



CITY OF SANTA MARIA  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL



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March 8, 2021

Bob Nelson  
Chair, County Board of Supervisors

**Re: Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations**

Dear County Board of Supervisors:

At your March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, I urge you to not approve the second reading of the ordinance to allow Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations, and instead continue the item until these issues are thoroughly vetted with the local cities and with the community.

If approved, this Ordinance will allow residential properties to convert to restaurants without many of the public health and safety requirements generally imposed on restaurants and other food service facilities. The proposed ordinance will create many negative impacts in the City of Santa Maria. We are very concerned about more health and safety problems, further deteriorating zoning laws in residential neighborhoods, creating inequities with the traditional brick-and-mortar restaurants and many other drawbacks that your Board must consider.

The County Public Health Department advocated for this and will own it.

The City is on record in stating the following drawbacks:

Micro kitchens happen in cities, and our Code Enforcement staff are front line in protecting health and safety. We have for decades discovered abhorrent violations of illegal kitchens selling unsafe food out of dirty kitchens, garages, and backyards. We have seen beef jerky in the back of a pickup truck and tamales being made in a bathtub.

Micro kitchens will raise greater risks for fire and sewer overflows. Yet, many building, zoning, mitigation for increased grease production, or fire suppression requirements cannot be required. These are all requirements that apply to licensed food service facilities in our commercial areas.

Negative impacts on our residential community and zoning laws. Home occupations are currently regulated. Micro kitchens are in clear violation of most of the home occupation regulations including having customers and employees at the home. Allowing for micro kitchens would provide micro kitchens an unfair advantage to current legal home occupations.

Micro kitchens will have limited regulation versus a full-service facility and no business licenses or home occupation licenses can be required.

Under the proposed ordinance, micro kitchens can basically operate in the City with few regulations and avoid paying taxes to support City services.

Many traditional brick-and-mortar restaurant facilities now are suffering due to decreased sales created by COVID-19. Micro kitchens would have an economic advantage over regulated restaurants and such impacts could potentially create further closures of traditional restaurants in our commercial sectors.

For all these reasons, I strongly ask that the Board not approve the second reading of the Ordinance and instead continue it until the matter is properly vetted among cities and the business community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice M. Patino". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**ALICE M. PATINO**

Mayor