

**PATTERSON AREA NEIGHBORHOODS ASSOCIATION
534 San Blas Place, Santa Barbara, CA 93111**

March 18, 2004

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

RE: County Housing Element Update: Action/Implementation Phase

Dear Mr. Centeno,

The Patterson Area Neighborhoods Association (PANA) is a non-partisan, volunteer organization devoted to the needs of our neighborhoods in the Goleta area. We are supportive of growth when it is well-planned, compatible with its surroundings and supported by the community it is most likely to impact – the immediate neighborhoods. Many of the 3,000 households that comprise PANA's membership have expressed a great deal of concern with regard to the county's efforts to update the housing element and to the perceived negative impacts that it may have on neighborhoods in the PANA area.

This concern has led to PANA's ongoing efforts to be actively involved in the update process for the past two years. We appreciate the opportunities we have had to comment on the process and the time the county's planning staff has set aside to meet with us, both in PANA-sponsored forums and privately.

PANA understands the importance of updating our housing element and having it certified by the State. However, we believe that local land-use decisions are best made at the local level and that the update of the housing element should be crafted in such a fashion that it mirrors the collective goals of our community. We believe that this approach will yield the best results for our community as a whole and therefore we continue to support broad public participation in the process.

As you conduct your deliberations on the housing element, we would like you to consider the following. The housing element requires the South Coast to balance two contrary goals. One goal is to protect our remaining agricultural and open lands. The other is to meet State-imposed mandates that require acreage be set aside or rezoned for future residential use. After considering these conflicting goals, the county has concluded that in order to satisfy the State's requirements agricultural lands will have to be rezoned. It is a controversial conclusion that we feel must be reconsidered.

For the planning period this housing element covers, through 2008, the South Coast is required to rezone acreage to accommodate 1,182 units. According to county staff, all but 157 of these units have either been built, are in the "pipeline" or are projected to be built. Therefore, fully 87% of our required growth has already been identified. More is

PATTERSON AREA NEIGHBORHOODS ASSOCIATION
534 San Blas Place, Santa Barbara, CA 93111

inevitable as we move toward 2008. (For instance, UC Santa Barbara has begun planning for 3,000 – 5,000 units of housing which would count toward the county's allocation). Thus it appears that the South Coast is well on its way to meeting its housing goals without the need for rezoning agricultural land.

Currently, the county is planning a design charrette for the San Marcos site along Hollister Avenue. PANA believes that holding this design process as part of the housing element update is virtually agreeing to begin the process of converting this productive agricultural land to housing. As PANA has repeatedly stated over the past several months, the update of the housing element does not require us to convert agricultural or open space to housing at this time. We firmly believe that we can successfully balance our competing needs without sacrificing either.

If the goal for the San Marcos Growers charrette is to allow truly broad public participation in determining what, if any, development should take place there, then we concur that this is an important goal and it should be done in as comprehensive a manner as possible. However, it is not necessary at this time and it is not necessary as part of the housing element update. Postponing the charrette should not be viewed as turning our back on housing but instead as an acknowledgement of the profound respect our community holds for our agricultural heritage and our desire to carefully consider the future for the portions of it that remain.

We support efforts aimed at planning for growth that will be compatible with adjacent neighborhoods, reduce the strain on existing infrastructure, and solve more problems than they create. In many jurisdictions the housing element is a very polarizing process but this does not need to be the case in Santa Barbara County. Indeed, the county met its quantified objectives for housing during the 1990's and is well on its way to satisfying its objectives for the current planning period. These are admirable accomplishments when the greatest constraint to housing, its sheer cost, is so magnified here.

To further these goals we support a series of specific steps (see attached) revising the planning process the county has proposed for the San Marcos Growers Agricultural Area. We remain convinced that updating the housing element does not require any rezones in this area but we believe our community will greatly benefit from strategic, long-range thinking about the future possible uses of these sites that incorporates the active participation of the broad spectrum of stakeholders.

Sincerely,



Tim Schmidt
President of the Board, Patterson Area Neighborhoods Association

attachment

RECOMMENDED HOUSING OPTIONS REVIEW PROCESS

The Patterson Area Neighborhoods Association strongly supports the following process for determining housing options for the unincorporated areas west of the City of Santa Barbara and east of the City of Goleta.

Our organization respectfully requests that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Cancel the design charette scheduled for the Hollister San Marcos Agricultural Area, or postpone it pending the outcome of a more thorough review process.
2. Direct P&D to prepare a comprehensive report on options for meeting both short and longer term housing demand in the unincorporated urban areas west of the City of Santa Barbara and east of the City of Goleta for public review and comment. The report should identify all available housing sites and programs, analyze potential housing production from each, assess environmental, planning and policy issues surrounding each site or program and objectively analyze the trade-offs involved in each approach.
3. Convene a citizens' coalition with a focused mandate and a limited time frame to review and comment on P&D's report and provide recommendations to the Planning Commission on how best to meet the community's housing needs. The coalition should consist of representatives from neighborhood groups, community and environmental organizations and housing advocates. The community should have sufficient time to review these matters, but must conclude its deliberations by early to mid summer to allow the County to maintain a reasonable schedule for the Housing Element.
4. Direct the Planning Commission to review these recommendations and the report prior to proceeding into the environmental impact review process and provide guidance to P&D on which lands to study for potential rezone.
5. Direct the Planning Commission to consider any policy adjustments needed to ensure sound planning of lands proposed for development or those required to protect lands not needed for housing production, including measures facilitating possible permanent agricultural land protection through eventual purchase of easements from willing sellers.