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Cohousing lifestyle offers an alternative

By Marty Maskall -

Published 12:00 am PDT Thursday, May 29, 2008

We are responding to Ron Potts' commentary on May 22, "Cohousing project should be stopped." We are acutely aware of the dreadful real estate market. This market affects Sycamore Village, just as it affects all developers.

As we all know, the real estate market goes through cycles. We are watching the market carefully for signs of turnaround.

In the meantime, we are working to get our project approved so that we will be ready at the appropriate time. We have no intention of starting construction until the market begins to recover.

Cohousing homes typically command a higher price because of the generous shared amenities and the environmentally sustainable features.

One of my friends tried to buy a cohousing home in Davis' Muir Commons. Even though he offered more than the asking price, he lost out to two higher offers. In Nevada City Cohousing, a two-bedroom home of 1,190 square feet sold for \$449,500 in November 2007. This price was \$100,000 more than the original price of \$346,200, for a gain of 35 percent in 19 months. During the same period, other Nevada County home prices fell 9 percent.

With concerns about rising energy prices, cohousing will become increasingly attractive in the marketplace, partly because the convenient lifestyle requires less driving and also because the homes are more energy-efficient.

Regarding neighborhood concerns, our research indicates that Sycamore Village would reduce traffic, increase safety and improve property values. In addition, our common house is available as a neighborhood center for meetings and social gatherings. We invite readers to visit www.OrangevaleCohousing.org. On the "Why Cohousing" page, the "Benefits to Neighbors" are detailed.

As to the concern for native oak trees, Sycamore Village will save far more trees than a conventional cul-de-sac development could. We have compared our 35-home footprint to a

conventional 14-home footprint. Even with 21 fewer homes, the conventional development would have 65 percent more impervious surface. This analysis is detailed on our Web site.

We are proceeding with the approval process because we believe that Sycamore Village will strengthen Orangevale by offering a new housing type, more riders for transit and more customers for local businesses. If the Sacramento region is to avoid unchecked sprawl, we need to encourage development of our commercial corridors, such as Greenback Lane.

David Mogavero, a well-respected architect and developer, commented, "Your neighbors don't know how lucky they are going to be."

Virtually every infill project has encountered strong initial resistance from the neighbors. However, after cohousing projects are completed, the objections vanish.

We look forward to joining and contributing to the rich community life of Orangevale.

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