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Sarah Mayer *Public Comment - REACH*

From: Russ Levanway <russ@reachcentralcoast.org>
Sent: Monday, April 29, 2024 1:25 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: REACH Comments regarding rezoning - File #24-00397
Attachments: SBCO Rezoning LOS to Supervisors.docx.pdf

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Greetings Board,

Please see our attached comments regarding the rezoning sites approval.

Regards,
Russ



Russ Levanway
Executive Vice President | REACH
E: russ@reachcentralcoast.org
reachcentralcoast.org/grow-here
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Ideas + Action for a Thriving Central Coast

April 26, 2024

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
c/o Clerk of the Board (sbcob@countyofsb.org)
123 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Subject: Santa Barbara County Housing Element Update to Select Rezone Sites and the Economic Imperative for Housing in Santa Barbara County

Dear Chair Lavagnino and Members of the Board:

As the County updates the Housing Element and considers pivotal rezoning decisions, we urge decision makers to move forward plans that will change the trajectory of workforce housing availability on the Central Coast. Ambitious housing plans as well as enhanced collaboration between regional agencies and employers are essential to support the economic prosperity for our community and residents.

As an economic impact organization serving San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, REACH has a mission to increase economic prosperity on the Central Coast of California through big thinking, bold action and regional collaboration. The north star of our work is collaboration with business, education, government and nonprofit partners to create good paying jobs and provide current and future generations the opportunity to thrive. Across all of our community based work there is no larger point to achieving this vision than the accessibility and affordability of housing.

REACH had the opportunity to review the Coastal Housing Coalition's letter that has recently been sent to you, and agrees with the need and urgency to rezone the sites that are up for consideration to accommodate critical housing. For the last decade, the County has struggled to permit new housing needed to keep up with both population and economic growth. This has created ripple effects into health, education, economic mobility, and ultimately the resilience of communities across the County. The choices before you represent an opportunity to not only address the pent up demand but to also not fall further behind the curve.

REACH, in partnership with the Counties of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo and the Economic Development Administration, recently finalized the 2-county comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS). A key workstream in the CEDS is an adjacent workforce development strategy for target industries which we just released. Based on industry feedback through the process, housing was underscored as a critical need to the health and vibrancy of our economy and workforce including the importance of creating housing that is affordable to the workforce in close proximity to jobs centers to support regional climate goals as well as a sense of community for residents.

REACH has also partnered with the County under the Vandenberg MOU, which developed a Master Plan in 2021 including a focus on regional housing, and which expanded in 2023 to include the Cities of

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Lompoc and Santa Maria to expand regional housing collaboration as housing was identified as critical to the viability of space ecosystem on the Central Coast and is frequently cited by VSFb as a top obstacle to servicemembers.

While the future potential for the military base and commercial space ecosystem is tremendous for our region, the lack of housing was a primary reason the base was not awarded STARCOM, and it presents a continuing challenge to our federal and commercial partners that wish to invest in and grow the space ecosystem.

Through our extensive outreach to business through the CEDS and other avenues, REACH has many factual narratives of businesses that have either closed, relocated, or gave up trying to expand in this region and opted to open a branch elsewhere to support their expansion. The inability of their workforce to find accessible housing is cited as the top reason for these unfortunate events.

As you plan for the future of the County and the housing needs in the unincorporated area, please keep these critical economic and workforce needs top of mind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa James". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Melissa James
President/CEO
REACH
melissa@reachcentralcoast.org