

Meeting Date: October 1, 2025
Agenda Item No.: 04
Batch No.:12

From: [Jorgine Ellerbrock](#)
To: [Lawson-Remer, Terra](#); [Anderson, Joel](#); [MontgomerySteppe, Monica](#); [Desmond, Jim](#); [Aguirre, Paloma x](#); [Potter, Andrew](#); [FGG, Public Comment](#); [Worlie, Paul](#); [LaVelle, Kyle](#); [Hayes, Andrew](#); [Yuen, Jeffrey](#); [Henson, Eric](#); [McDonald, Hunter](#); [Lynch, Dahvia](#); [Harbert, Amy](#); [Slovick, Mark](#); [efhgtc@gmail.com](#); [Lorenzana, Bianca](#); [Montagne, Sarah](#); [mcquead@rsf-fire.org](#); [ashcraft@rsf-fire.org](#); [hillgren@rsf-fire.org](#); [malin@rsf-fire.org](#); [stine@rsf-fire.org](#); [Nicoletti, Vince](#)
Subject: [External] HGVS = Gridlock, Danger, and Lost Lives
Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 5:33:50 PM

Dear Chair Lawson-Remer and Members of the Board,

I have been an Elfin Forest resident for 13 years. I love the beauty of our trails and wildlife and am blessed to live here. That said, wildfires are the biggest threat to our community. I survived the Cocos Fire unscathed physically, but am still traumatized. Not all my neighbors fared as well. We loaded up our three horses, two dogs, and parrot and drove off in gridlocked traffic, not knowing if we would have a house to return to. We saw the fire on the hill as we evacuated and it moved very fast down towards Harmony Grove Spiritualists and the area where HGV South is being proposed. There is nothing scarier than seeing your neighbors wrestle livestock trailers and unruly animals to try to get them out in time. The evacuation took at least 2 hours in literally crawling traffic. And that was before any developments in the community.

As a community, we're well aware of the fire danger. We keep "go bags" at the ready. We hitch our trailers every time there is a red flag warning and do not sleep when the warm wind blows. Some of my neighbors are third generation residents and have seen the many fires (once a decade) that have ravaged this little valley. We've lost hundreds of homes over the years and even suffered fatalities. We are all prepared for the next wildfire. What we are not prepared for, however, is the entrapment that is in store for us with a community that continues to accept (and support) additional housing but without any major improvements in the evacuation infrastructure.

We barely made it out during the Cocos Fire and that was a few hundred cars and dozens of livestock trailers. If HGV South is built, the total number of vehicles evacuating during the next fire will number in the thousands. Nationally renowned evacuation experts have analyzed the area and estimate it will take 7 hours to evacuate, but the fire arrives within an hour or two. This can only mean entrapment.

We cannot gamble with human lives just because a billionaire from Colorado throws a bunch of money at our fire district, our unions and our elected officials. Please vote no on Harmony Grove Village South or at least require a secondary access. Put community safety ahead of development interests.

Thank you for your leadership and for protecting the people you represent.

Sincerely,
Jorgine Ellerbrock

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Greg Kaczur](#)
To: [Lawson-Remer, Terra](#); [Anderson, Joel](#); [MontgomerySteppe, Monica](#); [Desmond, Jim](#); [Aguirre, Paloma x](#); [Potter, Andrew](#); [FGG, Public Comment](#); [Worlie, Paul](#); [LaVelle, Kyle](#); [Hayes, Andrew](#); [Yuen, Jeffrey](#); [Henson, Eric](#); [McDonald, Hunter](#); [Lynch, Dahvia](#); [Harbert, Amy](#); [Slovick, Mark](#); [efhgtc@gmail.com](#); [Lorenzana, Bianca](#); [Montagne, Sarah](#); [mcquead@rsf-fire.org](#); [ashcraft@rsf-fire.org](#); [hillgren@rsf-fire.org](#); [malin@rsf-fire.org](#); [stine@rsf-fire.org](#); [Nicoletti, Vince](#)
Subject: [External] Colorado Billionaire Shouldn't Decide Our Safety - Say No to HGVS
Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 5:56:10 PM

Dear Chair Lawson-Remer, board members and staff:

My family and myself have lived in Harmony Grove for 40 years. I'm a retired firefighter/ captain with over 30 years of experience. We've been through multiple big fires. It's just a matter of time before another event happens. During the 2014 Cocos Fire, the wind changed directions and about 30 homes burned, and it took us almost two hours just to get a few miles out. Back then, the village site was just dirt, and even that helped slow the flames. Roads were jammed even with far fewer cars.

Now Harmony Grove Village is built (the community actually testified in favor of the project back in 2011). We love our new neighbors, but evacuations are going to be seriously constricted: so many vehicles trying to get out on the same narrow roads. Years ago the County told us the safe place for growth was north of the creek, near the old egg ranch which is why we supported HGV. South of the creek was a dead-end fire-prone bowl unless there's a second way out. County even removed a proposed road to Del Dios Highway from the road plans. It's the main reason none of us can get insurance – we're surrounded by brush and no way out.

HGV South would add another 1000 cars onto the same routes that were gridlocked back in 2014. And to make things worse, the County felt it was ok to give a Colorado billionaire a waiver for secondary access in a bowl that has repeatedly caught fire throughout the years. The County never modeled a full community evacuation (even though we asked repeatedly); they looked only at the immediate project area. We had to fundraise and pay for an independent expert, and the verdict was sobering: entrapment is likely. His analysis showed that it would take seven hours or more to evacuate everyone, but fires arrive much sooner.

Our fire chief also recently acknowledged HGV South wouldn't pass today's standards without a secondary access. Please vote no on HGV South, or at least require real secondary access. Our safety has to come first.

Respectfully,
Greg Kaczur



Sent from my iPhone

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September 30, 2025

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Honorable Chair Lawson-Remer San
Diego County Board of Supervisors
1600 Pacific Highway,
County of San Diego
San Diego, CA 92123
E-Mail: PublicComment@sdcounty.ca.gov

Re: Board of Supervisors meeting October 1, 2025, Item 4 (HGV South)

Dear Honorable Chairperson Lawson-Remer and Board of Supervisors;

This firm represents RCS-Harmony Partners, LLC (RCS), the developer of a master-planned community commonly known as the “Harmony Grove Village South Project” (Project or HGV South) located within the Harmony Grove Subarea of the San Dieguito Community Plan Area. The County Board of Supervisors (Board) originally approved entitlements for the Project and certified the Project’s FEIR (2018 FEIR) on July 25, 2018. After several years of litigation, the Project entitlements and the accompanying revised FEIR (2025 RFEIR) will be reconsidered by the Board, at its Oct 1, 2025, meeting. The County of San Diego (County) Planning Commission recommended approval and certification of the documents, respectively on August 22, 2025.

The following information (Exhibit 1 herein) has been prepared to address the letters that have been received by the County opposing the Project and the various issues raised regarding the 2025 RFEIR. Most of the letters are largely duplicative of prior comments that were previously submitted during the course of its long history-since its original approval in 2018. For instance, one letter in particular re-submits letters provided by Elfin Forest Harmony Grove Town Council (EFHGTG)-hired

consultants that were provided in response to the original circulation of the Draft EIR in 2017. The vast majority of these commenters provide address issues related to fire safety and/or evacuation, a topic assessed by the California Court of Appeal as wholly settled.

Other letters appropriately respond to the August 2024 recirculation of greenhouse gases (GHG) data provided in Recirculated Subchapter 2.7 and Associated Documents. These have also been previously answered, with no new information being received during the public review period ending on October 7, 2024, through the Planning Commission Hearing date of August 22, 2025.

As fully explained by the County in the 2025 RFEIR, only the issues related to the Recirculated Subchapter 2.7 and Associated Documents are subject to further legal challenge and would be relevant for consideration; all other issues have been resolved. As detailed in the Project Global Responses: Res Judicata and New Information, and Lack of Need for Recirculation, no relevant new information was or has been provided in the numerous comment letters.

For purposes of the record, this additional response (Exhibit 1, attached and incorporated here) is provided to address the concerns raised by many of the letters provided to the Board of Supervisors before the public hearing, even though such matters were beyond the scope of the 2025 RFEIR.

Very truly yours,
NORTON MOORE & ADAMS



Ann Y. Moore

Enclosure

EXHIBIT 1

The letters addressed below were received post August 22. Where issues have already been fully addressed, it is so noted, together with the location of that information. Comments which currently provide slightly new or different statements are addressed below. ***No new issues have been raised that in any way would change FEIR conclusions as to impact significance under CEQA.***

Misstatements of Law/Inaccurate Allegations

False statements were made regarding Court of Appeal legal findings, developer redesign of the Project, and supposed irregular payments made by the developer.

Incorrect Statements Regarding Project Safety and Appeal Court Findings. Incorrect statements have been made that the Project “was found to be unsafe and was sent back to the developer to overcome the hazards. Other similar false statements include that “The prior Boards’s approval was overturned by the Court of Appeal for CEQA violations—**especially around wildfire evacuation, greenhouse gas emissions [GHG], and the lack of a required secondary access road.**”

The statements above are untrue. As addressed in Global Responses: Res Judicata and New Information, as well as 2024 Fire /Evacuation, the only two issues questioned by the Court of Appeal were the GHG mitigation measure under CEQA, and lack of affordable housing relative to General Plan consistency. Both of those issues have been fully resolved. With regard to safety, a mere ***sampling*** of what the Court of Appeal actually said was (emphases added):

[T]he Project would include a layered fire protection system designed to current codes with ‘site-specific measures that will result in a Project that is less susceptible to wildfire than surrounding landscapes and that would facilitate firefighter and medical aid response as well as project resident evacuation in a wildfire emergency. (Appellate Decision, page 35)

Further, the EIR and its supporting wildfire-related studies do not ignore a scenario where evacuation routes become unusable. The EIR and fire plan evaluate ‘the potential for impairment of a single road by vehicle congestion, condition of terrain, climatic conditions or other factors,’ explaining that the Project adopted an alternative approach to implement fire protection and evacuation measures that meets fire code requirements. Widening Country Club Drive was not the sole method to lessen the risks. The Project clusters residential development so as to minimize proximity of homes to wildland fuels and create a defensible perimeter; and the Project proposes a contingency plan for moving people to temporary refuge locations such as homes or the club house... (Appellate Decision, page 54-55).

We conclude the EIR’s discussion of evacuation routes and timing satisfies CEQA requirements (Appellate Decision, page 51).

Respondents' arguments concerning the analysis of evacuation times are unavailing. The EIR engaged in a calculation of the evacuation time on Country Club Drive using the capacity of vehicles per hour, in keeping with the formula set out in the County's Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan (Appellate Decision, page 53).

Because the safety analyses related to fire and evacuation were found adequate by the Court, the statement that the Project was returned for redesign are unfounded and untrue. No additional response is necessary on that point.

Additional more specific allegations regarding fire and evacuation comments are addressed in this letter under the heading "Fire Safety and Evacuation."

Voluntary Contributions. The statement regarding " 'voluntary contributions' made to the Fire District to get their support" is not factual and untrue. The \$850,000 amount referenced was *not* a voluntary contribution but actually represents a development fee (based on the estimated number of units) that any developer would pay as part of a fee program that is routinely applied to new projects. This amount has not been paid in advance and will be paid only if the Project is approved.

Fire Safety and Evacuation

The majority of comments received state incorrect or misconceived concerns that have proven incorrect after years of discussion by County experts on these topics. The following are the facts that have been litigated and resolved through years of litigation:

- secondary access *is not a mandatory* requirement in response to dead-end road length
- the Project has proven that it *cannot* provide secondary access
- beyond engineering constraints, surrounding homeowners continue to say no to even emergency access across their property (see letter from Coast Law Group)
- the Project complies with or exceeds all relevant current fire code requirements
- projected evacuation times have been addressed in the Evacuation Plan and confirmed by a third- party expert (Rohde) versus statements from a geologist from Utah who had not visited the site or surroundings prior to providing his estimates of evacuation timing
- the Project would improve both Country Club Drive (CCD)/Auto Park Way as well as CCD/Harmony Grove Road (HGR) intersections proving the statement false that "Country Club Drive would funnel traffic toward a 'limited -capacity intersection network'"
- CCD, HGR, and HGV Parkway are or would be widened with maintained and irrigated landscaping and therefore are not "narrow, vegetation-lined two-lane collectors"
- the Project is a fire-hardened master planned community consisting of fire hardened homes surrounded by a "sea" of fire-hardened, irrigated and maintained fuel modification zones (FMZs) and is not analogous or equivalent to only some "fire-hardened" homes that are typically isolated or surrounded by older and *not* fire-hardened homes

- the Project area is not at all similar to areas burned in the Camp, Pacific Palisades, Altadena, or Maui fires (and therefore would not be subject to the same effects)
- the Project’s location has been clearly identified as within a VHFHSZ , and appropriately addressed through application of Chapter 7A and other design features that have been reviewed and accepted by fire agencies
- location within a VHFHSZ indicates hazard as opposed to risk, or potential impacts
- the Project site has been clearly identified as within a wildland urban interface (WUI); and appropriately analyzed as such in the EIR
- the Project is not commercial in nature, nor would it site structures “on the top of steep hills” or in particularly rough topography
- the potential for increased human-caused ignitions has been previously and adequately addressed
- the Project is a new compact, fire-hardened community with irrigated FMZs that cannot be compared to less dense development that has been characterized as leading to increased wildfire ignitions
- the Project is not located with a “bowl”
- the Project has thoroughly addressed large animal evacuation and has addressed such evacuations even though large animals will not be allowed in this development

Although unrelated to the focus of Project recirculation, each of these issues was extensively addressed and clarified in 2018 responses to comments and/or Global Response: 2024 Fire / Evacuation, as well as in individual responses to comments as appropriate that are posted to the County Project website. These include not only the comments received during public review ending on October 7 during GHG recirculation, but also additional late comments filed through January 2025. *Most recently*, these issues were addressed in the letter to the Board addressing the letters received or comments made August 19 through 22, 2025, immediately prior to and during the Planning Commission hearing.

Attorney General’s Guidelines. Specifically related to the Attorney General’s Guidelines, note that the FEIR Global Response: 2024 Fire / Evacuation addressed the Attorney General Guidelines in full. In terms of their intended use the Attorney General Guidelines state (emphasis added):

*This document **does not impose additional requirements** on local governments or alter any applicable laws or regulations. Rather, it is intended to **provide guidance** on some of the issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be considered during the environmental review process (AG Guidance Document, Introduction page 2).*

As explained in the global response, the Guidelines ***are in fact guidelines, they are not requirements.*** Local decision-making agencies also determine what is acceptable for evacuation plan content and it varies by jurisdiction (RFEIR page 8-174). The AG’s best practices are meant to be “guidance” designed to help lead agencies to comply with CEQA when considering projects

in wildfire-prone areas. In any event, San Diego County has been far ahead of the curve in terms of these requirements for almost two decades. The County's locally relevant policies and guidelines provide the best practices for evaluating and mitigating wildfire exposure and risk as applicable in the Project context. Please refer to Global Response: 2024 Fire / Evacuation, which discusses the AG Guidelines.

In other words, this document has no legal effect. Instead, the Appellate Court, the final arbitrator of the legal adequacy of such matters, determined that the 2018 FEIR was CEQA-compliant concerning wildfire-related impacts. Therefore, this information is not material or significant, and res judicata applies to this comment. In addition, recirculation under CEQA Guidelines Section 15088.5 is not required. For the sake of discussion, even if the AG Guidelines were given the same weight as the law (which is not the case), res judicata would still apply. The same issues that were unsuccessfully raised in the previous lawsuit cannot be raised again, by using the AG Guidance Document as a pretext for doing so. This would allow the same parties in the last litigation to reassert the same CEQA issues about the same project involving the same FEIR and the same findings based solely on a guidance document.

Most importantly, as explained below, the AG Guidance Document does not raise any issues that have not already been considered and analyzed in the 2018 FEIR. Although the guidance is in no way binding, the Project's fire-related analyses are consistent with it.

The Guidance document calls out mitigation considerations to apply to building design and defensible space, which would reduce likelihood of fires within projects, as well as the risk of them spreading beyond Project boundaries. In fact, the buffer concept developed by CAL Fire had the original mission of protecting open space and keeping fires from spreading into wildlands. This includes clustered development and substantial buffers. As described in the point-by-point analysis of the Guidance in Global Response: 2024 Fire / Evacuation, the Project is consistent with the Guidance, and in fact proposes measures above and beyond what is recommended. It is also noted that over certain densities, ignitions go down. Anecdotally, the clustered HGV project has been inhabited since 2015. No wildfires are known to have started there. This is borne out by Syphard et al. 2007:

...it appears that when human population density and development reach a certain threshold density, ignitions decline, and this is likely the result of diminished and highly fragmented open space with fuels insufficient to sustain fire. In addition, above a certain population threshold, fire suppression resources are likely to be more concentrated in the WUI.

The Project resembles these characteristics and is therefore unlikely to result in increased fire frequency.

Some commenters contend, as previously stated in their arguments against the 2018 FEIR, that the density of this Project increases the fire risk. Now, these same opponents are basing the same

arguments on “extensive research done on California fire structure loss.” They incorrectly contend that closely spaced homes are at the most risk; potential for new construction, landscaping, and fuel breaks promote flammable invasive grass growth; absence of viable protection if evacuation fails; potential for additional homes to “overwhelm emergency services;” that the Project proposes updates to “a single lane bridge” in place of potential secondary access; that congestion experienced from Citracado to Del Dios in the morning, or an accident on I-15 can back up Citracado to Harmony Grove and that is a concern for trying to get out during evacuations; that up to five hour evacuations may occur in San Elijo Hills even with the “benefit of wide roads with multiple lanes;” and that “a lot more new businesses with potential hazardous materials” have been added to the area. A statement is also made that the Project barely met “the 2018 standards.” A final related note is concern over a phrase reported as made at the Elfin Forest Harmony Grove Town Council community meeting on September 17 by a “Deputy Chief” that “you better get used to sheltering in place because evacuation is not likely to be safe.” These concerns are briefly addressed here.

Closely spaced homes and promotion of invasive grass growth. Regarding closely spaced homes, it should be understood that closely spaced homes like those in the Palisades wildfire in January 2025 are indeed more likely to result in home-to-home ignitions. ***This is due to the vulnerability of those structures that were not built to ignition resistant standards and do not include interior sprinklers.*** However, most of the accepted research acknowledges that higher density, clustered buildings built to the ignition-resistant standards like the Project, that is required in fire hazard severity zones, with defensible space, result in extremely low incidents of damage and are recommended by the Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (formerly California Office of Research and Planning), as noted in their Fire Hazard Planning Technical Advisory. The clustered pattern allows for a larger agricultural buffer (or green spaces and fuel modification zones) “between the development and wildlands, requires less fire suppression resources, and is easier to defend” (Moritz and Butsic 2020). Further, the California Attorney General’s Office in their Wildfire Planning Guidance state (emphasis added):

Project Density: *Project density influences how likely a fire is to start or spread, and how likely it is that the development and its occupants will be in danger when a fire starts. Local governments should strive to increase housing density and consolidate design.*

Concerns over the growth of flammable invasive grass species following development ***do not apply*** to HGV South as all disturbed areas would be converted to non-vegetation land covers or would be part of actively maintained landscapes and fuel modification zones (FMZs), which would not enable establishment and proliferation of invasive grasses. Project implementation would result in a substantially **less flammable** vegetative setting than currently exists.

As shown on FEIR Table 1-1, *Project Landscape Palette*, the only relevant plants (Cucamonga brome, Tomcat clover, and small fescue) in a non-irrigated area would be used for short-term pad

stabilization following grading (which would, in and of itself, remove potentially flammable vegetation). ***The Project's fuel modification buffers would be in place prior to grading and would present a buffer between wildland areas and the graded pads during the period from pad creation to build out.*** Following implementation, the developed footprint of the Project would consist of either fire-hardened structures, or irrigated areas, with the Project surrounded by substantial fuel management zones. Just a few relevant passages are provided here from the Fire Protection Plan (FPP). As stated on pages 38 and 49, respectively, of the FPP:

Landscaping would be inspected annually and maintained on an ongoing basis. Plan and landscape review would be by Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District's [RSFFPD's] Fire Prevention Specialist/Urban Forester. This would assure that the use of highly flammable species is prohibited and that appropriate plant densities would be maintained.

Plants used in the fuel modification areas or landscapes will include drought-tolerant, fire resistive trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. The plantings will be consistent with RSFFPD's Suggested Plant List for Defensible Space (Appendix I). The intent of the list is to provide examples of plants that are less prone to ignite or spread flames to other vegetation and combustible structures during a wildfire.

The conclusion, as stated on page 55 of the FPP is (emphasis added): “The requirements in this document meet or exceed fire safety, building design elements, ***fuel management/modification, and landscaping recommendations*** of the applicable codes.”

Viable Protection if Evacuation Fails. The commenters set up scenarios that are not assumed by the emergency agencies responsible for evacuation and protecting life during wildfires. They state, for example, that “there are no U.S. population-level SIP [shelter in place] standards for WUI fires, and no operational evidence that thousands of residents could survive entrapment inside standard homes.” First, absence of a specific standard does not mean that a package of carefully compiled features will fail to provide a safe haven. The statement is immaterial to the reality of analysis. RSFFPD established the first designated Shelter in Place communities and they have been tested by wildfire (e.g., 2007 Witch Creek Fire) and performed as designed with virtually no structural damage. HGV South follows the design and fire protection features and ***actually exceeds them in some key areas*** so that it, too, could offer the contingency option of on-site, temporary refuge if considered safer than evacuation. However, like the five shelter in place communities, HGV South would prioritize evacuation. Second, the commenters throw out a red herring, stating that community members “could not survive entrapment inside standard homes.” The fire professionals working on this Project agree that that is not a good strategy. Sheltering inside older community homes, however, ***is not*** what is proposed by the Project, *or* by the RSFFPD evacuation plans. Rather, if a fire is moving too fast or suddenly shifts direction and evacuation is judged unsafe, people with “standard” homes are directed to refuge locations identified in existing plans. It is assumed that Harmony Grove residents will shelter at HGV South (should the Project be built),

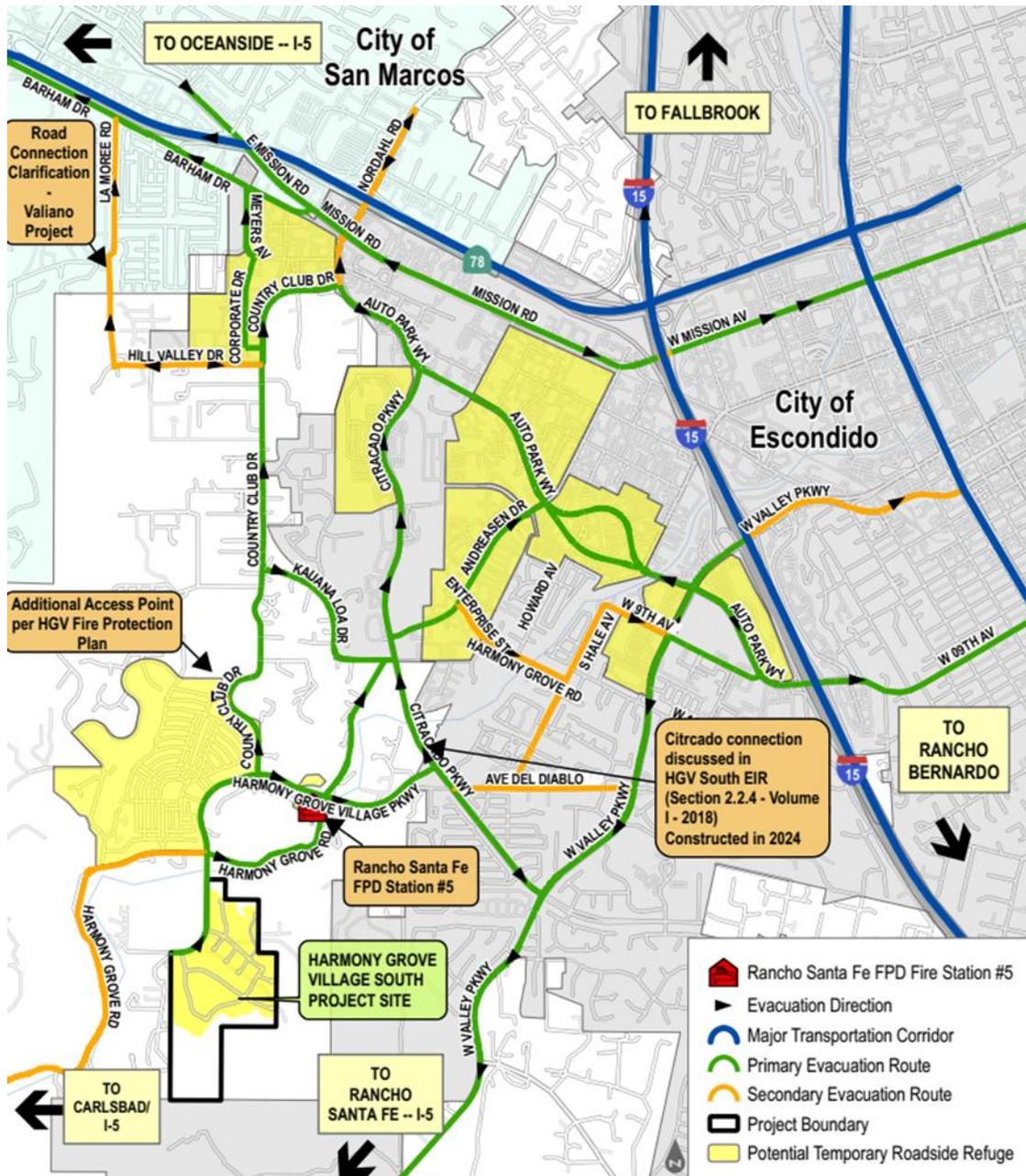
existing HGV, or the developed areas in adjacent cities, as clearly shown on the evacuation planning graphic included in multiple HGV South documents (see depiction on the next page). As such, the overall plan addresses the community as a whole, and not just individuals.

Although not formally designated a shelter in place community, the Project is designed to be fire-hardened and would provide a place of temporary refuge if emergency professionals decide staying on site is preferable to evacuation. As noted throughout prior evacuation and temporary refuge discussions of the 2018 FEIR, community members would be welcome to temporarily refuge at HGV South, just as they are currently directed to HGV and other refuge areas identified on the evacuation schematic below.

Emergency Services. Project implementation would not overwhelm emergency services. The 2018 FEIR addressed public services in Section 3.1.8, *Public Services*, which reviewed potential impacts to both fire responders and police service levels. As noted in the subchapter, No significant impacts were identified for fire or police protection services. As concluded on page 3.1.8- 10, development would not result in adverse effects:

beyond the incremental impacts usually addressed through the payment of developer fees, taxes or service fees. These would reduce the proposed Project's impacts to below a level of significance because these requirements would ensure that the districts would have adequate funds to provide for upgraded facilities in accordance with their improvement plans in a timely manner, and allow for retention of emergency services provision at levels of service consistent with comparable areas in the County.

Update to a single-lane bridge rather than secondary access. This comment is confusing. It misstates the Project plans. The current infrastructure being improved is an Arizona crossing of a creek. **The Project would build a three-lane bridge with associated amenities** in place of an at-grade crossing and would connect that to a three-lane plus additional improvements of Country Club Drive where it abuts Project frontage.



Congestion Effects/Anticipated Length of Evacuation in San Elijo Hills. The comments are noted, but not determinative of conclusions. First, routine congestion is understood and irritating. It does not, however, necessarily reflect concerns for evacuation. Those events are handled separately from normal traffic flow patterns, with roads closed and roads opened up to accommodate evacuation patterns as directed by emergency managers. Relative to potential time frame of evacuations (regardless of location); although potentially uncomfortable, the goal of evacuation is to get everyone out alive.

As indicated by the San Diego County Sheriff's Department (SDCSD) during the HGV South Planning Commission Hearing (Planning Commission Hearing [https://sdcounty.granicus.com/player/clip/2657?view_id=12&redirect=true] at approximately 4 hours 37 minutes), SDCSD is confident it can evacuate HGV and the Elfin Forest area. They indicated that evacuations are not comfortable and that there is confusion and waiting. It is understood that waiting to be moved may engender a sense of unease, but as an active participant, it is not possible to evaluate the overall considerations taken into account by emergency professionals. Although some evacuees may not be moving, SDCSD indicates that they would be directed to move if they were considered at high risk. Movement in any one lane or route may be halted while another area at higher risk is moved with priority.

In fact, Captain Brown's testimony specifically noted his having faced "far greater challenges" and completed successful evacuations in areas that were not "adjacent to 'city-ish' property." For context, while contrasting the Harmony Grove location with other evacuations, Captain Brown specifically noted that: "It's a mile or two to get you to a concrete jungle. That is a lot different than taking you 20 miles through wilderness or down Wildcat Canyon Road." Even closer than the "concrete jungle," are a number of the identified refuge sites, shown on the depiction above.

New Businesses. No location or specifics were given, and this comment is not understood. Excluding industrial uses in the developed urban commercial/industrial zones in Escondido, such uses are speculative at best. New business uses have been proposed for the northern extent of Country Club Drive (Solaris and Seguro projects). It is possible that the commenter is alluding to these as Solaris (a light industrial/commercial project) and the Seguro project (a battery storage facility). A third possibility is the Yoz project, proposed to be a multi-use facility offering religious services, mortuary, and other related services. That facility would be located across the street from the Harmony Grove Fire Station, off of HGV Parkway. None of these projects has been built, and review is either still ongoing or has been paused. As stated in Global Response: 2024 Fire / Evacuation:

For all three projects, if any one (or all) of these projects is approved, the restrictive design and operational requirements would result in there being no significant and unmitigated impacts. If a project fails to meet safety requirements, the County could deny the project, and no effect (even a less than significant one) would occur.

2018 Standards. The statement that the Project "barely meets the 2018 standards from when the [P]roject first was voted on" is absolutely untrue. It has been consistently demonstrated (refer to Volume III of the FEIR and specifically Global Response: 2024 Fire / Evacuation) that the Project continues to meet **or exceed** all relevant **current** Fire Code requirements. There is also a definitive discussion of this in the September 30, 2025, letter provided to the Board regarding comments received prior to Planning Commission.

Sprawl / (Incorrect) Anticipated Increase in VMT / Lack of Transit

General topics previously addressed in detailed responses to comments received following the 2024 recirculation of Subchapter 2.7 and Associated Documents include:

- inapplicability of the 2024 Climate Action Plan Fire Safe and Vehicle Miles Traveled alternative
- the County’s use of a traffic impact methodology allowed under CEQA at the time of EIR completion was consistent with CEQA and does not require analysis under subsequent new standards, such as VMT under the County’s Transportation Study Guidelines
- Although the infill analysis provided in Subchapter 2.7 was based on a methodology that was subsequently eliminated, the location of the Project and surrounding land uses discussed are not in doubt
- The Project is consistent with the 2022 CARB guidance, as analyzed in the 2025 FEIR

The argument about VMT in relation to the CAP is *much ado about nothing* because the Project mitigates to net zero. The commenter is fixated on VMT as a CAP measure. However, the 2025 RFEIR illustrates that the Project’s GHG emissions **would avoid 100 percent of the emissions** on annual basis starting in year one, which delivers 2045 neutrality from day one. ***This includes emissions related to Project construction and operation, and Project-related transportation sources.*** This Project would therefore far exceed the CAP goals. Since the CAP does not require zero net GHG emissions the Project would be far more conservative than what the CAP would otherwise allow.

Specifically relevant to the Fire Safe and Vehicle Miles Traveled Alternative, the FEIR notes that, as stated in the CAP Update (CAP Final SEIR at 5-25 [emphasis added]):

*[B]ecause the County would not prohibit development of properties outside of the fire safe and VMT efficient overlay, it is assumed for the purpose of this analysis that half of the growth that would have occurred outside of the overlay would instead be developed in these areas. Although the Board “adopted” this Alternative, staff would need to “integrate” the Alternative into existing, ongoing planning efforts within Planning & Development Services, such as the Sustainable Land Use Framework. This could involve new technical studies, program development, outreach, and environmental review to support incorporation of the Alternative into existing County programs and initiatives as a component (Statement of Proceeding, Minutes of the September 11, 2024, meeting of the Board). At this point, the integration and final form of the Alternative have yet to be finalized. In any event, the assertion that the Project conflicts with the adopted CAP policies is incorrect. **The Project does not conflict with the CAP and will not have a significant impact on GHG emissions because once mitigated it will have net zero emissions.***

Also as stated on FEIR pages 8-128 and -129;

Several comments state the Project should have conducted a VMT analysis because of the County's adoption of the 2022 TSG. Although the new CEQA Guidelines for VMT became effective in 2020 under SB 743, it would not be considered significant "new information" because the underlying information was otherwise known or should have been known when the 2018 FEIR was certified. (Olen Properties Corp v. City of Newport Beach, 93 CA5th at 280-281.) In Olen Properties Corp, the court held the change in the CEQA Guidelines from level of service to VMT was not significant new information because the underlying issue was known when the Olen EIR was prepared in 2006. The court explained that CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3 (the section requiring use of VMT to analyze traffic impacts) operates "prospectively" and subsequent changes to the guidelines are not "new information" triggering a subsequent EIR. Otherwise, the court reasoned, any change to the CEQA Guidelines would trigger the preparation of an EIR for every project. Similarly, the issuance of new GHG threshold guidelines did not constitute significant new information because the underlying information related to GHG emissions was otherwise known or should have been known since the 1990s. (Concerned Dublin Citizens v. City of Dublin, 214 Cal.App.4th at 1319, 1320. See also Citizens for Responsible Equitable Environmental Development (CREED) v. City of San Diego [2011] 196 Cal.App.4th 532) [the court found that the effects of GHG on climate change were known or could have been discovered with the exercise of reasonable diligence for an EIR initially certified in the early 1990s].)

The commenter's statement that *Olen Properties Corp v. City of Newport Beach* does not apply here because the case was based on a supplemental EIR, misses the point. As stated in *Olen*, VMT was known since 2006, the same commenter could have raised the issue of VMT, and in fact did, as related to GHG, but this issue has been resolved. In other words, *res judicata*, applies. Moreover, new CEQA guidelines, whether GHG or VMT, do not trigger a supplemental or subsequent EIR because the courts have consistently determined new guidelines are not new information. Similarly, for purposes of *res judicata*, this is not new information. The commenter and the public have had ample opportunity, and did, raise this issue in prior litigation.

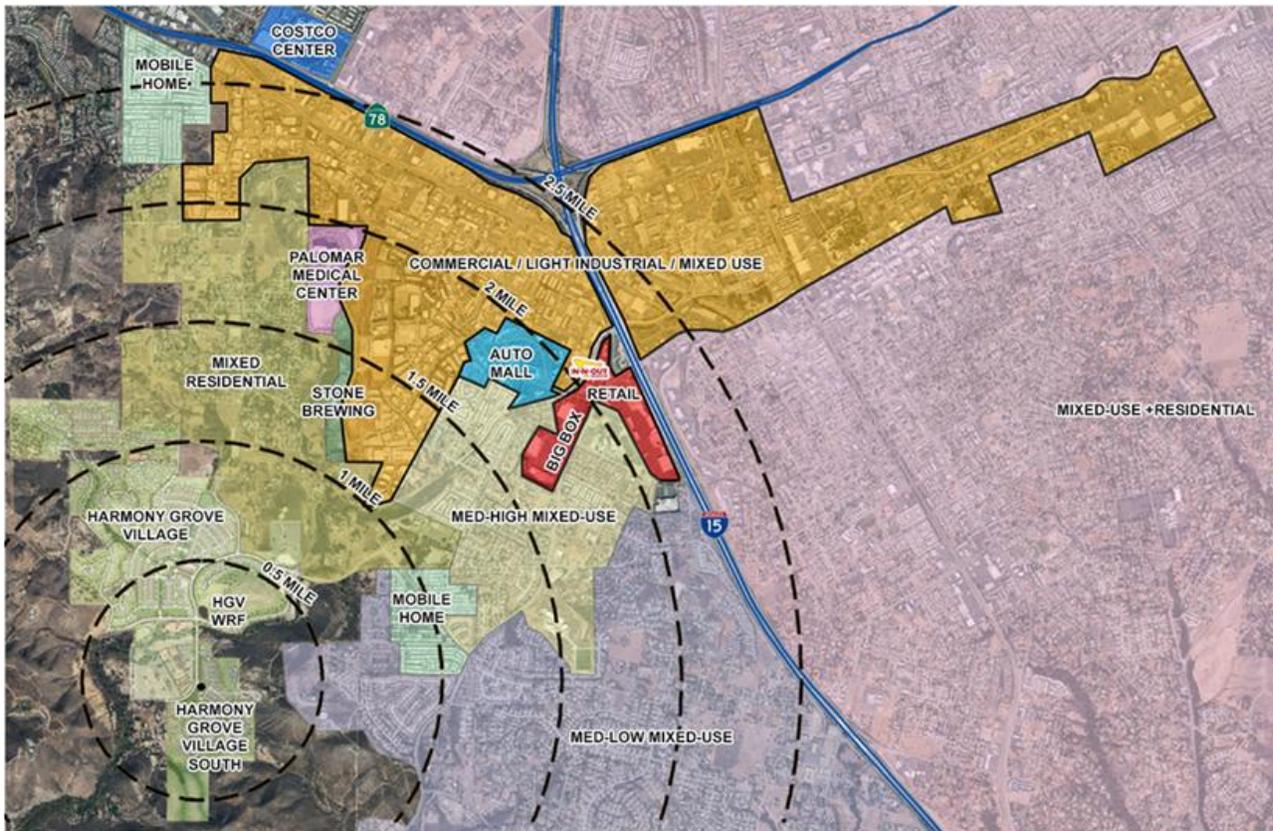
Comments stated that the Project's VMT is "significantly higher than the County-wide average" and that the Project would lead to increased driving distances or sprawl, which would subsequently undo the "hard work done by the County on the CAP." One comment also notes that there is no public transit to the site. In a comment related to greenhouse gas emissions, one commenter notes that the County's natural landscape onsite is a "carbon sink."

Sprawl / VMT. The contention that the Project would either lead to, or constitute an element of, sprawl, has been repeatedly debunked. This has been discussed exhaustively in global responses

prepared for the Project in 2018 (Project Consistency with General Plan Policy LU-1.4 and General Plan/Community Plan Amendments CEQA Impact Analysis) as well as in the 2025 FEIR Global Response: Res Judicata and New Information, and, of course, in numerous individual responses to comments.

At this point, before moving on to address the VMT element, a single graphic (included in both the 2028 and 2025 FEIRs) is being provided below. This clearly shows that the Project is not removed from development, but rather, it shares boundaries with areas already containing developed lots, in close proximity to urban resources.

Project VMT has been litigated and is now precluded from further argument per the principle of res judicata. It is noted, however, that it was identified as slightly below the regional average based on the TIA. As discussed throughout the RFEIR and responses to prior comments, the Project is consistent with County and regional land use plans and policies addressing VMT and sprawl.



As noted by the Court of Appeal:

[W]e must conclude the Project is consistent: the EIR evaluated the associated land uses; reflects County's effort to move future development closer to cities, shopping and employment centers; shows the Project is consistent with vehicle mileage projections; and encourages local walking in keeping with the plan (Appellate Decision, page 66).

Related statements that an increase in VMT will lead to greater carbon (GHG) emissions and significant climate change impacts are also unfounded. As provided in Subchapter 2.7, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, of the RFEIR, the Project would result in net-zero GHG emissions via offset of Project emissions with new solar energy, as required by mitigation measure M-GHG-1. Statements that the Project will “generate more GHGs than it is claiming it can offset” are unsubstantiated and do not provide relevant details to which a response can be provided – the RFEIR demonstrates there would be no net increase in GHG emissions with Project implementation.

Although the Project is not being processed under the CAP, it is in no way inconsistent with it. This has been discussed in detail in recirculated Subchapter 2.7, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, as well as in responses to comments. The lack of issues associated with VMT; the proximity to goods, services, and jobs; and the effect of net zero GHG emissions means that the Project would not have an adverse effect on County implementation of the CAP.

Public Transit. Statements that there is no public transit service to the Project site are immaterial as the FEIR claims no reduction in Project trips or VMT based on transit. The Project site is in the vicinity (within 3 miles) of the Nordahl Road station. It is beyond the Project’s purview to bring transit service to the Project site. Nonetheless, the Project would reserve a turnout for a future bus stop at the Center House in the event service is extended to this area in the future. The Project will also include two electric vehicles as an amenity of the HOA for residents to use and could potentially use to commute to the nearby Nordahl Road station.

Vegetation Removal and CO₂. The comment identifying natural vegetation as a “carbon sink” alludes to loss of sequestration, or the amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂) removed from the atmosphere by vegetation. The Project has accounted for this, and would plant 2,045 trees, a number substantially in excess of trees currently on site. As stated on page 2.7-26 of the FEIR (emphasis added):

*Development under the Proposed Project would also result in changes in CO₂ sequestration from the atmosphere. By removing existing vegetation, the Project would result in a one-time carbon exchange. Emissions from this land use change have been estimated according to the IPCC protocol for vegetation. It should be noted that the **loss of sequestered carbon estimate would be offset as the Proposed Project would also plant new landscape trees** which would sequester additional carbon through each growth cycle, **resulting in increasing amounts of sequestered carbon each year for the life of the tree.***

Increased Traffic / Degradation of Quality of Life

Concern was voiced over exacerbation of traffic issues based on addition of 453 homes.

Traffic is not one of the issues addressed in 2024 recirculation, and as such, is beyond the scope of these comments. It is noted, however, that the Project traffic analysis was found adequate during the CEQA challenge to this Project. Some points of clarification are provided, however. As

discussed in 2018 FEIR Subchapter 2.2, *Transportation/Traffic*, excluding even for the segment of SR-78 west of Nordahl Road, which would operate at an unacceptable LOS in the Existing Plus Cumulative Plus Project scenario, Project traffic in conjunction with cumulative traffic along this segment would not exceed the applicable significance criteria. Notably, ***all traffic impacts to roadway segments analyzed in the 2018 FEIR are calculated to operate at acceptable level of service (LOS) D or better with identified mitigation.*** It is also noted as a point of clarification that the Project would not add 4,500 daily trips to area roadways as conservatively analyzed in the Project *Traffic Impact Analysis*. TIA Attachment H documents a reduction in trips from 4,500 (a conservative estimate at the time based on an assumption that 450 single family residences could be constructed), to a more accurate 4,010 trips based on the current Project description proposing 193 single-family residences (generating 1,930 ADT) and 260 multi-family residences (generating 2,080 ADT). ***Project assessed impacts would therefore be lower than identified, although no change is proposed to required mitigation.***

Linking traffic to quality of life is noted. As stated above, the Project would adequately (in fact, conservatively based on the lower number of anticipated trips) mitigate for increased use of roads. Hot spots would not be generated, and traffic flow would be maintained at acceptable levels. This would continue to allow access for County residents to regional opportunities for employment, shopping, medical services, entertainment, etc., contributing to a high level of quality of life.

Noise on Avenida del Diablo

One commenter asserts that additional traffic from HGV has generated significant noise impacts along Avenida Del Diablo and “constructing more homes” (presumably referring to the Proposed Project) would generate “unbearable” traffic and noise for residents east of Harmony Grove.

Based on County criteria for traffic analysis, the Project TIA assessed “roads and intersections that will receive 25 peak hour trips (two-way peak hour total).” Avenida Del Diablo would not receive this level of Project-generated trips and was not assessed. The Avenida Del Diablo intersection with Citracado Parkway was assessed in the TIA based on County criteria and no significant impact to the operation of this intersection was identified. Project impacts to traffic noise were considered based on the TIA-studied roadway segments. Where traffic contributions to area roadways did not result in a traffic effect, substantial increases in Project-related off-site traffic noise similarly would not occur.

Biological Resources

A few comments were received on issues related to biological resources, including general concerns over loss of native vegetation and animal species. These concerns were all addressed via survey, and impact and mitigation identification as appropriate in the Project *Biological Technical Report* (BTR) as well as the 2018 FEIR (and both 2018 and 2015 responses to comments). Specific statements addressed concern over a “priority conservation area in the MSCP [Multiple species Conservation Program]” division of important wildlife habitat, disruption of a wildlife corridor,

threatening the (incorrectly described) “pristine nature” of the creek, and location of the Project adjacent to lands with least Bell’s vireo (LBV), California gnatcatcher (CAGN), southwestern willow flycatcher SWWF), and southwestern pond turtle. All of these topics were previously addressed in the 2018 FEIR, litigated and resolved by the courts.

MSCP, Wildlife Habitat, Wildlife Corridor. The Project identifies adequate mitigation in accordance with County requirements as well as Draft MSCP North County Plan ratios for mitigation. As such, the Project would contribute to, rather than adversely affect, existing conservation efforts.

The Project site is identified as pre-approved mitigation area (PAMA) in the Draft MSCP North County Plan. As discussed in FEIR Subchapter 2.3, *Biological Resources*, however, these areas of the site do not substantially contribute to the conservation targets for the local area. This is because site areas mapped as PAMA do not contain resources that would substantially contribute to the conservation targets for the local area. In fact, following an on-site resource agency visit, ***recommendations in the joint U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife letter focus on off-site mitigation*** areas rather than proposing retention of existing site conditions.

The Project would not substantially interfere with wildlife movement. As discussed on FEIR page 2.3-49:

The southern portions of the site facilitate east-west wildlife movement and the eastern boundary of the site facilitates north-south movement. Wildlife also move east-west within the Escondido Creek corridor just to the north of the site. The existing residential uses and construction of HGV development limits wildlife connectivity to the north, east, and west. The Project would conserve 34.8 acres of land in the southern portion of the site in a BOS easement, thus continuing to allow for wildlife to access the Project site from the south, east, and west. The Project further includes landscaped slopes and thinned-native habitat within the fuel modification zones along the eastern boundary of the site, thereby conserving some north-south movement functions

Project implementation would not result in long-term adverse effects on the creek. In fact, as a result of Project action, benefits would accrue to Escondido Creek relative to flow and elimination of invasive non-native species.. HGV South would provide a missing piece to up- and down-stream improvements of the overall Creek. Replacement of the Arizona crossing with a new bridge and implementation of Project restoration would locally provide an enhanced and contiguous Creek corridor. Removal of invasives and re-habilitation with native species would expand extent, and improve quality and function of native habitat, and improvements would support east-west connectivity and movement of animal/bird species, separating terrestrial wildlife moving along the creek from vehicles.

Beyond that, removal of existing creek fill would eliminate an existing “sink” area that traps pollutants washing down from upstream; the new bridge would eliminate existing pollutant sources (from people, vehicles, pets, trash) associated with the current at grade crossing, and making the flow channel wider would return this location to more natural flow conditions and allow for lateral dispersion and enhanced floodplain processes. (Creek width would not be so narrow – this would help alleviate scour, erosion, downcutting, and other processes resulting from previous channelization etc. that have affected the creek’s natural hydrology)

Sensitive Species. Although the precise concerns related to the noted species are not identified, it is noted that the Biological Technical Report (BTR) addresses sensitive species, and they were also discussed in the 2018 FEIR as appropriate. Impacts were identified for both CAGN and LBV. For CAGN, impacts were assessed based on encroachment into habitat used by a breeding pair in the eastern part of the Project. For LBV, it was noted that LBV were known from the creek, but no birds were noted within the Project footprint. For both species, all the County categories of review were completed (e.g., direct, or indirect impact [e.g., night lighting], nesting success, foraging, and potential for cumulative impacts). Mitigation was identified as appropriate, and update confirmation surveys would be completed if the Project is approved. Potential impacts were identified as less than significant following mitigation.

Relative to SWWF, Appendix D (Special Status Animal Species Potential to Occur) to the BTR documented ‘very little potential habitat’ within Escondido Creek to the north of the Project, and that the creek was unlikely to support the species. The species was not identified during field surveys. For the pond turtle, it was noted that suitable aquatic habitat occurs to the north of the site along Escondido Creek; however, the habitat is of low quality. The species was not identified during field surveys and the potential to occur was considered low.

It is noted that Goal 4 of the MSCP to: protect the Escondido Creek Floodplain for water quality and sensitive species (with Southwestern pond turtle and LBV specifically named) and to maintain natural flow regimes. The consistency analysis in Appendix G determined that

The Project has been specifically designed to avoid the Escondido Creek floodplain, with avoidance buffers of 100 feet from the edge of riparian canopy protected by an additional 100 feet of limited building zone easement, for a total setback of 200 feet. The Project would enhance the biological and hydrologic function of Escondido Creek at the Country Club Drive crossing to a condition superior to what currently exists.

This is consistent with the benefits to the creek and species described above.

From: [Matt Beaurain](#)
To: [Lawson-Remer, Terra](#); [Anderson, Joel](#); [MontgomerySteppe, Monica](#); [Desmond, Jim](#); [Aguirre, Paloma x](#); [Potter, Andrew](#); [FGG, Public Comment](#); [Worlie, Paul](#); [LaVelle, Kyle](#); [Hayes, Andrew](#); [Yuen, Jeffrey](#); [Henson, Eric](#); [McDonald, Hunter](#); [Lynch, Dahvia](#); [Harbert, Amy](#); [Slovick, Mark](#); [efhgtc@gmail.com](#); [Lorenzana, Bianca](#); [Montagne, Sarah](#); [mcquead@rsf-fire.org](#); [ashcraft@rsf-fire.org](#); [hillgren@rsf-fire.org](#); [malin@rsf-fire.org](#); [stine@rsf-fire.org](#); [Nicoletti, Vince](#)
Subject: [External] Prioritize Safety
Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 8:39:51 PM

Dear Members of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to you as a concerned resident and environmentalist regarding the proposed Harmony Grove Village South project. I urge you to reject this development, as it epitomizes urban sprawl that threatens to undo all the hard work the County has done on its Climate Action Plan and its efforts to limit sprawl and encourage infill.

The project is not served by transit and will increase the county's Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) as it is significantly higher than the County-wide average. And it will generate more GHGs than it is claiming it can offset. In addition, during the next wildfire, the potential for gridlock will pose a serious risk to the nearby communities. Independent experts have shown that, due to inadequate secondary egress, it poses a serious entrapment risk. This is absolutely unacceptable in view of the recent Palisades and Altadena evacuation catastrophes.

Increased VMT and driving distances will lead to greater carbon emissions, more sprawl and further contribute to climate change. The community itself is mostly rural, known for its wildlife, open space reserves, and natural beauty. We must protect areas like this from irresponsible developments that prioritize profit over public safety and ecological integrity.

Additionally, the site is listed as a Priority Conservation Area in the Multiple Species Conservation Area (MSCP) North draft. It is directly adjacent to lands supporting state and federal endangered least Bell's vireo, federally threatened coastal California gnatcatcher, the endangered Southwestern Willow flycatcher and near the Escondido Creek which supports the proposed federal threatened status Southwestern pond turtle.

The position of this project within the wildland urban interface (WUI) flies in the face of a wide body of research that shows that these are the communities that suffer the most losses during wildfire events. This community has already experienced the devastating effects of wildfires numerous times over the years (most recently, the Cocos Fire), with limited evacuation infrastructure.

I strongly urge you to consider the long-term implications of approving the Harmony Grove Village South project.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

From: nicolebeaurain@gmail.com
To: [Lawson-Remer, Terra](#); [Anderson, Joel](#); [MontgomerySteppe, Monica](#); [Desmond, Jim](#); [Aguirre, Paloma x](#); [Potter, Andrew](#); [FGG, Public Comment](#); [Worlie, Paul](#); [LaVelle, Kyle](#); [Hayes, Andrew](#); [Yuen, Jeffrey](#); [Henson, Eric](#); [McDonald, Hunter](#); [Lynch, Dahvia](#); [Harbert, Amy](#); [Slovick, Mark](#); efhgtc@gmail.com; [Lorenzana, Bianca](#); [Montagne, Sarah](mailto:Montagne_Sarah); mcquead@rsf-fire.org; ashcraft@rsf-fire.org; hillgren@rsf-fire.org; malin@rsf-fire.org; stine@rsf-fire.org; [Nicoletti, Vince](#)
Subject: [External] Prioritize Safety
Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 8:45:09 PM

Dear Members of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors,

I am writing to you as a concerned resident and environmentalist regarding the proposed Harmony Grove Village South project. I urge you to reject this development, as it epitomizes urban sprawl that threatens to undo all the hard work the County has done on its Climate Action Plan and its efforts to limit sprawl and encourage infill.

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The position of this project within the wildland urban interface (WUI) flies in the face of a wide body of research that shows that these are the communities that suffer the most losses during wildfire events. This community has already experienced the devastating effects of wildfires numerous times over the years (most recently, the Cocos Fire), with limited evacuation infrastructure.

I strongly urge you to consider the long-term implications of approving the Harmony Grove Village South project.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Nicole Beaurain

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Maryann Anderson](#)
To: [FGG, Public Comment](#)
Subject: [External] Add to official public file
Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 11:20:55 PM
Attachments: [Video.mov](#)

[RSF FIRE CHIEF McQuead goes on record](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/100064762806252/posts/pfbid0grrV5PcucaUCyJSbDHO6mvJ9fp3qquRZj2LWyTgzDwHhVbzf4FbBZt4tkyVSwTb5l/?mibextid=wwXlfr>