

Davidson, John

Subject: Re Zoning of Rancho del Pueblo

Mayor Chuck Reed and Council Members:

Tuesday, August 16, 2011

To: Mayor Chuck Reed, City of San Jose

200 East Santa Clara Street San Jose, CA 95113

re: First Outreach Meeting on the topic: Rezoning of Rancho del Pueblo

Mayfair Community Center 2039 Kammerer Ave., San Jose, CA 95116

Mayor Reed,

On August 17th, I will be attending the first outreach meeting on the topic of rezoning the property at Rancho del Pueblo golf course from Public Park/Open Space to Mixed Use Neighborhood on October 25, 2011. What you are actually doing is implementing the closing of the course and the sale of the property to a developer and this is the first step in the process. We went through this cycle not too many years ago and the proposal was defeated. You are trying again with the added emphasis of limited resources and reduced budget to seal the deal. I don't think you are taking the long view on this issue.

I have attended Envision San Jose 2040 meetings where the goal is to attract and house 400,000 more people in the City. As part of that process, the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services people pointed out that without additional acres of recreational/active parks [equivalent to the footprint of two Golden Gate Parks, San Francisco, with GGP being 1017 acres!], the City would fail to meet its accepted minimum of 3 acres of active park per 1,000 residents. We are already below this minimum; and the closing Rancho del Pueblo (or rezoning it) will reduce the City's park acreage by 31 acres. Where and how do you plan to reclaim and add the required acreage?

One way to do this was suggested by the City Staff (Greenprint 2009 Update, Robert Balagso, October 30, 2009) and that is to include public school campuses in the count of active-park acreage. This is entirely too creative! The public cannot use school-campuses during school hours and when after-school activities are underway, they are fenced providing limited access and view, and activities are limited by School Officials and certainly preclude golf or BBQ, as example. In a time when public park and open-space is at a premium in the quality-of-life of most cities, and in particular the City of San Jose, the City Council considers closing a 31-acre site!

Rancho del Pueblo is a unique resource to the community. It is centrally located and easy to get to. It is a flat course, easy on seniors. It is sized appropriately for First Tee, the program to attract youth into active exercise, and because it is on the East Side, it attracts diverse, multicultural individuals. I recently saw a sign at the course announcing a special program for overweight youth with type II diabetes. I believe the First Lady has high interest in such programs. Are we going to secure Wi-Golf programs for youth in lieu of active, participatory play?

Over the years, the number of golf opportunities for San Jose Residents has dwindled dramatically. Courses and driving ranges have disappeared and have been replaced by high-density housing. Rancho del Pueblo offers a 9-hole course and a driving range. What alternatives do local residents have? I can answer that for seniors, age 65 and over. Some are very healthy and using Los Lagos Golf Course is no problem; but a little expensive as a cart and green fee are required. San Jose Municipal too is flat, but the course is very long. Many would find it difficult to walk this course. Santa Teresa, the Executive Course is a reasonable 9-hole; but it is not flat! Deep Cliff in Cupertino is an option; but a long drive to and from; and it costs non-residents a premium. For downtown and east-side folk, well into their golden years, there really is not a convenient alternative!

I believe Rancho del Pueblo is zoned open/space and recreational because of the many marsh-ponds at the site. A variety of water fowl and marsh birds make this course home. This green-aspect of the current course should too be considered. How will this be mitigated and how much will that mitigation cost?

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I am truly disappointed in our City Representatives as they are consistently taking a developer-friendly and short-term view of land options. The Quality of Life aspect of living in this City is only narrowly viewed. There are plenty of new bike paths out there to get to and from work and for exercise for the thirty-somethings. But active parks for the growing number of seniors (softball, tennis, golf, ...) are not on the radar. It will cost the City much less in the long run to keep these seniors active and healthy, to provide them appropriate fields for active recreation, and certainly to retain those that we already have.

Do not re-zone Rancho del Pueblo!

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