

The Developer's Corner

Applying for permits and project approvals in Patterson is like finding your way out of a labyrinth. As residents, here's why you should care.



Every city in California, including Patterson, is required by California law to plan for and approve new homes to address the housing crisis. When cities refuse to build their fair share, it's a serious issue to California. The state can trigger enforcement, file expensive lawsuits, and issue financial penalties.

While city lawyers and elected officials will cause these problems, it's YOU, the taxpayers, who could lose millions of dollars if they break the law.

That's why most California cities work with businesses in good faith to meet demands, build new homes, and protect their residents from avoidable penalties and fines.

But in Patterson, only certain applicants face roadblocks.

Keystone Ranch is the example of what it now means to try to build in Patterson.

Keystone Corporation has a long 25-year legacy of delivering for the City of Patterson. When the opportunity arose, Keystone applied to build more than 700 homes and apartments on land

included in a larger master plan. City and County agencies led environmental studies, approved the development plan, and created a path toward building.

Keystone diligently worked through the process with the City and White Brenner LLP, Patterson's contracted city attorney, understanding the project would move forward.

But for the past four years, Patterson kept changing the rules. Through that time, Keystone Corporation lost trust in the City planning team, the Mayor, and the White Brenner legal team.

Annexation was delayed and made unnecessarily complicated, wasting valuable time and resources. Unreasonable conditions were added. Fees later found unlawful by the Stanislaus County Superior Court in a tentative ruling were imposed. Hearings were canceled or re-noticed. State laws were violated. What should have been a straightforward path became a quagmire of shifting requirements, legal challenges, and delays.

Fees became central to this issue. Keystone was told that it, and other applicants, were required to pay development fees that, in a tentative court ruling, were found to conflict with state law. Instead of correcting the issue, the City dug in, forcing Keystone Ranch to either accept the fees or get denied.

Then came the issue of water.

For years, studies consistently showed that Keystone Ranch could be served with water under existing plans and groundwater management frameworks.

But the City suddenly began insisting there was a "water crisis" and demanded Keystone pay \$20 million for a groundwater recharge basin to address a problem that the City's own planning documents did not support.

Finally, on April 1, 2025, the City Council denied the Keystone Ranch project, demanded a supplemental EIR, and told the applicant to start the entire 10-plus-year process from scratch. Doing so blocked 719 homes, new parks, and millions in tax revenue for the community.

To those on the outside looking in, it may appear that this is simply a disagreement between a city and a developer. But the truth is far worse, and residents need to take notice before it's too late.

The deeper issue is this: how Patterson treats various different developers, and how they do not follow state law, will have a direct and material impact on YOUR livelihood, quality of life, and pocketbooks.

Patterson's Mayor and Council, under the guidance of the City's outside legal firm, White Brenner LLP, have mishandled the City's growth and because of their actions, the City is facing multiple lawsuits for violating state laws designed to protect both developers and residents, including:

- Failure to properly notice meetings and materials, restricting public participation. This is known as the Brown Act.

- Failure to release public records requested by Keystone Corporation in a timely manner.

- Failure to adopt a compliant Housing Element, putting the City out of compliance with state housing law.

- Refusal to acknowledge SB330, California's law that prevents cities from increasing fees without legal nexus studies, blocking housing such as the Keystone Ranch developments.

Rather than simply correct these matters when they are pointed out, the City stonewalls Keystone Ranch until the only option left is costly litigation. In recent lawsuits against the City, a tentative court ruling has raised serious concerns about the City's arguments, exposing taxpayer dollars to significant financial risk.

You may think that the City is looking out for its residents, but the opposite is true. **The City is gambling with taxpayer dollars and risking its own future.**

Litigation is never an applicant's first choice. For years, the Keystone Corporation on behalf of Keystone Ranch met with staff, attended hearings, submitted studies, paid fees, and attempted to resolve issues without going to court. Only after repeated delays, shifting requirements, and a final denial did litigation become the only remaining avenue to ask a judge to require the City to follow state law.

Patterson deserves honest leadership from the Mayor and Council and real solutions, not delays, excuses, and costly legal gamesmanship. It's time for the City to follow the law, and stop blocking Keystone Ranch and the homes the community needs.

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