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**Planning Group considers Saint
Vincent de Paul project EIR - your
opportunity to comment
New Ordinance will prohibit using
storage containers in most areas**

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MERIT - MISSION STATEMENT

“The primary objectives and purposes of MERIT shall be to provide education and information that will 1) protect and maintain the natural resources, 2) promote responsible use of ground water, and 3) preserve the rural character of the community.”

Community Review and Comment of the Environmental Impact Report for Saint Vincent de Paul's Project - A Children's Village - 22 May 2006

Monday May 22, 2006 at their regularly scheduled meeting the Campo /Lake Morena Planning Group will review the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for this project. This is an especially important meeting for reasons we will try to explain. MERIT encourages each of you with an interest in our community to be there and to comment on this project.

First some background on this project. Father Joe Carroll and Saint Vincent de Paul (SVDP) first appeared in Campo in late December 1998 when Tom Dyke donated two separate properties to SVDP. In the spring of 2000 the community began to hear about plans for a foster child care facility. When the initial plan was presented, it was a modification of Disneyland and was referred to by many residents as Disneyland South. This initial plan developed almost every inch of the properties including things like an ice skating rink and 10 grass sports fields using enormous amounts of water and housing 500 children and a very large staff and a multitude of buildings and uses. The planned development looked like it came from the most densely populated area of San Diego - which is where it belonged.

Over the years there were many stops and starts and changes to the project. Many promises were made and many were broken. The saga of Tom Dyke Ranch/PromiseLand would make a good book. Eventually the original plans were scaled down. Then the project fell apart in a disagreement between Mr. Dyke and Saint Vincent de Paul and Joe Carroll. Mr Dyke went to court and gained back the properties (300+ acres) he had donated for the site of the foster child home. That location was north of 94 and a quarter mile east of the Sheridan Road intersection with Highway 94. SVDP retained the Tom Dyke Ranch (427 acres) located at the end of North Campo Truck Trail.

Later Carroll/SVDP negotiated with the Stephen and Mary Birch Foundation which purchased the former Flying A Ranch on Lake Morena Drive for SVDP. This 115 acre parcel is the site of the proposed project - A Children's Village.

A new Major Use Application (MUP04-034) was filed with the County of San Diego in August 2004. Work on a project starts long before the application is filed. Development is a four step process. First is the planning of the project and technical issues. The applicant works with its consultants and DPLU to design a project. Second is the submission of the MUP application and the preparation of environmental documents. When the MUP application is received by the County, they review it to determine if an EIR is needed. The size, complexity and scope of this MUP mandated that an EIR be prepared. The County then starts working with the applicant on the EIR on the environmental aspects of the project. Changes to the initial project design often result from the environmental review because a project will be denied if it fails to meet the environmental standards. Third, once the EIR is completed the MUP goes to the Planning Commission and then to the Board of Supervisors for approval or denial. Fourth and finally, if a project is approved, building permits can be issued and construction can begin,

SVDP submitted their application in August 2004. In September 2004 the County sent out a letter called a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for this project. The public had 30 days

to communicate to Department of Planning and Land Use (DPLU) all their concerns about the project and its effect on the environment. A number of residents did submit letters and emails. The County also had a NOP meeting which was held at the DPLU offices at Ruffin Road at 6 PM on a Wednesday. As one would expect for a meeting on a week night held down town only a few residents attended the NOP meeting.

During the last 18 months (Nov 2004 to May 2006) Brian Mooney and Mooney Associates have been working on the EIR. They prepared a draft EIR and the environmental studies that are part of the EIR document. The drafts was submitted to DPLU. The Planner at DPLU (Kristin Blackson) sent the document back to SVDP with a very long list of errors, omissions and changes needed. This scenario was repeated at least three more times. Finally an EIR that satisfied DPLU was completed. That is the report you are being asked to review and upon which you are being asked to comment.

While DPLU is responsible for the EIR, an environmental analyst at DPLU will tell you they are not experts in every single aspect of the report and there can be and probably are things in the EIR that are not correct or complete or not even considered. And any analyst will tell you they do not know the local area the way that residents do and they may be totally unaware of issues that are important to residents. That is why your review and comments are important.

This EIR is **LARGE**. The report is more than 1,000 pages and even the executive summary is more than 200 pages. One copy is in the Campo/Morena Village Library. MERIT has two copies and the Planning Group has two copies. There are probably more in the community and I am sure SVDP has a copy. You can also see the executive summary describing the project and the EIR on the Internet at www.sdcdplu.org/dplu/ceqa_public_review.html

You have until June 5th at 4 PM to make your comments. The report was mailed sometime around the 20th of April and the public has 45 days (unless an extension is granted - see below) to make their comments. The Planning Group is scheduling at least an hour at the 22 May meeting to collect comments on the shortcomings of the EIR for submission to DPLU. A number of people will also be submitting letters to DPLU. Written comments can be submitted to DPLU, Attn: Kristin Blackson, 5201 Ruffin Road, San Diego, CA 92123 There will also be a verbatim transcript of the entire PG hearing that will be submitted to DPLU as part of the public comment. This means that every point brought up at the PG meeting will be in the record and addressed by DPLU.

One question almost everyone asks is why does the Campo community only have about 5 weeks to comment when it took SVDP and Mooney with a staff of dozens and, by our estimate, more than \$170,000 and 18 months to prepare the EIR. And the EIR report included no hard deadlines imposed on SVDP by DPLU for timely completion of the report. The County answer is that this is their report and they can set whatever deadlines they want in the preparation of the report (obviously a pro development stance) while the public review of the completed EIR is a CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act Section 15105) mandated act and the law requires it be done in 45 days. We explained to DPLU the size of the report, the complexity, the myriad of issues involved, the enormous impact on our community, the detrimental impact of previous projects with inadequate public review and comment of an EIR (Campo Hills being one example). The response from DPLU was - "Well, if you do not like it, write to CEQA and ask them to change the law." That certainly does not help us here.

What happens with the comments on the EIR? We need to clarify this matter. Comments submitted during the NOP phase must be considered in the development of the EIR but it is not necessary to individually answer each NOP comment. The NOP comments are to help DPLU scope out the project and the EIR. Each and every comment submitted on the EIR must be listed in the final EIR and must be individually answered. DPLU considers each comment and then decides some comment is not valid and the EIR does not need change **OR** DPLU decides the comment is valid and directs SVDP to change the EIR. These changes can be anywhere from minor word smithing to changes in the project such as more parking or changes in hours or saving more trees or reducing the range of services provided by the project or even eliminating certain aspects of a project or substantially modifying parts of the project or requiring more mitigation of the environmentally damaged

components of the project. Your comments can have a major impact on the project and the ultimate decision by the BOS to deny or approve the project and any conditions on any approvals.

If and when SVDP makes all the changes required by DPLU, the EIR is forwarded to the decision making bodies. DPLU will include their recommendation for approval or denial of the project. While the revised EIR may or may not be sent out for a second public review, this is usually not done. Your opportunity to comment on the EIR is **NOW** - before June 5th.

If the public does not agree with the EIR certified by DPLU, they have one option. They can sue and challenge the EIR although that is a very expensive process and is one reason why developers with lots of money can get their way even when it is not the best thing from an environmental standpoint.

The Major Use Permit Application for the project and the accompanying EIR move to the approval process. This first step is a hearing by the Planning Commission for a vote of approval or denial. During the time leading up to the Planning Commission (PC) hearing there can be changes in the project and there can be changes due to testimony at PC hearings. The public has the opportunity to comment again on the EIR at the PC hearings. The main emphasis at the PC hearing is on the project itself. The issues considered by the PC are much broader than the EIR and include things like social good and community character and other issues.

And after the PC hearings and decision the MUP will go to the Board of Supervisors for their consideration and their vote. The BOS decision is the final decision and can be a denial or an approval or it can be an approval with additional conditions

Only after a Major Use Permit has been approved by the Board of Supervisors (including all conditions set by the PC and BOS) can the project get building permits and start moving dirt and start construction.

Back Country Revitalization Steering Committee Meeting with Supervisor Jacob - Friday May 19th

At the Community Center at 2:30 PM on May 19th the Back Country Revitalization meeting will convene. This meeting is an opportunity for residents in the Back Country to discuss their concerns on all issues and to recommend actions the County can take to improve the quality of life in this area. Discussion will include infrastructure needs, public safety, law enforcement, economic development, recreation, youth and community service. The discussions are informal but are issue and results driven. Supervisor Jacob listens and her staff and people from various County departments and organizations like CalTrans, Rural Fire, Sheriff, Planning Groups will be present. These meetings are very useful and are an excellent method for County government to hear our issues and be given direction to solve problems.

County Ordinance to Ban Sea Cargo Storage Containers in the Unincorporated Area

The Planning Commission will hear a proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance POD 06-002 to ban ocean going containers as accessory structures in residential and agricultural areas. This hearing will be Friday May 19th at 9 AM at the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting at the Department of Planning and Land Use, 5201 Ruffin Road.

Supervisor Jacob directed DPLU on December 6, 2005 to review use of containers to guarantee compatibility with surrounding land uses and community character. The first anyone knew this Zoning Ordinance Amendment was to be considered May 19th was when we received the Planning Commission agenda on May 13th . The proposed ordinance had not even been finalized so we had nothing to review. This is an important issue affecting dozens of residents in this area and throughout the Back Country. Despite its importance we could not even have the opportunity for the Planning Group and the community to comment.

MERIT called DPLU Monday morning and registered a strong objection to how DPLU was handling this issue. We have been advised by DPLU that at the Planning Commission on Friday they will request an additional 30 days of public review. This will give the PG an opportunity to comment. However, MERIT strongly recommends you comment to DPLU and/or you attend the PC meeting and any subsequent PC meetings that discuss this and that you communicate to the Board of Supervisors who will make the final decision.

This ordinance will prohibit all containers in residential areas - period. Even those few containers that are legal (most are not legal) will have to be removed in two years. Illegal ones it would seem need to be

removed immediately. The only places where these containers will be legal is in Agricultural Zones (A70 and A72) and in some zones with Special Purpose Use Regulations (S80, S87, S88, S90 and S92). But all legal containers must be modified to look like a normal frame or stucco building with siding and a pitched roof.

This proposed ordinance will be a hardship on many of us. You need to take action.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Home for Children

Please bring all cans and labels from Campbell's Soups products to the MERIT Recycling Center. Volunteer Nancy Slaff, member of Campo VFW Post 2080, collects these labels for the VFW National Home for Children. The home is for children and homeless whose relatives fought in our foreign wars. Campbells gives funds for each label collected. The money enables the National Home to build houses and other shelter, provide educational opportunities and provide a number of other beneficial programs.

There is a list of qualifying labels at the Recycling Center which includes all Campbell's soup labels including Hearty Soup and Chunky Soup, most Franco American products, Swanson Soups, Prego and Pace products.

Important Recycling Information

If you have questions about any aspect of recycling, MERIT recommends asking at the recycling center. There other good sources of information. One source is I Love A Clean San Diego and their recycling hot line at 1-877-R-1-EARTH. Another source is on the Internet at www.earth911.org

The recycling center does take cell phones. We also accept batteries for electronic devices and flashlights. We do not take automotive batteries.