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Developer gets approval for Phillips Creek Ranch

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The Phillips Creek Ranch development took a major step forward Tuesday night when the Frisco City Council approved the development with a 5-0 vote. The 948-acre development will be located east of FM 423 from Lebanon Road to Old Newman Road.

The project is being developed by Republic Property Group out of Dallas. The main hanging point in gaining council approval was a waiver filed by Republic relating to front-entry garages on some of the lots in the development.

City codes call for all lots less than 65-feet wide to have alleys and rear-entry garages. Republic wanted the option of including front entry garages on lots as short as 55-feet across. These front-entry lots would not have alleys. Planning and Zoning denied the request, meaning the council required a supermajority, five council members, to overturn the recommendation.

City officials said the reason for the ordinance is to prevent the street from being dominated with driveways. City staff also conducted a poll of 60 Frisco-based realtors who said that front-entry houses are not in demand.

Republic's Jake Wagner said that the group has performed market research that told them front entry houses were what buyers were looking for. He said there is very little noticeable difference between houses on 55-foot and 65-foot wide, and that front-entry garages, if designed properly, can be attractive.

Wagner said one of the main features that makes front-entry garages attractable on 55-foot wide lots is a larger backyard. Wagner said the back on front-entry houses is about twice as large compared to the backyard on a house with a rear-facing garage.

The property that Phillips Creek Ranch will occupy was purchased out of foreclosure by Republic in 2008. Wagner said that master planned developments such as this one are tough to execute properly and if approval was not granted for the front-entry garages, the majority of homebuyers, up to 81 percent, would not be interested in what Republic is offering and would look for houses outside of Frisco. Wagner said the prices for the houses in Phillips Creek Ranch will begin at about \$300,000.

During the public hearing, local realtors from Ebby Halliday, Keller Williams and other firms, as well as local homebuilders, spoke in favor of allowing the alley waiver. They also said that with thousands of real estate agents in Frisco, the 60 agent survey conducted by the city is not an accurate portrayal of the market.

After closing the public hearing, the council offered a compromise which the developers accepted. The compromise was approved 5-0 by the council.

Of the 1,000 potential 55-foot lots in the development, 500 may be front-entry. The developer also retains the option to come back before the council in the future and file an alley waiver for the rest of the lots.

Phillips Creek Ranch will contain up to 3,752 residential units. The units will range from single family homes on lots larger than 10,000-square feet, down to town homes and multifamily units. As approved, there will be 789 patio homes on 55-foot wide lots, but that number could increase to 1,000. There will be a minimum of 214 houses on 10,000-square-foot lots and 427 houses on 8,500-square-foot lots.

The council also approved \$1.3 million to be used for lump sum payments to employees who did not receive raises in the most recent budget. The money became available when the revenues exceeded expenditures in the 2010 fiscal year.

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