



Tucson Mountains
ASSOCIATION
SINCE 1934

PO BOX 86117 • TUCSON, AZ 85754-6117

February 14, 2024

Fletcher McCusker, Chairman
Rio Nuevo District
1703 E. Broadway Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85719

To Whom It May Concern,

The Tucson Mountains Association (TMA), est. in 1934, is the oldest neighborhood association in Arizona. We represent the interests of thousands of individuals who live in and around the Tucson Mountains. We serve to protect and preserve the open space of the Tucson Mountains for healthy ecosystems today, and for future generations.

We appreciate and laud the work and advocacy of the Tucson Birthplace Open Space Coalition in their efforts to preserve the 28 acres of the former A Mountain Landfill as open space. The landfill, which closed four decades ago, occupies some of the most important pieces of land in the heart of Tucson. At the base of A Mountain and Tumamoc Hill it is also adjacent to the Santa Cruz River and within walking distance of downtown Tucson and multiple barrios. This area is the birthplace of Tucson, which has been inhabited continually for over 10,000 years and farmed for the last 4,000. It is also a wildlife corridor that connects the open desert of the Tucson Mountains to the river through the protected spaces of Tumamoc Hill and A Mountain.

It is now the last significant open space near Tucson's core. The decision of the future use of this land will reverberate well into the future through its direct impact on the culture, quality of life, and ecology of our city.

We recognize the diverse interests and stakeholders whose voices and perspectives are key to the conversation and future direction of this land. These perspectives include the needs of lower income housing in our urban core, the importance of economic development, the sacred and historical nature of this land held by the Tohono O'odham, the cultural importance for generations of Tucson families that live there, the ecological value of the open space for wildlife and recreation, as well as additional priorities.

Based on the cultural and biological richness of this site, we firmly urge Rio Nuevo to prioritize and commit to preserving this historic 28 acres by designation as a Sonoran Desert Park. It is our firm belief that such a designation will stimulate development and investment in the heart of Tucson by celebrating and elevating the story of our home, a vibrant cultural hotspot in the Sonoran Desert.

This vision of the future use of this land recognizes its importance as well as the inherent challenges faced in reclaiming its degraded condition from decades as a landfill. The creation of a Sonoran Desert Park, which has a robust backbone of planning already in place, will be the most economical solution. This solution is also congruent with the needs of low-income housing and businesses, which are better suited for less culturally and biologically sensitive areas. A Sonoran Desert Park will provide an inspirational space for recreation and celebration of our heritage, that will elevate all future efforts and developments.

We also encourage Rio Nuevo and the Tucson Birthplace Open Space Coalition to develop and manage a transparent and inclusive planning process. There are many voices who need to be heard and incorporated as we make these decisions.

We appreciate the efforts of the Coalition and Rio Nuevo in their careful consideration of the future of use of this land. We look forward to continuing to work together to develop a Sonoran Desert Park that celebrates the best of our city's past and future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Hendel', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ed Hendel
President, Tucson Mountains Association

