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DELRAY BEACH

A 12th Valencia community is coming west of Delray; first project after land-swap collapse

Plans for the latest Valencia on Lyons Road are expected to be presented to county commissioners in October. The high-end senior development will have 481 homes.



Mike Diamond

Palm Beach Post

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Key Points

GL Homes is looking to build another 55+ Valencia community, the county's 12th, and sixth along Lyons Road between Atlantic Avenue and Boynton Beach Boulevard.

The homebuilder has called on the county to allow it to remove easements on the 166-acre parcel that bar development.

The latest submission comes after GL Homes failed to persuade county commissioners in October to approve a controversial land swap that would have allowed GL Homes to build a high-end development west of Boca Raton in the Ag Reserve.

(This story has been updated to include new information.)

GL Homes is looking to build another 55+ Valencia community, the county's 12th, and sixth along Lyons Road between Atlantic Avenue and Boynton Beach Boulevard, west of Delray Beach.

Palm Beach County planners are reviewing plans submitted by the homebuilder for an age-restricted development on the west side of Lyons Road about 1.7 miles south of Boynton Beach Boulevard. Base prices for the 481 homes are expected to exceed \$1 million.

The homebuilder has called on the county to allow it to remove easements on the 166-acre parcel that bar development. GL Homes, as it has done in the past, is attempting to

remove those easements by preserving land in other areas of the Agricultural Reserve. The rules for the Ag Reserve, an area generally west of Florida's Turnpike in the central part of the county, allow for such land swaps, and the county routinely approves them.

The latest submission comes after GL Homes failed to persuade county commissioners in October to approve a controversial land swap that would have allowed GL Homes to build a high-end development west of Boca Raton in the Ag Reserve. But unlike the land swap currently being proposed, the builder sought to swap land outside the Ag Reserve in The Acreage. In exchange, it would have preserved land there that had been slated for development and also build a water resource project for the county. But county commissioners voted 4-3 against the proposal.

Why some residents don't want the new Valencia and blame COBWRA for its evolution

Neil Ambrosio, a board member of Canyon Lakes and a member of the Boynton Ag Reserve Communities (BARC), blames the Coalition of Boynton West Residential Communities (COBWRA) for the continued development along Lyons Road. Ambrosio pointed to COBWRA's strong opposition to GL Homes' proposed land swap.

"Speaking for myself, this is a classic case of careful what you wish for," said Ambrosio. "COBWRA spent tremendous resources and got everybody riled up to oppose the swap," claiming that if the swap went through, GL Homes would never have built the new project on Lyons Road.

"So anybody who has an issue with this (new) development, I hope they write a thank you letter to COBWRA leadership because they are the reason we are getting another community on Lyons in Boynton. No one ever wants to hold COBWRA accountable for the mistakes they make and the damage they cause. Instead those of us who actually live in the AGR have to deal with the ramifications of their poor leadership and lack of any real vision."

Already on the west side of Lyons Road are Valencia Reserve, Valencia Sound and nearly built-out Valencia Grand. On the east side are the family developments of Canyon Lakes, Canyon Isles and Canyon Springs along with Valencia Cove and Valencia Bay. More than 5,000 homes and more than 7,000 residents live along the the five-mile stretch of highway.

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GL Homes land swap showdown: Critics say GL's sweeteners are not enough

COBWRA President Barbara Roth said the civic group, consisting of HOAs throughout the west-central part of the county, is "proud of its part in the successful defeat of the GL Land Swap. That proposal asked the county to allow a swap of preserve land to an area outside of the Ag Reserve. We, and other groups, strongly opposed this departure from the established rules of development in the Ag Reserve."

She said COBWRA always expected residential development on the Whitworth property, knowing that it would follow GL's adherence to the development rules in the Ag Reserve.

COBWRA: GL Homes was going to build on Lyons Road, regardless of the land swap proposal

Steve Wallace, the immediate past president of COBWRA who oversaw the opposition to the land swap, said it is wrong to suggest that GL Homes would never have sought to build more projects on Lyons Road had the land swap been approved.

"It was just a matter of when they were going to build, not if. They did not pay all that money to buy it to just sit on it." Wallace noted.

Plans for the new GL Homes development off Lyons Road have it aligning with Malear Palm Drive at Canyons Springs development, which is on the east side of the road across the street from the new senior development. The preliminary Master Plan provides for "a spine road that will include landscape buffers on either side. Approximately 60% of the total lots will be built on either on a lake or canal.

The development is expected to generate more than 2,000 daily trips a day onto heavily congested Lyons Road but the study notes that most of it will come after the county widens the highway to two lanes in each direction. Build out is expected to occur in 2029 but Ambrosio questions whether the roadway will be widened in time to prevent further traffic congestion along Lyons Road.

GL intends to build 11 lakes that it says will attract a great diversity of wildlife. A pedestrian pathway adjacent to the spine road will provide additional opportunities for recreation in addition to the proposed oversized recreation pod, according to the

application.

The new parcel was farmed for decades by the Whitworth family. In February of 2022, a subsidiary of GL Homes bought part of the Whitworth farm to the north and began building Valencia Grand, a 659-unit development that is nearly sold out. The new development has been described as "Whitworth South" in papers submitted to the county. The entire Whitworth property was bought for \$60 million.

The new development area along with Valencia Grand are both to the east and slightly south of the Eternal Light Memorial Gardens cemetery. The facility will be unaffected by either development. Spokeswoman Claire Piche said the cemetery is excited to welcome the latest Valencia.

"As an established cemetery, serving Jewish families along the 441 corridor since 1978, we are certain this housing development will bring new opportunities and growth to the businesses in the West Boynton Beach area for generations to come," she told The Post in an emailed statement.

GL Homes said the zoning changes it is requesting are "in keeping with the theme in the area and the market demand," noting that "this proposed rezoning is compatible and generally consistent with the surrounding existing uses." More detailed plans are expected to be presented to county commissioners in October.

Where all the GL Homes Valenica communities are located

It is difficult to not run into a Valencia in Palm Beach County if you are on north-south roads west of the Turnpike. The Valencias along Lyons Road include:

Valencia Shores, just south of Hypoluxo Road; 1,150 homes.

Valencia Reserve, at the intersection of Boynton Beach Boulevard, 1,043 homes.

Valencia Grand, just south of Valencia Reserve, 659 homes.

Valencia Sound, about a mile south of Valencia Grand, 653 homes.

Valencia Cove, two miles south of Boynton Beach Boulevard, 822 homes.

Valencia Bay, just south of Valencia Cove, 582 homes.

Other Valencias in Palm Beach County include:

Valencia Lakes, off Hagen Ranch Road, 696 homes.

Valencia Palms, off Jog Road, 612 homes.

Valencia Pointe, off Woolbright Road, 690 homes.

Valencia Falls, off Hagen Ranch Road, 705 homes.

Valencia Isles, off Jog Road, 793 homes.

Mike Diamond is a journalist at The Palm Beach Post, part of the USA TODAY Florida Network. He covers Palm Beach County government and transportation. You can reach him at mdiamond@pbpost.com. Help support local journalism. Subscribe today.

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