

QUARRY FALLS



San Diego's Future

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A Community Fit for the Future

*Walkable, sustainable, connected – Quarry Falls
Is San Diego's ideal mixed-use infill neighborhood*

When was the last time you walked to a friend's house or biked to the market? Met friends for dinner at the corner restaurant and didn't have to find parking? Made it home from work in less than 15 minutes? For residents who have been pushed to the suburbs and beyond in search of affordable housing, this seems pure fantasy.

Long time resident and developer Tom Sudberry is looking to turn that fantasy into reality with the 230-acre mixed-use infill community of Quarry Falls. Sudberry's concept exemplifies smart growth by turning a declining 70-year-old quarry in the heart of Mission Valley into a walkable community with attainable housing options, village shops, businesses, access to San Diego's Light Rail System and abundant acres of park space all within a 15 minute walk of one another.

"The high cost of housing, policies that limited growth and lack of developable land in San Diego County forced residents and businesses to the outermost edges of the county and beyond," said Sudberry. "The quest for more affordable housing led to amazing growth in Carlsbad, Oceanside, East County, Otay Mesa and into Riverside County. As a result, traffic congestion has increased, the number of vehicle miles traveled has increased and our health and quality of life have suffered. San Diego is in danger of losing its small-town charm as it sprawls to Los Angeles-like proportion.

"With less than 5 percent of the remaining land is developable, and the available land is not just for homes, it's for jobs, employment and for retail. So it must be used wisely and well."

Wisely means using principles of smart growth such as redeveloping infill sites, concentrating development by utilizing mixed-use densities and creating transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly communities. Planners and smart growth experts view Quarry Falls as one answer to curbing this city's sprawl and reviving quality of life in the heart of San Diego.

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“The quarry provides a unique opportunity for a sustainable new community that meets many of Mission Valley’s planning needs,” Sudberry said. “This includes attainable homes, new public parks from the San Diego River to the top of Quarry Falls, Mission Valley’s first public charter school, a civic center with heritage museum and urgently needed traffic improvements throughout the valley.”

The quarry is located on land currently owned by the Grant family, who has a long and rich history in San Diego. Recognizing that the quarry was nearing the end of its life cycle, in 2002 they selected Sudberry Properties to help create a community within Mission Valley.

“It was ingrained in us by our fathers and uncles that we should work to keep the land together, that it should always be managed in a manner that enhances the community,” said Pat Grant, whose grandfather Franklin first acquired the land in the late 1920s. “We have never wanted to put another isolated apartment complex or strip of shops on the land. Our own ethics drive a desire to make it sustainable, walkable and desirable. Quarry Falls is the embodiment of the best ideas emanating from all the vision meetings we had with the experts who soon joined our team.”

This team includes Sudberry Properties, architect Carrier Johnson and recognized experts in the fields of engineering, environmental protection and other disciplines. During the three-year planning process, the team relied on its collective expertise as well as input from community planners and residents to create the concept for Quarry Falls.

“You could do a development on that hillside that had no personality, but creating a really great community that’s a dream of so many people is a lot harder,” said Fred Kent founder of the nonprofit organization Project for Public Spaces and recognized national authority on smart growth. “It takes a lot more energy, a lot more skills. The community needs to gather around and support this because it will be better for everyone.”

More than one-third of Quarry Falls will be devoted to open space and public areas that will include public parks, landscaped public parkways, private open space and a Civic Center with a plaza, amphitheater for public events and Heritage Museum. The museum will celebrate the history of Mission Valley and be operated by The San Diego River Park Foundation.

According to architect Gordon Carrier the entire project was developed around the central open space, with the ultimate objective of being able to walk the community in any direction along green belts, trails and tree-lined streets.

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“Rather than leveling the site, the idea was to restore the land to its natural topography and connect the mesas to the valleys – go from low to high,” he said. “The elevation change complements the site, grants great views and provides many different experiences depending on your points of view.”

In addition to the acres of open space, Quarry Falls will ultimately include approximately 4,700 diversely-priced residential homes, including single-family homes, condominiums, townhomes, apartments, live/work homes, flats, row homes, as well as homes for seniors. Ten percent of these homes will also be priced as attainable according to San Diego’s guidelines for affordable housing. Additionally, there will be nearly 1 million square feet of office and retail space for shops and restaurants on the site to generate substantial jobs and revenue in the area.

The community is planned in four phases over a 12 to 15 year timeframe with each phase taking approximately 3 to 4 years to complete.

Quarry Falls will mark many firsts for Mission Valley. One of the most significant will be the addition of its first public school, a K-8 charter operated by High Tech High. Started in 2000, the High Tech High charter system has been highly successful in San Diego by creating personalized, project-based learning environments for students.

The school will be included in Phase I of the project along with some residential, office, retail, several finger parks and the western portion of the Civic Center. Groundbreaking on Phase I would be expected approximately 12 to 18 months after project approval.

With community such an important part of Quarry Falls, Sudberry Properties found it only natural to engage the public in the planning process for the project’s public spaces. In a workshop facilitated by Fred Kent, residents, business owners, city staff and others brainstormed ideas and crafted a vision for activities that could occur in the public spaces. These ideas and recommendations were then utilized in the design of the public spaces.

From the beginning, Quarry Falls was designed as a walkable, sustainable community with the idea of reducing dependency on cars. Featuring a shuttle system, a hybrid-car sharing program, and a network of hiking, biking and walking trails close to the trolley stop, the ultimate goal was to provide residents everything they need to live, work, and play without having to drive.

“Mission Valley is a series of areas that when put together could be seen as a neighborhood. Quarry Falls brings something new to Mission Valley - all things necessary can be done in one place,” Carrier said. “It is designed for walking. One can live, work and play in a pedestrian environment that will be one of a kind in Mission Valley.”

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This concept, recognized today as smart growth, was integrated into Quarry Fall's design during the initial stages of planning. By definition, smart growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life. In general, it's more town centered, involves mixed-use and is transit and pedestrian oriented. It also preserves open space and many other environmental amenities. All features prevalent in Quarry Falls.

The project also exemplifies San Diego's "City of Villages" concept that is based on smart growth principles. The concept was incorporated into the city's strategic framework element and serves as the guiding land use policy in the General Plan.

According to SDSU Professor Dr. Jim Sallis, research suggests that the more a development is based on these principles, the healthier its residents should be.

"Principles of a healthy, walkable community should be applied everywhere. Everybody wants to be healthy and there is a lot of support for walkable communities."

In addition to its health benefits, Quarry Falls also includes sustainable design features that include a hybrid car sharing program, an alternative fuel shuttle, solar orientation and energy management systems, drought tolerant and native landscaping, a community garden, high efficiency irrigation systems designed for reclaimed water, natural filtration of storm water, construction waste recycling and the use of sustainable and recyclable building materials.

In recognition of its sustainable features and neighborhood-oriented design, Quarry Falls has been selected as a pilot project for the U.S. Green Building Council's new LEED for Neighborhood Development program. The first national standard for neighborhood design that integrates principles of smart growth and green building, the program serves as a guide for creating compact, walkable, well-connected communities with a holistic approach to sustainability.

"Building a LEED-ND certified neighborhood benefits the community, tenants and the environment," said Ruth Stafford of Wallace Roberts & Todd Landscape Architects. "With infill development and increased density, you reduce land consumption and resource use; with mixed-use development, multi-modal transportation and pedestrian-friendly environment, you reduce auto use and increase exercise; and with green construction techniques, you reduce the environmental impacts by lowering water and energy use, reducing storm water runoff impacts and you create wildlife habitats."

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The Grant family is so confident in the merits of Quarry Falls that it plans to donate another parcel of land it owns along the San Diego River for the creation of a public river park. Although zoned for a high-rise office building, the family would prefer to see the land used by the community and will donate it to the River Park Foundation upon approval of Quarry Falls.

The River Park Foundation will use this land for creation of the River Discovery Center, which will be part of the park the Foundation is hoping to establish along the entire 52-mile stretch of the San Diego River. The Discovery Center will help to restore and enhance the river while providing community facilities and opportunities to learn about the region's rich history.

"We want people to see the river as an asset," said Rob Hutsel of the River Park Foundation. "Our goal is to create a place for people in Mission Valley where people want to come together and connect with the river and with nature."

With every aspect of the project, both the Grant family and Sudberry Properties are committed to investing in Mission Valley's future.

"The Grant family is a real force within this," Kent said. "This isn't something they are going to just let happen. They are a control factor, but a control factor with a big vision of what they want to do. This is a legacy project, not just a development.

"Sudberry has that same vision – I have never seen them veer off from that. They're so excited about it," Kent said.

As with any development, there have been concerns about traffic. Sudberry Properties has gone to great lengths to mitigate traffic issues, providing nearly \$50 million in funding for planned improvements to key freeway interchanges, local intersections, pedestrian and bicycle paths and other key transportation arteries.

Currently, there is a \$140 million improvement to the Friars Road and Hwy. 163 interchange currently undergoing environmental review by the City of San Diego. This improvement will help alleviate a significant amount of traffic in the area. Quarry Falls will provide a substantial amount of funding for this improvement, approximately half of the city's overall contribution, in conjunction with other state and federal money. With this improvement, traffic at this interchange will operate better than it does today.

"I think Quarry Falls will be a real catalyst for the entire area," Kent said. "It will start defining how other developments need to be done and how existing developments need to be upgraded so that they become a continuous set of public spaces and experiences that people want to be in.

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“This project is a model for the future of San Diego,” Kent said.

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