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CITY OF PITTSBURG ATTEMPTS ILLEGAL ANNEXATION

600-Acre Project to Cover Hills with Housing Units

Pittsburg, CA – The City of Pittsburg is attempting to illegally fast-track a proposal by Seeno/Discovery Builders to annex 600 acres of one of the most significant ridgelines in Contra Costa County into the city limits to initiate development. The city’s actions would violate state laws and numerous local and regional policies, says a legal comment letter submitted Friday by Greenbelt Alliance and Save Mount Diablo.

Owned by Faria Land Investors LLC, the area lies on the eastern edge of the Los Medanos Hills, which separate central and eastern Contra Costa County. Immediately adjacent to the Faria land, the City of Concord intends to approve a new 2,500 acre regional park on the former Concord Naval Weapons Station, completely protecting the western side of the Los Medanos Hills.

The 18-page comment letter was prepared by Shute, Mihaly & Weinberger LLP, one of the most respected land-use law firms in California. The firm finds that the City has failed to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by circumventing the required environmental analysis and public review process. The proposal also violates the standards of the state law governing annexations, known as the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000, as well as the policies of the powerful Contra Costa County Local Agency Formation Commission, which oversees annexations. The project also violates numerous provisions of the City’s own General Plan.

“The Seeno developers claim that they have no development plans for the area, so the city is pretending that there will be no environmental impacts of adding the developers’ land into the city. However, many of us have seen project maps for this site,” states Seth Adams of Save Mount Diablo. “The law requires that they reveal their development plans so that the public and decision makers can make informed decisions. The developers are hoping Pittsburg leaders will break the law and that residents won’t notice.”

Several public agencies, including the Local Agency Formation Commission and the Contra Costa Water District submitted similar critiques of the project, asserting that Pittsburg’s attempt to annex without required information and adequate public review is premature and cannot be approved.

If the City of Pittsburg is successful, the project would destroy one of the most scenic ridgelines in the East Bay, threaten the new regional park, and significantly worsen traffic on Highway 4 and other roads—already some of the most congested in the county. Numerous unstable soils and fault lines run through the area, raising concerns that development could undermine landslide-prone slopes that have already cost other Seeno homebuyers their houses in nearby projects. The City of Pittsburg has already approved development on less-steep slopes below the ridge.

“Local residents have repeatedly voiced their support for protection of these beautiful hills,” says Matt Vander Sluis of Greenbelt Alliance. “This enormous project also takes resources away from initiatives that would put the city back on sound economic footing—undercutting efforts to revitalize the downtown and create walkable neighborhoods with easy access to jobs, services, and transit. With this hillside development proposal, everybody suffers but Seeno.”

The Pittsburg Planning Commission will vote on the proposal on Tuesday, February 8 at 7 p.m. The City Council is scheduled to consider approval of the project on Tuesday, February 22 at 7 p.m.

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Legal comment letter:

http://greenbelt.org/downloads/regions/eastbay/Pittsburg_Southwest_Hills_Faria_IS_MND_Comment_Letter.pdf

Additional images and map: http://greenbelt.org/regions/eastbay/camp_pittsburg.html

For more than 50 years, **Greenbelt Alliance** has been the San Francisco Bay Area’s advocate for open spaces and vibrant places, with offices in San Francisco, San Jose, Walnut Creek, San Rafael, and Santa Rosa. www.greenbelt.org

Founded in 1971, **Save Mount Diablo**’s mission is to preserve Mount Diablo’s peaks, surrounding foothills, and watersheds through land acquisition and preservation strategies designed to protect the mountain’s natural beauty, biological diversity, and historic and agricultural heritage; enhance our area’s quality of life; and provide recreational opportunities consistent with protection of natural resources. www.savemountdiablo.org