

# Trails may yield 1,471 homes in SW Manteca

**Dennis Wyatt, Manteca Bulletin, 6-11-10**

The Trails of Manteca - the biggest completely residential housing project ever envisioned for the city - is getting ready to move to the environmental study stage.

The Trails of Manteca consists of 1,471 lots on 477 acres located south of Woodward Avenue, north of the Reclamation District 17 dry cross-levee and east of Wetherbee Lake. The land is already in the Manteca city limits but needs to be withdrawn from the Williamson Act designed to protect farmland from development by providing a lower tax rate. It takes 10 years to withdraw from the Williamson Act without substantial penalties plus back taxes based on previous assessments.

The City Council on Tuesday is being asked to hire Michael Brandman Associates for \$203,100 to prepare the environmental impact report. The developer - Wetherbee Properties LCC - has agreed to pick up the tab so the study will cost Manteca nothing. The city, though, selected the consultant.

The Trails of Manteca also will provide an extra amenity for Manteca – the strengthening of the cross levee on the developer's dime that was the last line of defense for homes along Airport Way and Woodward Avenue when the San Joaquin River levees failed in 1997. It was touch and go for three days as emergency crews worked and watched the levee – including covering it with plastic – to make sure it didn't fail.

The plan is to widen and strengthen the levee.

Two separate projects being advanced along with the Trails of Manteca will add 2,439 housing units between McKinley Avenue south of the Highway 120 Bypass and a slough that drains into the San Joaquin River.

They are:

- Machado Estates with 575 lots is located on the southwest corner of Airport Way and Woodward Avenue. The environmental impact report has been certified. The land hasn't been annexed yet to Manteca.
- Terra Ranch near McKinley Avenue and the Highway 120 Bypass. It features 193 lots that will be developed by Anderson Homes and a 200-unit apartment complex being pursued by AKF Development.

Terra Ranch in all likelihood will be the first of the three to break ground as it is near existing infrastructure – sewer and water lines.

It is ironic that the southwest section of Manteca is where the next housing boom could be shaping up. Just outside of the city limits in a finger of the county, the 480-home Oakwood Shores is the Mother of All residential foreclosures in San Joaquin County. The 480-lot project that rose from the rubble of Oakwood Lake Resort and Manteca Waterslides was promoted as a lake front gated community with luxury homes pushing \$1 million each.

Only half dozen homes are occupied with a number more empty. Most of the project is un-built save roads and street lights.

Southwest Manteca is where Manteca's much touted Tara Business Park – complete with an employment center, town square, and retail. The concept is to have jobs, and amenities within walking distance of housing.

The Terra Ranch project with its homes and apartments is a component of the Tara Business Park plan.

The City Council meets Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the Civic Center, 1001 W. Center St.