

Memo

To: Mayor Khan and City Council
From: Larry Agran, Councilmember
(A second is needed)
Date: November 2, 2021
Re: **Request to Agendize a Presentation on the Veterans Memorial Park at the November 9th City Council Meeting**

At our last City Council meeting (October 26th), the City Council adopted a resolution to support establishing an “Orange County Veterans Cemetery” at the County-proposed Gypsum Canyon site at the interchange of the 241 Toll Road and the 91 Freeway in Anaheim. This site has been proposed as an alternative to the Irvine voter-approved and Council-approved ARDA site at the Great Park.

Over the next year or two, there will presumably be numerous County and state-initiated studies of the Gypsum Canyon site to determine its suitability as an alternative to the ARDA site for state acquisition, construction and operation as a state-authorized “Southern California Veterans Cemetery.”

Adoption of the Gypsum Canyon resolution by the City Council doesn’t change or in any way supersede the Irvine citizens’ *initiative law* (Build the Great Park Veterans Cemetery Initiative), which zoned the 125-acre ARDA site at the Great Park as the exclusive location in the City of Irvine for a “veterans memorial park and cemetery.” While the final state decision on the siting and construction of the *veterans cemetery* itself seems likely to be mired in studies and politics for the next couple of years, this does not preclude our going ahead with the promised *veterans memorial park* at the ARDA site. In fact, the language that is now part of the City of Irvine Great Park zoning law specifically calls for a *memorial park* — beginning with demolition, cleanup and clearance of the entire ARDA site, followed by construction of a Perimeter Park that surrounds the ARDA site.

The Perimeter Park would be characterized by a system of trees, trails, memorial gardens, memorial installations, and would also include preservation of the iconic aircraft control tower and airplane hangars for repurposing as an on-site aviation museum. Adjacent to the Perimeter Park on the ARDA site would be a newly planted 35-acre forest reserve — a Veterans Memorial Forest. All this, of course, is intended to begin transforming the ARDA site — now an eyesore — into a beautiful Veterans Memorial Park that forever honors the service and sacrifice of so many.

At our October 26th City Council meeting, Mayor Khan publicly indicated that in order to explore the ARDA site Veterans Memorial Park further, I should submit this agenda item request for a future City Council meeting. Accordingly, I am submitting this request to place this matter on the November 9th agenda as a Presentation item. I anticipate my presentation, uninterrupted, will take approximately 15 minutes.

cc: Interim City Manager
City Clerk
City Attorney