



Mayor Ron Gonzales
Council Member Forrest Williams
Coyote Valley Specific Plan Task Force Members
801 North First Street, Rm. 600
San Jose, CA 95110

August 11, 2005

Re: Phasing for CVSP and EIR Project Alternatives

Mayor Gonzales, Council Member Williams and Task Force Members,

The Sierra Club would like to take this opportunity to comment on the phasing discussion for the specific plan and on the July 1, 2005 information memorandum discussing alternatives to be studied in the EIR. This important project is moving into its final phase and it is vital to be clear about the significant environmental impacts that this project portends for South Santa Clara County. Furthermore, it is especially critical at this time to remind the Task Force that the intent is to plan, NOT develop, Coyote Valley.

Phasing for CVSP

Discussion of phasing for the development of Coyote Valley is a reasonable part of the planning process. However, there is great interest on the part of landowners in seeing the specific plan completed and adopted so that development may occur. For those of us concerned about the extensive environmental impacts that will result from development of this rural area we feel strongly that the need to develop Coyote Valley should arise from San Jose's complete exhaustion of infill opportunities. The City Council has consistently stated their commitment to smart growth and that should be honored by approaching planning for Coyote Valley in relationship to the entire city.

Staff analysis in 2001 found that "development in Mid-Coyote Valley is still beyond the time horizon of the San Jose 2020 General Plan" (General Plan Report, 2001 Fall Annual Review). Furthermore, the adopted text amendment to the General Plan in 2001 makes clear that the existing general plan triggers must be met prior to adoption of the specific plan. Furthermore, the General Plan explicitly states that the "prerequisite conditions should only be modified during a comprehensive update of the General Plan involving a community task force similar to the San Jose 2020 General Plan update process" (San Jose 2020 General Plan, "Coyote Valley Urban Reserve). The City Council may circumvent this intent and adopt changes to the triggers at the same time they adopt the specific plan. This means that it is absolutely critical that discussion of triggers be cognizant of the Council's vision that development in Coyote Valley achieve a jobs-housing balance.

The Sierra Club urges the Task Force members to be mindful of their role in helping shape a good plan, one that when the need arises can be pulled down from the shelf and reviewed for any needed updates. Coyote Valley as it currently exists is home to a diverse array of wildlife,

including endangered and threatened species. In addition, it offers an important wildlife corridor between the Central Valley/Mt. Hamilton Range and the Santa Cruz mountains. Development of Coyote Valley at this time would only encourage additional development in South Santa Clara County and parts of San Benito and Monterey County. The upcoming habitat conservation planning process is an important opportunity for the county and its citizens to evaluate how to grow and protect the rich natural and agricultural heritage of the region.

The current General Plan triggers need to be strengthened and we support the co-chairs efforts to find appropriate means to achieve this. We urge you to not let the momentum of your important work override a commitment to the financial well being of the city and the ecological health of the habitat of Coyote Valley.

Alternatives for Environmental Impact Report

The premise of the California Environmental Quality Act is to seek public input into decisions attempting to balance the preservation of high-quality ecological systems and the general welfare of the people of the state. It is expected that there will significant environmental impacts resulting from the development of Coyote Valley. Therefore the alternatives studied should be designed to provide adequate information to identify an environmentally superior choice. This choice would minimize impacts such as habitat loss, degradation of air and water quality and potential sprawl inducement in nearby communities. It would also clearly identify significant impacts and propose mitigations that are realistic economically and ecologically.

The matrix of possible alternatives provided to the San Jose City Council identifies numerous areas of concern for the Sierra Club. We are particularly pleased to see Alternative Location Analysis posed as a choice and encourage this area of study being continued to the final product. Dispersing the intended development within the existing city limits is consistent with Club policy. We believe that development should occur primarily in existing urban centers making the most efficient use of land and minimizing impacts on natural systems. While Coyote Valley is within the City's Urban Reserve the potential for development within existing neighborhoods in San Jose should be exhausted prior to development of Coyote Valley.

Analysis aimed at identifying and preferring an environmentally superior choice will help shape a specific plan that will be a model community. While we strongly oppose development in the area we do support innovative efforts to meet social and ecological needs.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns,



Melissa Hippard, Chapter Director

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