

Growth-control measures rejected in EDC

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County has long roiled with bitter political battles over new housing developments and perceived threats to the rustic Sierra foothills environment.

But Tuesday night, voters overwhelmingly rejected initiatives that proponents argued would protect rural community boundaries and ban new subdivisions that threaten to gridlock Highway 50 with traffic. They also elected two new county supervisors, Michael Ranalli and Sue Novasel, who both campaigned against the initiatives and “land use planning through the ballot box.”

Measures M, N and O went down to ignominious defeat in the face of more than \$1 million in campaign spending by real estate and development groups, including building interests proposing thousands of new homes for western El Dorado County. The political media blizzard – costing more than \$20 per vote based on Tuesday’s turnout – broadcast a message that the county’s pastoral landscape was imperiled by the growth-control measures themselves.

“It means that even a good ballot argument and proposition is hard to win against \$1 million,” said Bill Center, a former county supervisor and co-sponsor of Measure M. “It was basically an electoral carpet bombing with signs and mailings and robocalls and World Series ads. They ran the best campaign that money could buy.”

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