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Developer looks at options after loss

NJD suggests city buy hillside land

By Alison Hewitt Staff Writer
San Gabriel Valley Tribune

GLENDORA - A day after a dramatic loss at the polls, the development company behind Measure A is considering whether to build houses on the hillside land it owns in Glendora or sell the property, possibly to the city.

"We really believed \ was a good plan for Glendora, but obviously the voters didn't agree with us," said Kim Scott, a partner with developer NJD, referring to the 91 percent vote against the ballot initiative recorded Tuesday in the City Clerk's unofficial election results.

In the measure, NJD would have given up the right to build homes on the hillside in order to build 338 homes on the Glendora Country Club instead. The developer also would have relocated the golf course to the hillside property.

As NJD considers its next move, a major question is how many homes the city would allow NJD to build in the foothills, Scott said.

NJD has long asserted a lawsuit against the city permits it to build 53 homes. Mayor Doug Tessitor said Wednesday Glendora's zoning laws limit the number to 22.

The City Council could approve more, but 53 would likely be too many, Tessitor said. City Manager Eric Ziegler was more circumspect, saying 53 homes could be possible but that NJD has yet to secure the necessary entitlements.

NJD expects the city to let the developer build enough homes to be profitable, Scott said, but he also said he interpreted Tuesday's results as a vote against development on the hills as well as at the country club.

"But it is our property," Scott said. "If they don't want us to do that, they should consider buying it."

The land would need to be re-appraised to set a price, but NJD's 400 acres - split between Glendora and San Dimas - appraised for $20 million in mid-2005, said Ziegler. Tessitor called purchasing it an attractive option if NJD agrees to a reasonable price and if Glendora can come up with the resources.

"It would be nice to be free of litigation, and frankly, any relationship with NJD in Glendora," Tessitor said of the company that has sued the city six times.

"That would be a possibility if the residents of Glendora wanted to tax themselves or float a bond in order to purchase the property," he said.

Scott said he hopes to sit down with Tessitor for a "one-on-one" meeting to hash out the possibilities for NJD's land in the hopes of ending the impasse.

But Tessitor said he would refuse any one-on-one meetings with Scott.

"If Kim Scott wants to make a proposal to the city, I would sit down with him, the city attorney, the city manager and the representative that Kim Scott has," Tessitor said. "I do not trust the man."

Voters expressed a similarly forceful opinion on Tuesday at the polls, voting en masse against Measure A. Of the 12,431 votes cast, 11,260 opposed it.

"Ninety-one \ to nine. Wow. That's unusual ... It's shocking that it was that overwhelming of a defeat," said Douglas Johnson, a fellow at the Rose Institute of State and Local Government.

"It certainly says the campaign in support of the measure completely missed where the voters were at, and they failed to connect with anyone," Johnson said. "And the opponents of the measure did a great job of knowing what the voters wanted."

The Rev. Thomas Stricklin of the First Baptist Church of Glendora attributed the lopsided vote to, among other things, Glendora's close-knit community and support of their City Council members, all of whom opposed the measure.

"The citizens kind of saw this as the developer trying to run around a normal approval process," he said. "It was a guy who couldn't get his project through, so he tried an end run. And people saw that as unethical."

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