Mission Viejo OKs plan for 144 homes
Project includes Target store and helps city meet low-income housing rules.

By MARIA HSIN
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MISSION VIEJO – The City Council late Monday voted 5-0 to approve the construction of 144 townhomes and a Target store on a vacant 23-acre lot.

The project moves Mission Viejo closer to meeting its low-income housing requirement.

More than 20 people, most of them opposed to the Aliso Ridge project, addressed the City Council.

"No one's entitled to live here," resident Joe Holtzman said of the 22 low-income townhomes that would be built. "You earn your way into this community."

Another resident, Donna Ferguson, called the lot a "trouble spot for teens" and said she would like to see a Target store built at Los Alisos Boulevard and Jeronimo Road.

On affordable housing, she said teachers, police officers and military personnel are "not asking for handouts."

Ralph Deppisch, an executive with the developer, Steadfast Investment Properties, gave an overview of the project and said it's one "we believe Mission Viejo can be proud of."

Steadfast Investment Properties first approached the city two years ago with a plan for homes and 168 multi-family, low-income rentals. That proposal and another were rejected.

The state Housing and Community Development Department, which oversees cities' housing plans, says Mission Viejo doesn't have enough affordable-housing units to comply with state law.

Approval of Aliso Ridge leaves the city 94 units shy.

Mission Viejo, Cypress, Laguna Hills and Dana Point are the only Orange County cities that have not met the state law.

The compliance rate in California is 72 percent.

The council did not discuss whether a portion of its redevelopment funds could be put toward Aliso Ridge and the Townhomes on Los Alisos, a housing project approved in September.
The money would cover the difference between what the affordable units sold for and their full market price.

The city has about $3 million in redevelopment money that must be used for affordable housing, said Irwin Bornstein, the assistant city manager and director of administrative services.

Aliso Ridge and The Townhomes on Los Alisos together will offer 60 one-bedroom homes for low- and very low-income people.

Target would like to start construction in 45 days, a representative said.