

COMMENTS	RESPONSES
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Comment Letter I24</b></p> <p>Ms. Ashley Smith Land Use &amp; Environmental Planner Planning &amp; Development Services 5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 310 San Diego, CA 92123</p> <p>E-Mail: Ashley.Smith2@sdcounty.ca.gov</p> <p>Re: Harmony Grove Village South Draft Environmental Impact Report (PDS2015-GPA-15-002; PDS2015-SP-15-002; PDS2015-TM-5600; PDS2015-REZ-15-003; PDS2015-MUP-15-008; PDS2015-ER-15-08-006.)</p> <p>Dear Ms. Smith:</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Harmony Grove Village South proposal being put forth by the Kovach Group and RCS Partners. I am a resident of the united rural communities of Eden Valley, Harmony Grove and Elfin Forest in unincorporated San Diego County, one of the last contiguous stretch of rural land and open space in the County within 15 minutes of the coast. We are one of the oldest rural communities in the County, going back to the late 1800s with the establishment of the Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association in 1896. I've lived in Elfin Forest for 34 years and moved here because I wanted to live in a quiet rural area on a large piece of land.</p> <p>I'm very concerned about this proposal to change the General Plan which many of us spent countless hours negotiating in good faith for several important reasons:</p> <p><b>COMMUNITY CHARACTER:</b> This project is completely out of place with the character and nature of our community. It offers condos and multi-story dwellings in an area surround by preserved open space, rare habitat, horse ranches, estate residences and semi-rural residential environments. Surely our decision makers can't envision that a remote development of condos directly adjacent to thousands of acres of protected open space and farmland is consistent with the policies of the General Plan? This project will destroy the character and nature of the last of the few special places in San Diego County that all citizens can enjoy. For all the hours that our planning group and others invested into setting up a general plan for our area, I feel it is a slap in the face to ignore this plan. Do you ever wonder why your constituents are distrusting you and our government? You never seem to keep your promises. I do not have a problem with development in our area, but there is no reason they cannot follow the plan we have in place.</p> <p><b>DECREASED SAFETY AND INCREASED FIRE RISK</b> In the DEIR, the Fire Protection Plan waives a key requirement intended to protect the safety of both existing and new residents. The most egregious of these is a waiver of the 800 foot minimum dead end road requirement (503.1.3). The only mitigation acceptable for exceeding this requirement is providing secondary access (503.1.2). The FPP waives both these requirements and fails to demonstrate appropriate mitigation to avoid putting lives in danger. There should be zero tolerance for granting exceptions and exemptions to the California Fire Code in a Very High Risk Fire Area. The entire population at risk in case of wildfire includes all of Eden Valley, Harmony Grove, Elfin Forest but also Cielo residents who may be unable to access Harmony Grove Road from Via Ambiente in case of sudden mass evacuation like those we have experienced in the past. The EIR needs to evaluate and disclose impacts to the entire region, not just the 1400 feet of improved road contemplated in the EIR.</p>	<p><b>Response to Comment I24-1</b> The County acknowledges these introductory comments; however, they do not raise an issue concerning the environmental analysis or adequacy of the EIR. Please see the responses below to specific comments.</p> <p><b>Response to Comment I24-2</b> The Proposed Project would expand the Harmony Grove Village (HGV) village in a manner that is consistent with the community character of HGV and the surrounding areas. Please see the Global Response to Project Consistency with General Plan Policy LU-1.4.</p> <p><b>Response to Comment I24-3</b> When the strict application of the requirements set forth in Section 503.1.3 is impracticable, the Fire Code Official may grant a modification from such requirements. A modification may be granted pursuant to Fire Code Section 96.1.104.8. (MODIFICATIONS) when the modification is in compliance with the intent and purpose of the code and such modification does not lessen health, life, and fire safety requirements. The Project is requesting a modification from Section 503.1.3 of the Consolidated County Fire Code (Code) with respect to dead-end road lengths because the topographical, geological, and environmental condition of the site, make compliance with this standard infeasible. The Fire Protection Plan (FPP) that describes the modification has been accepted by the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District (RSFFPD), the Fire Authority Having Jurisdiction.</p> <p>With respect to secondary access, the ability of the Project to provide a secondary access route was considered infeasible, as described in the FPP. (Secondary access is the typical mitigation for exceeding the dead end road length, but is not required as stated in the comment.) Since secondary access was determined as not being feasible, the potential for impairment of a single road by vehicle congestion, condition of terrain, climatic conditions, or other factors was evaluated. The Project developed an alternative approach for secondary access that meets the intent of the Code through the implementation of a list of specifically developed measures and features as described in the FPP.</p> <p>The commenter is correct in that secondary access route is a typical mitigation for exceeding the dead-end road length. However, it is not a requirement per se for development projects. The Project proposes meeting the intent of the Fire Code through a combination of measures that provide a system of fire safety</p>

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The traffic has increased substantially since I have been here and the evacuations are, in my opinion, unsafe due to the amount of residents in the surrounding communities. The traffic plan for all of the projects out there: Harmony Grove Village, Valiano and now Harmony Grove South, (and let us not forget the next project that will be south of Harmony Grove South), will add an enormous amount of traffic to our roads. As a former member of the San Dieguito Planning Group, I understand that each dwelling unit is assessed with 10 daily traffic trips, for traffic considerations. If all of the developments are completed, we could experience 18,000 ADTs (1800 combined units for all 4 developments), NOT including any businesses that are built there (50 ADTs per business). For light collector roads, given the current amount of traffic on these roads at this time, and adding this cumulative amount of traffic, the LOS of these roads, as they are currently built out, should be LOS F at peak times. Anything lower than LOS A is destroying our community character. With the bicycles riding along this road as well, on winding and blind curved roads, you are asking for lawsuits for the deaths that will result from a lack of appropriate width of roads. My husband witnessed a head on along Harmony Grove Rd a few years ago. A woman passed along a blind curve and crashed head on to someone coming the opposite way. This development, along with the others will only make this traffic problem worse.....and the county will be liable because many of us have disclosed the problems we will have with this increased density. In addition, none of these developers seem to acknowledge that a substantial increase in traffic will occur from these developments down Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove Rds. Traffic always will go on the roads that have less traffic to get to their destination.</p> <p>The Wildfire Emergency Plan included with the DEIR states that Country Club Drive is the only safe evacuation route, because Harmony Grove Road East and West could be compromised by wildfire. Yet the DEIR does not calculate how long it will take not only the project traffic, but existing residents to get to safety all the way to Auto Parkway. This information needs to be provided, and a simulation of evacuation needs to be modeled, to fully disclose the real risk to the current residents.</p> <p>According to numerous studies including the latest from the National Park Service and the Department of Interior, human activity causes 90% of the fires. Introducing upwards of 453 houses and as many as 1500 new people, in an area previously zoned for 25 under the General Plan greatly increases the overall fire risk to the surrounding residents. This is indisputable.</p> <p>The project has a supposedly Shelter-in-Place "philosophy," (but not official status as stated in the DEIR, as this would have stricter requirements) but what about the rest of us who will be trapped on dead end roads with no secondary egress behind 1,500 additional cars? Will the developer make our homes shelter-in-place too? Many of our homes were built before 1980. And more than 20 houses burned only 3 years ago in the same exact area they are proposing 453 homes. The EIR should evaluate proper mitigation measures such as</p>	<p>above and beyond the code requirements. One of the most significant measures is construction of roads on-site that include an additional travel lane that is within 800 feet of all Project structures. The additional travel lane provides additional capacity for evacuation and would occur throughout the Project, and would include Country Club Road from the southernmost Project entrance northward to Harmony Grove Road, including the bridge over Escondido Creek. This enhanced road capability would be supplemented by a complete system of fire protection that includes a redundant layering of measures designed to keep roadways open and passable, and reduce the possibility that wildfire threatens the Project. The primary Project access for Harmony Grove Village South (HGV South) would be via a widened Country Club Drive that provides three travel lanes. This includes a three-lane-wide bridge constructed over Escondido Creek that also includes separated horse and pedestrian pathways. Please see the Global Responses to Fire Hazards Impact Analysis and Adequacy of Emergency Evacuation and Access.</p> <p>The commenter asserts that the EIR fails to account for cumulative emergency traffic from the residents of HGV with respect to County Club Drive being used for evacuation. In some fire emergencies, likely excluding shorter-notice events, Harmony Grove Road would be available for evacuation. HGV residents would likely use Country Club Drive to the north/northeast into Escondido. During a wildfire evacuation, law enforcement and fire responders would evaluate conditions and fire spread and that information would inform continued evacuations. Law enforcement understands the importance of maintaining clear intersections to support evacuating residents. In an evacuation where HGV and HGV South were evacuating simultaneously, emergency managers (Office of Emergency Services, law enforcement, fire personnel, and others) would determine how to maintain traffic flow out of the area into Escondido, or, depending on conditions, to areas away from the wildfire or other threat. This may include directing traffic along Harmony Grove Road toward Rancho Santa Fe and the coastal communities. If a traffic surge or road blockage occurred, the decision makers would have a contingency to temporarily refuge residents within HGV and/or HGV South, including legacy residents that do not have the same level of protection.</p> <p>Regarding average daily traffic and levels of service, please refer to Subchapter 2.2, <i>Transportation/Traffic</i>, of the EIR. The County requires new proposed projects to assess traffic impacts in their setting to accurately depict potential impacts. In this case, the modeling was conservative as it included projected HGV traffic as already built, and placed Project traffic on top of that in order</p>

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There are good reasons for the Fire Code requiring a secondary egress, especially in this Very High Fire Risk area.</p> <p>It is also extremely disturbing to read in the DEIR that the developer is claiming the project will help fund a financial shortfall for the HGV Fire Station, especially in conjunction with asking the County to grant exceptions to the Fire Code.</p> <p><b>BROKEN PROMISES:</b> our community worked cooperatively and in good faith with County staff during the GP update process to maintain our community's rural character, as demonstrated by the compromise on Harmony Grove Village, based on the agreement that this more than doubling of our density would be our fair share of population growth; the rest of our community was downzoned to reflect that agreement. Now, only 5 years after the General Plan was approved, developers are seeking to set aside this negotiation and plopp another 453 houses into our community after we had already agreed to 742 in HGV. There are numerous references to this negotiation and compromise throughout county planning documents, video from BOS meetings and there are many folks, including former County staff, current and former board of supervisors that would attest to it. Furthermore, this agreement is encoded and spelled out in the Community Plan (and thus the SD General Plan), though the developer seeks to erase these very references in their proposed amendment to our community plan (without our input, naturally). Approval of this project would constitute a breach of public trust, and discourage communities throughout the county from ever trusting our County officials.</p> <p><b>NO JUSTIFICATION FOR A GPA:</b> The requirement for considering a General Plan Amendment is "any change requiring a GPA "should be reviewed to ensure that the change is in the public interest and would not be detrimental to public health, safety, and welfare." This project would definitely be detrimental to public health and safety in that it will result in entrapment of current residents in case of evacuation; further, it brings no "public interest" that we can discern since there apparently is low public appetite and demand for the dense housing across the street in Harmony Grove Village. If that development is way behind its sales projections, as it is, what is the public interest in granting an amendment to a carefully constructed General plan to allow yet more density?</p> <p><b>TRAFFIC:</b> In addition to plopping condos in the middle of protected open space and equestrian properties, this project will generate 4500 average daily trips exiting Country Club Drive from the south onto Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive going north. These are two lane roads that are already operating at congestion levels which will get worse as HGV is built out.</p> <p><b>IN SUMMARY:</b> This DEIR needs to be recirculated to fully disclose the true impacts to health and safety in case of wildfire, the analysis of which is woefully inadequate. The County should also preemptively refuse to take any monies for the HGV fire station from developers unless they conform to the General Plan, to prevent even the appearance of quid pro quo in the granting of exemptions to the Fire Code in a Very High Fire risk Area.</p> <p>It is important to note that we are not knee-jerk NIMBYs. We have gone through this exercise already and have compromised by accepting our fair share of growth in</p>	<p>to isolate and identify Project contributions.</p> <p><b>Response to Comment I24-4</b></p> <p>The County acknowledges these comments; however, they do not raise an issue concerning the substantive environmental analysis within the EIR. Please also see the Global Response to Project Consistency with General Plan Policy LU-1.4.</p> <p><b>Response to Comment I24-5</b></p> <p>The EIR did not identify significant impacts related to public health, safety and welfare. Please see the Global Responses to Fire Hazards Impact Analysis and Adequacy of Emergency Evacuation and Access, regarding fire safety and evacuation issues. Comments related to "public interest" concerning the Proposed Project and the sales of the existing Harmony Grove Village development do not raise environmental issues and therefore no further response is warranted.</p> <p><b>Response to Comment I24-6</b></p> <p>The southernmost portion of the Project site is bordered by Del Dios Highlands Preserve, to the east and west are equestrian (and non-equestrian) residential uses, the Harmony Grove Spiritualist Society is also located to the west, and the Harmony Grove Village residential development site is located to the north. None of the Project site is currently within "protected open space." Please see the Global Response to Project Consistency with General Plan Policy LU-1.4.</p> <p>Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road currently operate at an acceptable level of service (LOS) under County guidelines, LOS D. As concluded in Subchapter 2.2 of the EIR, the Project would not result in significant, unmitigated impacts to Country Club Drive or Harmony Grove Road. As part of the Project design and mitigation, Country Club Drive would be expanded to three lanes, more consistent with the portion of Country Club Drive north of Harmony Grove Road and with the portion of Harmony Grove Road trending west. Please refer to Subchapter 2.2, <i>Transportation/Traffic</i>, Section 2.2.7, <i>Conclusion</i>, of the EIR which presents the rationales for the conclusions of impact levels resulting after implementation of the Project and the proposed mitigation measures.</p>

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<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Comment Letter I24</b></p> <p>HGV. Please don't make us regret having made that compromise.</p> <p>Signed,</p> <p>Mary Cross Elfin Forest Resident 7150 Circa de Media Elfin Forest, Ca 92029</p> <p>P.S. I vote in every election and make sure I let all my friends and neighbors know where I stand on everything!!!!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">↑ I24-8</p>	<p><b>Response to Comment I24-7</b></p> <p>Please see the Global Responses to Fire Hazards Impact Analysis and Adequacy of Emergency Evacuation and Access. As concluded in that response, the analysis of health and safety in case of wildfire have been adequately addressed, and recirculation is not required. The contribution to the HGV Fire Station is a routine part of development fees, similar to those paid to support police services and schools. The payment would support adequate fire services for the Project (and, it is assumed, surrounding neighbors).</p> <p><b>Response to Comment I24-8</b></p> <p>These are conclusion comments. They do not raise specific issues regarding the content of the DEIR, but will be included as part of the administrative record and made available to the decision makers prior to a final decision on the Proposed Project.</p>