



Developer wants to build homes in northern Fontana

Fontana officials say this could be a sign of an improving economy

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Fontana officials are pleased that a developer is interested in building houses in a section of the city which had been considered highly attractive but has been sitting idle due to the current economic crisis.

Forestar Land Partners, a venture between the owners of Foremost Communities and a controlled affiliate of Starwood Capital Group Global, LP, announced last week it has acquired a 65-acre site in northern Fontana for residential development.

The infill development site is located just south of Interstate 210, about three miles east of Interstate 15. The site is bordered by Juniper Avenue on the west, Sierra Avenue on the east, Walnut Avenue on the north, and Baseline Avenue on the south.

The property is within the Fontana Promenade Specific Plan, which was approved in 2008. The property acquired by Forestar is currently approved for up to 721 townhomes and condos.

City leaders had been hoping that the Promenade area, a mix of residential and commercial property, would create a boom for Fontana. But one residential developer withdrew plans for the area, and so nothing had transpired until Forestar entered the picture.

City Manager Ken Hunt said Forestar's announcement is one of the positive signs that is offering financial hope for the city.

"Moving forward on a project like this would be an indication that we're getting the economic challenges behind us," he said, although he added that much work remains to be done.

Foremost President Steve Cameron said he likes the property's central location "in a great market area."

"The site has freeway access, proximity to jobs, nearby retail and elementary, middle and high schools all within a quarter of a mile. We expect this to become one of the most desirable addresses in Fontana and the surrounding area."

Forestar plans to work with the City of Fontana to reduce the density and provide a community of predominantly lower-density, single-family detached homes instead.

"Homebuyers typically prefer single-family detached homes and we believe we can build what they're looking for in an upper-scale community at a reasonable price," Cameron said. "In every Forestar development, we strive for a balanced community — one that is not only based on a strong foundation of design and planning principles, but one that is also well suited for the current and future demand of the home-buying market."

The timeline for development will depend on the market and city approval process, he said. Because it is an infill site surrounded by existing neighborhoods, the infrastructure and utilities are already in place, which would allow the new community to come online as soon as the market picks up, Cameron said.

Forestar owns or manages more than 2,000 residential lots in Southern California.