



Media Contact:
Beatrice Kilat, Landis Communications Inc.
415.745.9109, Authority@landispr.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Morgan Hill and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority to Collaborate on Creating Future Public Access on El Toro Peak

Morgan Hill, Calif. (November 6, 2025) – The [Morgan Hill City Council](#) yesterday unanimously approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the [Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority](#) (Authority), paving the way for future public access on El Toro, one of the region's most iconic natural landmarks. The vote, held on November 5, marks a major step forward in expanding recreational opportunities in the heart of downtown Morgan Hill.



Left: Authority District 1 Director Alex Kennett, City of Morgan Hill Vice Mayor Marilyn Libbers, Authority General Manager Andrea Mackenzie, Mayor Mark Turner celebrate the MOU. Photo: David Mauk, courtesy Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
Right: El Toro peak, site of future public access trail. Photo: D. Neumann, courtesy Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

“Creating an opportunity for free public access to El Toro has been Morgan Hill’s vision for many years. With this agreement in place, the City and the Authority are poised to begin planning a recreational opportunity that reflects the community’s values and deep appreciation for open space,” said Morgan Hill **Mayor Mark Turner**. “This future trail promises to be a signature destination for hikers, families and nature lovers - offering a rare blend of beauty and urban accessibility.”

El Toro, the prominent peak rising 1,420 feet above Morgan Hill, has a distinctive silhouette that is visible from nearly every corner of the city and is even featured in the City’s logo. Its hillsides are home to a rich tapestry of native oak woodlands, grasslands and seasonal wildflowers. The area also provides habitat for a variety of wildlife, including deer, bobcats, hawks and native pollinators.

“This is an exciting opportunity to bring nature closer to the Morgan Hill community,” said **Andrea Mackenzie**, general manager of the Authority. “El Toro has inspired generations of residents, artists and visitors. As the regional agency responsible for creating environmentally responsible public access opportunities across Santa Clara Valley, we’re thrilled to work with Mayor Turner and the Morgan Hill City Council to make this vision a reality.”

Project History

For more than a decade, the City of Morgan Hill and the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority have been exploring the feasibility of establishing safe and ecologically responsible public access to the El Toro summit. The City owns approximately 310 acres on the eastern face of El Toro, flanked by the Authority’s 33-acre El Toro Preserve to the south and another six acres to the north at the western end of Main Avenue. The Authority also holds a conservation easement over 20 acres that were purchased by the City of Morgan Hill in 2011 with funds from the Authority’s 20% grant program.

The MOU approved yesterday outlines a shared commitment between the Authority and the City to explore trail design, access points and long-term stewardship of the site. Public engagement and environmental review will be key components of the next project phase. The proposed trail will offer residents and visitors a chance to experience scenic views stretching across the valley and into the Santa Cruz Mountains.

In 2014, the City adopted a Revised El Toro Trail “Access Strategy,” which was developed with input from the Authority and laid out conceptual trail alignments and potential public access points for El Toro. Public access on El Toro is also a goal of the City’s Bikeways, Trails, Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Authority’s [Santa Clara Valley Greenprint](#).



The City and Authority have held several public workshops to receive community input about expanding public access on El Toro and where to prioritize trailheads and parking.

On September 3, 2025, the Morgan Hill City Council approved the West Hills Church Community Church project, which includes a public trail easement that allows for a future trail connection through the property to the Authority’s El Toro Preserve. On September 25, 2025, the Authority’s Board of Directors unanimously voted to accept the easement and separately authorized entering into the MOU with the City.

Next Steps

The MOU approved yesterday outlines the shared commitment between the Authority and the City to explore trail design, access points and long-term management and stewardship of the site. The trail easement now held by the Authority is an important step towards realizing the City's and Authority's vision for public access on El Toro via DeWitt Avenue.

More planning is needed to refine trail alignments and design the staging area before opening El Toro for public access. Public engagement and environmental review will be key components of the next phase. Additional property rights need to be secured to locate a trailhead staging area for public use.

* * *

Media please note: Images, b-roll and maps of the project area may be downloaded [here](#).

* * *

About the City of Morgan Hill

The City of Morgan Hill is a welcoming community of 47,000 residents in southern Santa Clara Valley, known for its rich agricultural roots, strong civic spirit, and commitment to preserving the small-town charm that defines our identity. Surrounded by rolling hills, open spaces, and world-class recreation, Morgan Hill blends a proud past with a future focused on thoughtful growth, public safety, sustainability, and community well-being. With active residents, engaged local government, and a deep dedication to transparency and public service, Morgan Hill continues to strengthen connections, foster belonging, and build a thriving community for generations to come. For more information, visit www.morganhill.ca.gov.

About the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

The Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority conserves the natural environment, supports agriculture, and connects people to nature, by protecting open spaces, natural areas, and working farms and ranches for future generations. Since 1993, the Authority has protected almost 30,000 acres of open space, natural areas and working lands, watersheds, and wildlife habitat – providing ecologically friendly outdoor recreation and preserving the natural beauty and environmental health of the Santa Clara Valley. For more information, visit openspaceauthority.org

#