

Bella Terra violates sustainability tenets

Sustainability has become a marketable commodity instead of one goal of reasonable community planning. Redefined to explain the intelligent use of natural and other resources that consider the preservation of resources well into the future, sustainability has become a marketing catch-phrase to sell anything from a rechargeable battery to a housing development.

Case in point: the Bella Terra development off of Red Rock Loop Road. Marketed as a sustainable community that uses recycled denim jeans as wall

insulation, the developer, BySynergy, largely misses the point regarding sustainability.

Regardless of how homes are constructed, how many recycled materials are used and how energy-efficient the homes are, ignoring the development's impact on its surroundings, environment and effect on neighboring properties makes it a fruitless and meaningless endeavor. It becomes just another sales pitch.

Siting a development with its own waste treatment facility over aquifers that supply drinking water to hundreds of local residents is a bad idea. It flies in the face of sustainability as the term was intended and it shows disrespect to those in the vicinity.

Tack onto that willful disregard for the permitting process that responsible developers must adhere to, and the development's merits fall further into disgrace.

The permitting process protects such regions from unscrupulous developers whose only interest is profit. Silt and runoff from ill-designed work areas now filter into Oak Creek. Flood plains that offer protection from 100-year floods have been backfilled and rendered useless. Towering cottonwoods that housed blue heron and black hawks are no more, cut down, roots yanked from the ground, so that another few houses can go up in their places.

The environmental destruction is significant and long-term. No environmental impact studies were done prior to construction; no consideration was demonstrated for wildlife or the creek's vitality.

How can our community support such disregard for the resources that make the Sedona area beautiful? How can anyone with good conscience pollute and harm Oak Creek? Even if the developer mitigates the damages already done, it will take decades to restore the flood plain, its trees and natural wildlife habitat to what it once was.

We must insist that this take place. Those who willfully and knowingly ignore requirements protecting the environment must be taken to task. The banks along Oak Creek must be restored and reinvigorated for wildlife and all who call the Verde Valley home.

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