

Sarah Mayer *Public Comment - SBC Trails Council*

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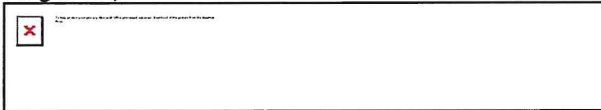
From: Mark Wilkinson <mwilkinson@sbtrails.org>
Sent: Friday, April 26, 2024 5:02 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: Housing Element hearing at the Board of Supervisors next week.
Attachments: Housing Element-BOS-Trails-Council-04-26-24.pdf

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Hello, Clerk of the Board,

Please find attached our letter commenting on topics related to the Housing Element hearing at the Board of Supervisors next week.

Regards,



Mark Wilkinson
Executive Director

Santa Barbara County Trails Council

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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
Trails Council

April 26, 2024

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Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: Proposed County Housing Element Rezones

Dear Chairman Lavagnino and Honorable Members of the Board:

The Santa Barbara County Trails Council (Trails Council) is writing to commend several project developers for proposing to provide public parks, recreation, and trails as part of proposed rezones being undertaken as part of the Housing Element and to offer suggestions to the Board to consider during the review of these rezones. As your Board knows, the Trails Council is a broad-based trails advocacy, construction, and maintenance organization consisting of hikers, trail runners, equestrians, and mountain bikers. The Trails Council was formed in 1967 to advocate for the planning and construction of new trails and to help organize work parties to maintain existing trails. The Trails Council Board of Directors includes members with unique trail planning, design, construction, and maintenance expertise. The Trails Council has assisted the County with a range of projects, including the initial construction of the Orcutt Hills Trail system, the Baron Ranch Trail, and the Franklin Trail, and is currently overseeing the design and permitting of 1.1 miles of the County's Gaviota Coastal Trail, including a new bridge over the railroad, public parking, and a vertical access trail.

We would like to offer the following comments and recommendations to address the increased demand for trails generated by the roughly 15,000 to 20,000 new residents generated by Housing Element proposals:

Key Sites 10 and 11; Orcutt Creek Trail: The rezone of these two sites offers the opportunity to complete almost 1 mile of the Orcutt Creek Trail, including the roughly ½ mile on these sites and the intervening ½ mile between these sites which would traverse existing public and private open space and a small area of private land. We recommend that your Board direct County Parks to work with the project developers to plan, design, and construct the entire 1-mile reach of this trail from Highway 135 east to Bradley Road as part of their developments, with appropriate reductions in Park Development Impact Fees. These project developers could lead negotiations with the Homeowner's Association, which holds the open space along a segment of the trail, as well as one private property owner with a rental stable. If successful, this could result in the construction of over 1 mile of this trail, which could connect with almost ½ mile of already completed trail east of Bradley Road and ½ mile of trail already completed or in design west of Highway 135. This would be a major recreation benefit to Orcutt residents.

San Marcos Agricultural Area: With the inclusion of new public parks, recreation, and trails to serve both new and existing residents, the Trails Council now supports the rezones to

accommodate the proposed San Marcos Ranch, Tatum, and Montessori development projects. We note that the Board-appointed County Riding Hiking and Trails Advisory Committee (CRAHTAC) now supports these rezones, as recorded in a vote at their meeting on April 8, 2024. The Trails Council thanks the Hodge family for leading efforts to include these public recreational improvements in this area. However, we urge the County to continue to pursue the expansion of an integrated system of trails and walking paths to build upon those proposed in conceptual development plans.

South Patterson Agricultural Area: Within this area, only the Caird development appears to include public trails. We urge the Board to require an integrated system of trails and walking paths for all rezone sites consistent with CRAHTAC recommendations, including trails along restored natural drainages and Maria Ygnacia Creek. The Caird, St. Athanasius, Scott and Ekwill should also be required to plan for trails and walking paths. The Trails Council commends the Caird family for proposing 10 acres of public open space and initial trail system and urges the County to build upon and expand this proposal.

Maximize Provision of Trails on County-Owned Land: Consistent with the County's adopted Parks, Recreation, and Trail Maps (PRT Maps), the County should fully develop existing County-owned lands with public trails as part of any planned housing or administrative development. This should include the Foster Road campus in Orcutt, the County's Calle Real campus and the Cathedral Oaks campus. The Calle Real Campus already has an existing offroad trail system that traverses coastal sage scrub and oak woodland habitats and Hospital Creek and offers views of the Goleta Valley. However, these trails are not well developed with trailhead signage and parking and are mostly used by neighboring residents. The County should pursue improvements. The Cathedral Oaks campus has substantial trail development potential, particularly when combined with Calle Real to the South and the St. Vincent's West site to the east. If fully developed consistent with the PRT Maps, these areas could provide several miles of new trails to meet the increased demand for trails from Housing Element development. In addition, the eastern half of the San Marcos Foothills Preserve also offers additional potential for trail development.

The Trails Council requests that the Board direct County P&D and Parks to fully pursue the development of the planned trail systems on the Calle Real and Cathedral Oaks campuses and St. Vincent's west sites to create an integrated trail system on these properties, as well as for the Foster Road campus. County Parks should also pursue expansion of the San Marcos Foothills Preserve trail system. In this way, substantially increased demand for public trails from Housing Element development can be partially met.

St. Vincent's East Trail: The Trail Council supports CRAHTAC's proposal for a new trail along the west bank of Atascadero Creek to provide offroad trail access for existing and new residents to the San Marcos Foothills Preserve and planned new park. *We request that the Board clarify with P&D and county parks that this trail would somehow be conditioned as part of the rezone.*

Glen Annie Golf Course: We commend the project developers for proposing almost 100 acres of public open space and 4 miles of foothill trails. We strongly support this rezone and hope to work with the County to pursue additional foothill trail opportunities.

We thank the Board for considering this input. The Trails Council stands ready to assist the County with planning, designing, and constructing these trail proposals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Wilkinson", written in a cursive style.

Mark Wilkinson
Executive Director
mwilkinson@sbtrails.org