

Escondido Neighbors United

*An alliance of engaged residents working for the benefit of rural, urban, and natural communities
in the Escondido Area.*

January 9, 2026

Mr. Alex Rangel. Associate Planner
City of Escondido
Via Email Alex.Rangel@escondido.gov

RE: ENU concerns related to Project PL24-0290

Dear Mr. Rangel,

Thank you for your responsiveness to our queries related to the above project. Escondido Neighbors United (ENU) has been involved with and very concerned about pollution impacts from the hazardous waste at the designated 'State-Superfund site' the Chatham Barrel Yard.

The time is very short so we wanted to provide our concerns and requests as soon as we could. We have reviewed the material available related to the parcel map changes and have the following comments and requests.

The nature of the contamination at the former Chatham Barrel Yard means precautionary buffers should be required.

The kind of contamination dumped at the Chatham 'Recycling' yard is some of the hardest contaminants to control or predict. Wastes from the site have traveled over a 1/5 mile downgradient and have even shown up to the northwest of the site. Even decades after the original dumping, contamination continues to 'daylight' into Felicita Creek in Felicita Park (FC-10, 14, 16). The study in [October, 2022](#) of soil vapor reported contamination near the home to the northwest of the actual contamination site, demonstrating that this waste is often on the move and long-lived. Further, these contaminants do not behave with any kind of predictability or precision. Locating new housing so close to the contaminated areas of Chatham should not be allowed. The furthest east new housing parcel should be removed and that land left as buffer.

Understanding the fate and transport of hazardous materials is a highly technical field and the city should have its own expert.

Waste sites like Chatham are highly complex and technical. The Geotechnical report only seems to address the geologic stability of the site e.g. subsidence etc... not the conditions of the hazardous materials. The city does not have this kind of expertise on staff and, in an important matter such as locating housing near a waste site, should have its own experts review the data.

Construction can be a messy endeavor.

Several of our members live near this site and are concerned about construction impacts. During construction dust and soil can be stirred up and vapors could be released. We would want these impacts to be fully studied and prevented during construction. Further, disclosure of the presence of Chatham must be required for any future homebuyers at the site.

Additional testing would be prudent and necessary for protection

We request a map be provided showing the property in question and the locations and results of any monitoring wells on and around it. In particular, MW 64 and 33 seem to be the closest to the site, but please confirm since the maps are not that clear. As you know, cleanup at Chatham has involved excavation, removal, and offsite disposal of 11,430 tons of highly contaminated soil decades ago. This site should be checked in the event any of the long-lived contaminants escaped offsite during that removal. PCBs especially are long-lived and were a driver of the removal.

The past does not predict the future.

The current reports we have only reflect the conditions today. However, conditions can change. For example, at some point in the future the PRPs could argue that they no longer need to operate the remediation wells or impacts of stormwater flows from new development could change conditions at the site. We do not know the full impact of future changes. Precautionary action is needed here. To protect public health now and in the future the city should remove the housing parcel closest to the Chatham boundary and further designate the Chatham Barrel Yard as an undevelopable site.

Requests

1. Prior to approving the map, the city should confer with the two California State Agencies overseeing the cleanup of the Chatham Site (California Department of Toxic Substance Control, and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Diego Region), regarding the suitability of the site for residential occupancy, and any land restrictions that may be required.
2. The city should confer with the Chatham Brothers Barrel Yard PRP Group (PRP Group) to determine if any development of the site would impact the on-going remediation being conducted.
3. Future property owners must provide access to the PRP Group to sample and/or install groundwater monitoring wells and conduct other necessary environmental testing.
4. Land use restrictions should be made that would either prohibit the installation of groundwater production wells (domestic or irrigation) within the site, unless hydrogeologic studies are conducted to ensure that pollutants from the former

Barrel Yard will not impact the production wells. Regular testing of any new wells must be required.

5. A buffer from the Chatham site is warranted due to the longevity and nature of the contaminants on site. Any parcel or homesite that is proposed along the boundary of the Chatham site should be removed. No more housing should be located adjacent to this waste site. Ever.
6. The city should require current soils, groundwater, and soil vapor testing on the site in question, and require engineering controls be used to prevent the migration of soil vapors with Chatham Barrel Yard pollutants from entering the occupied spaces of future structures.
7. The city should hire its own hazardous materials consultant to review the reports related to the proposed project prior to allowing homes on this site.
8. Rigorous air and soil testing must be conducted during construction with contingency plans in the event releases occur.
9. City should require that brokers/sellers of the property notify future buyers of the presence of the waste site in close proximity.
10. The city should designate the Chatham parcel itself as un-developable due to the historic contaminated conditions by separate action.

The fact that we are still dealing with the impacts of the Chatham Recycling Center from activities that started in the early 1940's and after over 30 years of active remediation is a painful reminder that actions of one generation can significantly degrade the health, economy, and future of generations.

Please let us know that you received this and how the city plans to proceed. Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We can be reached at EscoNeighbors@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Laura Hunter

Maria Ampalu

Melissa Hayes

Ron Forster

Tina Iki

Denise Rolen

Phil Lauder

Pam Heatherington

Doreen Reagle

Brenda Townsend

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cc. Mr. Kevin Snyder, Director Development Services, Kevin.Snyder@escondido.gov

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<https://escondidoneighbors.org/>