



January 25, 2021

Mayor and Council
201 N. Broadway
Escondido, CA 92025
Via Email

RE: Opposition to current Palomar Heights proposal; support for more economic development opportunities, housing, and climate action

Honorable Mayor McNamara and City Councilmembers,

On behalf of Climate Action Campaign, we urge you to oppose the upcoming Palomar Heights redevelopment proposal, and instead, support a better development that can take full advantage of the economic, housing, climate action, and city revenue opportunities, emissions reductions, and quality of life improvements Downtown Escondido deserves as one of the region's key Transit Priority Areas.

Climate Action Campaign is a nonprofit organization with one mission: stop the climate crisis. We have played a leading role advocating for bold climate policy and equitable implementation in the region since 2015, including in the areas of housing, land use, and transportation.

There are a number of reasons why Palomar Heights must maximize the density allowed on site:

- More housing near transit helps reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), which in turn, cuts transportation emissions—the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Escondido;
- Denser communities support healthier and more sustainable mobility options such as biking, walking, and transit;
- Developing within existing urban footprints preserves natural resources and carbon sinks, and saves sensitive habitats from destruction;
- Building more homes on existing infrastructure saves taxpayers from costly expansions of sewers, roads, fire, and other expensive public services; and
- The housing crisis is displacing community members who need more housing options closer to jobs and transit, which the Palomar site is more than suitable to accommodate.

With an underwhelming number of proposed homes, no deed-restricted affordable units, no commitments to local hire or workforce standards, and minimal commitments to help the city hit its climate and equity goals, the current Palomar Heights proposal fails to meet the moment. If approved,

this project will set the city back in its efforts to fully realize its economic potential, provide more affordable housing options, and implement its Climate Action Plan.

We hope Escondido can emerge as a leader on climate-friendly land use and housing policy and recommend the city oppose this iteration of the proposal, and continue to work with the developer on maximizing the density of Palomar Heights or formally request a new developer who can help revitalize Downtown Escondido and support the city's Climate Action Plan, housing and equity goals.

We also recommend the city include an inclusionary housing requirement for the project and eventually develop a city-wide inclusionary housing ordinance to create more on-site, deed-restricted, affordable homes, which prevents displacement, fosters inclusivity, and promotes upward mobility.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this critical redevelopment project. We look forward to further partnering with you on this and other issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Vasilakis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Vasilakis,
Co-Director of Policy
Climate Action Campaign