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Woodlake reaches new 'Heights' in housing

By Paul Myers

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The demand for homes in Woodlake has begun to rise as nearly 15 acres of land is primed and ready for development on the north side of town. Through the fruitful partnership between Self Help Enterprises and the City of Woodlake, 70 homes will be built on the southeast corner of Valencia and Wutchumna, called the Valencia Heights project.

A crop of new homes spells only good news for Woodlake as it implicates a demand to live in town. According to City Administrator Ramon Lara there are 80 applicants thus far on the waiting list. While not all will qualify there are plenty clamoring for a home.

At Woodlake's June 8 city council meeting, the Council unanimously voted to uphold the decision by the planning commission to rezone the property single family residential. The Council agreed to reclassify the approximately 15 acres from an agriculturally reserved designation to a medium density single family residential. Construction of homes will not begin until next summer and only eight to twelve homes will be built at a time.

According to city planner Greg Collins and Administrator Lara the project is especially attractive because of the mortgage before moving in.

"We have gotten a lot of response for this project because of the first time home buyers program that will provide a good down payment on the house," said Lara.

The first time home buyers program is collected from different grants but mostly Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and CalHome grants.

As well, home buyers have the opportunity to help construct their home. The hours the homeowners work during construction is attributed to the amount they will pay on the overall mortgage of the home.

Any concerns over the expansion of utilities from the city's water supply were squelched by the planning commission and city staff. As well, because homes are meant to be built eight to twelve at a time until the subdivision is complete there is plenty of time to evaluate the impact of water use if any.

With any new growth in the city there is a projected level of progress that will likely result in additional revenue.

"The demand for housing in the city definitely shows a level of progress from the city's stand point," Lara said. "We have seen a demand for single family homes from people looking to move here or relocate back to the area, and that helps us commercially."

Businesses certainly stand to benefit from an influx of new residents who will shop local, but the City will be the recipients of additional revenue through property taxes and sales tax.

"More people will buy more goods and the added revenue the city will receive opens up a lot of avenues that we can continue to explore. We are hoping to expand more of our parks and recreation services so that's one thing it can help," Lara said.