

How to Talk about the Housing of Immigrant Children at an Escondido Facility
Refuting the Escondido Planning Commission's Flawed Arguments

TOPLINE:

We call on the Escondido City Council to approve the application for a conditional use permit and allow Southwest Key to open the proposed housing facility. The Planning Commission got it wrong on every count. Escondido needs to get it right.

Message 1:

The Planning Commission's decision is not supported by the facts.

- The proposed facility is virtually indistinguishable from the nursing home that operated on the same site for more than 30 years.
- A point-by-point analysis of the Commission's decision demonstrates how wrong it was.
 - The facts show that the proposed facility would not raise any legitimate concerns about traffic, parking, or noise.
 - The facility presents no valid security concerns. The Escondido police department raised no concerns about security that have not already been addressed. In the previous year, a miniscule number of children left Southwest Key facilities—only 0.004 percent.
 - The proposed facility would not impact the neighborhood differently than the previous use, and quite likely, would have less of an impact, since there would be fewer visitors and less traffic generated.
 - There is plenty of outdoor recreation that can be used offsite and at times that would not deprive local residents of access.
 - Southwest Key agreed to reasonable solutions proposed by Escondido city staff, such as not conducting intakes during evening hours, between 9 pm and 7 am.
- The community comments about the facility impacting parking, traffic, and noise were not based on fact. They were emotional appeals based on fear. The City Council needs to consider the *facts*. The facts are that there would be few if any visitors, no more than 40 staff people during the day, 53 parking spaces, and no outdoor play at the facility site. Parking, traffic, and noise are not legitimate reasons to deny this facility a CUP.

Message 2:

I'm an Escondido City resident and I support this housing facility.

- The proposed facility would help our city. Similar facilities have been a boon in the other cities in which they operate. The proposed facility would add 100+ jobs and millions of dollars in new money to our local economy.
- Having an abandoned, empty building in my neighborhood does not make me feel safe.

- I believe in fairness, justice, and due process. We should give each of these children a chance to tell their story to a judge. The housing facility would provide temporary housing to children while they await placement with family members as their immigration cases go forward.

Message 3:

We are a compassionate people. We believe that children fleeing in crisis to escape rape and some of the highest murder rates in the world need a temporary safe haven until they can be reunited with their families.

- Between 60 – 80% of the children have family members here, and can be reunited with them while waiting for the judicial process to move forward.
- Unaccompanied children make up *only 1½ of one percent* of all immigrants in the U.S.
- This housing facility allows for a commonsense solution to be put into place. It addresses an immediate crisis with an immediate solution that will keep the kids safe while their cases in immigration court are decided.
- There are rules and regulations in place for refugee children to have their chance to tell their stories to a court. A judge decides what the best solution is for each child. This fair legal process will restore order and allow our compassionate nation to offer relief to these children who must be terrified, alone, and anxious about what to expect in a foreign land.