

This turn in McKinney's development pleases city

Lower-profile east side is site of proposed garden-home project

By **MIKE JACKSON**
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MCKINNEY — Home construction is so common in McKinney, few people notice when a developer shows up with plans for a new subdivision.

But an Australian developer is drawing praise from the city for its plan to build a neighborhood on the city's older east side.

It will be the largest subdivision — with 166 houses — and only the second built east of Central Expressway in a city that is booming westward.

"When I heard that a developer wanted to build homes there, it was very good news to me," said City Council member Gilda Garza, whose district would include the development.

City officials have grown accustomed to developers eager to build to the west.

So they were pleasantly surprised when Wilbow Corp. proposed building in a 47-acre en-

clave a few blocks southeast of Central Expressway and Louisiana Street, adjacent to the historic district.

"There's nothing about that deal that I don't like," said council member Thad Helsley.

Mr. Helsley said the development is a sign of economic well-being spreading into the city's east side, where construction has consisted mainly of buyers renovating older homes or tearing them down to build new ones.

"It's a sign that not only is McKinney healthy on the west side, where you've got all the growth in the world, but it is also healthy on the east side," said Mr. Helsley, a real estate agent.

Wilbow jumped at the opportunity to buy and develop the land, said Chas Fitzgerald, president of Wilbow's Dallas-based U.S. operation.

"We think we're giving a really urban experience to our homebuyers who don't want to live in Dallas but want a small-town experience," Mr. Fitzgerald said.

The company plans high-end garden homes with small yards and patios hidden from neighboring houses, he said.

Prices would range from \$200,000 to \$450,000.

Garden homes attract buyers who want to do little or no yard work and who typically have no children living at home, said Nancy Stuckey, co-owner of Cambridge Homes, one of three builders partnering with Wilbow.

"One of the neat things about this is that it's right outside the historic district," Ms. Stuckey said.

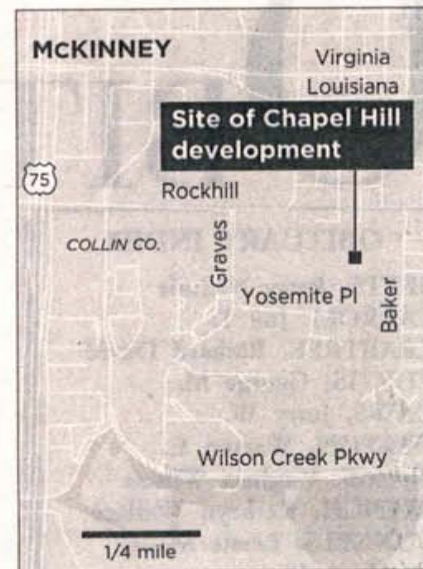
"We have people who have bought homes from us who say that they wished they knew we were building in McKinney.

Wilbow has already built two parks and streets in the development, on Yosemite Place and Graves Road off Rock Hill Road.

Three model homes are under construction.

The subdivision will include a hiking and biking path running from the northern end of the property, at the historic district, south to Towne Lake Park, said Aaron Richards, a Wilbow vice president in charge of land development.

The company plans to replicate European cottages, Craftsman-style bungalows and Tudor homes.



TOM SETZER/Staff Artist

Gas lanterns will line the street.

"We tried to make it look like you're pulling into an old estate," Mr. Richards said.

The development, called Chapel Hill, can't be seen from Central Expressway.

There is only one way in and out and it's separated from the historic district by Warden Creek.