

PASADENA STAR-NEWS

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THE 1 CARTER DEVELOPMENT

Maranatha project OK'd by City Council

- **THE LAWSUIT:** Maranatha High School agrees to drop its federal lawsuit against the city
- **NOW WHAT?:** Opposition mulls options; Maranatha says it will pay costs of court challenge



Staff graphic by MANUEL AMAYA

End of one lawsuit may spur others

By Gene Maddaus
STAFF WRITER

SIERRA MADRE — Ending a five-year development battle, the City Council has approved a plan to build 28 homes on 63 acres of unspoiled hillside, a decision that ends one lawsuit and could prompt another.

The council voted 4-1 on Monday night, with Mayor George Maurer opposed, to grant Maranatha High School the right to develop homes on the land where it had once hoped to build a new school.

Maranatha agreed to drop its federal lawsuit against the city, which it filed when the city rejected a plan to relocate the private school to the hilltop estate. The land is known by its address: 1 Carter. Maranatha has since moved to the former Ambassador College campus in West Pasadena.

Residents who banded together to oppose the 1 Carter development said they were disappointed and mulling their options. Maranatha has agreed to pay the city's legal costs should the residents challenge the approval in court, said City Manager John Gillison.

Grading and infrastructure improvements are not expected to begin for at least a year. After that, each home builder will have to go before the Plan-

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Staff photo by WALT MANCINI

SIERRA MADRE'S City Council voted Monday to approve the 1 Carter development, which has divided residents and created numerous lawsuits.

CARTER

Council approves 28 new homes

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ning Commission to get individual approval before construction can begin.

"If this housing development proceeds, it'll be very closely monitored by the whole community," said Margie Simpson, who led the anti-1 Carter group Residents for the Preservation of Sierra Madre. "I think it will be difficult to build. I think it's going to be extremely costly — more than they realize."

Residents who were opposed to the project expressed concerns about mansions dotting the city's pristine ridgelines. They had hoped to interest environmental conservancy groups in buying the property and turning it into a park, but talks never got past the preliminary stages.

The property was long ago zoned for single-family homes. The City Council, though it would have preferred that the land be preserved, felt it had to allow some development or risk losing a federal lawsuit.

"They're capitulating in my mind because they don't want to be sued," said Verna Chilton, a resident who has worked with RPSM.

City officials negotiated with Maranatha and the Glendale



Staff photo by WALT MANCINI

ABOUT HALF of the 63-acre estate at Carter and Baldwin avenues will be developed with 29 homes.

developer Dorn-Platz, and believe they extracted significant concessions. Earlier versions of the project called for 40, 32, and 30 single-family lots.

Including the historic Willis Residence, which will be preserved, the final plan calls for 29 homes.

"The question became, how can we best limit this project without eventually turning over to a court a decision on how many houses go on the property," said Councilman John Buchanan.

Buchanan said the final terms will preserve more open space than required under the law, protect view corridors, and will do so "without us spending a ton of money to have a court tell us to do it."

About 34 of the 63 acres at 1 Carter will be left undeveloped.

The council spent about six hours Monday going over the

agreement, and stressed that homes on the seven ridgeline parcels must comply with the city's hillside standards.

"They wanted to make it clear that people buying these lots should not expect to have large mansions up there on the hills," Gillison said. "They will have to blend in with the hillside."

Maurer, who has long been involved with the volunteer fire department, said he feared the new homes would be susceptible to mudslides and brush fires.

"I think we're creating a dangerous condition," he said. "They say there won't be mudslides. Well, I know better ... They're building right into a high-fire zone."

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