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## Housing projects coming on Chico's east side

*By Laura Urseny, Chico Enterprise-Record*

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Chico >> Big projects that mean residential and commercial construction are a good sign for Chico, according to city officials.

Saying Chico's economy has improved significantly, Community Development Director Mark Wolfe referenced several major projects flanking Bruce Road that mean thousands of single and multi-family homes when fully built.

But that build-out is a long way out, he noted.

Talking at the quarterly community development update hosted by the Chico Chamber on Thursday, Wolfe mentioned Meriam Park, Oak Valley and Stonegate.

Together, they represent more than 1,000 dwellings when finished.

"People are making a significant effort in getting them going," said Wolfe. "Things are cooking out there."

All three projects are locally created, and have elements of residential and commercial construction.

At 130 acres, Meriam Park is west of Bruce and north of East 20th Street, and construction could start in the fall, according to previous reports. Owned by Ken Grossman of Sierra Nevada Brewing Co., the project includes a combination of about 400 dwellings to house residents who could work nearby.

Construction is able to start on a lower cul-de-sac of 43-acre Oak Valley at Bruce and Highway 32, according to Building Official Leo DePaola. Once stumped by water supply issues, developer Tom Fogarty was able to install fire hydrants that will allow limited construction to begin at the west end of the development. According to the city, the project represents about 300 homes.

Around 300 acres, Stonegate is a residential project proposed by Epick Homes with about 460 homes on both sides of Bruce Road south of East 20th Street. To a comment about the condition of Bruce Road, planner Brendan Vieg said improvements are planned.

The project still needs several layers of approvals because of environmental constrains.

In the pipe right now, DePaola said, are several restaurants, about 25 multi-family projects with about 100 units, and 200 single-family homes.

The proposed expansion of Wal-Mart is moving forward, with the final environmental impact report due out in a couple of weeks, Wolfe said. The Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board should be seeing it in September or October.

Wolfe said the city planning and building divisions are being kept busy, but aren't quite at the point where he can hire more staff, although that may be changing.

Chico's General Plan is up for its five-year review, which will start at the Planning Commission around November and then head to the City Council.

"We'll be looking at what the General Plan called for and does it still make sense," Wolfe said, with focus on the zoning code to see if more streamlining could be introduced.

While a community advisory body will not be formed for this review, the Chico Chamber will be taking public comments about the General Plan, Title 19, as well as land use and zoning, according to Chamber CEO Katie Simmons.

DePaola noted that project inspections can now be booked on the city's website, [www.chico.ca.gov](http://www.chico.ca.gov). Online bookings can be accomplished through midnight, while call-ins and walk-in bookings stop at 3 p.m., he said.

In addition, project information back to 2013 will be online for review soon.

Updates to the city's green building code regulations will be coming, DePaola noted, and will include some of the biggest changes that builders need to know.

The next development update will be in November.

*Contact reporter Laura Urseny at 896-7756.*

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