

de la Guerra, Sheila General Public Comment

From: Arthur Olguin <olguin@sbcc.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 4, 2023 6:42 PM
To: sbcob
Subject: 23-00301 HEARING - Consider recommendations regarding a Housing Element Update
- Status and Next Steps

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PO Box 6246
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February 28, 2023

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E Anapamu St
Board of Supervisors, 4th Floor
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Board Members,

I am disappointed that the Housing Element has already been submitted to the state without the Board discussing the feedback generated from the publication of the draft housing element. To submit the plan showing all the proposed agricultural sites highlighted is particularly offensive because it contradicts the longstanding values of the county (EGV Community Plan) that agricultural lands should be a last resort by making these agricultural lands the principal focus quite early in the planning process. It suggests the Board has predetermined a judgment about housing unalterable by additional community input.

Although the expansion of potential sites for the workforce and low-income housing was helpful, it's unfortunate that the location of these new sites occurred only after staff received widespread complaints from community members about the concentrated proposals in agricultural areas in No/Goleta areas.

The relative lack of community involvement is also troubling. That there was little time for community members to receive and review the revised housing element draft prior to submitting the document to the state HCD (3/31/23) or even prior to a Board meeting where it would be discussed (4/4/23). This indicates not just a substandard planning process resulting in unrealistic compressed timeframes but also a disrespect of community members and their social contract with representatives. On a positive note, the interactive maps were helpful in understanding this planning process.

The over-concentration of dwelling units in a rezoned South Patterson agricultural area (D-35, Table D-18) continues to be a key problem as it creates an unacceptable, insanely dense population in this area. It would increase the population in this region by over 10,000 persons. The impacts of this affordable housing plan will create cascading community dysfunctions both foreseeable and unintended, with the ill effects of over-densification affecting safety and infrastructure including water, streets, schools. The revised draft is unacceptable and untenable.

I encourage the board to continue publicizing the proposed housing element and to hold meaningful and transparent dialogue with the community, not merely insiders or "stakeholders" who stand to profit from these decisions. There were no stakeholder meetings in the Eastern Goleta Valley, nor were the Patterson area residents notified of such proposed housing densification.

The Board and county staff members made an error in prioritizing the rezoning of agricultural lands in the county in the eastern No/Goleta area instead of distributing housing proportionately and fairly throughout the south county. The Montecito and Carp revisions are token at best. The Board should not decide to expand

the large proportion of housing, particularly high-density, low-income housing, in agricultural lands. There are numerous reasons for not rezoning the South Patterson area:

- High-density housing in an airport flight approach and clear zone is insane (higher risks of injury or death (crashes), environmental pollutants), contributing to health conditions and increasing the risk of developing chronic diseases, and violates SB1000 environmental justice protections for communities of color.
- The area is in a flood zone (Atascadero and Maria Ygnacio Creeks).
- Given the homeless population is concentrated in the downtown area, creating the bulk of new housing, whether it is high-density, low-income tent or mini-units, or homes, will be an inducement to shift those homelessness from Santa Barbara to No/Goleta. This is not tenable especially since social and health services are more available in the downtown area, as well as potential jobs for those transitioning from unhoused conditions.
- The infrastructure is unsustainable for this concentrated No/Goleta area (electricity, water, waste, transportation, schools, street congestion, etc.).
- There are more appropriate areas, e.g., using La Cumbre as a central site for multi-use housing; the conversion of shopping malls and unoccupied businesses to housing.
- By disproportionately excluding Montecito, Hope Ranch and Summerland from the proposal, this unfairly elevates the property values for those areas, creating a greater wealth disparity between rich and poorer segments of the county.
- Identification of certain areas for low-income, high-density housing infill creates stigma and further economic burdens on schools and communities of color (e.g., lower property values are funded at reduced levels). There are also intangible costs associated with other sociodemographic characteristics that are likely correlated with this housing element proposal.

It is unconscionable to propose effectively 70% of the County's burden for housing in the No/Goleta area because it represents a disproportionate impact on residents in three census tracts that already have disproportionate under-representation in the county. In addition to meetings with genuine "stakeholders" of the No/Goleta community, i.e., the *residents*, the Citizens Planning Association documents should be carefully weighed before any final decisions are made on the housing element. The effects of removing these agricultural lands and replacing it with housing must be evaluated in terms of the potential adverse effects on communities of color, which have largely been excluded from this rushed bureaucratic process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Art Olguin