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Benefits of Trails and Greenways

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Trails are the vision at Sequoia Ranch community

A homebuilder looks at the opportunity to market the benefits of a developed trails system at Sequoia Ranch near Springville, California.

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"The Vision we are proposing is walking, hiking, and mountain bike riding as the primary amenity of the community."

One of the key questions for Sequoia Ranch has been, "what is the Vision?" Although we have expressed the Vision in terms of a conservation community and a sustainable development, while promoting connection with the land and its heritage, we may want to consider a Vision that includes a specific focus on trails as a way of appealing to a specific, large and highly motivated target audience. The concept for the Vision we are proposing is walking, hiking and mountain bike riding as the primary amenity of the community environment and lifestyle experience.

We have concluded that this is an opportunity based on the following elements:

1. Recent medical research supports findings that there are significant health and longevity benefits from walking and hiking.
2. The Baby Boomer market is maturing to an age where walking, hiking and bicycling have become the primary focus of exercise. See attached graphs from Consumer Research by American Lives. The biggest difference in responses from 2000 to 2005 regarding desired amenities is the interest in walking and biking trails and interesting little parks.
3. Leading with an emphasis on trails and walking paths will help overcome the stigma of an Active Adult Community being for "older people."
4. Trails are a base of social interaction and connectivity as they provide a reason to meet, encourage conversation and create an environment where friendships are formed and bonds are developed.
5. Groups of people interested in walking may be recruited through fitness magazines, environmental groups like the Sierra Club and International Mountain Biking Association (IBMA).
6. A potential entitlement advantage can come from promoting healthy lifestyles based on a commitment of land to trails/parks.
7. Major walking or cycling events within Springville can draw potential customers.
8. A successful Trail system could put Springville on the map. Opening trail systems have been responsible for the revitalization of small town economies, i.e. Moab, UT; Maa Daa, ND; Downeyville, CA.

Elements of design, timing, consumer preferences and health as well as considerations of liability and budget, are discussed below:

Design

Our study of trail planning, helped us understand that, more than anything else, trails provide an

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experience with nature. While a carefully designed paved path with a gazebo and vista provides a nice experience, it often sits vacant. A convenient and well designed trail, however, will draw people back over and over to enjoy the landscape, connect with friends on walks/rides and enable them to live longer from the physical benefits.

Trail design begins with identifying users, purpose, constraints, vista opportunities, and establishing standards. If designed and built correctly, the build cost is inexpensive and the maintenance costs are minor if volunteers are engaged.

Fitness levels can range from paraplegic to the elite, design should consider the desires of walkers, joggers and biking enthusiasts. In some cases this means separating single use trails. Trails should be marked and mapped for distance, tread surface, incline, and technical difficulty.

To make the trail experience sustainable, trails must be designed and laid out to address drainage and erosion considerations. A well built trail should only need minimal maintenance, while a poorly designed trail will need costly yearly repair and reconstruction.

Optimal Timing and Marketing Benefits of Developed Trails at Sequoia Ranch

The development of trails is a significant opportunity to attract potential buyers to Springville and to Sequoia Ranch. As it is, Springville is a little known town to those inside or outside the Central Valley. The trails and accompanying activities, runs, walks, races, nature hikes, and camping can become a draw long before the homes become a reality.

By beginning the planning and development of a master trail system at the front end of the project we may realize the following advantages.

Show the stakeholders that we are serious about making the trails a reality.

Show the DRE that the maintenance cost of the trails is minimal as trail volunteers are maintaining the facilities.

Create a schedule that allows for volunteers to build our trails for their future use. In contrast, if the schedule is rushed, we may be pressed to have a professional trails crew install the trail at full cost. By involving volunteers we will physically connect with hundreds of people that could become our residents or future maintenance volunteers.

Establish public use of the trails without the use of a land trust to enforce an easement. We could, for example, contractually promise to keep a certain number of acres for open space yet leave potential future development options open as the area changes.

Schedule:

It is likely that trails on private land will be less impacted by approvals than on state or federal land.

Duration

Planning and Permit Processing - 9 months

10 miles Trail Construction - 6 months

Liability

Per the statute in the state of California, landowners are actually protected by state law if they permit guests on their property. If no trespassing signs are posted the statute listed below does not apply. However, if guests are invited there is liability to the land owner.

CALIFORNIA CIVIL CODE DIVISION 2. Property PART 2. Real or Immovable Property TITLE 3. Rights and Obligations of Owners CHAPTER 2. Obligations of Owners

846. Permission to enter for recreational purposes

An owner of any estate or any other interest in real property, whether possessory or nonpossessory, owes no duty of care to keep the premises safe for entry or use by others for any recreational purpose or to give any warning of hazardous conditions, uses of, structures, or activities on such premises to persons entering for such purpose, except as provided in this section.

A "recreational purpose," as used in this section, includes such activities as fishing, hunting, camping, water sports, hiking, spelunking, sport parachuting, riding, including animal riding, snowmobiling, and all other types of vehicular riding, rock collecting, sightseeing, picnicking, nature study, nature contacting, recreational gardening, gleaning, hang gliding, winter sports, and viewing or enjoying historical, archaeological, scenic, natural, or scientific sites.

An owner of any estate or any other interest in real property, whether possessory or nonpossessory, who gives permission to another for entry or use for the above purpose upon the premises does not thereby (a) extend any assurance that the premises are safe for such purpose, or (b) constitute the person to whom permission has been granted the legal status of an invitee or licensee to whom a duty of care is owed, or (c) assume responsibility for or incur liability for any injury to person or property caused by any act of such person to whom permission has been granted except as provided in this section.

This section does not limit the liability which otherwise exists (a) for willful or malicious failure to guard or warn against a dangerous condition, use, structure or activity; or (b) for injury suffered in any case where permission to enter for the above purpose was granted for a consideration other than the consideration, if any, paid to said landowner by the state, or where consideration has been received from others for the same purpose; or (c) to any persons who are expressly invited rather than merely permitted to come upon the premises by the landowner.

Nothing in this section creates a duty of care or ground of liability for injury to person or property.

Preliminary Budget

If we go first class, the budget for planning would be \$100,000 per an estimate from EDAW Planning and Architecture (proposal to follow). Poor design can be very expensive to maintain and may lose impact. However, with research we may find accomplished volunteers.

Assume \$3.00 per foot for 10 miles, or \$160,000 for trails, if built professionally. Assume \$50,000 if volunteers are used.

For more information on trails call Randy Martin at 949.673.4474

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