

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

September 5, 2003

Mr. Valentin Alexeeff, Director
Planning & Development Department
County of Santa Barbara
123 East Anapamu St
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Mr. Alexeeff,

I want to thank you for taking the time to prepare the op-ed piece that appeared in the Santa Barbara News-Press on August 31, 2003. The Patterson Area Neighborhoods Association applauds every effort to inform the community on issues related to housing in our area.

I found your fiction vs. fact format an effective way of presenting the information. However, some of your conclusions do not completely set the record straight.

Your assertion that only 20 units are proposed for Montecito, not 40, does not reflect the fact that 20 units is a base density and that in combination with one or more programs in the housing element the final number of units could be significantly more than 20.

The fiction that the county has proposed 3,000 new units in the unincorporated area of Goleta is an unfortunate mistake but it should be noted that it was a result of information originally provided by the county on their website.

The fiction that affordable housing creates ghettos of purely very low-income units and people who live in affordable housing are poor and cannot maintain their property are difficult notions to dispel. One suggestion would be that the county follow through on what has been an unfulfilled requirement of Santa Barbara County's housing elements for over 20 years, evaluate the effectiveness of the program on a yearly basis. If this had been done the county might have some hard data to present to the community rather than bland statements that do very little to reassure.

The fiction that the county is forcing agricultural land to convert to housing to meet State mandates, in the case of the Noel Christmas Tree Farm, can not be dismissed by simply stating that the property owner approached the county about rezoning prior to the update of the housing element. In 2000 the county requested that the owners of this particular property work with the neighbors, including PANA, to reach consensus as to what type of development would be suitable for the property. The understanding was that the county would endorse whatever was decided upon. At that time there was significant support to build 85 homes. During the past two years the county has continually refused to listen to the wishes of the very people who were originally asked to participate in the process and has pushed for an extremely large number of units to be built on the property. No, the county is not compelling the property owner to rezone but it is attempting to force a density that is not compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

There is also widespread concern that the public has not been allowed to provide input into the process and you rightly point out that the county hosted several meetings on this topic last year. However, several members of PANA did in fact attend some of the county's "road shows" last

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year. My first impression about the meeting that I attended was that the county did a very poor job presenting the information. My concern was such that I contacted the person who made the presentation to ask why it was so inaccurate. The answer I received was disturbing. As explained to me, the county's presentations were exaggerated to "scare" the public on the affordability gap. So rather than taking advantage of an opportunity to inform and include the public on such an important issue the result was an attempt to intimidate. My second impression, based on conversations with others in attendance, was that the involvement of the public was definitely not wanted. This reflects the poor publicity for the meeting and the substandard presentation. I expressed both of my concerns in a letter to Susan Rose in November 2002.

Finally, here are some other notions about the housing element update process that the community is concerned about.

Fiction: Affordable homes built in the unincorporated area of Goleta will help ease the jobs/housing imbalance.

Fact: There is absolutely no provision in our affordable housing program to give priority for those interested in buying an affordable home that currently commute from outlying areas. Far more homes would have to be built than are possible to make any difference in the jobs/housing imbalance or to satisfy the needs of those who wish to live here and now commute.

Fiction: The county does not propose to allow four story structures to be built in the unincorporated area of Goleta.

Fact: The updated housing element continues to contain provisions for structures up to 45 feet tall to be allowable despite verbal assurances made to PANA that the language would be modified.

Sincerely,

Tim Schmidt
President, Patterson Area Neighborhoods Association

Cc: Susan Rose, 2nd District Supervisor