

From: [Mathias Redwall](#)
To: [Chris Garcia](#)
Subject: Oppose the San Elijo 5 Story Safety Hazard
Date: Thursday, October 1, 2026 4:14:40 PM

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Mr. Garcia,

I am sure you have seen the 3,000+ signatures opposing the building of a 5 story apartment complex in the 3 story San Elijo Hills. I am adding my own signature to the list.

This project would obviously be an absolute disaster for myriad reasons, but my primary one is the safety hazard it presents, especially to those of us that were here during the last fires. I am frankly very surprised this project has been allowed to progress this far for this reason alone.

When the next fires come, those City planners and other officials that made irresponsible decisions will be held accountable. For the benefit of the families you serve, I trust you will make the right decision and deny this project from being approved.

Respectfully,

Bill

From: [Kelly Lenahan](#)
To: [Chris Garcia](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Proposed SEH Apartment Building
Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2026 10:09:38 PM

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Dear Planning Commission and City Officials,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed construction of a five-story apartment complex in our residential neighborhood.

The proposed location raises serious concerns regarding emergency access, evacuation, traffic congestion, and the safety of nearby residents and students. The site is particularly problematic because it is a small triangular area located in the middle of the roadway, with two lanes of traffic surrounding the proposed development. This is not a typical development site with multiple, easily accessible routes for residents, emergency personnel, and evacuation traffic.

Emergency evacuation is already a significant concern in this area. During previous fire-related evacuations, the neighborhood experienced severe traffic congestion, and residents were effectively limited to a single viable way out. Adding a substantial five-story residential building—and the additional vehicles, residents, visitors, deliveries, and emergency-response demands that would accompany it—could place even greater pressure on an already constrained evacuation system.

Before approving this project, the City should require a comprehensive analysis of how residents could safely evacuate during a wildfire, structure fire, earthquake, major traffic incident, or other emergency. That analysis should account for the existing roadway configuration and the possibility that one or more lanes or routes could become blocked during an emergency.

There is also an important school-safety consideration. The proposed development would be directly across from a middle school. A five-story structure would create elevated rooftop and upper-floor vantage points overlooking school grounds. The design and placement of a large, multi-story building directly adjacent to a school should be carefully evaluated from a school-security and emergency-response perspective, including how law enforcement and school officials would respond to a potential threat i.e active shooter involving an elevated position.

The City should not consider this project solely in terms of whether the property can physically accommodate a building. It must also consider whether the surrounding infrastructure can safely accommodate the resulting population, traffic, emergency vehicles, and evacuation demands.

I respectfully request that the City:

- Conduct a thorough independent emergency evacuation and traffic-impact analysis

before considering approval.

- Evaluate the area's ability to evacuate residents safely during a wildfire or other emergency when traffic is severely congested.
- Assess emergency vehicle access and response times under both normal and emergency conditions.
- Consider the cumulative impact of adding a five-story residential development to an already constrained roadway.
- Conduct a comprehensive school-safety assessment because of the project's immediate proximity to the middle school.
- Consider whether the height, density, and placement of the proposed building are appropriate for this residential neighborhood.
- Require meaningful input from residents, school officials, emergency responders, and other affected members of the community before any decision is made.

Our community's ability to evacuate safely should not be treated as an afterthought. When an area has already experienced severe congestion and limited evacuation options during previous emergencies, adding significant density in a constrained location deserves particularly careful scrutiny.

I respectfully ask that you reject the proposed five-story apartment complex at this location unless and until these substantial safety, evacuation, traffic, and school-security concerns have been fully addressed with credible, independently reviewed evidence.

Thank you for your consideration and for taking the safety of our residents and students seriously.

Sincerely,

Kelly Lenahan

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Beth Houser](#)
To: [Chris Garcia](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FORMAL OBJECTION to Item SDP24-0009 (San Elijo Hills Town Center Apartments)
Date: Thursday, October 1, 2026 11:31:59 AM

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FORMAL OBJECTION to Item SDP24-0009 (San Elijo Hills Town Center Apartments)

Location: Town Center Triangle Median Lot, San Elijo Hills
Hearing Date: October 5, 2026

To the Members of the San Marcos Planning Commission,

Please accept this formal letter of objection regarding the proposed 5-story, 31-unit multi-family development (Project ID: [SDP24-0009](#)) slated for construction within the central town center median of San Elijo Hills.

As a local stakeholder, I urge the Planning Commission to deny approval of this project. The City cannot safely or legally approve increased residential density at this specific location until a project-specific, dynamic wildfire evacuation simulation is executed, analyzed, and made transparently available to the public.

To approve this development without updated empirical safety data ignores clear historical precedents, violates current California infrastructure planning mandates, and is entirely unnecessary given San Marcos has **already exceeded its state-mandated targets** for both the "Moderate" and "Above Moderate" income categories.

1. The Infrastructure Strain: Stagnant Roads vs. A 27% Population Surge

The infrastructure of San Elijo Hills was severely tested during the 2014 Cocos Fire, which resulted in catastrophic traffic gridlock and endangered thousands of fleeing residents. Since that emergency baseline, the regional population footprint has shifted dramatically, while arterial infrastructure has remained entirely stagnant:

- **Unprecedented Localized Growth:** In 2014, the regional footprint of the San Elijo master plan and its immediate perimeter enclaves (such as Venzano) stood at an estimated **9,000 residents**. Today, in 2026, that same geographic footprint has surged past **11,500 residents**—a **27% increase** in human volume.
- **Compounded Vehicle Density:** This growth has injected an estimated **1,700 additional resident vehicles** onto our hillsides.
- **Zero Infrastructure Delta:** Despite an influx of roughly 2,500 new people

relying on the area's evacuation grid, the primary escape corridors—San Elijo Road and Twin Oaks Valley Road—have seen **0% physical expansion** since 2014.

2. Structural Bottlenecks and the "Funnel Effect" on Surrounding Enclaves

San Elijo Hills is topographically constrained. Perimeter neighborhoods like Venzano, Copper Creek, and The Estates sit on outer ridges. In a wildfire event, hundreds of families from these surrounding enclaves are forced down a single-lane network into the valley, funnelling directly through the central Town Center.

The proposed apartment complex sits directly inside the primary arterial median spine of this funnel. Introducing a high-density residential structure at the literal mouth of a bottleneck—without expanding the surrounding roadway—creates an immediate public safety hazard. Not to mention there are two schools that would need to be evacuated as well if they are in session and a fire were to erupt. It prioritizes new development over the survival routing of established surrounding neighborhoods and schools.

3. Non-Compliance with State Safety Elements and Legislative Mandates

Because this project sits squarely within a designated **Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ)**, the City of San Marcos cannot legally rely on outdated Environmental Impact Reports (EIR) or generic traffic studies from the original 1999 master plan. Bypassing a project-specific evacuation simulation flies in the face of modern California planning statutes:

- **California SB 99 & AB 747 Compliance:** State law explicitly mandates that local jurisdictions map residential areas within hazard zones that lack sufficient evacuation routes. Cities are required to evaluate roadway capacity under concrete emergency "jeopardy scenarios."
- **California SB 12 Strictures:** Local agencies are heavily restricted from approving residential density increases in very high fire risk zones unless strict, verifiable wildfire risk reduction and comprehensive evacuation modeling are satisfied.

4. Zero Regulatory Pressure: San Marcos Already Leads in RHNA Compliance

Planners and developers often argue that density updates must be approved to avoid state penalties under California's housing mandates. However, this justification does not apply to the City of San Marcos.

The City of San Marcos has established itself as regional leader in fulfilling its 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) requirements through the 2029 deadline:

- **Exceeded Targets:** Thanks to major strategic developments like North City, San Marcos has **already exceeded its state-mandated targets** for both the

"Moderate" and "Above Moderate" income categories.

- **On Track for Lower Income Categories:** The City has already permitted roughly **75% of its assigned low-income units** and leads all neighboring North County jurisdictions in Housing Element progression.
- **No Threat of State Intervention:** Because San Marcos is one of only five highly compliant jurisdictions in San Diego County, it is not vulnerable to "Builder's Remedy" penalties or state litigation.

The City has already successfully planned for and produced its fair share of housing. There is absolutely no regulatory or statutory pressure forcing the Planning Commission to compromise public safety in a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone just to clear a 31-unit quota.

Conclusion & Formal Demand

Nearly 3,000 residents, alongside the San Elijo Hills Community Association Master Board and the San Elijo Hills Fire Council, have raised formal alarms regarding this project's pedestrian, traffic, and wildfire risks.

We request that the Planning Commission uphold its duty to public safety. Please order a **comprehensive, project-specific, dynamic wildfire evacuation simulation** before this parcel is considered for high-density rezoning or development. If the roads failed to clear 9,000 people in 2014, they cannot be assumed to clear nearly 12,000 people safely today.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to safeguarding the residents of San Marcos.

Sincerely,

Beth Houser

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [Kristalyne Packard](#)
To: [Chris Garcia](#)
Subject: A letter regarding unsafe building on San Elijo Road
Date: Friday, October 2, 2026 7:07:05 AM

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Dear Members of the San Marcos Planning Commission and City Staff,

I am writing in opposition to Ambient Communities' proposed five-story, 31-unit apartment building on the half-acre parcel between San Elijo Road North and South.

This is not opposition to housing. It is a concern about placing a development of this size and intensity directly along one of only two primary routes residents rely upon to enter and evacuate San Elijo Hills—a community now designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

During the 2014 Cocos Fire, one route was blocked and thousands of residents were directed west. Evacuation was frightening, chaotic, and took hours. Adding dozens of residents and vehicles at this constrained location could further delay residents trying to evacuate while emergency responders are simultaneously trying to enter.

*Here is my personal experience! Evacuating the Cocos fire was terrifying! It took hours to leave San Elijo while the flames weren't far behind. My husband was at work so I packed up my 4 kids, our belongings and we inched our way out of San Elijo. It was dangerous, and I'm so glad everything worked out. If you add more people, more cars, more traffic, I fear not everyone will be safe next time. Please don't make an already busy road unbearable and down right dangerous! Please be considerate of the residents who already live here. I have lived here for almost 20 years and this is not ok. It really breaks my heart actually! Please protect our kids, neighborhood and safety by not building there! Please!!!!

*I'm so concerned about added traffic as well. The traffic around school drop off and school pick up time is insane! I have seen accidents during after school traffic. Adding that many residents with no extra parking is not ok. It doesn't make sense, and I don't know how this is even a consideration! Please do not let this building pass!

*My children attend San Elijo Elementary and San Elijo Middle school. I want them to be safe. I want all of the children to be safe. Making this area more congested with a large building overlooking the school scares me. It's too much, the lot is too small for all of this. The parking spots already fill up for drop off and pick up. There isn't room for more cars. This apartment complex will greatly affect so many and honestly keeping our kids safe and the surrounding area safe should be THE number one top priority!!!! I also can't help but be

concerned that this could make a school shooting incredibly accessible and easy. Protect our kids please! We have great schools! Please keep them safe!

I am particularly concerned that the City may consider approving this project without the current information needed to evaluate these risks:

- The principal San Elijo Hills Specific Plan EIR was certified in 1997—nearly 30 years ago and before today’s development, traffic conditions, wildfire knowledge, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone designation.
- A current, project-specific CEQA evaluation addressing wildfire evacuation and cumulative development has not been completed.
- The project-specific Fire Protection Plan has been deferred until the permitting stage, after entitlement approval.
- Ambient marked “No Impact” for every wildfire question in its environmental checklist, despite the absence of a completed FPP and project-specific evacuation analysis.

The Fire Protection Plan and current environmental review could identify necessary changes to the building’s height, access, parking, driveway, emergency operations, or overall design. These are threshold safety questions that should be answered before the City commits to approving the project—not afterward.

California law does not require a city to approve housing at the expense of public safety(****seriously this is ridiculous! When did we stop using our brains!!!! Let’s stop caring about money and care more about people and our cities safety!)It permits denial of a housing project—and denial of requested Density Bonus concessions or waivers—when the required findings establish a specific adverse impact on public health or safety that cannot feasibly be mitigated or avoided.

I respectfully ask the City to:

1. Deny SDP24-0009 based on the unresolved safety concerns; or
2. At minimum, postpone approval until a project-specific Fire Protection Plan and current CEQA, evacuation, access, and cumulative-traffic analyses have been completed, independently reviewed, and made available to the public.

Nearly 3,000 residents have signed the petition, and 200 opposition emails have already been submitted. Please listen to the community and require clear evidence that this project can be safely located on this particular site before making an irreversible decision.

*San Elijo is a special place and I love living here! It deserves better than this. Our kids deserve better than this. The current residents deserve better than this. Our roads and all who use them deserve better than this. Our safety and ease to evacuate is vital! All of our safety deserves better than this.

Thank you for your time and service to our community.

Sincerely,

Kristalyne Packard

Promontory Ridge neighborhood

[REDACTED]

