The Inside Scoop



September, 2026

Dear District 3 Resident,

My name is Peter De Hoff, your City Council Representative for Poway's District 3. This monthly-ish newsletter is one way I keep you posted on what's happening in your city government.

Another packed issue with topics from the Meridian Insights, to Zone 0 Updates, to some Critical Presentations at City Hall. And yes, a small favor at the bottom. Onward….



Report from the Meridian Conference

The Pre-Development Conference for the Meridian Project, a mixed-use development proposal in the early stages, at and around the Enterprise car rental site, took place during the City Council Meeting on Tuesday, August 18th. A special thank you to those who saw the notice in the most recent newsletter and tuned in.

To recap, the developer provided a history of the site, which was previously a series of run-down storage buildings used as homeless encampments, along with some open space used as overflow parking. As part of the amenity requirements for construction, the developer had already razed the buildings, graded the land, and installed stormwater treatment facilities for the site. We also learned that this is the same developer who designed and built the pocket park at the corner by the library, one of the components of the Poway Road Specific Plan (PRSP).

There was robust public participation, both online and in person. Curiously, one of the online callers, who runs a couple of the more cantankerous Facebook groups, appeared to have a misinformed but deeply held conviction about what a circa-2019 agreement between the City and the developer actually said. The developer's version was confirmed by an opinion from the City Attorney, and I later reviewed the old agenda item to figure out where this caller had gotten off track. It turned out they appear to have stopped reading at Page 2 of the item's summary, while Page 4 (and the legalese that followed) provided the accurate, fuller, and more holistic picture. Another good reminder of the importance of asking questions and gathering all the facts before drawing conclusions.

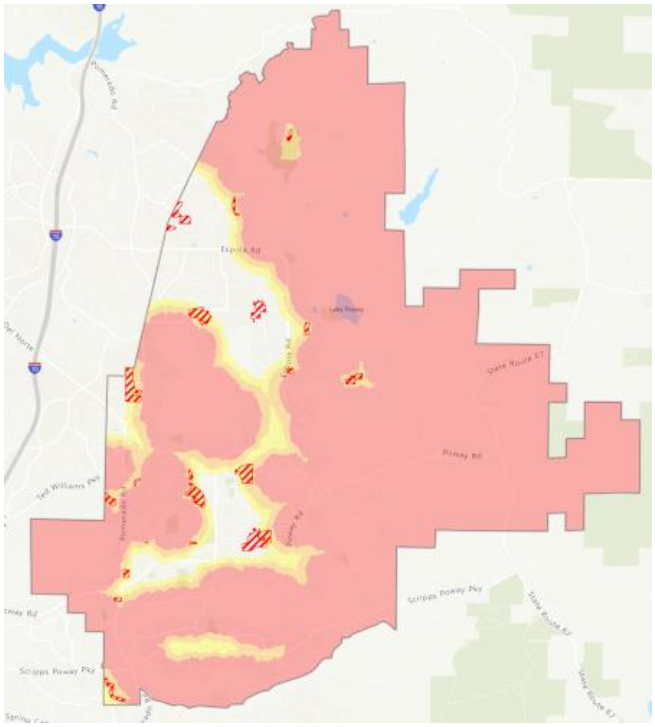
Fortunately, the other speakers and callers were constructive and raised some excellent points on how the project would need to change – from widening the walkways and separating them from

traffic, to increasing the articulation of some buildings so they don't feel boxed in. I found the speakers well versed in both the project's details and with the PRSP.

Most of the Council asked probing questions, and those who did made sure the developer was on notice that the commercial spaces would not be convertible to residential units, and that a number of the smaller commercial units would need to be enlarged and have their ceilings raised. There was also universal support for rooftop dining on at least one of the restaurant buildings.

Overall, a productive Pre-Development Conference, and I hope the next round of the developer's design incorporates the elements the public raised. I'd anticipate the next phase surfacing either later this year or sometime in early-to-mid 2027.

California's New "Zone 0" Wildfire Rules:
What Poway Homeowners Need to Know



The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (the Board) adopted the state's first "Zone 0" rules on August 19th. These new rules govern the five feet immediately surrounding homes and structures in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Truthfully, though, if you live anywhere in Poway, you may want to start implementing some of these changes on your own to reduce your risk profile. You can look up which zone your own property sits in here:

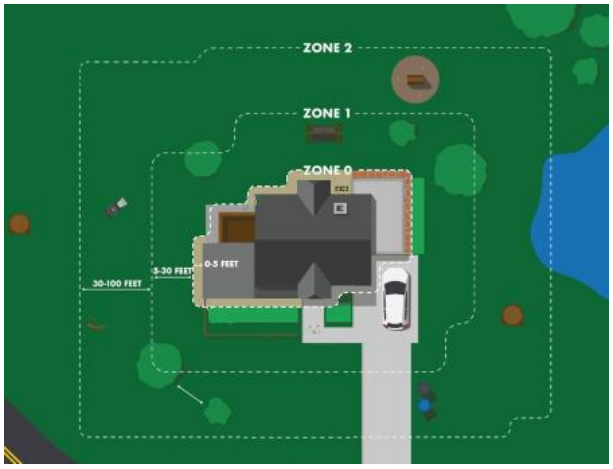
poway.org/1162/Fire-Hazard-Severity-Zones

What's Required

Zone 0 bans combustible materials, such as firewood, mulch, dead leaves, debris, within five feet of your home, including under attached decks and stairs. Tree branches must be trimmed back from chimneys, eaves, and roofs. The "safety zone," which is closest to your house and measures the larger of 1 ft from your wall or from your wall to the eave line, allows no vegetation at all. Out to five feet is minimal vegetation. New combustible fences and gates are already forbidden in this zone in Poway, requiring noncombustible materials like CMU or metal. Existing combustible fences can remain and be repaired as normal, except for the portion touching the house, which must be converted to noncombustible material.

The Process and What Comes Next

The Board adopted these through California's emergency rulemaking process, which means an accelerated submission to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) on August 28th, 2026. After a five-day public comment window and an expedited legal review, the rule is expected to become law in September 2026.



When Does It Start?

Poway has already adopted a version of these rules for new construction. Once the state rule is adopted, existing homes get a phased runway. Some requirements kick in immediately, like removing roof and gutter debris, eliminating firewood storage next to the house, and basic tree clearance from chimneys. The heavier yard work, like removing combustibles, tree maintenance, adjusting vegetation, is due within three years. The most structurally involved changes, like creating the noncombustible safety zone, upgrading fence attachments, and replacing sheds, come with up to a five-year runway.

Enforcement

Poway's approach is explicitly education-forward, with inspectors offering guidance to help homeowners prioritize the most achievable steps first rather than leading with citations.

In the meantime, the Poway Neighborhood Emergency Corps (PNEC) – a terrific, all-volunteer resource run by Poway residents, for Poway residents – runs a home assessment survey program staffed by highly trained volunteers who can help you understand how your own property fits into these evolving state requirements. You can learn more and get on the survey list here:

POWAY NEIGHBORHOOD EMERGENCY CORPS

powaynec.com/firewise-communities
or by emailing powaynec@gmail.com.

A Note on Insurance

A question I get all the time is about fire insurance rates, and even availability. While these new rules don't set insurance policy, the industry already treats defensible space and home-hardening as key factors in assessing wildfire risk and setting rates. In practice, insurers are often ahead of the state, and some carriers already require mitigation steps that mirror these rules even for homes outside the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

As we all know, insurers across California have been pulling back coverage and raising premiums in high fire-risk areas over the past couple of years, and that broader insurance crunch is a central issue in this November's open race for California Insurance Commissioner.

https://ballotpedia.org/California_Insurance_Commissioner_election,_2026

And

https://calmatters.org/california-voter-guide-2026/insurance-commissioner/

Whoever wins will have real influence over how affordable and available home insurance stays for communities like ours so this one may be worth keeping an eye on alongside everything happening with Zone 0.

Bottom Line
Whether you're in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone or just nearby, remember that wildfire doesn't care about lines drawn on a map by a committee some 500 miles away. It only cares about fuel.

Starve it.

Presentations Galore
The September 1st meeting has very little in the way of City business, so a large number of relevant and timely presentations are planned.

Meeting Details can be found here:
https://poway.org/Calendar.aspx?EID=4945

Wildfire Safety
The new Zone 0 rules, along with other fire safety topics, will be discussed, with guidance on what you can do.

Flood Safety
With the "super" El Niño underway, what's being done to prepare, and what can you do to harden your own fortress?

Scripps has a useful information hub (https://scripps.ucsd.edu/news/el-nino) if you want to learn more. (or tune into the presentation on September 1st in the Poway City Council meeting)

Advanced Adaptive Traffic Signals
They're supposed to alleviate traffic. Is it working? How much do these systems cost? Who pays for them? Should we be fast-tracking this project?

Public Safety
What can you do to make yourself a hard target for crime?

The Crystal Ball



Here's what I see happening in the future. (only works on city related matters)

Citywide Speed Limit

Due to resident concerns about speed limits, the Traffic Safety Committee met in open session to discuss them. While nobody from the public attended that meeting, my hope is that when their report comes before City Council on September 15th, more folks will be on hand to weigh in and share their thoughts. It should summarize a fairly comprehensive analysis, one that takes traffic patterns and pedestrian safety concerns into account.

I hear a wide range of opinions on speed limits. Which is your lane?

- Lower speed limits everywhere?
- Lower them around me, but nowhere else?
- Raise them across the board?
- ...or follow the data?

Let me know before the meeting….or at it.

AI Data Center Ban



This is moving quickly and could come before Council as soon as September 15th. The name says it all, but here's a brief recap and some background.

About a month ago, Mayor Vaus and Councilwoman Edmondson proposed an ordinance to ban large-scale standalone AI data centers in Poway, citing concerns over their intense resource use. Highlighting the practical value of experience, it's actually a fairly forward-thinking proposal, drawing on the lessons learned from the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) projects at the Business Park.

Longtime readers may recall a prior newsletter where I took a deeper dive into that issue. One of those BESS facilities was essentially approved ministerially, because that type of use didn't fit into any previously defined category for the area. As a result, meaningful public input on it was nearly nonexistent.

It turns out that hyperscale AI data centers fall into a similarly unregulated category and could follow the same path to approval. When the first BESS facility appeared, I watched staff scramble in an all-hands-on-deck effort to draft new safety regulations in real time, for a use that

was vastly different in practice but classified as little more than a generic storage facility. Staff performed admirably under the circumstances, a real testament to their skill, but it came at the cost of their ability to carry out other state-mandated functions. And as a general rule, writing complex regulations under severe time pressure is never good practice.

The impact profile of data centers is complex and evolving, and in some ways improving. But without a proper regulatory framework in place, the path of least resistance will always win out, and that path typically carries the largest negative local impacts. Getting ahead of the curve by banning these facilities now, effectively a moratorium without a defined end date, buys staff time to develop a framework the public can review and weigh in on before it's adopted.

That said, this effort would require significant staff time that may not be available anytime soon, given state mandates on turnaround times for housing project approvals.

Let me know where you come down on this. (and yes, I do use AI to polish this newsletter)

Election Season Is Upon Us Again



Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to my reelection effort for the District 3 City Council seat. I'm grateful for the support.

The real work of campaigning continues, and I look forward to earning your vote. For the quick pitch:

I think Poway's a great place to live and raise a family. I'd like to keep it that way. About four years ago, I ran on "Staying the Course," and I've been doing just that in office ever since — from keeping Poway the safest city in San Diego County, to helping lead the acquisition of open space to preserve for generations, to massive improvements at our parks, to an unbroken string of balanced budgets. If you'd like four more years of that, the choice is simple.

Endorsed by the Poway Firefighters Association and the Deputy Sheriff's Association.

Find your District here:

https://poway.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=0feab6db015e43deb3de19e4d9466237

My ask of you: Remember to vote in November, spread the word to your neighbors and friends in District 3, and, if you're able, make a contribution today. Every yard sign, walk piece, and mailer that reaches doors in District 3 depends on people like you stepping up.

Can I count on you?

CONTRIBUTE

https://www.efundraisingconnections.com/c/DeHoffforPowayCityCouncil

Either way – thank you for reading, for caring about this city, and for being the reason Poway stays Poway.

I want to hear from you about what interests you most to see in future newsletters.
Your input will help shape future updates.

Thank you for taking the time to stay informed and engaged. Together, we can continue making Poway a great place to live.

Sincerely,

Peter De Hoff

Poway District 3 City Council Representative

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Want to add someone to the list? Let me know their contact information.
Question or concern regarding governance issues in Poway? Email me at pdehoff@poway.org
Any other question: Email me at peter@peter4poway.com
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Paid for by De Hoff for Poway City Council District 3, 2026
FPPC #: 1492464