Letters: Solar Turbines and Fat City Lofts

The U-T San Diego is to be commended for its support of Solar Turbines and its hard-working employees. (“Don’t threaten 1,800 San Diego jobs”, Jan. 8). In this economy, we must do everything we can to not only create jobs, but also keep the good-paying, quality jobs that we do have in this region.

That’s why I partnered with City Council President Pro Tem Kevin Faulconer, Port Chairman Scott Peters and dozens of elected state and local government officials and community leaders from across a wide spectrum of business and environmental groups to hold a rally Jan. 6 in support of Solar Turbines that drew more than 300 people. The rally included representatives from the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, the San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council, San Diego Port Tenants Association, United Way of San Diego County, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, Industrial Environmental Association, Working Waterfront Group, Environmental Health Coalition, BIOCOM and CONNECT.

We are not opposed to good projects that provide housing for San Diegans. But what we do object to are poorly placed projects that threaten the jobs of hard-working San Diegans. Common sense tells us that you don’t build luxury lofts across the street from a major manufacturing facility that has been in San Diego for 83 years.

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- E-mail letters@utsandiego.com
- Fax: (619) 260-5081
- Mail: Letters Editor
U-T San Diego,
P.O. Box 120191
San Diego, CA 92112-0191.

Commentary policy

Unsolicited manuscripts for op-ed commentaries are also welcome but can only be accepted by e-mail to opinion@utsandiego.com
If allowed, the Fat City Lofts project will undoubtedly trigger problems around regulations and permits for Solar Turbines, threatening its ability to compete in this global economy and forcing it to move its facilities and jobs out of this region. Simply put, this is the wrong project in the wrong place at the wrong time. – Greg Cox, Vice chairman, San Diego County Board of Supervisors

The Fat City-Solar Turbines quandry, like the great airport debacle, is yet another typical example of the mess that develops when a lack of robust and effective regional planning combines with an overly burdensome regulatory environment to thwart economic activity.

Am I right that U-T believes that property rights can and should so quickly be cast aside just because a neighbor doesn’t like the plan and has friends in high places? How can a developer function in such an environment? The Fat City site is proposed to be developed in accordance with what it is entitled (even though one could question the soundness of trying to develop residential under a runway, adjacent to rail lines, gas stations and industrial sites).

Conversely, an important, established industrial manufacturer is facing increasing environmental hurdles to stay in business at an existing site. Local and port authority planners call for improving the waterfront to be a new centerpiece to attract residents and tourists starting with North Embarcadero, which also sits adjacent to Solar Turbines. Can they realistically envision that, long-term, the port can maintain the Solar Turbines site as an industrial site sitting smack-dab in the middle of that waterfront zone?

Solar Turbines will inevitably continue come into conflict with the myriad regulations that can be brought to bear against it. Its time for regional authorities to find the incentive package for an important manufacturer to move the operation to another part of the city or county in a controlled way. Let’s not make the same mistake as the airport. – Jay D. Matthes, Coronado
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