



SUPPORTING UTAH SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS

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Michelle E. McConkie  
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May 29, 2025

*Via Email: [mmcdonald@sanjuancountyut.gov](mailto:mmcdonald@sanjuancountyut.gov)*

San Juan County Commission  
c/o Mack McDonald, Chief County Administrator  
PO Box 338  
117 South Main Street  
Monticello, Utah 84535

**RE: Sky Ranch Subdivision and Airstrip**

Dear Commissioners,

The State of Utah through the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration (“SITLA”) holds developable lands within the San Juan County portion of Spanish Valley. Most of these lands were included in the Spanish Valley Area Plan, which the San Juan County Commission (“Commission”) approved in 2018. In 2023, the Commission approved SITLA’s 2022 South Valley Community Structure Plan (“CSP”), which presented a land use plan to develop a smaller portion of the SITLA property.

The purpose of this letter is to briefly describe the impact of the proposed Sky Ranch fly-in subdivision and its integrated Sky Ranch airstrip on the Spanish Valley community and SITLA’s development project. The proposed Sky Ranch subdivision’s fly-in development and airstrip will create public safety and noise hazards for adjacent Spanish Valley landowners.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) and the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) regulate public airstrips in Utah. Rural Planning Group prepared guidelines (“RPG Guidelines”) for airports and land use<sup>1</sup> that provide useful planning information for appropriate land uses and distances of impact zones around airports. Although the Sky

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<sup>1</sup> *Airports and Land Use: An Introduction for Local Leaders*, Rural Planning Group, 2016 or later. Based on *Compatible Land Use Planning Guide for Utah Airports* prepared by Wasatch Front Regional Council and Utah Division of Aeronautics (part of UDOT) in December 2000.

Ranch airstrip is private, the RPG Guidelines can inform the design of a private airstrip within in rapidly growing residential areas like the Spanish Valley.

Approximately twenty (20) acres of the SITLA land in the CSP is located on the north side of Mt Peale Drive where the road abuts the north end of both the Sky Ranch airstrip (now that it has been extended) and the Sky Ranch subdivision. The County-approved CSP land-use plan for this 20-acre parcel is for residential development along Mt Peale Drive. If the RPG Guidelines were followed, SITLA's 20 acres would be located within Sky Ranch airstrip's Runway Protection Zone<sup>2</sup>, No Development<sup>3</sup> and Approach Surface<sup>4</sup> areas of RPG Guidelines' Small Airport Template. Additional SITLA land north of Mt Peale Drive lies within the Limited Development area of the RPG Guidelines that extends 2,500 feet perpendicular to the Sky Ranch airstrip. The Sky Ranch airstrip was recently extended without consideration of either the RPG Guidelines or the property rights of surrounding landowners. The north end of the Sky Ranch airstrip significantly impacts those SITLA lands to the north of the Sky Ranch airstrip and associated Sky Ranch fly-in subdivision.

Additional SITLA lands within the County-approved CSP area are located within i) 700 feet laterally from the airstrip (on East Allen Street) and ii) 1,950 feet southerly from the airstrip's south end (north of Ken's Lake)<sup>5</sup>. Most of the remaining SITLA land within the County-approved CSP area is located within 5,000 feet of the airstrip.

In summary, the Sky Ranch fly-in subdivision and associated Sky Ranch airstrip will severely hamper SITLA's County-approved CSP and its plans to bring housing into Spanish Valley to the north of the Sky Ranch airstrip and subdivision. The impact of the Sky Ranch fly-in subdivision and airstrip imposes unique hazards to the Spanish Valley community and the planned residential land uses elsewhere in the CSP-approved area. These safety hazards impact the value, desirability and marketability of the Spanish Valley community around the Sky Ranch airstrip.

Thank you for your consideration of SITLA's concerns presented above.

Sincerely,

*Elise Erler*

Elise Erler

Assistant Managing Director, Real Estate

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<sup>2</sup> **Runway Protection Zone** is the area between the Approach Surface Zone and the end of the runway (from RPG Guidelines).

<sup>3</sup> **No Development Zone** "only allows for airport-related building" (from RPG Guidelines).

<sup>4</sup> **Approach Surfaces Zone** "recommends no residential use to protect against noise and safety hazards" (from RPG Guidelines).

<sup>5</sup> San Juan County owns approximately 5 acres for future county uses in Spanish Valley; the parcel is located about 1,400 feet laterally from the airstrip.