

are able to participate in an open settlement conference to determine if that's a proper path going forward for our city."

The City Council was given a choice: reconsider the project as modified on Sept. 23, or it proceeds into costly and time-consuming litigation.

The council cannot place new conditions on Daybreak.

THE "MISSING MIDDLE"

A coordinated PR push this past spring had the community repeatedly hit with the term "missing middle." News stories and editorials were advocating for an increase in missing-middle housing—including developments like Daybreak.

The term generally refers to a type of housing lacking in the local market—residences like townhomes and duplexes that are affordable for the working poor, such as households with incomes between \$20,000 to \$60,000 a year.

In 2016, the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency released a study showing that "we lack certain housing types, known as 'Missing Middle' housing." TMRPA also said the location of developments was critical. Outside of the McCarran loop presents challenges for developers.

According to the report, "It is possible these areas may not develop to their full potential due to ... infrastructure deficiencies, as development may be delayed until these services are addressed."

TMRPA presented what it called the "McCarran Scenario," whereby development could be concentrated within the McCarran ring. More "high-density, single-family, low-density, multi-family" housing would be created within this scenario.

"The Truckee Meadows region needs a wider variety of housing types to meet anticipated demographic shifts and affordable housing needs," the report concluded. "Like most metropolitan areas, the region does not have enough housing affordable to moderate and lower-income households."

Daybreak appeared mostly consistent with TMRPA's "missing-middle" recommendations.

The developer in early September said that revisiting Daybreak's approval allowed for even more conversation about the project's impacts and what may be done about them.

"It's an opportunity to reduce the important concerns about flood water and mercury mitigation," said Andy Derling of Wood Rodgers, the project's engineering and planning consultant. "It's an opportunity

for us to do a better job of clarifying the technical elements and correct the public misconceptions."

He proceeded to note that, in lieu of Daybreak, the Butler Ranch North Development could proceed now. That would allow for more than 1,500 homes in a floodplain with less flood mitigation than Daybreak's.

Daybreak, he said, "significantly lessens development that modifies the floodplain more than the approved Butler Ranch North [development]."

Daybreak's attorney, Michael Burke, previously described the situation like this:

"Portions of the Daybreak development are already master planned, zoned, and entitled for residential development. The Butler North (planned unit development) would allow Daybreak to construct and develop more than 900 homes in the floodplain. Because the PUD has already been approved (with even less flood mitigation), Daybreak could begin construction on these homes at any time."

Don Tatro of The Builders Association of Northern Nevada supported the project's approval.

"All the things we've been asking for, I think this project represents," he said. "With the engineering advances, with the concessions made by the developer, I think this is a great project."

He also had words for those opposing such projects.

"I understand everyone wants to be the last one on the block," he explained. "Everyone wants to be the last home built—but the reality is, that doesn't work."

He called Daybreak a tremendous asset to the area, a region in desperate need of housing, mainly housing people can afford.

Residents are furious, however, with the prospect of Daybreak getting built. Councilmember Oscar Delgado cited already grievous traffic problems in south Reno. Emergency services were also questioned. The Reno Firefighters Association said the project would require new resources.

Other councilmembers expressed concern.

"To make sure our new residents have police, fire, flood protection, education, all the things that they need is our job," Duerr said. "We've been taken to court, in part saying we've exacted things. Making sure developments are done well is part of our job."

The council narrowly approved the project's reconsideration for Sept. 23. This time council members will vote on it with new conditions—conditions that were negotiated without their knowledge. □

"There is precedent for settlements being baked behind closed doors."

Jenny Brekhuis
Reno City Council



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