

## **Yolo supervisors use Dunnigan development to set boundaries**

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A map of the Dunnigan Specific Plan, which would expand services to the small town. (Courtesy)The Board of Supervisors spent a good part of its morning Tuesday exploring a proposal for a huge development project in the small community of Dunnigan.

That's where the applicants -- led by Folsom-based developer Elliott Homes -- want to build more than 9,000 homes over the next few decades, swelling the town's population from 1,400 to more than 25,000.

Many of Dunnigan's residents say they support the project in the hopes that it would bring some amenities to their unincorporated town, which currently lacks a school, medical clinic or supermarket.

Although no action was taken on Tuesday, the 2 1/2-hour discussion gave board members a chance to hear an update on the proposal -- and to make clear their own philosophies when it comes to future growth in Yolo County.

"I will not be voting for a project that waters down the standards and conditions and requirements" set forth in the county's General Plan, said Supervisor Mike McGowan.

That includes high standards when it comes to agricultural mitigation, accessibility for walking and biking, housing density and, above all, a jobs-to-housing balance.

Putting homes close to commercial centers will prevent "the nightmare of having a bunch of houses that are not near jobs," agreed Supervisor Jim Provenza. The alternative, he added, is "contrary to our General Plan, contrary to county policy and state and federal policies."

Yet remarks by Elliott Homes representative Greg Forest had some supervisors worried that the developer was already trying to water down those standards.

Making the density requirement too high is a bad idea, he said, because "folks may not want to live in Dunnigan if they're required to live in a small, compact house."

Similarly, the developer is asking for a break on the county's agricultural mitigation requirement "because again it is a very costly aspect. ... In round numbers, it's about \$10,000 per acre to mitigate."

Another issue, Forest said, is "vehicle miles traveled" -- a measure of how "green" a community is by estimating the average miles driven per weekday per household.

"The fact of the matter is in this region people do commute," Forest said. Of all of Yolo County's communities, the best average was in Woodland, he said, where residents travel about 48 miles per day per household. (County staff estimated that Woodland and Davis were both at about 44 miles per household.)

"We think that there is going to be a demand for housing in this area," he concluded. If they can't be built in Dunnigan, the homes likely will be put in Colusa County or elsewhere nearby, he said.

Supervisor Duane Chamberlain seemed to agree with Forest about the mitigation standards, echoing previous concerns over the high cost of mitigation.

But Provenza wondered why the county should slide on its jobs-to-housing standards "for a community that is quite frankly out in the middle of nowhere."

Supervisor Matt Rexroad said that when it comes to building more housing units, "We could have put rooftops anywhere. ... We chose Dunnigan because we were trying to do something better."

"What I'm very reluctant to do is just say, we're going to unilaterally lower the bar."

McGowan said he found it "disheartening" to hear a developer ask for flexibility on county standards so early in the process.

"If you want to do a project in Dunnigan, you've got to show me a world-class project," he said.

Despite those sticking points, board members were still willing to consider the Dunnigan project, with Supervisor Don Saylor saying, "I think it's worth continuing the discussion about this."

The Dunnigan application was sent back to staff for further modification, and will return to the board at a later date.