

Article for Consideration

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To: GeneralPlanStaff <GeneralPlanStaff@sanjoseca.gov>

 1 attachments (146 KB)

mercurynews.com-Opinion Why Newsom should sign bill protecting Coyote Valley.pdf;

[External Email]

Good Afternoon,

I am submitting the attached article for the San Jose General Plan Task Force's consideration during their October 29th meeting.

The article, written by Senator Jim Beall and published by The Mercury News, gives a detailed account of why we should preserve Coyote Valley and put an end to any potential residential development in the area once and for all.

Thank you,

Ryan Mickle
Legislative Aide
Office of Senator Jim Beall
State Capitol Room 2082
Phone: 916-651-4015

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Opinion: Why Newsom should sign bill protecting Coyote Valley

 [mercurynews.com/2020/09/24/opinion-smart-development-strategies-to-protect-coyote-valley-open-space/](https://www.mercurynews.com/2020/09/24/opinion-smart-development-strategies-to-protect-coyote-valley-open-space/)

September 24, 2020

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The Mercury News

Opinion: Why Newsom should sign bill protecting...



A \$93 million deal was reached in November, 2019 for the city of San Jose, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority and the Peninsula Open Space Trust to purchase 937 acres in Coyote Valley on San Jose's southern edges to preserve the property for wildlife, open space and flood control. (Photo: Matt Dolkas, Peninsula Open Space Trust)

By Jim Beall |

September 24, 2020 at 6:10 a.m.

The fight to preserve Coyote Valley has been ongoing since the 1960s, when developers pushed to approve developments on our hillsides and open space. Serving on the San Jose Planning Commission early in my public service career, I helped create a General Plan containing no developments in Coyote Valley.

The City of San Jose updated its General Plan several times since then, even considering the construction of a Cisco campus in Coyote Valley. This fight was a prominent reason I got into politics as a city planner in the first place: to preserve our open space and reduce the harmful impacts urban sprawl has on our communities.

As time progressed, these impacts have only worsened with challenges such as the housing and climate crises. Senate Bill 940 provides the flexibility to end the fight and finally preserve Coyote Valley. The bill authorizes the city to eliminate potential development on open space in Coyote Valley as long as the city maintains its housing capacity by proactively up-zoning in other areas of the city. The Legislature approved the bill, and it is now awaiting action from Gov. Gavin Newsom. His signature would represent a massive stride in addressing these crises and preserving Coyote Valley and surrounding open space land.

This year's devastating wildfire season forces us to pay attention to where and how we build future communities. Over the past few weeks, the SCU Complex fire — one of the largest wildfires in California's history — has torn through over 200 structures and scorched almost 400,000 acres near San Jose.

As climate change brings an onslaught of higher temperatures and extended droughts, it becomes increasingly evident that building in areas prone to wildfires is problematic. The fire risk is greatest in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) because that's where human activity and wildland vegetation intermingle. With almost 95% of California wildfires caused by human activity, fires are more likely to ignite and more challenging to fight in the WUI. SB 940 protects the WUI near San Jose and allows the city of San Jose to downzone thousands of acres of land that would be dangerous for development, promoting more climate-resilient open space.

Protecting open space and agricultural land not only offers us the opportunity to get out into nature but also reduces harmful greenhouse gas emissions by allowing for more carbon sequestration. Furthermore, preserving agricultural land provides communities with locally sourced food. An acre of Santa Clara Valley farmland produces 77 times fewer greenhouse gases than that same acre would if converted to urban development.

Protection of open space, however, must not impede housing construction. SB 940 allows San Jose to continue increasing housing capacity in the urban core by zoning for more multi-family housing near transit while simultaneously protecting open space by downzoning outside of the infill area. This carves the path for a smart, anti-sprawl

development strategy that focuses on growth in urban areas. Building infill housing near jobs, transit corridors and existing communities allows us to provide services without inducing sprawl into open space and the WUI.

Last year, San Jose acquired nearly 1,000 acres of open space in Coyote Valley for conservation. This was a considerable achievement, but we need to utilize the authority granted by SB 940 and finally protect the remaining open space in Coyote Valley. Over the past 40 years, I have worked to jettison the outdated and dangerous sprawl development patterns of years past. It is fitting that one of my last pieces of legislation would represent such a momentous step in designating Coyote Valley once and for all as a place for wildlife and open space, not for development.

Jim Beall represents District 15 in the California Senate.



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