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Editorial: Sycamore Village is right for Orangevale

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If the Sacramento region is to grow up instead of out, it needs to encourage a mix of housing in older developed areas, including places such as Orangevale.

There, near the corner of Greenback Lane and Illinois Avenue, a group is seeking county approval to build a 35-unit project called Sycamore Village. It is facing more opposition – and less support from county supervisors – than it needs or deserves.

Sycamore Village known as a "co-housing" development. Co-housing started in Denmark more than 30 years ago. Since then, scores of such projects have spouted across the United States.

Unlike traditional subdivisions, in which an entire tract is divided into private homes and yards, co-housing features a mix of town homes clustered around a common green.

Neighbors tend to interact and look out for each other's kids. The proposed Sycamore Village would also include a neighborhood center open to both co-housing residents and nearby neighbors.

Co-housing projects have proved popular in Sacramento's Southside Park neighborhood, Pleasant Hill and elsewhere in California. But in Orangevale, this project is facing "not-in-my-backyard" resistance. A group of local residents say the density of the project – with 35 units on 3.5 acres – doesn't fit with their neighborhood.

To date, the Stoppers have been successful in delaying Sycamore Village. The Orangevale Community Planning and Advisory Council rejected a rezoning for the project last year, and county staff came up with a commercial corridor plan that excluded it. Then, in February, the county planning commission voted to delay a hearing on the project until June. Delay, delay, delay.

Supervisor Roberta MacGlashan is the linchpin here. If she allows the Stoppers to stop Sycamore Village, it will be another setback for the region's efforts to contain sprawl by encouraging new housing in established areas. She and other supervisors need to send a clear message that co-housing would be an asset for Orangevale, and for the entire region.
