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June 29, 2010

CONTACT: De'Ann Weimer, Friends of Aviara, 858.344.0436

Carlsbad Citizen's Group Recommends Changes To Proposed Development Threatening Aviara Environment and Community

CARLSBAD, CA -- Having withstood the implosion of California's residential real estate market and the loss of the prestigious Four Seasons nameplate on its premier hotel and resort, the Aviara neighborhood is digging in to protect its community and vulnerable ecosystem from outside developers.

Friends of Aviara (FOA), a grass-roots group of Aviara neighbors, recommended Monday significant changes to a proposed assisted-living facility along Poinsettia Lane and Ambrosia Lane that – with its high-density plan of 458 units -- would be one of the largest such campuses in the United States.

The development – variously referred to in city filings as The Bridges at Aviara or as PonteBello – is designed to house more than 900 people in more than 15 two- and three-story buildings perched atop one of the last predominantly open space canyons in Southern Carlsbad. As envisioned, the development's characteristic feature would be a towering, covered pedestrian bridge stretching across four lanes of traffic to connect campuses to the north and south of Poinsettia.

“Where the goal of the Aviara Master Plan was to blend into the natural setting, this developer's proposal is to dominate the skyline and obliterate nature,” said De'Ann Weimer, president of Friends of Aviara. “The Aviara Master Plan, for example, prudently directed pedestrians and golfers underneath Aviara Parkway, preserving trees and the rolling landscape of the community, rather than attempting to build a three-story bridge over Aviara's four-line boulevard.

“Perhaps, it would be more accurate to call this proposed development The Bridges ‘Over’ Aviara,” she added.

In a letter to City of Carlsbad officials, FOA proposed that this projected commercially-operated assisted-living site, which will not be a medically licensed complex, should follow the Aviara precedent and route pedestrian and golf cart traffic below the proposed extension of Poinsettia.

Carlsbad's City Officials were asked additionally to follow the example set by the Del Mar City Council, which also was faced with building a bridge in an area burdened by the convergence of heavy traffic, residential neighborhoods and a sensitive coastal environment.

Del Mar will replace the bridge conveying traffic between Del Mar and Torrey Pines with a new one structurally safe enough to carry four lanes of traffic but restricted to two, allowing drivers to transition into and out of residential areas.

“With a large city park, the Aviara Oaks Elementary and Middle School campuses and several church supported schools clustered around the Poinsettia and Ambrosia intersection, the construction of a two-lane bridge similar to Del Mar’s would provide some of the same safety features and be more in keeping with the residential atmosphere,” Weimer said.

Central to neighbors’ objections is the desire to see the area remain zoned for approximately 120 single-family homes. The developer is intent on changing the zoning to one of the highest in the city of Carlsbad, thus establishing an island of high-density housing within the surrounding, single-family area. FOA has proposed that El Camino Real serve as a dividing line between low and high density development with higher densities allowed to the East of El Camino.

“If this development as conceived is built, it is hard to imagine Aviara continuing to serve as a buffer between North County and the devastation that has rocked California’s real estate market. I fear headlines of recent years like ‘Carlsbad 92011 holds the fort on home prices’ will become a distant memory,” Weimer said.

Friends of Aviara invites concerned citizens to sign a petition objecting to The Bridges At Aviara/PonteBello by visiting FOA’s website <http://friendsofaviara.org> and clicking on “petition.” A copy of FOA’s letter to the city outlining its proposals for the development is also available at the website.

P.O. Box 151775 Carlsbad, CA 92015

boardmembers@friendsofaviara.org

www.friendsofaviara.org