

Katherine Douglas

Public Comment - Citizens Planning Association

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From: Citizens Planning Association <citizensplanningsb@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2023 11:54 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: CPA Public Comment Letter for HEU
Attachments: CPA HEU.docx

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Dear Staff: Please find attached the CPA Public Comment letter for the HEU item at Tuesday's BOS meeting. Would you please respond to my e-mail so I know you received this in a timely manner and the format is correct. We hop that it will be distributed to the supervisors and included in the packet. Thank you. Mary Ellen Brooks, President, Citizens Planning Association

Citizens Planning Association
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916 Anacapa Street

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

November 30, 2023

TO: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Citizens Planning Association

Re: Input regarding Housing Element Update

Dear Supervisors:

Citizens Planning Association has been following the Housing Element process since the very beginning. We hope you have read the many CPA letters regarding the RHNA numbers allotment and our comments about site selection that are in the appendix of the HEU packet. We feel what occurs today regarding accepting the HEU creates the foundation for the rezones so it is impossible to separate the two.

For today's hearing, CPA offers the following suggestions:

Take a very close look at the inordinate numbers of units placed in the Eastern Goleta Valley community plan area. We understand staff contacted most land owners in the County before the public workshops began, but land owner desires should not be the only criteria for rezone. The thousands of units proposed for this small geographic area will create untold negative impacts that have yet to be determined but many can easily be foreseen: traffic, water resources, impacts to schools, need for parks, open space, etc. These impacts must be considered before rezoning takes place.

Focus rezones on parcels that will actually provide work force and affordable housing. These include publicly owned parcels, some of the parcels owned by the faith community and property owned/purchasable by non-profit housing providers. Policies should be added that clearly define 'work force' and 'affordable' so what is created really addresses the needs of the people living and working in the County. "Work force" and 'affordable' units must remain so over time through some type of resale restriction or you only have a short-term fix.

If we want to end what the State is now calling a 'housing crisis' market rate units should not be included in this update. South Coast's 'housing crisis' is a decades-old situation. See the writings of Pearl Chase in the 1920s and continuing for several decades where she

describes the Santa Barbara 'housing crisis'. She recognized even back then that everyone wants to live in a beautiful place.

CPA supports any programs that will provide long term affordable units for the local workforce. We also support some type of rent control and the creation of just cause eviction policies. It is ironic that during all this work on the HEU, there has been a massive eviction in Isla Vista, due to the actions of outside real estate investment companies. This situation is where the State should be focusing, as it is the industry and now REICs that are fully behind some of these new State policies.

Prioritize pursuing federal/state policies to provide adequate funding to build and maintain low-income housing in perpetuity. We read through the County Legislative Program and see this as an area of concern. This could be pushed to the top of the list of legislative priorities. We are pleased to see that local groups, such as Santa Barbara Foundation, are proposing programs to help fund such housing, but to really solve the problem, we need to urge the State to contribute more of its resources to provide secure affordable housing.

Many residents have concerns that the proposed rezones will have a negative impact on the trails and recreational opportunities available to the residents of our County. As mentioned in other public comments, Program 22 needs improvement and clarification so that Santa Barbara County does not undermine our historic support of public parks, trails, and recreation.

Rezoning of agricultural lands must be done very carefully, if at all. Again, existing County policies to protect productive agricultural land and prime soils, always a priority for Santa Barbara County, should not be ignored.

CPA urges the Board to be very selective before approving this Update and consequently undermining decades of good planning policies which have, up to now, helped to create livable and sustainable communities in Santa Barbara County. We read the findings that you are asked to support today and **believe it would be a stretch to accept a finding that claims this HEU reflects sound planning policies** without significant modification. This document reflects pressure from the State, not the support of your local constituents.

The maps included in this HEU show the possibility of drastic irreversible changes to our county, especially in the South Coast, thus undermining decades of effective planning and development policies. Please take the time at this hearing to thoroughly discuss the ramifications of accepting this document. Ignoring our existing planning policies and community plans because of pressure from Sacramento is just not good planning.

Marell Brooks

President

Citizens Planning Association