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The Fresno Bee



Ever-expanding Tesoro Viejo adds 1,000 lots in Madera

BY ERIK GALICIA
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Tesoro Viejo — Madera's mammoth planned community — took another step Tuesday toward greater expansion as the county's planning commission approved more than a thousand new residential lots.

The subdivision maps approved by the commission set the stage for development in four of the community's nine

planned neighborhoods: Arroyo Village, The Vistas, Oak Knoll Village and The Vineyard.

The growing community already has an onsite K-8 school, a town center, an amphitheater and ranch houses for residents to hang out in — all surrounded by the Rio Mesa's hilly landscape and bordered to the southeast by the San Joaquin River. Still in the works are an on-site school that also serves high school students, and the Rio Mesa Education Complex,

which will include athletic facilities.

Brent McCaffrey, president of McCaffrey Homes, Tesoro Viejo's developer, told the county's planning commission he expects the education complex to be completed in the next few years. An age-qualified senior development on the southern edge is also in planning.

According to McCaffrey's presentation, homes planned for construction in each neighborhood are:



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The Tesoro Viejo home development in Madera County is located near Highway 41 and Avenue 15. Drone image taken on Tuesday, July 16, 2019.

- 307 in Arroyo Village
- 259 in The Vistas
- 317 in The Vineyards
- 175 in Oak Knoll Village

Tesoro Viejo broke ground in the county's Rio Mesa area in

2017. It falls under the county's Rio Mesa Area Plan, a nearly 15,000-acre space bordered by Highway 145 to the north, Milerton Lake to the east, the San Joaquin River to the southeast

SEE TESORO VIEJO, 2A



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Businesses in Fresno's Chinatown line F Street west of downtown Fresno in this drone image made on Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023.

Who owns Fresno's Chinatown? Locals control most of the land

BY TIM SHEEHAN
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When James and Michelle Moyer of San Jose bought their tiny empty lot — less than a tenth of an acre — in the heart of Fresno's historic Chinatown district about six years ago, they were attracted by plans for a nearby passenger station for California's future high-speed train project and impressed with what they see as the potential for Chinatown and downtown Fresno.

"Chinatown has been mostly empty for quite some time, the result of urban fight to the suburbs in previous decades," James Moyer told The Fresno Bee via email. "But now people are discovering that the suburbs, malls and car culture are isolating, expensive and boring, so we're returning to the urban village. We hope to be part of that in our own little way."

Of almost 150 pieces of property in Chinatown, almost one-third — adding up to almost 8.5 acres — are undeveloped lots of nothing more than dirt, some

vacant for years, even decades. Out-of-town owners like the Moyers own a handful of the empty lots, while most are controlled by local owners in Fresno and other cities in neighboring central San Joaquin Valley counties.

Whether local or out-of-town, those owners are waiting to see how — or if — planned city investments of more than \$100 million in Chinatown infrastructure and the future high-speed rail station will bolster prospects for the sagging neighborhood.

It's unclear how many owners may ultimately develop their empty lots rather than sell to get a return on their investment; either way, there's a sense of anticipation over what specific plans by the city of Fresno and the California High-Speed Rail Authority will look like.

A HISTORIC AREA 'LEFT BEHIND FAR TOO LONG'

Parts of Chinatown date to Fresno's origins in the 1870s. What is now an 18-block area generally bounded by Fresno,

G, and Ventura streets and Highway 99, is tucked between the state freeway and the Union Pacific Railroad freight tracks. The railroad separates Chinatown on the west from downtown Fresno to the east, and post a physical barrier that historically segregated the neighborhood as Fresno's original "wrong side of the tracks."

Chinatown became home to immigrants largely unwelcome in other parts of the fledgling city, including the Chinese laborers who built what was then the Central Pacific Railroad line and, later, ethnic groups including Japanese, Mexicans, Armenians and others who came to Fresno looking for work and opportunities. It became a notorious red-light district where vices frowned upon east of the railroad tracks — such as gambling, drinking, drugs and prostitution — could be satisfied. Remnants of that sordid past are evidenced by tunnels that course beneath parts of Chinatown.

Now, as the city wields almost \$300 million in state infrastructure grants, the area

that has been largely neglected for decades is poised for a historic investment in improvements that Mayor Jerry Dyer sees as integral to the revitalization of the broader downtown core. The mayor estimated that at least \$100 million of that work will happen in Chinatown.

"We're not going to lift up downtown without Chinatown," Dyer said in late October. "Chinatown has been left behind far too long."

But the city's hope is that better streets, upgraded capacity for sewer and water lines, new park areas and other improvements will stimulate interest in developing long-vacant lots and prompt owners of aging, empty buildings to breathe new life into their properties.

Dr. Elipidio Fonte, a retired physician who used to have his medical practice in Chinatown and still owns several parcels of empty land near Tulare and E streets, is among the owners who want to develop their prop-

SEE CHINATOWN, 3A

Israel indicates it's willing to fight for months or more

BY WAFAA SHURAF, NAJIB JOBAIN AND SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, GAZA STRIP

Battles raged across Gaza on Sunday as Israel indicated it was prepared to fight for months or longer to defeat the territory's Hamas rulers, and a key mediator said willingness to discuss a cease-fire was fading.

Israel faces international outrage after its military offensive, with diplomatic support and arms from close ally the United States, has killed thousands of Palestinian civilians. About 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million people have been displaced within the besieged territory, where U.N. agencies say there is no safe place to flee.

The United States has lent vital support in recent days by vetoing a United Nations Security Council effort to end the fighting and pushing through an emergency sale of over \$100 million worth of tank ammunition to Israel.

Israel's air and ground war has killed thousands of Palestinians, mostly civilians, since the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas and other militants killed 1,200 people and captured around 240. Over 100 of them were released during a weeklong cease-fire late last month.

With very little aid allowed in, Palestinians face severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods. Some observers openly worry that Palestinians will be forced out of Gaza altogether.

"Expect public order to completely break down soon, and an even worse situation could unfold including epidemic diseases and increased pressure for mass displacement into Egypt," U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a forum in Qatar, a key intermediary.

Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesman, called allegations of mass displacement from Gaza "outrageous and false."

Qatar's prime minister,

SEE ISRAEL, 2A



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BIRTHDAYS

 **Britannica**

Biographical information from December 11 is from *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Explore more at britannica.com.

Pranab Mukherjee, president of India (b. 1935). **Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn**, Russian author (b. 1918).

ON THIS DATE

 **Britannica**

Historical events from December 11 are brought to you by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Explore more at britannica.com.

2012: Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar, who was influential in stimulating Western appreciation of Indian music, died at age 92.

1998: The Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives recommended three articles of impeachment against President Bill Clinton, to which would be added a fourth article the following day, for actions taken in connection with his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

1994: Russian troops invaded Chechnya in an effort to suppress a rebel Chechen government led by Dzhokhar Dudayev.

1981: American boxer Muhammad Ali fought his last professional bout, losing to Trevor Berbick in a decision.

1978: Nearly \$6 million in cash and jewels was stolen from the air cargo building of the German airline Lufthansa at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City; at the time, the Lufthansa heist, as it became known, was the largest-ever cash theft in the United States.

1972: Apollo 17 astronauts Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt became the last humans to walk on the Moon.

1967: The acclaimed American film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, a lesson in racial tolerance and etiquette, premiered in New York City; it starred Katharine Hepburn, Spencer Tracy (in his last movie), and Sidney Poitier.

1946: UNICEF—a United Nations program devoted to improving the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children—was established.

1941: Adolf Hitler declared that Germany was at war with the United States following the Japanese attacks on the U.S., British, and Dutch positions in the Pacific and in East Asia.

1936: Edward VIII, failing to win acceptance for his desire to marry American divorcée Wallis Warfield Simpson, became the only British sovereign to voluntarily resign the crown, his abdication formally approved this day in 1936.

1845: The Sonderbund was formed by the seven Roman Catholic conservative Swiss cantons (Luzern, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Fribourg, and Valais) to oppose anti-Catholic measures by Protestant liberal cantons.

PEOPLE

Terrence Howard sues talent agency over pay on 'Empire'

Los Angeles Times

“Empire” star **Terrence Howard** filed a lawsuit Friday against CAA, alleging that the talent agency urged him to accept a salary below the industry standard during his time on the musical drama.

The Oscar-nominated actor, who played protagonist and music mogul Lucious Lyon in the hit Fox series, sued Creative Artists Agency in Los Angeles Superior Court for breach of fiduciary



JOEL ANGEL JUAREZ/THE REPUBLIC USA TODAY NETWORK

Migrants and asylum seekers are guided into vans Dec. 4 to be transported for processing by U.S. Border Patrol agents in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument along the U.S.-Mexico border about a mile west of Lukeville, Ariz.

US border agents overwhelmed by smugglers at remote crossing

BY ANITA SNOW
Associated Press

LUKEVILLE, ARIZ.

Gerston Miranda and his wife were among thousands of migrants recently arriving at this remote area on Arizona's southern border with Mexico, squeezing into the United States through a gap in the wall and walking overnight about 14 miles with two school-aged daughters to surrender to Border Patrol agents.

“There is no security in my country,” said the 28-year-old from Ecuador, who lost work when his employer closed due to extortion by criminals. “Without security you cannot work. You cannot live.”

A shift in smuggling routes has brought an influx of migrants here from countries as diverse as Senegal, Bangladesh and China, prompting the Border Patrol to seek help from other federal agencies and drawing scrutiny to an issue critical in next year's presidential elections.

With hundreds of migrants crossing daily in the area, the U.S. government last week indefinitely shut down the nearby international crossing between Lukeville, Arizona, and Sonoyta, Mexico, to free Customs and Border Protection officers assigned to the port of entry to help with transportation and other support. The agency also has partially closed a few other border ports of entry in recent months, including a pedestrian

duty, constructive fraud and fraudulent representation.

The complaint alleges that CAA — who represented Howard as well as the producers of “Empire” and “numerous” other parties during the show's five-year run — “placed their interests and the interests of their other clients above” his while “urging him to accept talent fees that were far less than what he should have been afforded,” according to a news release published Thursday.

Howard maintains that he trusted his agents' “representations that these salaries were industry standard” until recently, when he discovered through his own research that he was “entitled to a much higher

crossing in San Diego and a bridge in Eagle Pass, Texas.

Critics of the move, including Arizona Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs, the state's two U.S. senators, the governor of Mexico's Sonora state and the leadership of the nearby Tohono O'odham Nation, said it could harm trade and tourism. Hobbs urged President Joe Biden to reassign the 243 National Guard members already in the Tucson sector to help reopen the Lukeville crossing.

The morning after it was closed, about a dozen Border Patrol agents in olive green uniforms watched over some 400 migrants who had spent the night by the towering wall of steel bollards, wrapped in shiny Mylar blankets they later discarded among saguaro cactus and Palo Verde trees.

Three or four times as many CBP field operations officers in navy blue uniforms helped the migrants into white vans for a short drive to a canopied field intake center. From there, agents took migrants for processing to the Border Patrol's Ajo station, a half-hour north, or to other locations such as Tucson.

U.S. authorities have been so short-handed in Arizona that they have used charter flights to transfer some migrants from Tucson to three Texas border cities for processing, according to Witness at the Border, an advocacy group that analyzes flight data.

salary given the success of the show.”

The Times has reached out to CAA for comment.

During a news conference Friday in Los Angeles, Howard's attorneys at the Cochran Firm said their client received 30% to 50% less than what he should have been paid per episode but said they were still determining exactly how much the actor is allegedly owed. The highest pay Howard said he received was \$350,000 per episode during the final season of the show.

Howard stopped short of calling his case “a racial issue,” but added that he “cannot imagine” a white performer with the same “accolades and ... world recognition” being misused and underpaid the way he allegedly was.

FROM PAGE 1A

TESORO VIEJO

and Highway 41 to the west. The county hopes to see the full 30,000 homes in the next 30 years.

Jamie Bax, Madera County's director of community and economic development, said Tesoro Viejo has 922 projects in different phases of construction. The community was recognized this year as the National Community of the Year by the National Association of Home Builders.

The Bee spoke to several residents who said that the broader development was starting to feel like a real community.

Lisa Wells, 57, and Laura Rios, 33, neighbors in the Hillside community, said they immediately “hit it off” when they moved in about four years ago. “We immediately became family,” Rios said.

Neighbors said book and bicycling clubs have formed. Brian and Renee Curwick, a married couple who also live in Hillside, joined a local running club before they even moved into the development.

“It absolutely has become a community in a short time,” Brian Cur-

wick said.

So far, Tesoro Viejo has homes in three neighborhoods: Hillside Village, Creekside Village and The Plaza. KB Homes and De Young Properties are also developing homes there.

According to McCaffrey's presentation to the county and conversation with the Bee:

- 804 homes are planned for Hillside Village, with about 705 homeowners already living there
- 544 homes are planned for Creekside Village, with a few dozen homeowners already living there
- About 1,560 homes are planned for The Plaza, with approximately 46 already sold. Upcoming in this neighborhood are also about 540 apartments, 230 duplexes and 250 “Wildrose” homes

In The Plaza, sales are set to begin for Tesoro Viejo's “Boulevard” product — two-story homes ranging in size from 1,200 to 1,700 square feet. Already on the market are the “Poppy” homes, which

McCaffrey said are designed to be affordable for first-time home buyers. Prices for Poppy homes start in the \$300,000s.

“Tesoro Viejo is not about high-end living,” McCaffrey said. “We have made a commitment to having products that are available for all walks of life or demographics.”

Homes in the highest price ranges start in the high \$500,000s with the Oaks collection and in the high \$600,000s with the Ivy Collection, which has homes of more than 4,000 square feet. Different price ranges will also be found in the new subdivisions.

McCaffrey said construction on Rio Mesa Boulevard — a new north-south road that will begin about 2,200 feet east of the Avenue 12 and Highway 41 intersection and traverse a few miles north to Avenue 15 — is expected to begin in the second quarter of next year.

Traffic on Highway 41 has increased from an average of 29,000 daily trips when the development first began to about 40,000 daily trips today, he said.

Erik Galicia: @journol901



MOHAMMED TALATENE USA TODAY NETWORK

Palestinians drive their cars along a narrow stretch of Salah al-Din Road to avoid the crater left by Israeli bombing Sunday as they flee Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip south toward Rafah.

FROM PAGE 1A

ISRAEL

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, told the forum that mediation efforts will continue to stop the war and have all hostages released, but “unfortunately, we are not seeing the same willingness that we had seen in the weeks before.”

Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel's Channel 12 TV that the U.S. has set no deadline for Israel to achieve its goals. “The evaluation that this can't be measured in weeks is correct, and I'm not sure it can be measured in months,” he said.

FIGHTING AND ARRESTS IN THE NORTH

Israeli forces face heavy resistance, including in northern Gaza, where neighborhoods have been flattened by air strikes and where ground troops have operated for over six weeks.

Israel's Channel 13 TV broadcast footage showing dozens of detainees stripped to their underwear, hands in the air. Several held assault rifles above their heads, and

one man walked forward and placed a gun on the ground.

Other videos have shown groups of unarmed men held in similar conditions, without clothes, bound and blindfolded. Detainees from a group who were released Saturday told The Associated Press they had been beaten and denied food and water.

Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said the arrests took place in two Hamas strongholds, Jabaliya and Shijaiyah, and that people are undressed to make sure they are not hiding explosives. Those believed to be Hamas members are taken away for investigation, while others are told to head south.

“We have arrested dozens of terrorists,” Hagari asserted.

Residents said there was still heavy fighting in the Gaza City neighborhood of Shijaiyah and the Jabaliya refugee camp, a dense urban area housing Palestinian families who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its

creation.

“They are attacking anything that moves,” said Hamza Abu Fatouh, a Shijaiyah resident. He said the dead and wounded were left in the streets as ambulances could no longer reach the area, where Israeli snipers and tanks positioned themselves among abandoned buildings.

“The resistance also fights back,” he added.

Israel ordered the evacuation of the northern third of the territory, including Gaza City, early in the war, but tens of thousands of people have remained, fearing that the south would be no safer or that they would never be allowed to return home.

Heavy fighting was also underway in and around the southern city of Khan Younis.

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