



April 22, 2026

To: Santa Monica City Council

Re: Santa Monica Airport Observations

Dear Councilmembers:

As SMRR reviewed the Draft Framework Diagram of the SMO property of the future as presented to the Airport Commission, we found it interesting that the proposed organization of the airport site was divided into three distinct activity zones - the Central Green Space, the Urban Edge, and the Arts and Cultural zones.

This was interesting to us because that proposed organization of the space was very similar to the way in which some of us who support new below-market rate housing on the airport had also envisioned the re-organization of the airport site in the future.

Like the Framework Diagram we too have envisioned the long broad runway and tarmac space running east to west as providing the most natural space for park-like green space on the site, with meadows and lawns as places to wander, and areas set aside for sports activities.

We also have generally envisioned the areas south of the runways on both sides of Airport Avenue as the area most appropriate for arts, cultural and educational purposes. Afterall, facilities for such activities were already there, some of which – Barker Hangar, restaurants and theater – many folks would not want to lose.

SMRR's thinking about where below-market-rate housing might best be placed has become increasingly centered around the area north of the runways, the area that the Draft Framework Diagram calls the Urban Edge.

First, the Urban Edge area is now entirely devoted to uses that become expendable once the airport is closed.

Second, the property bordering the Urban Edge on the north is the old SM Business Park, now owned by Boston Properties. That owner is expected to propose to develop major market rate housing on that property. It already has announced a plan for a 385 unit, 8-story project at 28th and Ocean Park Boulevard. Below market-rate housing in the Urban Edge area adjacent to Boston Properties housing seems a good fit, likely a step down buffer next to the park.

Third, ingress and egress from a neighborhood in the Urban Edge area can easily be provided to Ocean Park Blvd as demonstrated by the Diagram. This should eliminate most neighborhood worry about traffic burdens on Walgrove/23rd St. from new housing.

Fourth, the Urban Edge area in the Draft Framework Diagram looks to be about 30 acres. While this is less than the 25% of the airport site proposed for below market rate housing in the ballot measure now being circulated, it could probably accommodate all of the measure's proposed 3000 units, perhaps with some flexibility if needed to expand the area to enable parking and circulation infrastructure.

For example, the Diagram shows there is a big parking lot to the east of the Urban Edge. Perhaps the Urban Edge could be extended some to the east, while ensuring we preserve the elevated area and the much anticipated views from the northeast corner of the airport.

The uses proposed for the Urban Edge in the Draft Framework Diagram, while attractive, already have a strong presence in our community and do not rise to the same level of need as below market-rate housing. Farmer's markets - we have four weekly at various sites. Brew gardens - doesn't the City Council already envision the downtown as an area for such playfulness. And, we have multiple branch libraries and senior centers. Importantly, such uses can be provided in any event within a multifamily housing development for example on the ground-floor of housing developments.

Given the great need for affordable housing in our community as well as regionally, SMRR does not believe we should reserve the 30+ acres on the airport site for the uses enumerated in the Draft Framework Diagram for the Urban Edge, though SMRR agrees that every neighborhood needs uses that make life convenient and enjoyable for residents, such as neighborhood markets, cafes, even restaurants. Such uses can and should be provided within a multifamily housing development

Proposal

With these considerations in mind, SMRR proposes that the City Council direct the city staff and consultants to include in their EIR Alternatives Analysis for the future use of the SMO Airport land the development of 3000 below market rate housing units (as it previously has urged), but that the development of this housing be targeted for the Urban Edge area. The EIR should assess the wisdom of expanding the Urban Edge area some to ensure good circulation and parking as well as an attractive urban design.

SMRR's hope is that with such an analysis the community divisions about future use of the Santa Monica Airport land can heal and we can ultimately move forward together.

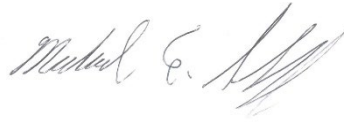
We know that park-only advocates have expressed worries that aviation interests will seek some strategy to prevent closure of the Santa Monica Airport. Clearly having parks and affordable housing advocates united is the best way to repel any such effort.

Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Denny Zane in cursive.

Denny Zane
Co-Chair, Santa Monica's for Renters' Rights

Handwritten signature of Mike Soloff in cursive.

Mike Soloff
Co-Chair, Santa Monica's for Renters' Rights