

## Proposition X defeat means more homes for Santee

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### Voters decisively turn back initiative to limit growth

By **Jose Luis Jiménez**  
STAFF WRITER

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SANTEE – Voters yesterday soundly defeated the controversial Proposition X, giving the green light to two large-scale developments.

The projects will add an estimated 1,750 new homes, with more than 5,000 new residents, and bring millions of dollars to Santee's coffers in development fees and new taxes.

Opponents, led by the developer-backed Save the Santee General Plan committee, called the results a ringing endorsement of the housing projects.

"We're delighted the citizens of Santee have clearly spoken to save their general plan," said Nicholas Arthur, project manager for Barratt American, which owns Fanita Ranch.

The environmental group Preserve Wild Santee, which gathered the signatures to place Proposition X on the ballot, congratulated the other side.

"We'll take a little time to evaluate where we are and go from there," said Van Collinsworth, the group's leader. "We've lost before and people wrote us off, and we've come back."

Yesterday's results reversed a 1999 election in which voters overturned a City Council vote to put 3,000 homes on Fanita Ranch. At the same time, they rejected a plan to permanently preserve the area as open space. The project stagnated until Barratt bought the ranch in 2003.

Mayor Randy Voepel, who campaigned to defeat Proposition X, said the results show that the community agrees with the council's vision.

"They believe we'll do balanced growth in the best interests of the city," Voepel said during a victory celebration last night at the Carlton Oaks Country Club.

The special election was seen by many as a referendum on the developments: 1,380 homes on Fanita Ranch and the 373-unit Sky Ranch on Rattlesnake Mountain.

A "yes" vote meant the general plan would have been changed to prevent development on steep slopes, dramatically changing or eliminating the two large housing projects. A "no" vote would allow the projects to proceed according to the terms spelled out in the general plan.



RONI GALGANO / Union-Tribune  
 Santee resident Sandy Schielke (right) and Mayor Randy Voepel made their respective cases on Proposition X to drivers on Mast Boulevard yesterday.

Yesterday, campaigning started early as supporters and opponents greeted morning commuters on Mast Boulevard, hoping to sway the undecided.

Later in the day at City Hall, Santee's largest precinct polling place, some voters complained that the ballot language was confusing. They said that if you were pro-growth, you voted "no." If you were anti-growth, you should vote "yes."

Tess and Jerry Hager figured it out and voted "no." They believe more development will lead to the completion of projects long promised to residents. Specifically, Jerry Hager thinks developers will pay for more parks, a new fire station and a new library.

The couple, who have lived in the city for 23 years, have their eye on one of the new homes.

"The last time around, there were some perks the community could have gotten," said Tess Hager, referring to the 1999 ballot measure. "These are things the community needs."

Few voters wanted to give their names when asked how they voted.

Some said the city has grown enough. Others cited traffic as an issue.

One couple, who have lived in Santee for 13 years, also noted the campaign's rough edge. Mailers calling the opponents "liars" were sent to their home. They also witnessed many campaign signs around town either knocked down or ripped.

"It's gotten a lot more aggressive and meaner," one voter said. "People have a right to say yes or no."

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■ Jose Jimenez: (619) 593-4964; [jose.jimenez@uniontrib.com](mailto:jose.jimenez@uniontrib.com)

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