



April 6, 2012

Leichtag Foundation Purchases Iconic Ecke Property to Grow a Platform for North County Community and Jewish Life

The Leichtag Foundation announced today that we have signed an option agreement to purchase the Paul Ecke Ranch property in Encinitas. The Foundation plans to create a cultural and community resource for the San Diego region and the Jewish community. Paul Ecke Ranch, located between Saxony Road and Quail Gardens Drive adjacent to the San Diego Botanic Garden, is 67 acres of land that currently houses over 850,000 square feet of greenhouse space.

The Paul Ecke Ranch is a family owned and operated business started in the early 1900's. In 1923, operations were relocated to Encinitas, helping to establish it as the Flower Capital of the World. Today Paul Ecke Ranch is a worldwide leader in the breeding and development of flowering plants and is one of the top five growers in the US based on greenhouse area managed by the company. Core to the company's success is its focus and dedication to retailers, as well as the growers who serve them. With facilities in the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Denmark, and Spain, Paul Ecke Ranch employs or contracts more than 1,000 staff dedicated to research and development, production, marketing, and sales. Paul Ecke Ranch also licenses and distributes product from more than 30 other plant partner breeders. The Saxony Road property in Encinitas has been home to three generations of Eckes. As Paul Ecke III has positioned Ecke Ranch for the 21st century, he redesigned the business model to be more sustainable for the long term. Today, the Saxony Road location houses research and development and its retail trend design center, as well as company administration.

Leichtag Foundation founders Toni and Lee Leichtag, of blessed memory, lived and worked in North County and deeply cared for their community. The purchase of the Paul Ecke Ranch property honors their loving legacy. The Leichtag Foundation focuses its philanthropy on combating poverty and increasing self-sufficiency for residents of coastal North County; supporting and inspiring vibrant Jewish life in coastal North County; strengthening education about the Holocaust and its modern-day lessons for tolerance, understanding, and civility; stimulating renewal, service, and social activism in Jerusalem, Israel; and building strong connections and relationships between San Diego and Israel. We see the purchase of this property as a way to ensure the land's use as a unique space that advances the Foundation's strategic goals and inspires the community.

While we don't yet know the details of the site's long-term use, we believe the kind of uses that will be explored include urban farming, service learning, expansion of the San Diego Botanic Garden, educational and cultural programs, and support of a strong Jewish community in North County. Our purchase ensures that it will not be used for development of residential subdivisions, commercial office parks, or shopping centers.

The Leichtag Foundation's next step will be to explore opportunities and establish the long-term vision and a phased plan for the site. We anticipate that refining the vision will take years and will be informed by resources like the current City of Encinitas General Plan Update, the Vision for a New Commons in Encinitas, and other recent community visioning projects. We will always be informed by evolving community needs. The Leichtag Foundation will seek additional community input and invite visionary ideas to address identified needs in ways that are appropriate to the site. Of course, any plan for this land will go through the appropriate public process that includes community engagement.

So, what can you expect today? There will be continuing agricultural use. Paul Ecke Ranch will hold a multi-year lease for their flower research and development while they seek a new location. Other growers will continue to lease and utilize greenhouse space for years to come. The Leichtag Foundation will also explore complementary uses, such as urban farming, service learning, and community engagement, which may start in the near term.

The Leichtag Foundation believes in the importance of transparency and in keeping our community informed. The Leichtag Foundation encourages those interested in receiving updates and hearing about opportunities to participate to visit our website at www.leichtag.org.