



ECOC
Escondido Chamber of Citizens

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Escondido Chamber of Citizens
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The Escondido Chamber of Citizens (ECOC) is the organization responsible for the passage of Proposition S, the Growth Management and Neighborhood Protection Act in 1998. One of ECOC's goals is "to preserve the integrity and intent of the General Plan of the City of Escondido through political and community effort with a particular focus on land use and quality of life."

Given the nature of Safari Highlands Ranch, a sprawl development project which is not included in the San Diego Smart Growth Plan, which is inconsistent with Escondido's Smart Growth Plan, and that is contrary to the spirit of Proposition S, ECOC resolves to take an oppositional stand with regards to the Safari Highlands development.

The developer's attempt to bypass the County Smart Growth Plan by requesting the City of Escondido to annex the parcel now held by the County violates the principles of Smart Growth, and shows complete disregard for the southern 2/3 of the property considered a valuable resource, that is, a "Biological Core Resource Area." If Escondido annexes the proposed Safari Highlands Ranch property out of the County of San Diego, it will remove that land from active conservation management and oversight by the County, undermining decades of conservation planning and protection.

The negative impact on the quality of life for residents of Escondido cannot be overstated. Traffic on Bear Valley Parkway is already heavily congested during commute hours. Commuter traffic near the project site is estimated to increase by 200%. Increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from mounting traffic will greatly affect air quality and impact not only Escondido, but also the greater San Diego area.

Not to be overlooked is the nature of the land on which the developer seeks to plant this project. Large portions of the project site are solid granite. It was noted by the Escondido Planning

Commission staff in 2003 when they recommended against a similar development effort on the same land that “...blasting in solid non-ripple granite rock will be required to install the required infrastructure. These areas will be difficult at best to landscape and will involve several years of growth to achieve coverage... this impact wildlife movement...”

The all-important issue of water needs to be addressed. Where is the water coming from, and is there enough water to meet the project’s needs for 20 years as required by the “Show Me the Water Laws” (SB 610 and SB 221)? Does the SHR project developer have written verification that water is assured for 550 luxury homes for 20 years? Sprawl and luxury homes are not water neutral.

The City of Escondido is looking on the SHR development and its 550 luxury homes in terms of tax money – money in its coffers. It is well-accepted that this kind of development, far from the urban core and necessitating significant infrastructure expansion and maintenance as well as expanded services such as police and fire, does NOT pay for itself. Furthermore, the site is in a highly fire prone area. Monies needed to maintain added sewer, roads, schools, etc., as well as a fully-staffed 3-bay fire station on site, will burden the local tax payers. The tax advantages are just not there. Escondido residents’ protections to safeguard the environment and quality of life will be gone- forever.

Further, let it be known that Safari Highlands Ranch development is contrary to the intention of Proposition S. The County of San Diego has zoned the land for a maximum of 27 homes. Seeking annexation into the City of Escondido where the developer can get the land upzoned by 20x, to 550 homes, violates the spirit of Proposition S. This type of violation may well require an update of Proposition S.

These are just some of the reasons – and there are others not mentioned here – ECOC takes a firm stand in opposition to the Safari Highlands Ranch development.

Regards,

Christine Nava
President, Escondido Chamber of Citizens