

# Sierra Club challenges warehouse project in Otay Mesa

By **Albert Fulcher** - 08/31/2024



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The Sierra Club filed a lawsuit challenging the County's approval of the Otay Majestic project, a 1,253-acre warehouse project, claiming the project would worsen already poor South County air quality, generate significant greenhouse gas emissions harming global climate, and critically impact endangered wetlands and species. The project is located east of Brown Field Municipal Airport, on the east side of the South Bay Expressway.

According to the County of San Diego website, the East Otay Mesa Business Park Specific Plan to establish a new Light Industrial Master Planned Business Park area, on approximately 253 gross acres in the East Otay Mesa area of the County of San Diego.

The Proposed Project would allow for the entitlement of approximately 187 net acres and include approximately 51.3 acres of permanent biological open space located in the northeastern corner. The Proposed Project design strategy is to allow for up to 2,850,000 square feet of Class A industrial buildings spread out over 5 proposed phases. It is estimated that, when completed, the Light Industrial Master Planned Business Park will include approximately 145,000 square feet of flex office space to support the business operations of the tenants.

"Any new large commercial project should include measures to minimize impacts to air quality and climate, especially projects generating truck traffic where air quality is already terrible," said David Hogan, San Diego Chapter Legal Committee chair in a press release. "There is no practical reason this project can't include measures to minimize air pollution and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions other than the developer just doesn't want to pay and the County gave them a pass."

Attorney Josh Chatten-Brown of Chatten-Brown Law Group added that the county only included a list of vague and unenforceable project design features to justify project approval.

“Significant impacts to air quality, climate, and endangered species trigger legal requirements to include clear and binding measures to reduce environmental impacts. But documents and approvals for this project don’t include meaningful or enforceable measures to reduce harm,” he stated.

The lawsuits argue that the project will also harm biodiversity, posing risks to imperiled vernal pools and coastal sage scrub habitats as well as endangered species like the California gnatcatcher.

“San Diego is a globally important biodiversity hotspot of concentrated sensitive habitats and endangered species,” added Hogan. “Rather than being part of the problem, this project could be part of the solution by leaving and restoring more habitat and species on the project.”

More arguments in the lawsuit include that “San Diego, along with many areas in Southern California, is facing an unprecedented boom in warehouse development, particularly due to the rise of e-commerce and consumer expectations of rapid shipping.

While warehouses can bring economic development, when done without proper analysis and mitigation, warehouses can harm local communities and the environment. Diesel trucks visiting warehouses emit nitrogen oxide – a primary precursor to smog formation and a significant factor in the development of respiratory problems like asthma, bronchitis, and lung irritation – and diesel particulate matter – a subset of fine particular matter that is a contributor to cancer, heart disease, respiratory illnesses, and premature death.”

For more information about the Otay Majestic project, visit <https://bit.ly/4dWQLdc>.



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