

I-57 Tracey Brown

Comment Letter I-57

From: Tracey Brown <traceyb@csusm.edu>
Sent: Monday, August 14, 2017 3:19 PM
To: Smith, Ashley
Subject: Engulfed by fire in 15 minutes - comments on the proposed EIR of Newland development

Dear Planning Associates,

I am submitting this letter in extreme opposition to the proposed Newland development near Deer Springs Road. I first sat down to submit an extremely detailed response to the EIR, largely based on the biological resources impacts as I am an biologist by trade. However, I now submit a much briefer response as there are just several overwhelming issues that make it clear this project should never be approved in any form at that location. While I do live within two miles of the proposed project and would be personally impacted by the traffic, dust, and noise from the project, I appreciate the lack of affordable housing in the county. This is not a NIMBY complaint as we all live somewhere that previously affected our pre-existing neighbors. It is your responsibility as elected officials to abide by our government documents and to find appropriate locations for supplying more housing in the county. This development is not the solution.

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Biological impacts - the number of significant biological impacts created by the design of this project is substantially large and walk described in the EIR. What I see as the worst aspect is a very poor design for their open space. I believe the entire project area was designated for species conservation and intended to remain undeveloped by the county general plan and the NCMSCP. Any destruction of habitat in this area is a take of those planned conservation areas. What good are planning documents if the areas within them are whittled away over time by amendments to those protective plans? Furthermore, their proposed blocks of open space are not contiguous as one of them is separated by a road. Nowhere does it seem to be addressed how wildlife would move across this road to access the inner area of open space? This inner block should not be considered of conservation value if it is largely cutoff and exists as an island. While this proposed project does meet smart growth design principles of being close to a transportation corridor, this does not offset the numerous significant biological impacts at this particular location. Large developments such as these should be placed in other parts of the county.

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Schools - it appears that this project will span both the San Marcos and Escondido unified school districts? This absurd fact alone indicates the project is too large in scope. Why would this be allowed within a single development? I can imagine that this will set up social disparities in these neighborhoods, and would closely watch which types of housing are put in which school district.

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Fire hazard - regardless of the significant biological impacts, I believe the absolute worst facet of this proposed project is the fire hazard and the threat it poses to both humans and wildlife. This project is located entirely within a very high fire hazard area. As illustrated by the EIR documents, a single fall fire can have 30 to 50 foot flames and travel 600 to 800 feet per minute. That means a catastrophic Santa Ana fire, so common to our area, could blow across the entire development within 10 to 15 minutes. That area has not burned in its entirety in quite some time, and numerous fires start along the I-15 Freeway adjacent to the area each year. So far, we who live here have been lucky that our great fire agencies (using lessons learned from the deadly Cedar fire) have coordinated to put out these started fires right away. But it is only a matter of time (not if) before one gets out of hand in the Newland area. There will not be time to evacuate, people will panic and clog the two roads to the development, and no amount of heat resistant walls, brush management or banned plants is going to stop the catastrophic destruction of houses in that development. It is as if someone said please choose the absolute worst location and provide the least escape routes in the county to place a large development such that a single fire event could destroy most or all of it. Humans cause a majority of wildfires, and this development would add thousands more cars trips and people living in the area. The habitat and wildlife destruction that would also occur would be biologically catastrophic p and greatly affect wildlife corridors.

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Please do not approve the numerous amendments necessary for this project. Encourage development in the more appropriate areas and as outlined in the County Planning documents that took many years and dollars to develop.

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Sincerely,

Tracey Brown, Ph.D.
Professor of Biological Sciences
CSU San Marcos

Sent from my Verizon 4G LTE Tablet

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