

ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

O.C. developer plans new, and rare, housing project in East Long Beach

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A developer plans to build 40 homes on a former church property in East Long Beach, a part of the city that hasn't seen much new housing over the past five decades.

Preface, based in Newport Beach, is seeking city government's approval for the project. Matt Hamilton, a project manager for the firm, anticipates construction may begin in early 2017 and that homes will be offered at prices in the \$900,000s. Prices for resale homes in the East Long Beach 90808 ZIP code are listed in the \$700,000 to \$900,000 range.

"The resale market is very strong, and there haven't been any new homes built in the area for at least 50 years," he said in an email. "The underlying zoning of the property is residential, so we thought a gated community of single-family homes would be a great fit for the area. We also felt a high-end, marquee project would be a great landmark for one of the city's northern entrances."

The project site is the former home of El Dorado Park Community Church, which went by the name of Park Church before the congregation changed its name again to Generations Church. The church sold its former sanctuary site to Preface about 21/2 years ago for \$6.5 million, lead pastor Jeff Ludington said.

The church's former site at 3655 N. Norwalk Blvd. has, of late, attracted some attention from Long Beach police officers and others in city government as a result of homeless people camping out where congregants used to worship.

Preface has also let Long Beach officers conduct K-9 training sessions on the site.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Preface plans to demolish the vacant church sanctuary to build 40 two-story homes with average lot sizes of about 4,000 square feet, according to the city's initial study for the project.

The planned homes, according to Hamilton, would be built to provide 2,400 to 2,700 square feet of living space with open floor plans and downstairs bedrooms. Plans call for the homes to be built within a gated community with a central park area.

An environmental impact report will have to be completed before City Hall can allow the project to be completed.

Proposals for new single-family homes are a relatively rare happening in modern Long Beach, where much of the higher-profile residential development has recently come in the form of high-rise apartments in the downtown area.

Long Beach's City Council did, however, approve a development called Riverwalk in November. Another Newport Beach developer, Integral Communities, proposed the construction of 131 homes on the former site of the Will J. Reid Boy Scout camp near Bixby Knolls.

HOMELESS OUTREACH

In the meantime, Preface and Long Beach city officials acknowledged they are confronting problems posed by homeless people who have gathered at the former church site after the congregation's departure.

Long Beach police Cmdr. Liz Griffin, who oversees officers' work in the eastern part of the city, said callers frequently report vagrants at the former Norwalk Boulevard church site. She said the property owners have cooperated with efforts to secure the property and city Health Department officials have engaged in outreach work with the homeless population there.

In a statement, Preface listed several security measures that have been undertaken to at the property. Among them:

- Removing storage containers and sheds.
- Setting up a security fence and boarding up doors and windows at the former church property.
- Hiring security guards and meeting with Long Beach police officers and Los Angeles County sheriff's deputies at the location.

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