



Buena Vista Audubon Society



November 12, 2019

Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
City of Escondido
201 North Broadway
Escondido, CA 92026



RE: Request DENIAL of Harvest Hills project

Dear Mayor and City Council,

The 23 undersigned organizations are united to urge you to take land-use decisions that will move the city in the direction of sensible planning, production of housing that is needed, investment in the urban core, promotion of infill, traffic reduction, and to move away from inappropriately located development, such as Harvest Hills.

We understand that several proposals will be coming up for city action in the next few months. While we support increased density in urban areas near transportation corridors, far-flung sprawl development projects should be abandoned. To continue with these types of development will undermine any climate gains and degrade the livability of our region.

As an important first step, we urge the city to refuse to take any further steps and to deny the proposed Harvest Hills (formerly known as Safari Highlands Ranch) project and its annexation into Escondido. In spite of the re-marketing and minimal revisions, the major impacts remain.

In short, fire and evacuation risks, traffic, and climate impacts alone are enough to stop this project in its tracks.

We urge the city to oppose this project because it:

- **Significantly increases wildfire risks:** Location in high wildfire risk area will exacerbate the risks and difficulties for evacuating residents in the entire area, as well as residents of this development.
- **Worsens Traffic:** It will significantly increase traffic by adding over 67,000 vehicle miles **a day** (VMT) to an already congested area.
- **Undermines transit:** Its far-flung development footprint will further frustrate efforts for effective transportation planning.
- **Fails to provide moderate or affordable housing:** By only providing high-end housing, it does nothing to help us meet housing goals.
- **Violates County General Plan:** It violates the County General Plan by increasing density 2,000%.
- **Worsens climate impacts:** It will undermine efforts to address and reverse climate change and makes greenhouse gas emission reductions more difficult.
- **Destroys sensitive habitat:** It will undermine an adopted Multiple-Species Conservation Plan and the one proposed for North County and obstruct wildlife corridors necessary for many species to survive in the region.

The defeat of Safari Highlands/Harvest Hills is a high-priority if we are ever to move in the direction of appropriate land-use plans that, ultimately will, result in investment in the urban core, allow transit to succeed, protect critical habitat, and reduce and reverse climate impacts.

We urge you to deny this project.

Respectfully,

George Courser, Sierra Club

Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League

Tina Iki, Escondido Neighbors United

Erika Cueva, Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation

Pam Heatherington, Environmental Center of San Diego

Jim Peugh, San Diego Audubon Society

Diane Nygaard, Preserve Calavera

Cody Petterson, San Diego Democrats for Environmental Action

Richard Halsey, California Chaparral Institute

Natalie Shapiro, Buena Vista Audubon Society

Michael McCoy, DVM, Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association

Karen Zirk, Friends of Rose Creek

Sandra Farrell, Friends of Agua Hedionda Creek

Patricia Borchmann, Escondido Chamber of Citizens

Frank Landis, California Native Plant Society

Michael Beck, Endangered Habitats Conservancy

NeySa Ely, San Pasqual Valley Preservation Alliance

Matt O'Malley, San Diego Coastkeeper

Sophie Wolfram, Climate Action Campaign

Marian Sedio, North County Climate Change Alliance

David Hogan, The Chaparral Lands Conservancy

Penny Hernandez, Palomar Audubon Society

Bee Mittermiller, San Diego 350