

ORANGE PROJECT PLACED ON HOLD THE STATE SAYS A 1,137-ACRE DEVELOPMENT VIOLATES THE COUNTY GROWTH PLAN.

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State planners Thursday slammed Orange County commissioners for changing their growth plan to allow a huge Christian ministry, homes and shops on a remote lake southeast of Orlando International Airport.

The state Department of Community Affairs is stalling the 1,137-acre Lake Hart development that commissioners approved Dec. 7 because planners say it violates the county's growth plan.

"It definitely puts the development on hold, for now," DCA planning manager John Healey said. The Lake Hart plan includes 5,149 homes and apartments, a business park, a hotel, several shopping centers and a \$30 million international headquarters of Campus Crusade for Christ.

Campus Crusade, an interdenominational ministry with 44,000 staffers and volunteers in 152 countries, agreed to move to Central Florida from California in 1989, bringing nearly 1,000 jobs.

To allow the development, commissioners had to expand the urban area in which the county allows intensive development and provides costly services such as water and sewer lines.

State planners said commissioners were allowing urban sprawl in a rural area and were not adequately protecting nature areas between lakes Hart and Whipoorwill.

DCA left the door open for a compromise that would allow the Campus Crusade headquarters but not the houses, shops and offices.

County and state planners will likely meet in the next few weeks to try to reach an agreement.

What effect Thursday's rejection will have on the Campus Crusade project is unclear. Ministry officials could not be reached for comment.

The Lake Hart property is split by the newest leg of the beltway around Orlando near State Road 15. County planners and County Chairman Linda Chapin wanted to link home-building to the number of jobs created by the ministry.

Commissioners rejected that plan after heavy lobbying by Lake Hart developer Maury L. Carter and his lawyers, Egerton K. van den Berg Jr. and Duke Woodson.

Carter threatened to withdraw the plans - and consider having the land annexed by Orlando - if commissioners linked approval of the development to construction of the Campus Crusade headquarters.

Van den Berg said the link is unfair because the ministry has no timetable to build. Ministry officials have said

construction will start on the 327,000-square-foot headquarters and a lakefront retreat center as soon as they raise the \$30 million.

Most commissioners sided with Carter, voting 4-2 for a plan that would have allowed homes outside the beltway in phases after 1996, even if the ministry headquarters isn't built. Commissioners Fran Pignone, Bob Freeman, Tom Staley and Mary Johnson voted for Lake Hart. Chapin and Commissioner Bill Donegan voted against it.

Carter was confused by the state's findings, saying he couldn't understand what natural resources were being threatened because the development will occur in former sod and hay fields.

He also questioned the state's logic of allowing 1,000 new jobs in an area but no housing to go with it, which would encourage more commuter traffic.

Carter also disagreed with the state's contention that the area is rural, noting that there is a beltway exit at the property's entrance. Airport growth has created a housing boom in southeast Orange and three miles south of Lake Hart.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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