proposed new 2,395 square foot Clubhouse.

Rather, their primary concern is about increasing the membership from 250 to 300 families and associated impacts. The neighbors would also like Rancho's Board of Directors to certify that Rancho is in compliance with all conditions of approval and that Traffic Management guidelines are enforced. These concerns are included in the Planning Commission Staff Report, where staff recommended 14 project specific land use conditions of approval covering everything from hours of operations, to number of swim meets, parking spaces and more.

After spending quite a bit of time meeting with neighbor representatives, Rancho Board President Todd Mullins said the Club has agreed with the neighbors on a number of issues including, removal of proposed tennis court lighting, hours of use, number of swim meets, limited number of members, noise, and the appointment of a Traffic Manager to oversee parking issues.

A letter to the Lafayette Planning Commission received September 26, 2007 from neighbors William Gavan and Tom Lowe stated, "As of this date, Rancho and the neighbors have essentially reached agreement on all of the major issues as outlined in the draft agreement with the exception of the number of member families that will be permitted." It goes on to say they will compromise and agree to 275 member families.

At the early October Planning Commission meeting neighbor Steve Peers surprised most everyone in attendance and officially withdrew from



Burton Valley's Rancho Colorados Swim and Tennis Club (Rancho)

the tentative agreement between Rancho and the neighbors, citing that year after year Rancho is not in compliance with their current use permit and that the proposed increase to 300 families is just too many. Another neighbor spoke up pointing out that Rancho has renege on all of its promised compromises. A third neighbor complained that she was okay with 25 additional families, but not special events that might go until midnight.

Brad Fox, Rancho Treasurer for five of the last six years noted that the club has an infrequent parking problem, especially during swim meets. To address that, Rancho has developed a Parking and Traffic Management Plan, which was reviewed and approved by the Circulation Commission at their September meeting.

Mullins added that Rancho has worked hard to educate club users about the private road, posting information on their website, in their quarterly club newsletter, telling outside swim teams specifically where to park and sending out notices to members. He agreed that on occasion in the past, some people have parked illegally, but within a few minutes those cars were moved. Finally, during the last four years serving on the Board there has not been one complaint about parking problems or traffic by the neighbors at a Board meeting.

Parking will continue to be a problem, due to the City's limited ability to enforce parking on a private road. One viable option available to disgruntled homeowners is to tow illegally parked vehicles. At this point, it seems like the neighbors don't like that option. The Planning Commission directed staff to consult with the City Attorney in terms of an enforceable condition of approval pertaining to parking on a private street.

In the end, the Planning Commission was willing to support 25 additional members to Rancho, bringing their current membership to 275 families, provided that the club returns in two years to revisit the process and check on Rancho's compliance with the conditions of approval.

Planning Technician Michael Cass noted, "This has been a somewhat contentious project." This was the sixth public hearing on this matter and it still isn't finalized. The matter is tentatively scheduled to be reviewed by the Design Review Commission on October 23, 2007, prior to returning to the Planning Commission for final action. Stay tuned.

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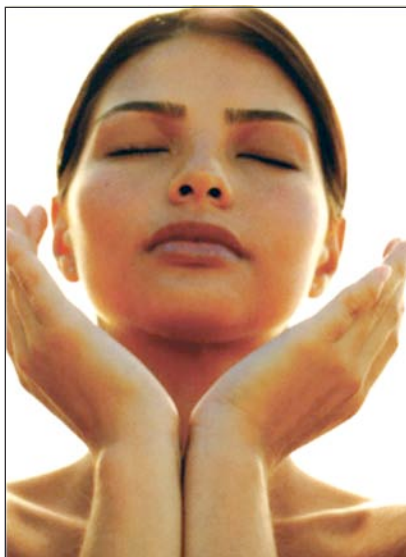


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