



May 19, 2014

Parks and Recreation Commission  
City of Santa Clara  
1500 Warburton Avenue  
Santa Clara, CA 95050

Re: Agenda Item IV.B: Commission Recommendation that Council consider developing a sports complex at Ulistac Natural Area

Dear Chair O'Halloran and Commissioners,

Committee for Green Foothills respectfully urges you not to recommend development of soccer fields or a sports complex at Ulistac Natural Area. Committee for Green Foothills (CGF) is a nonprofit environmental organization with members throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, including in the City of Santa Clara. CGF's mission is to preserve open space and natural resources within the two counties through advocacy, education and grassroots action.

A vote on this issue, at this juncture, would be premature. Parks and Recreation Department staff has not even brought a proposal to this Commission or the City Council describing what would be involved in constructing soccer fields at Ulistac, such as the expense, the timeline, the proposed design, or any other details that are necessary to be determined prior to such a vote. As you are no doubt aware, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be prepared, analyzing the effects of any such project, prior to approval. The purpose of CEQA review is to inform the lead agency as well as the public as to the environmental impacts of agency actions. Any recommendation by the Parks and Recreation Commission on a project that has not been analyzed and has not undergone CEQA review cannot be based on full and accurate information as to these impacts, and therefore is valueless.

Furthermore, an agency process for evaluating various alternatives for new or additional soccer fields has already been commenced. The City Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Additional Soccer Field Planning has initiated discussion of possible locations for soccer fields. A vote by this Commission to recommend locating soccer fields at Ulistac would seem to suggest that the City Council should bypass this process and jump to a decision on this issue – without public comment, without appropriate environmental analysis, and without the legally required process.

In addition, locating soccer fields at Ulistac would be in contravention of the agreement between the City of Santa Clara and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (OSA). As has been discussed at the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee on Additional Soccer Field Planning, the City accepted grant funds from OSA for Ulistac's native habitat restoration under a contractual agreement that included the requirement that Ulistac be maintained as natural open space.

A city with the resources, pride and community spirit of Santa Clara deserves to have both a beautiful, wild nature park such as Ulistac, and a state-of-the-art soccer complex. There is no reason to sacrifice one in order to build the other. Ulistac is irreplaceable – a 40-acre contiguous native habitat area, adjacent to the Guadalupe River which provides a vital riparian corridor for wildlife. This oasis of trees and plants in the midst of urbanized Silicon Valley provides critical nesting, foraging and breeding habitat. The arguments that have been made that putting artificial turf fields in the middle of Ulistac would leave the remainder of Ulistac intact, are false. The value of Ulistac as habitat lies in its uninterrupted nature. Animals in the wild benefit exponentially from

contiguous, uninterrupted habitat. Fragmentation, or chopping up remaining habitat into separated pieces, destroys far more of that habitat's value to wildlife than is apparent from the mere number of acres lost.

Finally, Ulistac's value to the community as a recreational resource is as great as any sports field. Hundreds of volunteers have spent thousands of hours painstakingly weeding, planting, creating trails, and otherwise restoring this native habitat. From school field trips and Boy Scout projects, to joggers looking for peaceful trails away from car traffic, to birders and native garden lovers, Ulistac offers benefits to the entire community in Santa Clara and the whole region.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alice Kaufman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alice Kaufman  
Legislative Advocate, Committee for Green Foothills