



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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**DATE:** May 7, 2025

**03**

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

### SUBJECT

**GILLESPIE FIELD DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL: TENTH AMENDMENT TO THE JOINT EXERCISE OF POWERS AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO AND THE CITY OF EL CAJON CREATING THE GILLESPIE FIELD DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AND RELATED CEQA FINDING (DISTRICT: 2)**

### OVERVIEW

On March 19, 1974 (70), the Board approved the “Resolution Approving Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Between the County of San Diego and the City of El Cajon Creating an Agency to be Known as the Gillespie Field Development Council (GFDC),” The GFDC was developed to serve as an advisory board overseeing the implementation of the Airport Master Plan for Gillespie Field and supporting the creation of consistent priorities, policies, and standards to apply to development within the Gillespie Field area. Furthermore, the GFDC guides the development of Gillespie Field by making recommendations to County Airports staff, the Board, and the City of El Cajon Council providing advice in the areas of aviation, industrial, and economic development which has led to a more efficient development of the airport and increased business and economic activity in the area. The GFDC holds regular bi-monthly public meetings which also provides a forum for community involvement and stakeholder input. The JPA has been amended nine times to extend its term, which is currently set to expire on June 30, 2025.

The County of San Diego (County) Department of Public Works (DPW) operates eight airports including Gillespie Field, which is located within the municipal limits of the City of El Cajon and the City of Santee and is the oldest and largest County-owned airport. The airport is a valuable community resource, providing local services and business opportunities through a unique mixture of land uses including non-aviation industrial and aviation-supporting businesses.

Today’s request is to approve the “Tenth Amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Between the County of San Diego and the City of El Cajon creating the Gillespie Field Development Council” (GFDC), which extends the term an additional 10 years until June 30, 2035 (Attachment A). This Amendment will enable the GFDC to continue to provide its expertise and guidance to County staff, the City of El Cajon, and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. The original term length for the GFDC was ten years with subsequent term lengths varying from

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1-11 years. The basis for the proposed 10-year extension is to minimize administrative actions and streamline County business allowing County staff and GFDC to focus on airport development and economic activities. Part of this amendment process is for the GFDC to recommend approval of the extension along with approval by El Cajon City Council. As such, this Amendment was placed before the El Cajon City Council on Tuesday, March 25, 2025 for their consideration, and the City of El Cajon voted unanimously to approve the Tenth Amendment. The City of Santee is not a signatory on the agreement and not required to vote on the agreement.

Beyond the extension of the agreement term, there are no changes to the proposed terms and functions of the GFDC. If the Tenth Amendment is not signed by June 30, 2025, the GFDC dissolves as a Development Council reducing the coordinated effort to engage stakeholders, complete the final stages of land development at the airport, and strategically engage with experts to strengthen the economic development of the region.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

### **CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find that an amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) because the activity is not a project as defined by Section 15378 of the state CEQA Guidelines.
2. Approve and authorize the Clerk of the Board to execute, upon receipt, the “Tenth Amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Between the County of San Diego and the City of El Cajon Creating the Gillespie Field Development Council”.

## **EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

The County of San Diego (County) owns and operates eight airports that provide essential air transportation hubs, emergency response facilities, and serve as regional economic engines. The County pursues delivery of these services in a fair and equitable manner and actively works to remove barriers by providing airport guests with general airport information in the County’s threshold languages, encouraging participation, and providing competitive opportunities for small businesses, businesses that traditionally have less working capital, and business owners and managers who may be socially and economically underserved.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

This request to authorize the “Tenth Amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Between the County of San Diego (County) and the City of El Cajon Creating the Gillespie Field Development Council” has regional economic and social sustainability benefits. The base monthly rent from business leases helps support economic and social sustainability by providing services for the region. The revenue that County of San Diego Airports (County Airports) continue to receive from current general and commercial aviation and charter operators will help operate, maintain, and improve the County Airport System consistent with the County sustainability goal

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of providing just and equitable access to County services and resources in support of sustainable communities.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

If today's action is not approved, the JPA would expire on June 30, 2025, and may result in the dissolution of the GFDC, which supports the development of Gillespie Field and future economic development and revenue generating activities.

### **BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

Leases at airports benefit the local business community by creating jobs, increasing economic activity, providing business opportunities, and supporting infrastructure development. Leasing airport property attracts visitors, generates revenue, and helps small businesses grow, thus stimulating the local economy and improving the quality of life for residents. San Diego County Airports connect individuals to jobs and local communities to the world. Revenue derived from airport leases allows the Department of Public Works to operate and maintain the eight County airports safely, efficiently, and cost-effectively. Today's action of authorizing the "Tenth Amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Between the County of San Diego and the City of El Cajon Creating the Gillespie Field Development Council" promotes self-sufficiency by enhancing the economic viability of the County airport system.

### **ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

The "Tenth Amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Between the County of San Diego and the City of El Cajon Creating the Gillespie Field Development Council" was considered by the Gillespie Field Development Council at their March 19, 2025 meeting. The Council recommended approval of the amendment with four members voting in favor and one member absent.

### **BACKGROUND**

On March 19, 1974 (70), the "Resolution Approving Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Between the County of San Diego and the City of El Cajon Creating an Agency Known as the Gillespie Field Development Council" (JPA) was approved by the County Board of Supervisors (Board) and the City of El Cajon for a period of 10 years. The GFDC was developed with the intention of serving as an advisory board overseeing the implementation of the Airport Master Plan for Gillespie Field and supporting the creation of consistent priorities, policies, and standards to apply to development within the Gillespie Field area. Furthermore, the GFDC guides the development of Gillespie Field by making recommendations to County Airports staff, the Board, and the City of El Cajon Council providing advice in the areas of aviation, industrial, and economic development which has led to a more efficient development of the airport and increased business and economic activity in the area. The GFDC holds regular bi-monthly public meetings which also provides a forum for community involvement and stakeholder input. The JPA has been amended

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nine times to extend its duration, with the ninth amendment extending it ten years to June 30, 2025. It is recommended that the JPA be extended ten years to June 30, 2035, to continue to enlist the expertise of the Gillespie Field Development Council (GFDC) appointed members.

Gillespie Field has been a General Aviation Airport since 1953. It offers services to the general public and aviation community supporting local services and business opportunities through a variety of land uses including non-aviation industrial and aviation-supporting businesses. There are about 350 businesses operating on all County airport property.

The GFDC consists of five members, three of whom are appointed by the County Board of Supervisors and two of whom are appointed by the City of El Cajon. The Board of Supervisors voted to utilize one of its three nominated seats to be selected from qualified candidates to be identified by the City of Santee, purposefully involving this neighboring jurisdiction in land development decisions at the Gillespie Field Airport [April 8, 2015 (7)]. Should the City of Santee be unable to identify a suitable candidate, the County may nominate members of its own choice. Appointment of each member is made by mutual agreement and ratified by actions of both the Board of Supervisors and the El Cajon City Council. The JPA requires GFDC members to have expertise and experience in such fields as real estate, finance, industrial development, aviation, and other fields related to the development program for Gillespie Field. The GFDC guides the development of Gillespie Field by making recommendations to County Airports staff, the Board, and the El Cajon City Council on matters relating to the Gillespie Field airport. Their advice in the areas of aviation, industrial, and economic development has led to more efficient development of the airport and increased business and economic activity in the area. The GFDC holds regular bi-monthly public meetings which also provides a forum for community involvement and stakeholder input.

This request proposes approval of the “Tenth Amendment to the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement Between the County of San Diego and the City of El Cajon Creating the Gillespie Field Development Council” (JPA), extending the term an additional ten years until June 30, 2035 (Attachment A). The basis for a 10-year extension is to minimize administrative actions and streamline County business allowing County staff and the GFDC to focus on airport development and economic activities. Part of the process for the amendment to be approved is for the GFDC to recommend approval of the extension along with approval by the El Cajon City Council. The El Cajon City Council voted unanimously to approve the Tenth Amendment on Tuesday, March 25, 2025. The City of Santee is not a signatory on the agreement and not required to vote on the agreement.

The Tenth Amendment proposes a ten-year term extension to the existing JPA allowing the GFDC to continue advising the County. If the Tenth Amendment is not signed by June 30, 2025, the GFDC dissolves as a Development Council, reducing the coordinated effort to engage stakeholders, complete the final stages of land development at the airport, and strategically engage with experts to strengthen the economic development of the region.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) provides that certain activities are not considered projects subject to CEQA review as defined by Section 15378. Specifically, Section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines provides that “organizational or administrative activities of governments that will not result in direct or indirect physical change in the environment” are not projects. The proposed action includes extending the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement to extend its term for an additional 10 years. The action is administrative in nature and is not a project within the meaning of Sections 15060(c)(3) and 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today’s proposed action supports the Economic Sustainability Strategic Initiative in the County of San Diego’s 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. Revenue derived from airport leases is placed in the County’s Airport Enterprise Fund, which aligns services to available resources, maintaining fiscal stability, and ensuring long-term solvency by using lease revenue for ongoing maintenance and operation of San Diego County Airports (County Airports). The County Airport System is an important part of the County’s physical infrastructure and the federal transportation system providing superior service delivery to local aviation customers and the public which they serve.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dahvia Lynch', with a stylized flourish at the end.

DAHVIA LYNCH

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Attachment A: TENTH AMENDMENT TO THE JOINT EXERCISE OF POWERS AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO AND THE CITY OF EL CAJON CREATING AN AGENCY TO BE KNOWN AS THE GILLESPIE FIELD DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Attachment B: Gillespie Field Vicinity Map 2025