

Vista Oaks – Ingredients for Success

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Have you ever marveled at the great chefs of our day? They can take many different ingredients to create a specific gastronomic experience? At times, there are precise measurements and other times, it is a “pinch” of this and a “dash” of that. The final master piece is then pulled from the oven and served to the eager eyes and palette of the on-lookers. They enthusiastically take in the final product and are keen for a sample of this prized dish!

The same analogy could be said in the case of the entitling a subdivision. The proof is in the final approval that is served up.

The ingredients in the Vista Oaks Subdivision project include: site requirements by the City of Rocklin; a regionally significant creek corridor; and protection of endangered species habitat. Start with a portion of the site being located within the 100 year flood plain and mix in “proximity to a major noise source” along Interstate 80 and “oak tree preservation” provision. Roll out the site plan onto a surface with steep terrain and grades.

Even with the challenges of the site, TLA rolled up their sleeves to begin working with the site, and its requirements. Having a Consultant who will work with the other consulting “chefs” in the land development “kitchen” is vital. The City of Rocklin has site standards which a project must adhere; the federal agencies (US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife, US Fish & Game) have conditions that must be met; and people from the existing neighborhoods want to provide input on what will be in their backyard.

The results anticipated by the Client are a subdivision that makes fiscal sense. The Client was looking to TLA to find a way to place 120 quality homes in an area with numerous physical and natural constraints. A masterful Consultant is able to protect the various interests and objectives and still meet the vision of an adequate number of homes for financial feasibility. That will make any Client’s mouth water for a second helping.

How can a Consultant be successful in marrying together these challenging areas? The key is blending excellent planning and engineering skills with very effective communication. This means listening, and closing the feedback loop when actions are taken. One highly productive forum for listening includes: public outreach with the people from the existing neighborhoods, being responsive to those concerns and then following up. During the entitlement phase of Vista Oaks, TLA had multiple outreach meetings. In the field, neighbors were able to point out items, such as “Move the trail out a bit, away from my yard”. In a local meeting room, multimedia presentations and

updates can demonstrate the results of prior communication with the stakeholders and how these changes vary from the original proposed project. This is a vital opportunity to close the feedback loop with the neighbors.

What was the final result of all the preparation that was cooked up? The indication of this project's success was the number of neighbors who stood up to speak so highly of TLA and their efforts. During the Planning Commission hearing, only eight neighbors spoke of minor project concerns. This was achieved by TLA through our continuous efforts to work with the neighbors. They were pleasantly satisfied with their interaction with TLA when they learned of the project, given feedback and updates on the project design and seeing the final site plan being rolled out. A similar result occurred at the City Council hearing where Council Members were astonished by the lack of even a single comment from historically critical neighbors.

TLA's ingredients for success brought out a smooth entitlement processing through the City of Rocklin, delighted Clients with the green light to continue their subdivision project and satisfied neighbors who are looking forward to the new development. When it comes to satisfying numerous, diverse interests and populations, it is important to have a consultant like TLA Engineering & Planning who can work as your advocate.

TLA Engineering & Planning, Inc. is a land planning and civil engineering firm dedicated to providing a full-range of services to private and public clients. Established in 1985, the firm specializes in planning, permitting, design and managing public and private projects that range from small to large, simple to complex. Experience earned over many years and across all varieties of projects provides the necessary foundation for a wide range of capabilities. Each project is undertaken with an eye toward providing solutions that allow plans and project to proceed smoothly. TLA's extensive experience with regulatory agencies has proven useful to many organizations throughout the Northern California region.