

THE SACRAMENTO BEE

10,000 new homes are coming to ‘desirable’ part of the Sacramento region

By Tony Bizjak
June 07, 2017

The city of Folsom has spent years laying the groundwork for a major city expansion on the rolling hills south of Highway 50. That leapfrog moment has arrived.

Crews have begun laying utility pipe, carving out new road alignments and plotting home sites south of the freeway for what officials say will be a city-sized area of 25,000 residents, ultimately pushing Folsom’s population past 100,000.

Scott Road, one of the main cross-freeway connectors, closed this week for the rest of the year to allow crews to extend water and sewer lines to the new area, and to allow for major road reconstruction.

ROAD CLOSURES

Folsom has closed Scott Road between Highway 50 and White Rock Road as work begins on housing subdivisions.

The first of 10,000 homes are expected to go up this time next year. At full build-out, expected to take 25 years, Folsom’s new neighborhoods will fill 3,500 acres between the freeway, White Rock Road, the El Dorado County line, and Prairie City Road.

The new development, 6 square miles broken up into two main areas called Folsom Ranch and Russell Ranch, represents the biggest expansion of the foothills city since the 1980s, when Folsom annexed a similar-sized area north of the freeway. Those areas, now known as Iron Point, Broadstone and Empire Ranch, are still being developed.

That earlier growth era turned what had been a quiet former Gold Rush and prison town into a contemporary suburb known not only for its history, but also for its retail outlets, trails and lake.

Mayor Andy Morin said the south of 50 development will be an extension of Folsom’s new style, and will include a town center that city officials describe as Folsom’s third “downtown,” along with Historic Folsom and the Palladio outdoor shopping center across the freeway.

The city hopes to attract 8,000 jobs to the site to offer new residents a chance to work near home. The new area will include hiking and biking areas, with 30 percent of the land remaining as natural open space. The area, annexed in 2011, will include a high school, middle school and elementary schools.

“We’re proud of the way we’ve grown,” Morin said. “We like to think we have the formula mix pretty well.”

The project has been controversial, however, and brings with it uncertainties for Folsom.

The development will lead to more traffic congestion throughout the area, notably on Highway 50 and on White Rock and Grant Line roads, although those roads are planned for widening. The city and state plan two new interchanges on Highway 50. The first is expected to be built at Empire Ranch Road in about five years.

Folsom’s expansion will also likely increase pressure for more building south of the highway on the rolling hills and oak woodlands of unincorporated Sacramento County, currently off limits to growth under the county’s general plan.

The just-ended drought that nearly drained Folsom Lake also has prompted concern about how much the demand from new residents and businesses will tax the city’s limited water supply in drought years. City water chief Marcus Yasutake said the city has plenty of water for normal years, and can rely on agreements with other water agencies to obtain supplies in dry years. But he did not rule out imposing restrictions on water use similar to those Folsom and other California communities lived under during the past few years.

City officials say they are developing the grasslands south of the freeway because if Folsom doesn’t do it, someone else will.

“I feel we are better off being a participant than a bystander,” Morin said. “This is a way control our destiny. If we don’t continue to grow appropriately, that growth will come our way.”

The first homes will be built in 2018 west of Placerville Road by CalAtlantic Homes and Taylor Morrison. Homes are expected to arrive the following year in Russell Ranch, between Placerville Road and the El Dorado County line. They will be built by The New Home Co.

CalAtlantic’s Sacramento-area president Jon Nicholson said his company will build one and two-story homes ranging in size from 2,300 to 3,700 square feet. They will have a California adobe or farmhouse look, and will be aimed at a market of move-up Folsom buyers, young families, and Bay Area emigres looking for more house and space for their money. He said it’s too early to know what the price range will be.

Nicholson and Kevin Carson of The New Home Co. said they believe there is a pent-up buyer’s market in Folsom, in large part because the city has a reputation as a family-oriented community. Greg Paquin, a Sacramento-region real estate analyst, said the timing is good for Folsom. New home sales are picking up in the region, and the inventory of homes is tight.

“Folsom is certainly one of those areas in Sacramento that is considered more desirable,” Paquin said, citing schools, shopping, and recreational amenities at the nearby lake, foothills and mountains.”

<http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article154936164.html>

