

EASTVALE: Homebuilding strong in new city

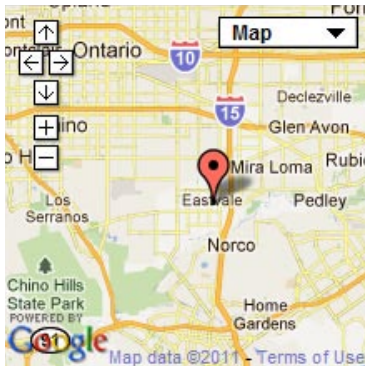
With hundreds of houses being built the city is “a real bright spot in Riverside County”

BY LESLIE BERKMAN AND SANDRA STOKLEY, STAFF WRITERS

Richard “Dickie” Simmons, who headed Eastvale’s 2010 cityhood drive, has never been shy about his affection for his hometown.

When he exclaims “Eastvale is like a boomtown,” there’s a good reason for his optimism.

In the first eight months of this year, Eastvale issued permits to build 278 new homes — the largest number for any city in Riverside and San Bernardino counties according to the Construction Industry Research Board.



Location Map of Eastvale

“Eastvale is a real bright spot in Riverside County,” said Mark Knorringer, the chief executive officer of the Riverside County Chapter of the Building Industry Association of Southern California.

“There are people who want to buy, and they want to buy in Eastvale,” he said.

In a housing market that is the worst in memory for Inland homebuilders, Eastvale boasts the greatest amount of homes sold and under construction.



Construction in City of Eastvale

“If you are going to look for successful projects in the Inland Empire, you will find the most successful there,” said Tom Dallape, a principal at The Hoffman Co., a land broker that does business in Eastvale, a former dairy enclave where cows outnumbered humans.

A key reason for Eastvale’s success is its location, framed by freeways and within a reasonable commute to major employment hubs near Ontario International Airport as well as the San Gabriel Valley, Los Angeles and north Orange County.

Location, location

“What really appealed to us was Eastvale’s central location,” said Lupe Nava. “I was commuting to Los Angeles and my husband Mike was commuting to Temecula.”

The Navas moved to the community in 2003 with their three children, and a second generation has now put down roots in Eastvale — the Navas’ oldest daughter Valerie and her husband and two children have purchased a home in the city. About half of the buyers in Lennar Homes’ two Eastvale communities commute to work in Los Angeles and Orange Counties, said Greg McGuff, president of Lennar’s Inland

Empire Division. McGuff said Eastvale has been “consistently a strong market” for his company, attracting first-time buyers and move up buyers of homes ranging from the high \$200,000s to the low \$400,000s.

Eastvale is attracting a lot of professionals, doctors, nurses, firemen, teachers, “those who have not been injured by the economy,” said Steve Johnson, a director in Riverside with MetroStudy, a real estate consulting firm.

Dave Welch, a 54-year-old retired law enforcement officer, moved to Eastvale in April, 2010, drawn by the affordable homes and newness.

“It was affordable, it was clean and it had a lot of parks,” Welch said.

Community

Not long after moving in, Welch said he discovered an intangible that isn’t listed on the real estate brochures.

“There’s a real sense of community here,” he said.

Lupe Nava said that sense of community didn’t just happen.

“We’ve worked on building that through our Eastvale events,” she said.

Early on, community leaders such as Nava, Kathy Bogart, Rosalinda Murphy and Peggy Galinas started working on the Eastvale Events Committee. Annual events such as the Picnic in the Park, the Fall Festival and Casino Night brought residents together.

The strong construction and sales numbers bode well for the city’s future, said Councilman Jeff DeGrandpre.

“That means more residents and better opportunities for us to attract more business,” said DeGrandpre.

DeGrandpre and Eastvale Mayor Adam Rush attended a conference in San Diego last month to try to lure commercial developers.

Another attraction for families with school age children is the highly rated Corona-Norco Unified School District and the feel of a new community that is well planned with wide, landscaped streets, large parks and new retail centers.

“You come in any of our gateways and you can see the benefit of having landscaped parkways and parks in every neighborhood,” said Simmons, who moved to Eastvale in 2002 with his wife and family. “Our schools are so ultra modern and well maintained.”

“It is the new town look and feel combined with the school district and good urban planning by the county” before Eastvale was incorporated as its own city,” said Johnson, of MetroStudy. He called Eastvale “a miniature Irvine,” and noted that early in the planning of Eastvale, Riverside County planners toured Irvine, which is acclaimed for its master plan.

“You have a lot of construction going on, homes being built and land being graded. It looks vibrant,” said Dallape. “If you are going to build in one market in the Inland Empire, you are going to build in Eastvale.”

This is a stark comparison with other communities farther east of the I-15 corridor that are much more distressed. “When you see weeds growing on lots, it makes buyers nervous,” Dallape said.

Hoffman said Eastvale homes are well priced in this market — with new home prices averaging \$396,000 — in part because builders purchased most of the land in 2009 and 2010, when prices had fallen significantly from their peak.

Over the past year, construction began on 521 homes in Eastvale and sales of 687 homes were completed, which is “the most building and sales activity for any of the western Inland Empire cities,” said Johnson. ■