



Photos courtesy of The New Home Company and FirePoint Communities



COMMUNITY & SUSTAINABILITY

UNCOMMON VISION TAKES SHAPE IN TWO
CALIFORNIA HOA DEVELOPMENTS

BY CECILIA N. BRENNAN, ESQ.



As managers, board members and service providers, we are often faced with budget issues, rule enforcement and problem-solving rather than community-building and neighborly interactions. However, the vision and perspective of two new developments in California contain inspiring elements based partly on a previously uncommon vision for HOA developers: sustainability, clean energy and a “farm-to-table” model.

Who would have imagined that a former military base or a former tomato processing plant would be converted to innovative developments focused on community, outdoor space, drought-tolerant landscaping and low-impact transportation? Thanks to new developments in Irvine and Davis, such models have become a reality.

In Irvine, FivePoint Communities has embarked upon a unique project called “Great Park Neighborhoods,” which is designed as a mixed-use project hosting homes, shops, parks, offices and schools, all in a sustainable, connected community.

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The development features a small-town square with a modern barn aesthetic, along with a community greenhouse with outdoor dining spaces and a “bike barn” where cyclists can tune up their wheels. “The ‘Life will be different here’ mantra is the foundation of Great Park Neighborhoods’ spirit ... miles of walking trails, bike paths and bridges will join the neighborhoods, connecting residents to the Orange County Great Park, to nature and to each other. Perhaps one of the most exciting highlights is the connectivity that the residents experience,” explains Jamie Cross, lifestyle coordinator with Great Park Neighborhoods and a member of the FirstService Residential team.

The vision of the project has been unique and inspiring for both residents and management, as can be witnessed by what manager Holly Maddalena, district manager with

FirstService Residential, shares: “Great Park Neighborhoods Community Association is completely unique in our diverse programming, lifestyle and feel. The creativity from the developer is inspiring and it greatly motivates me to ‘get creative’ in my everyday tasks. As the manager of Great Park Neighborhoods, I feel so much pride in being involved with an innovative and forward-thinking association... As a managing team we are always trying to be innovative in our approach and staying fluid in keeping up with the needs of the owners to create a cohesive and happy environment.”

A similar concept is underway in Northern California, where forward-thinking developers recently embarked upon a new community built on the grounds of a former Hunt-Wesson tomato factory. “Life Tastes Better Here” is the motto you read when entering the website for The Cannery, a new common interest development in Davis (www.livecannerydavis.com.) The Cannery sits on 100 acres and will





include over 550 homes of various configurations, nearly 30 acres of parks and open space, an amphitheater, a Market Hall anchoring up to 172,000 square feet of commercial space and a working farm. The farm will be a training ground for beginning farmers, as well as a commercial venture. “Through a collaborative effort with the Center for Land-Based Learning of Winters, Calif., the Urban Farm will serve as a state-of-the-art example of sustainable urban farming and as an agri-classroom for students and beginning farmers,” says Kevin Carson, Northern California president for developer The New Home Company.

The Cannery was based on cutting-edge technology with a concern for the environment, but also was conceived to be “down-to-earth,” with its extensive outdoor gathering spaces for enjoying one’s families and neighbors. The physical project is focused on a low-impact, community-centered model, encouraging less reliance on cars and emphasizing accessibility, open space and human interaction. As Carson notes, “every home is within 300 feet of a trail or park, which we believe adds to the social connectivity of the community.”

It is not only the physical layout of Great Park Neighborhoods or The Cannery that makes them unique. Both projects included a vision to create mixed-use, multi-generational neighborhoods that would “bring homes, businesses and parks together in a sustainable manner.” As Cross states, “current and potential homeowners see Great Park Neighborhoods as a unique alternative to what Irvine is used to seeing. The response has been a positive one, as homeowners enjoy being able to choose which style of product they prefer.”

While the Great Park Neighborhoods and Cannery models appear to be unique and isolated, they could be replicated in any community. In fact, many of the highlights of these projects have nothing to do with their newness: chatting with neighbors, picnicking in the park, eating outdoors from your own local garden – these ideas can become a reality, wherever there is a will and vision.

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