



HUNTINGTON BEACH TOMORROW

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"Making a difference today for Huntington Beach tomorrow"

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February 14, 2005

City Council & City Administrator
City of Huntington Beach
2000 Main St.
Huntington Beach CA 92648

Subject: Loss Of Open Space

The Fountain Valley School District (FVSD) Board of Trustees approved the sale of the Ward and Lamb school sites located in Huntington Beach at their February 10, 2005 meeting. Their stated intent is to sell the properties for residential purposes for approximately \$50 million dollars and use the invested income to fund annual operating expenses.

For decades the open space on these school sites has been used by thousands of Huntington Beach residents annually for recreational and open space purposes. Open space is a necessity of life to feed the mind, body and spirit of our citizens. Once open space is developed it is gone forever.

Huntington Beach Tomorrow's position on closed school sites is to preserve the open space and allow development only within the footprint of the existing buildings on the property. The complete position with its supporting rationale may be found at www.hbtomorrow.org.

It is expected the FVSD will follow state law by declaring the sites surplus and offer the sites for sale to the city within a few weeks. The city will then have 60 days to accept or refuse the offer. HBT understands the city does not have the funds to purchase the property nor is there time to conduct a bond issue ballot.

HBT requests the City Council take immediate actions to prevent the conversion of open space on these school sites to other uses.

One option is to zone the open space on the properties to OS-Open Space. Supporting rationale is the open space was always planned to be used as open space and has been used for that purpose since inception. In addition, Government Code Section 65852.9 states a city may rezone school sites to "open-space, park or recreation, or similar designation" where the adjacent property is so zoned. The Wardlow school site is adjacent to Wardlow park. The school buildings could continue to be leased or sold to provide income to the FVSD.

HBT believes the City Council and city staff will need to take immediate, forthright actions to prevent the permanent loss of these valuable community resources. Huntington Beach Tomorrow strongly supports actions that will lead to preserving these open spaces for posterity.

Sincerely,

Ed Kerins
President

Copies: Huntington Beach Independent; Huntington Beach Wave; OC Register; LA Times