

EDITORIAL

THE OPINION OF THE WEEKLY

A housing initiative well handled

“We will likely be doing a lot more building in this town than we have over the last five years.”

Those were Mayor Jennifer Hosterman’s closing comments Tuesday night after the Pleasanton City Council approved a multi-million-dollar housing project in Hacienda Business Park to be built by BRE, a national affordable housing developer. Coupled with the council’s earlier vote this year to rezone 73 acres in different parts of the city for moderate to affordable housing, Pleasanton’s more than two decades of managed slow growth policies have ended.

BRE’s project will add 18 new apartment houses in Hacienda, with some 500 studio, one, two and three bedroom units once developed. Using the same 30 units per acre ratio as BRE’s, the 73 acres should accommodate about 3,100 units. Pleasanton’s population, which has limped along at just under 70,000 during the no-growth years, should jump to well over 80,000 over the next few years, but even then, there will be more to come.

With Tuesday’s decision, along with the rezoning earlier, the council has now satisfied requirements imposed by the Alameda County Superior Court at the behest of the Oakland-based Urban Habitat affordable housing organization that Pleasanton meet its current state housing obligation to provide more workforce/affordable homes. In 2014, though, another set of housing requirements will be issued by the state and the Association of Bay Area Governments. Pleasanton’s obligations, because of our large business parks and workforce, will no doubt be asked to build more. Those who work here should be able to live here, not have to commute over the hill where emissions are damaging the environment, Gov. Brown told the city when he was still Attorney General.

Tuesday night, Hosterman and others on the City Council heaped deserved praise on the many community participants on various commissions, committees and task forces that quickly came together to respond to the Urban Habitat and Superior Court requirements. They met in groups and offered their comments at various public hearings. As BRE’s proposals began unfolding, they helped to shape the project, which were also reviewed by the Housing, Parks and Recreation and Planning commissions, and several times at workshops and public hearings involving the City Council. Because of this work, the people of Pleasanton had a voice in what BRE will now build, which is much more to everyone’s liking than if we’d allowed Urban Habitat and the court make those decisions, which they were quite willing to do.

Councilman Matt Sullivan said he has never seen a community process work so well. He and others on the council said they hope that this process has set a precedent and a pattern for “more building in this town” as Hosterman says will happen. We do, too. ■