



# Home Builders Association

OF THE CENTRAL COAST

*providing quality housing and communities*

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Tuesday, April 15, 2008

Supervisor Salud Carbajal  
Chairman of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu St.  
Fourth Floor  
Santa Barbara, CA

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Dear Chairman Salud Carbajal and fellow supervisors:

Because of scheduling conflicts that cannot be changed, the Home Builders Association will be unable to attend the Community Environmental Council's "New Direction" presentation Tuesday, April 15, to the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors. But the association has seen the presentation twice before and submits this written testimony for your consideration.

The association supports voluntary green building and smart energy policies and addressing climate change in a fiscally achievable manner. However, we find parts of CEC's presentation to be misdirected and misleading.

CEC sites national figures about how much green house gas existing homes and businesses emit, but does not show that new construction in California has steadily become more energy efficient. That results in CEC's plan placing too much emphasis on regulating new construction and not enough on remodeling.

Under California's Title 24, homes built today in the state are 35 to 40 % more energy efficient than those built before 1990. That will increase to 55 % in 2009 and continue increasing by 15 to 20 % every three to four years. Homes and commercial buildings constructed before 1990 do use energy inefficiently. That is why any new county policy should focus on remodeling existing homes and businesses, should be voluntary, and should offer incentives to promote public participation. There is no need to regulate new construction. The state is already doing that. New construction is already far ahead of the curve in energy efficiency.

Santa Barbara countywide has 180,000 homes, counting all the cities, and has permitted an average of 1,000 new homes per year since 1990. At that rate, it will theoretically take 180 years for today's more energy-efficient newer homes to equal the number of the energy-inefficient older homes you are living in today. If you wanted to make new homes today exceed Title 24 by 10 %, you would increase construction costs by \$7,000 to \$10,000 but only reduces green house gas emissions by 1.4 %. If you spent only \$2,500 to add better insulation, seal leaky ducts and update air-conditioning in existing homes, green house gas emissions would decrease by 32 %. It is simply more energy- and cost-efficient to focus on remodeling.

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This illustrates a recurring problem new construction faces. We are regulated not because we are the problem, but because we are an easy target, letting people claim something is being done about a problem when real effective solutions – like getting existing residents and businesses involved -- are too politically problematic to face.

The county can impact global warming in a positive way by:

1. Developing incentives to encourage voluntary energy-efficiency remodeling in existing homes and businesses and to encourage new construction to volunteer to exceed Title 24;
2. Increasing residential densities and building height limitations so more workforce housing can be built nearer to job centers instead of making the workforce commute long-distance from Oxnard and Santa Maria to the South Coast; and
3. Zoning more land for housing where the workforce lives.

Thank you for your time. We are, of course, always willing to continue this dialogue.

Sincerely yours,

Jerry Bunin  
Government Affairs Director  
Home Builders Association of the Central Coast

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