

Homes plan worries locals

“This project is too harsh. It looks like a wedding cake. It’s not about putting parks way up where you have to be a mountain goat to get to it.”

KEN RYAN
FORMER
YORBA LINDA
COUNCILMAN
AND PARKS
COMMISSIONER

“We already have a lot of overcrowding in our schools. Even if (the developers) have the money, they have to build the schools and build the facilities.”

PATRICE WERSCHMIDT
YORBA LINDA

“The thing that worries me the most is that there’s already a situation with existing ingress and egress and all this is going to add to it.”

LES MASON
YORBA LINDA,
FORMER
SERGEANT WITH
BREA POLICE IN
YORBA LINDA

Those who fled 2008 fire say adding residents would make future evacuations more difficult.

BY DANIEL LANGHORNE
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

When the Freeway Complex fire shot down Blue Mud Canyon in 2008, it bathed the hillside behind Via Del Agua and Stonehaven Drive in flames.

The night the fire broke out, Marlene Nelson drove up into the cul-de-sac to find her husband hosing down their home, and she watched as the roof on her next-door neighbor’s garage exploded. The Nelsons’ house was spared, but the houses on either side were not.

Homes have since been rebuilt, and the nearby hillside has recovered its green coat. These hills are being eyed for the development of homes.

Nelson and Sharon Reh-meyer are among the most vocal of the neighbors trying to squash two developments that would add 452 single-family homes on 550 acres bordering Chino Hills State Park, mostly because, they said, of what would occur if more cars tried to evacuate the area during a future fire.

“I don’t think anyone who has knowledge of the 2008 fire would ever move into here,” Reh-meyer said.

But the developer said there would be less chance of a fire there with the homes in

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Marlene Nelson of Yorba Linda inspects a trail near Blue Mud Canyon in Yorba Linda, which is part of a planned home development. Nelson opposes the new homes, in part because of the potential fire hazard.



Bob Kane of Yorba Linda holds a map of the plan for several hundred homes in unincorporated county land just outside city limits. Kane, who has lived in Yorba Linda for 14 years, witnessed the destruction of many homes near his Via Del Corral neighborhood and is opposing the project due to its location where fires burned during the 2008 Freeway Complex fire.



Yorba Linda residents walk along a trail near the site of the planned home development.

New library location narrowed to two spots

BY DANIEL LANGHORNE
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

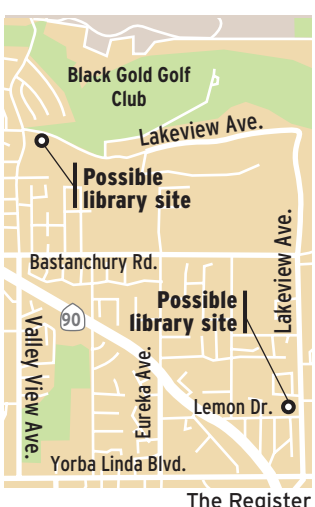
The city is closing in on a new location for its public library, which has outgrown its current home at Imperial Highway and Lemon Drive, as the City Council is expected to pick one of two spots next month.

“It was getting really tight in there,” said Melinda Steep, the library director.

Expanding the current library location would lead to too little parking space.

The two finalists:

- A seven-acre parcel on Lakeview Avenue, just east of Lakeview Elementary School, that is called the Tank Farm.
- A four-acre former



Construction of the new library is expected to cost \$29 million. The old library site will be sold to help pay for the new one.

Sheriff’s Department urges vigilance against burglaries

BY DANIEL LANGHORNE
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The Orange County Sheriff’s Department is asking Yorba Linda residents to remain vigilant in the wake of deputies arresting a crew of four on suspicion of burglary.

Lt. Bob Wren, chief of police services for Yorba Linda, said the arrests were the first sign of success in combating a string of home burglaries in the city that had been a problem long before the sheriff’s deputies took over community policing Jan. 5.

“I want the word to get out that this is not the place you want to go, because there are deputies all over the place,” Wren said.

Deputies were called to the 5600 block of Chalon Road around 8 p.m. Jan. 29 by a resident who said a woman came to the door and asked for someone who did not live there. Deputies found Lisette Ayala, who matched the resident’s description, in a car with Andrew Rashad Gatlin, Terrence Davion Collins and Art Anthony Wibberding.

Officers found property, guns, cash and burglary tools, including a crowbar and bolt cutters, in the car, police said.

Officials said they believe the individuals were involved in a crime ring specifically targeting and operating in Yorba Linda.

“I want the word to get out that this is not the place you want to go, because there are deputies all over.”

LT. BOB WREN
CHIEF
OF POLICE
SERVICES
FOR YORBA
LINDA

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place, and the Orange County Fire Authority would have to sign off on the emergency access before any construction starts.

The two projects are Cielo Vista, with 112 homes, and Esperanza Hills, with 340 homes, on unincorporated county land just outside Yorba Linda's city limits.

The projects are in their environmental-impact-study phases and still must be approved by the county; it could be years before any ground-breaking.

A plan to build such a large gated community like Esperanza Hills under the county's oversight instead of Yorba Linda's has been contentious in town. The city's general plan recommends the annexation of future development on county land that's within Yorba Linda's sphere of influence, which includes the hills.

Because Cielo Vista and Esperanza Hills would be built on unincorporated land, the city has limited authority; the developer

would have to get city permits, though, to tie into city streets.

Debbie Kroner, a spokeswoman for OC Public Works, said the county and city are communicating about the developments.

"The county will send project plan submittals to the city as they become available," she said in an email. "The county will also include the city on all public-noticing activities associated with the project. The city will have the opportunity to provide comments at various stages of the process."

Esperanza Hills developer Doug Wy-
more said he and his
team are constantly
receiving suggesti-
ons from Fire Au-
thority officials on
how to design fire
breaks and emergen-
cy-access routes and
adding vegetation
that is less prone to
burning. He pointed
to fire breaks of
cleared land that
would be maintained
by the homeowners

association as evidence that nearby residents would have greater protection.

"I'm not telling you that this makes this fire proof, because nothing will," he said. "It will be something that's not just a bunch of brush."

Wymore plans to spend millions of dollars working with the Yorba Linda Water District to pipe in water from its pumping

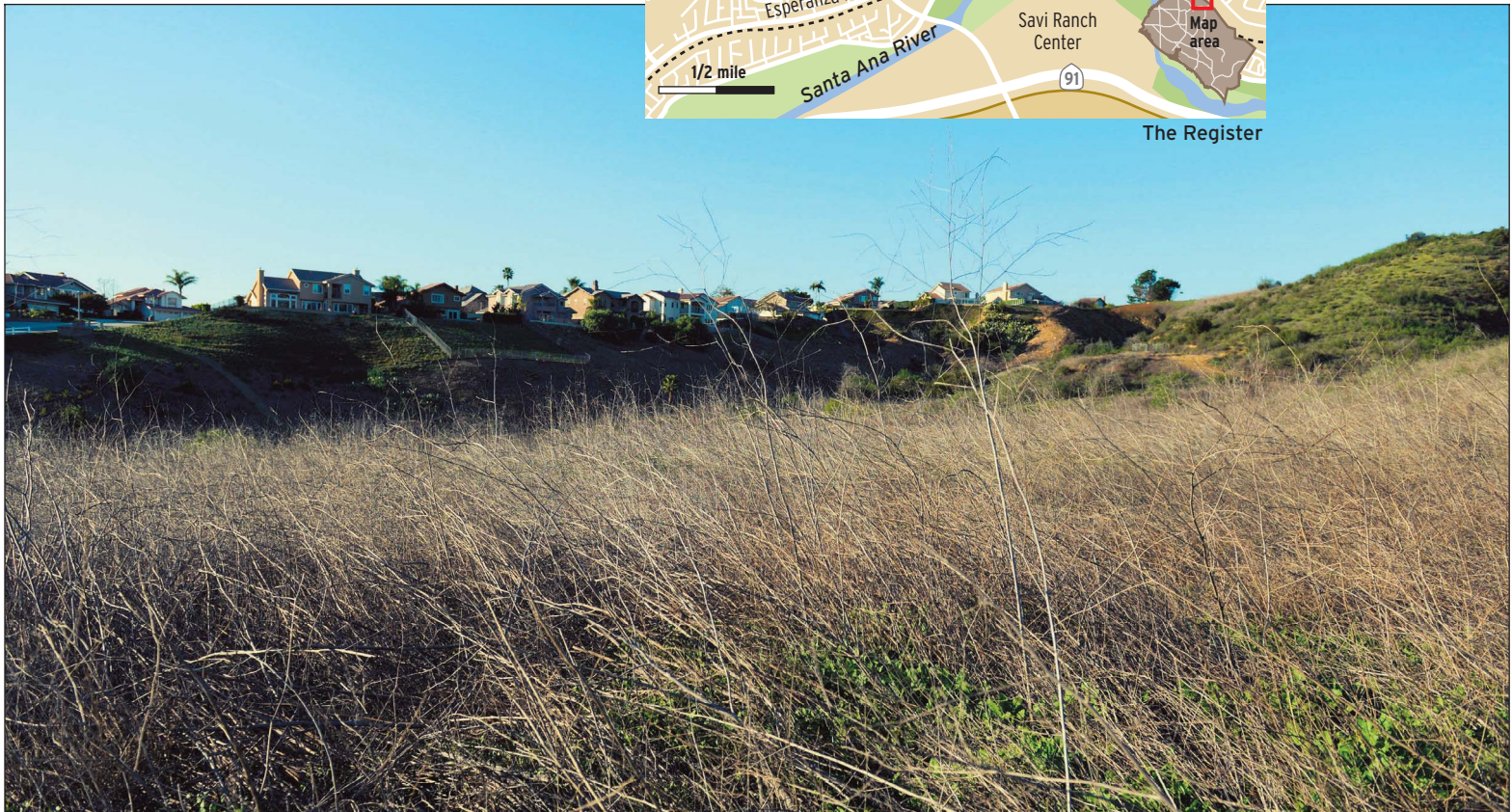
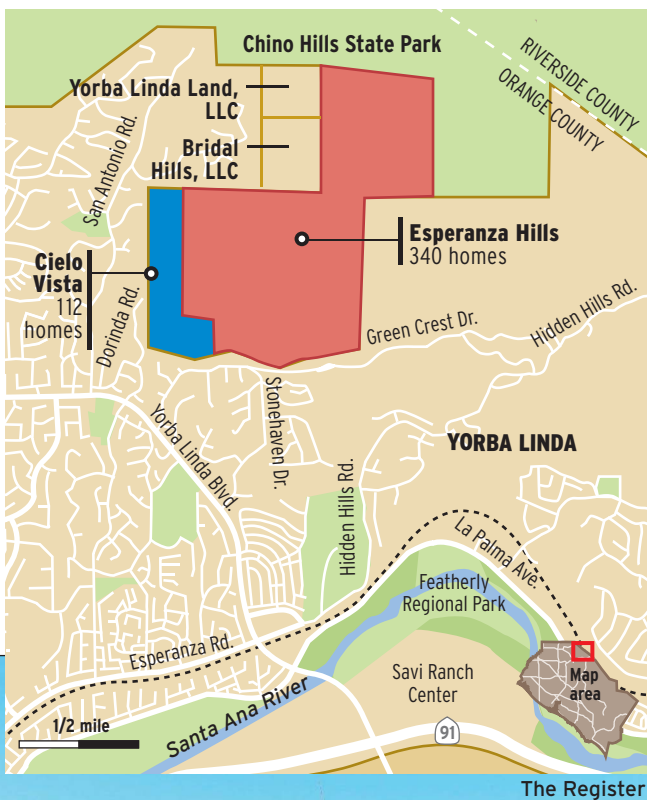
station in Hidden Hills.

Last week, more than 100 residents went to the Travis Ranch Activity Center to hear about the Esperanza Hills project. Their comments were critical.

Sage Community Group, developing the Cielo Vista project, did not return phone calls.

Last week Steve Harris, Yorba Linda's director of community development, announced at a meeting held by the county that the city would be recognized as a "responsible agency" under the California Environmental Control Act, so it has some discretionary power to approve or deny these projects.

The city still does not have the authority to vote up or down on the project, Harris said. That power is still with the county's Planning Commission and the county's Board of Supervisors.



KEVIN LARA, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Brush and weeds fill most of the Blue Mud Canyon area, where two home developments are being planned. The area of unincorporated county land just outside Yorba Linda city limits was scorched during the 2008 Freeway Complex fire.

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