

**Wells, Stephanie**

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**From:** Lael Montgomery <laelmontgomery@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 13, 2017 4:12 PM  
**To:** Mills, Benjamin  
**Cc:** 'Lael Montgomery'; 'ashly mellor'; 'Smith, Oliver'; 'Rich Rudolf'; 'Ann Quinley'; Wardlaw, Mark; Gretler, Darren M; 'Keith Robertson'  
**Subject:** Rite Aid Project should be denied: Contradicts VC's Design Objectives

**RE: Rite Aid Drug Store Proposed for 28535 Cole Grade Rd, Valley Center, CA 92082**

***What exactly gives Mark Wardlaw the unilateral authority to destroy Valley Center's Vision for itself as he has done with his approval of an overbuilt site design for a strategic intersection in the heart of Valley Center?***

Address

28535 COLE GRADE RD, MASTER, VALLEY CENTER SAN DIEGO CA 92082, VALIDATED BY THE DIRECTOR OF PDS  
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Dear San Diego County Planner Mills,

I am writing to object to Mark Wardlaw's approval of Rite Aide's appalling site plan for the corner of Cole Grade and Valley Center roads in Valley Center. I was a member of the Valley Center Planning Group for many years and the Chairperson of the community's Design Review Board for fifteen years. I was also among the hundreds of Valley Center residents and business and property owners who invested thousands of hours between 2002 and 2011 to re-write our Community Plan. I was vice chair of the Valley Center CPG Subcommittee that organized that process locally as well as other projects that the County professional planners assured us would guide development in Valley Center.

Valley Center's Vision for itself is described in exacting detail in an array of public planning documents, including the SD County General Plan, and more specifically in the Valley Center Community Plan, the Valley Center Design Guidelines, the Valley Center Design Guidelines Checklist, and the Valley Center J-36 Road Development Standards. These documents have been available since they were approved in 2011, and they could not be more straightforward or clear. They have been cited over and over again since 2015 by the VC Planning Group and the VC Design Review Board to the property owners, Lori Lee and Dick Stephens, to the "option holder" Tom Lenny, to the developer, Chris Peto, and to dozens of staff in the SD County Planning Department, including yourself.

As you and the others well know, community members who have been elected by Valley Center residents to uphold the Vision our little town worked so hard to express *have repeatedly recommended denial of the Rite Aid Site Plan – not for nothing, but for its blatant and careless contradiction of the community's most basic design objectives, and for the ruinous precedent it sets.*

The Minutes from the Valley Center Design Review Board meeting of April 2015, the first time the community saw this project, are clear in their objections to an 11,900 SF structure on this small site. A building of that size on such a small lot creates exactly the asphalt jungle that Valley Center's landscaping objectives are meant to prohibit. From the get-go the property owners, the option-holder,

the developer and the County planners have been well aware of the project's violation of these most basic community objectives. These people are now being rewarded for bullying their way past approved community development and design objectives to shove Rite-Aide's corporate cookie-cutter down Valley Center's throat. Why should the rural and small town character of the San Diego backcountry be sacrificed to the bull-through tactics of a few people whose only interests are their own enrichment? What about community enrichment? What about fairness to the developers and property owners who have worked hard and invested much to build in accord with the community's vision?

These developers (of little more than an acre!!) should NOT be supported in their scheme to trash this strategic site with asphalt and, while they're at it to set a precedent for bullying through the community's wishes. Approval of this poor plan will be the precedent that destroys Valley Center's 40-year old vision of a canopied parkway through the heart of town, of landscaped buffers along side streets, between properties and parking spaces? If these property owners and developers cannot on their own respect the wishes of the Valley Center community and the numerous attempts of community groups to work with them, they should be required by supposed overseers of the "public good" to reduce the footprint of their structure so that their enterprise will enhance our little town -- not annihilate it.

For Mark Wardlaw to destroy the central character of Valley Center with his unilateral approval of this overbuilt site plan is an outrage that in my view should cost him his job in "planning" – this is not planning. It is a despicable violation of the public trust.

Most Sincerely,

Lael Montgomery  
13678 McNally Road  
Valley Center

Valley Center Planning Group 2003-2007  
Valley Center Design Review Board Chair 2003-2015  
Valley Center Planning Group Villages Subcommittee Chair 2003-2011  
Valley Center General Plan Update Subcommittee Vice Chair 2003-2011

P.S. The minutes below show that these property owners and developers have essentially "blown off" community comments for the last two and a half years. If they claim otherwise they are misrepresenting the facts.

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### **Valley Center Design Review Board**

**Approved Minutes: April 6, 2015**

**DRB Members Present:** Montgomery, Moore, Robertson.

**Visitors:** Tom Lenny, Jon Vick, Lorelee Stephens, Richard Stephens, Chris Peto, Ken McKently, Tom Lenny, Kerry Watts, Kerry Garza, Brian Nestoroff, Mike Mahan, and County Planners Mindy Fogg and Dennis Campbell,

**MINUTES:** March 2, 2015 were approved as is 3-0.

**New Style Primers Drafts** was approved to be included in the Design Guidelines.

**OPEN FORUM:** There were no speakers for Open Forum.

### **PROJECTS:**

**Rite-Aid Pharmacy: Preliminary Site Plan:** Property owners Lorelee and Richard Stephens have optioned to Tom Lenny the property on the SE corner of Valley Center and South Cole Grade

Roads where the Corner Skillet is now. The 1.22 acre-property is in escrow with Rite Aid. Chris Peto, developer for Rite Aid, explained that the architects for Rite Aid have created a smaller size store especially for this location. **The proposed building is 11, 900 SF.** The plan shows 52 parking spaces and landscape area of 3563 SF. The building will have a corner entrance facing the intersection, a drive-through prescription window and loading dock. The applicants propose driveways from Valley Center and from Cole Grade roads. Chris Peto explained that the site design is dictated by the truck and automobile circulation; based on vehicular traffic and the size and configuration of the site, this is the only design that will work.

**All of these factors contribute to the problem that the proposal meets few of Valley Center's Design Guidelines for site design or landscaping.** Ken McKently, architect, described the building's architecture as 'Early California Style'. He showed drawings of a plaster finish building with batten siding and concrete roof tiles. Along the base, he had added stone detailing and trellis work over the walkway. The back of the building has an 8' roll-up door for loading and the pharmacy drive through on the other side of the rear.

**The DRB's comments included that neither site design, nor landscape plan, nor the architectural design meets Valley Design Guidelines.** We asked the architect to pick a style within the Early California genre and use authentic elements of that particular style, suggesting a design that appears to be a re-purposed old farm/ag building. Mike Mahan suggested that a Farm Village style building could be created without too many changes. Basically use authentic detailing. There was some discussion about positioning the building closer to the corner of Cole Grade and Valley Center Road for better pedestrian access and better relationship to the street edge, and possibly adding a vertical element at the corner. **It was suggested that Loralee Stephens design it, and then it would be great. Loralee has done an exemplary job on the Stephens' other properties along Valley Center Rd.**

Jon Vick asked if they would be tied in to the sewer. Chris said they would temporarily be a self contained septic, and would tie into the sewer when it was available. Storm Water runoff is not completed at this time.

Kerry Garza, Touchstone Communities asked if their demographics could support two new drug stores (along with the current one in town. Kerry stated he had just signed CVS as a tenant at the new Park Circle project which we will be reviewing at the May meeting.

Ken also presented a landscape plan showing some hedging and trees along Valley Center Rd. and Cole Grade. Susan requested several changes: Remove the Platanus r. and the Tristania c. trees. They require too much water and with the high voltage lines overhead, these trees would have to be topped to remain. She requested that trees 30'tall and smaller should be substituted. Susan also requested the Myoporum,(due to thrips), Lantana (freezes) , Rosemary and Callistemon be removed and replaced with

more appropriate plants. A Ceanothus variety could be used instead of the Rosemary. It is native and does not require hedging. She explained our area is unique in the plants we could maintain easily also, especially in the native/very drought tolerant range and would like to see more of them used. Also, we would like the existing Oaks and Crape Myrtles to remain.

The applicants says the site is too small and “set-backed” challenged to provide the landscaping that VC’s Design Guidelines require. The Guidelines call for a 20-foot landscape buffer along the road edges, landscaping along the property line, and landscaping in the parking lot. There is too much asphalt and too little vegetation in this plan.