

Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board

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www.rbplanningboard.com

August 25, 2025

Honorable Mayor and San Diego City Councilmembers
City of San Diego
202 C Street
San Diego, CA 92101

SUBJECT: Fairbanks Ranch Country Club – Proposal to Terminate Open Space Deed
Restrictions on 660 Acres of Public Open Space

Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers:

The Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board is a member of the San Dieguito River Park’s Citizens Advisory Committee and a long-time supporter of the regionwide goal of protecting the San Dieguito River watershed for the many benefits it provides for residents within the City and throughout San Diego County. A key component of the River Park experience is that it is available to visit and explore for everyone within the region and beyond at no cost.

Private lands within the River Park’s focused planning area have been acquired for open space over the years through numerous methods including, but not limited to purchase, dedication, donation, easements, and mitigation. Through all of these methods, the intent is that the land remains as open space in perpetuity. Open space areas are set aside to protect valuable environmental resources, as well as to provide opportunities for public recreational uses.

The Planning Board has become aware of a proposal by the City to remove the deed restrictions related to lands, which were set aside as open space in 1982 as part of the proposal to shift property referred to then as Fairbanks Country Club from Future Urbanizing to Planned Urbanizing to accommodate residential development. An overview of the previous actions is presented below.

According to Resolution Number R-256123, dated March 30, 1982, the City Council approved and adopted “*an amendment to the Land Use Map of the Progress Guide and General Plan for the City of San Diego, shifting those properties known as Fairbanks Country Club from Future Urbanizing to the Planned Urbanizing Area . . . subject to the following conditions: . . . That the precedent-setting value of this decision be limited to the open space only, requiring that 75% of the land be dedicated to open space in order to establish the overriding open space value of the plan. . . .*” (emphasis added).

Resolution Number R-256125, approved March 30, 1982, (pages 2 and 3 of 3) states: *BE IT RESOLVED, . . . That all of the following facts exist with respect to Planned Residential Development Permit No. 20-252-0: . . . 3. The proposed use will comply with the relevant regulations in the Municipal Code. The Council believes that this finding can*

be met. The applicant is providing 355 acres of open space where 219 acres would be required (emphasis added). In addition, the applicant is providing 157 acres of usable open space where 109 acres is the minimum required (emphasis added).

According to Resolution Number R-310421, dated May 27, 2016, “Whereas, in 1981, Watt Industries deeded 600 acres of open space (emphasis added) in the San Dieguito River Valley to the City of San Diego (City) in conjunction with the City’s approval of Watt Industries’ residential development. . .”

These previous Council actions clearly acknowledge the importance of the open space areas that were dedicated to the City in order to shift the properties known today as Fairbanks Ranch Country Club from Future Urbanizing to the Planned Urbanizing Area. The importance of this open space to the region has not changed, and the reasons for the requirement that the land be dedicated as open space remain relevant and should not be undone. Open space uses can include active recreation, as demonstrated by previous uses of these open space lands, but should be implemented in accordance with a Conditional Use Permit, appropriate environmental review, and adherence to requirements for how development should occur in floodplains. Further, proposed uses in this area should be required to ensure that the Coast to Crest Trail can be adequately accommodated within this section of the River Valley.

We believe that when an agreement is made to protect valuable open space, particularly in areas located within and along the floodplain, those protections should not be reversed. Therefore, the Planning Board approved a motion by a vote of 7-0-0 to request that the Council deny the proposal to terminate the existing open space deed restrictions and ensure that the uses provided on the affected property respect the requirements established for the area when the land was set aside as open space in 1982.

Sincerely,

Robin Kaufman

Robin Kaufman, Chair
Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board