The Inside Scoop



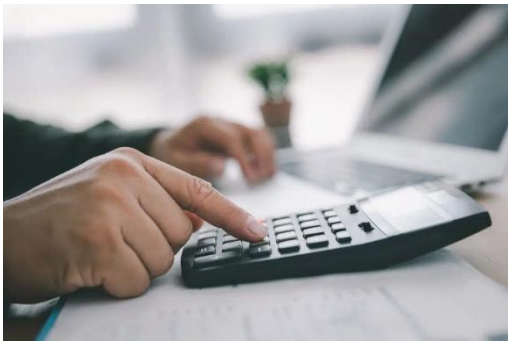
May, 2026

Dear District 3 Resident,

My name is Peter De Hoff, your current City Council Representative for Poway's District 3. This monthly-ish newsletter is one way of keeping you informed about some city government activities. My goal is to provide clear, accurate updates on current topics so you can stay engaged and informed.

Let me know if you'd like any further refinements!

Fee Update Study



The bill has come due — and it's overdue.
The comprehensive fee study, a major undertaking that took about 18 months to complete, is headed to council on **May 19th** (I just dusted off my Council crystal ball, and there it was), and the findings are about what you'd expect with the time that has passed since the last one – we've been out of the cost recovery window for too long.

The study aims to bring fees back in line with actual costs, and importantly, it comes paired with policy changes designed to smooth things out going forward and avoid the kind of sticker shock that comes from letting things drift too long between updates.

To be clear, the fee schedules weren't written with a one-size-fits-all approach. Full cost recovery is the goal in some areas, while others are structured to ease the burden on everyday residents like you and I, rather than passing the full freight along.

I'll be doing my homework before the 19th and will have more to share after the presentation. Stay tuned → this one has a price tag worth paying attention to.

Pickleball Noise



The council has been getting an earful lately, and for once that's not a figure of speech. Residents across Poway have been raising concerns about the noise generated by pickleball courts popping up in residential backyards, and those concerns deserve a real response.

I was able to build council consensus to begin the process to update our noise ordinances so that the impacts from this kind of activity can be properly addressed. Keeping the fun on the court without volleying the frustration over the fence. I expect this to move forward sometime in July or August, and I'll keep you posted as it develops.

Density Bonus Laws and the Poway Road Specific Plan



At the April 21st City Council Meeting we had a sobering presentation about just how far California's density bonus laws have gone to strip cities like Poway of our ability to shape our own future. Once a modest incentive program, these laws have evolved into a sweeping override of local planning authority. Laws that let developers bypass the very standards our residents spent years crafting through the Poway Road Specific Plan (PRSP) and elsewhere.

Current law allows a developer who includes just a handful of affordable units, sometimes as few as 5% of the total project, to ignore our setback requirements, blow past our height limits, and nearly double the size of a project with the stroke of a pen. Buildings that should top out at two or three stories can balloon to five. And as we've now seen firsthand, developers can strip away the commercial requirements from our mixed-use zones, which has already happened at the Apollo project (across from Taco Bell), and at the Paseo project behind Five Guys although, in that one we were able to keep the major restaurant pad. The "City in the Country" vision our community fought for is not as protected as we once believed.

Making matters worse, the law gives residents almost no meaningful voice in the process. When Powegians show up to planning hearings with legitimate concerns about traffic, parking, neighborhood scale, infrastructure, or just plain common sense, that testimony carries virtually no legal weight for density bonus projects. The law also mandates slashing parking requirements by at least half, which may make sense near a BART station in San Francisco but is disconnected from reality here.

And the underlying math of the density bonus heavily favors developer profits over community benefit. For example if a normally 50-unit project designates just three low income units, the developer gets 10 more market-rate units, bringing the total to around 63. A thin veneer of affordability in exchange for an enormous windfall.

Honestly, that presentation was more than a little deflating. Learning that the State has worked so methodically to remove our input, and that the tools available to push back are so limited.

The only sliver of hope seemed a little surprising to me: Finding the right kind of developers to bid on the projects. Developers whose business models are more geared to the vision encapsulated by our PRSP. The kind of developers who appreciate molding their project to the vision expressed by the residents. They are few and far between for sure but, from my position here, I've seen them and I've seen the real impacts and changes community input makes. So, despite the doom and gloom from that council meeting, and from what you've just read, if there's a project coming up, send in your thoughts and attend the pre-development conferences. Despite the push from State, I've seen that move the local needle.

Intracorp — Part 3 (or is it 4?)



I've watched this project bounce back and forth so many times, I'm starting to feel like a ping-pong ball. After being sent back yet again for not quite being in technical compliance with the PRSP, (I'm something of a stickler for the details) Intracorp has had enough. They've returned with a "take it or leave it" Density Bonus offer which, as is customary in these situations, it arrived gift-wrapped in a lawyer's letter.

This whole thing reminds me of the Harmon Ranch project on Oak Knoll Rd, where the choice was between adopting a specific plan of 63 units, slightly above the 59 permitted under the Poway General Plan, or absorbing a density bonus project north of 90 units. A classic "offer you can't refuse."

Here, the stakes are similar. While I haven't seen the full details of their density bonus alternative yet, the letter makes the contours clear: all the commercial space disappears and in its place we get a straight four story housing block built up to one or two of the lot lines. My read is something like 75 units, up from the current 47 or so, with three designated low-income units, parking cut to the bone, zero ft setbacks on a couple of sides, and the other run of the mill concessions that come with density bonus projects. Pretty much standard operating procedure from what I've seen reported elsewhere in the region.

That said, I'll give credit where it's due: the most recent PRSP based version that I've seen looks considerably better than where this started. I think that's mostly been due to the community's involvement in shaping the project, which has made a real difference and the effort shows. We may not be all the way to the full vision of the PRSP, but we've come a long way down that road, *Poway Road*, to be precise, which is where this project sits (right next to the wood lot.)

I expect this will come before us sometime between July and September, and I'll keep you posted as things develop.

In the meantime, I'd love to hear from you: **Do we take the deal — or do we call their bluff and risk a four-story housing block landing on Poway Road?**

Coming up

Dark Sky Updates



After a productive meeting with staff, we've made solid progress hashing out the details of Poway's Dark Sky initiative. The goal is finding the right balance between keeping our streets safe and functional, while meaningfully cutting back on light that spills where it shouldn't. Done right, this won't just be good policy; it'll let Poway shine *without* the shine. I'm hoping to have this fully fleshed out and ready for adoption by October.



Meridian Rises Again
From the builders behind the Apollo (across from Taco Bell) and Poway Commons (next to El Armando's) comes the next chapter: Meridian Part 2.

This one takes shape at the current Enterprise Rental Car location on Poway Road (they'll be relocating westward), and the project will include the two adjacent vacant parcels. Early layouts suggest this could be a real deal true mixed-use project with connections to the south for alternative mobility routes. And refreshingly, no density bonus on this one. I've sat down with the developers to work through the more obvious sticking points, and they're targeting a July pre-development conference. Whether they can get all their ducks in a row by then remains to be seen, but the direction is encouraging.

This is exactly the kind of project where your voice matters most: early, before the concrete (literally and figuratively) starts to set. I'd encourage you to head over to that pre-development conference, share your two cents, (which carries more weight than you might think) and help shape this into something we can all be proud of. That's how you help make good projects become great ones. I'll keep you posted as this one finds its way onto the docket.

Your Feedback Matters

I want to hear from you about what interests you most for 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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Question or concern regarding governance in Poway? Email me at pdehoff@poway.org

Paid for by Peter De Hoff