

Residents voice concerns over proposed office complex inside Del Mar Mesa Preserve [Link](#)Online

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Representatives of a local developer gave an informational presentation about a proposed new office complex near the intersection of State Route 56 and Camino Del Sur before members of the Rancho Penasquitos Planning Board on Wednesday, Feb. 3.

Residents of the area also were allowed to speak regarding the proposed project, the Preserve at Torrey Highlands. The project would include three office buildings of 4, 5 and 6 stories, respectively, and a seven-level parking structure. The project would include a total of 450,000 square feet of office space.

Some community members are concerned because the project — south of SR 56 and on the west side of a planned extension of Camino Del Sur — would be surrounded on three sides by the Del Mar Mesa Preserve, a 900-acre parcel of open space earmarked for recreation and habitat preservation.

The project is proposed by Cisterra Development, which is based in Carmel Valley. Currently, the developer is working on environmental studies, and the plan would need approval by the planning board and the San Diego City Council. Before the project could be built, the city would have to approve an amendment to the community plan for the area, as well as a zoning change.

Cisterra bought the 11-acre parcel in June from the Catholic Diocese of San Diego, which at one time had planned to build a church on the property.

The Feb. 3 discussion was held before the land use committee of the planning board. No date has been set for a hearing before the full planning board. But some residents were on hand to let board members know of their concerns.

"What are the benefits to the community to change this plan? I don't see the benefit when we have lands that we are stewards of," said resident Mary Ann Eisele.

"(The parcel) was never envisioned to be an employment center," she said.

Lisa Ross, president of the Friends of Del Mar Mesa, said her group is awaiting the completed environmental impact report, but still is worried about how the project could affect the nature preserve.

She also questioned the process, in which a developer can purchase property, then seek approval for an increase in density.

"This is getting to be a One Paseo redux. Here we go again," said Ross, referring to a controversial mixed-use project proposed to be built on Del Mar Heights Road.

As for the Cisterra project, she said, "It's bringing University City-style development right into the middle of a habitat preserve."

Jeff Brazel, of JVB Real Estate Advisors, who spoke on behalf of the developer at the Feb. 3 meeting, said afterward that the project fits in with other development planned for the area, such as Meridian, a 600,000-square-foot office project planned for next to the 56 freeway, and Merge 56, a mixed-use development proposed for directly across Camino Del Sur from the Preserve at Torrey Highlands.

"It fits in with the scale and overall theme ... the nature of the other projects that are out there," he said.

The Preserve is envisioned as an office campus, and the developer is seeking either one single large tenant, or a small number of tenants. Its amenities would include both indoor and outdoor gathering places positioned to take advantage of preserve views.

"This is not your father's cubicle," he said.

The development could actually help the environment by blocking off-trail access to sensitive areas such as vernal pools, Brazel said.

The developer will also have to abide by stringent adjacency guidelines established by the city to protect the preserve, Brazel said.

<https://www.delmartimes.net/sddmt-office-complex-mesa-preserve-2016feb07-story.html>

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