

Katherine Douglas

Public Comment - Los Padres Forest Association # 3

From: Bryan Conant <Bryan@LPForest.org>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 10:00 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Los Padres Forest Association: County Housing Element Suggestions
Attachments: LPFA_DasWilliams_HousingTrailConcerns.pdf

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Attn Clerk of the Board,

Please see attached letter of concern over County Housing.

Thank you and let us know if you have any questions,

Bryan



Bryan Conant

Director, LPFA
HikeLosPadres.com
[Upcoming LPFA Trail Projects](#)



Chair Das Williams
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E Anapamu St
Santa Barbara, CA 93101



RE: Trail use increase and considerations due to new housing
November 27, 2023

Dear Chair Williams and Honorable Members of the Board:

The Los Padres Forest Association (LPFA) is writing to respectfully request that the Board of Supervisors address substantially increased demand for hiking trails from new residents generated by major new housing developments planned under the County's draft Housing Element. We would hope that the Board would prioritize and encourage inclusion of new public trails into larger new housing developments where possible and retain sufficient funding from the Park Development Impact Fees to permit at least partial County funding for new trails such as those in the Goleta foothills. LPFA does not normally comment upon planning matters but feels that this is a key issue as such new trails would benefit both existing residents of the Goleta Valley and the thousands of new residents in planned developments.

The LPFA is a partner non-profit of the Los Padres National Forest (LPNF) and works to maintain hundreds of miles of existing trails and develop new trails using both paid trail crews and extensive volunteer work parties. We use limited federal funding, raise private funds and pursue grants to fund both maintenance and new trail construction in LPNF. We also develop and maintain County trails in coordination with other trails groups such as the Santa Barbara County Trails Council (Trails Council) and Montecito Trails Foundation (MTF) in cooperation with County Parks and the City of Santa Barbara by providing trail crews for trail maintenance and construction. This has recently included working with MTF to provide trail crews for major trail reconstruction (e.g., Cold Spring Trail) after recent floods and with the Trails Council on construction of the County's Baron Ranch and Franklin Trails. County Parks supports these efforts as much as limited staffing allows and sometimes contributes Park Development Impact Fees to help partially fund new trail construction.

The LPFA was fortunate to virtually attend the November meeting of the County Riding and Hiking Trails Committee (CRAHTAC) to hear a presentation by the Glen Annie Golf Course regarding a proposed rezone and major new housing development of 800-1,000 new homes, including substantial affordable housing, which also includes very significant public benefits and amenities. These appear to include a substantial area of public open space that would include 3.5 miles of public trails, trailhead parking, as well as a public community park, botanic garden, pool, community center and other public amenities.

The LPFA understands that the Board must consider many factors regarding such a development, but we would like to commend this type of development to the Board. While we don't typically take positions on development project, we would like to the Board to know that the Goleta

Valley currently lacks any foothill trails and that this project would provide the first such trail system, a huge benefit to both existing residents, and those of this future development. We would hope that the Board would carefully consider such public recreation, particularly trails, and amend the Housing Elements Programs to "prioritize rezones and housing developments that provide public recreation and trails." We would like to note that while private recreation may benefit residents of new development, it does not benefit existing residents that can experience the impacts of new development but would get none of the benefits associated with private recreation.

We would also like the Board to know that LPFA is part of a working group, which includes County and City of Goleta representatives and the Trails Council, which is exploring how best to create a new foothill trail into the LPNF to serve more than 70,000 residents of the greater Goleta Valley. The residents of this area must currently drive relatively long distances (e.g., 10-25 miles) to Santa Barbara, Montecito or the Gaviota Coast to hike into their national forest. We note that we have identified several potentially viable trail options for exploration which we hope this working group will continue to pursue. However, successful completion of such a trail may take a decade or more and based on recent experience, could cost upward of \$1,000,000 or more.

Therefore, we urge the Board to consider prioritizing new development authorized under the Housing element which includes public recreation, particularly public hiking trails. We also encourage the Board to amend the Housing Element Programs to protect Park Development Impact Fees to retain such funds for public recreation, particularly new public parks, recreation and trails.

Thank you for considering our input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryan Conant', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bryan Conant
Executive Director, LPFA
PO Box 1282
Goleta, CA 93116