



## Planning and Development Department

### Office of Long Range Planning

#### Transmittal Memo

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**DATE:** Wednesday, October 28, 2009

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**TO:** GVPAC Members

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**FROM:** Erika Leachman, Associate Planner

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**CC:** 2nd Supervisorial District Office  
Cecelia Brown, Planning Commissioner, 2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisorial District  
Derek Johnson, Director of the Office of Long Range Planning  
Vicki Parker, Deputy Director, Office of Long Range Planning  
Peter Imhof, Supervising Planner  
Lucy Pendl, Associate Planner

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**SUBJECT:** GVPAC member Bonnie Freeman investigations, interviews and presentation of agriculture land use information

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On behalf of GVPAC member Bonnie Freeman, please see the attached supplemental materials. Ms. Freeman has prepared and provided staff with the attached packet of materials documenting her personal investigations of agricultural land use issues and interviews with agricultural property owners primarily in the urban area of the Goleta Valley Planning Area. Ms. Freeman has requested distribution of this report to the GVPAC for consideration in advance of the schedule discussion and goal-setting GVPAC meetings pertaining to agricultural land use.

The attached packet contains the following items:

1. Letter from Bonnie Freeman to GVPAC members and Long Range Planning staff regarding her personal investigations and reports (Page 1).
2. Commentary/Letter from Paul Nielson, Groen Rose Co., to GVPAC member Freeman regarding the Groen Rose Co. property and the South Patterson Agricultural Area (Page 4).
3. Photos of the interiors of the Groen Rose Co. greenhouses referenced in items #1 and #2 (Page 7).

Please note that agricultural land use is not a scheduled item on the GVPAC's upcoming meeting agenda on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009. As such, the GVPAC should refrain from discussion of goals and planning tools for agricultural land use until this land use planning issue area is agendized for future public GVPAC meetings.

TO: Committee Members, GVPAC Staff, Long Range Planning  
FROM: Bonnie Freeman, Committee Member GVPAC  
DATE: Tuesday, October 25, 2009  
RE: Recommended Sites & Summary

Dear Fellow Committee Members, as many of you know, I have been visiting farmers, nurserymen, and landowners who fall into the South Patterson Agriculture Block for the past 3 months in an effort to bring these stakeholders into the process so we get a full picture of what commercial urban agriculture is like in the Goleta Valley. Since I did not have a background to speak authoritatively on urban agriculture and that was looking like an area of contention for the upcoming plan revisions, I decided to immerse myself as much as possible into the state of affairs. I have also talked to 3 or 4 farmers in the rural section of the EGV and will be seeing many more in the coming weeks.

To my complete surprise I heard another side of the “No more loss of agriculture” argument. And if it were just from one landowner I would have sensed a special interest, but to my further surprise other landowners in this particular agricultural block at the south end of Patterson had similar issues. A theme began to emerge, one of being overly restricted with the current zoning and ordinances, as well as the general pattern of an industry that is not as viable as it was in the last century. This also coincides with the fact that most of the owners are in their late 70’s and early 80’s and while they took over from their predecessors, that is not the case with any of the children of their families who find the business too economically unviable coupled with the high cost of land, housing and worker housing issues. I focused on the urban agriculture as the rural businesses with their own wells, orchards, large plots of land and other sustainable aspects leave them still competitive in the market and still able to farm w/o the other urban restrictions.

You have heard from a handful of growers that I was able to convince attending the May meeting: Ron Caird of Por La Mar Nursery(2<sup>nd</sup> largest grower/Florals) , John Givens of Givens farms(organic vegetables), and Stan Giorgi of Giorgi Farms (Lemon Groves/Hollister & Ward) and more recently the owners of Deigaard Nursery (Palms), Dean Lowrey and his family. His son-in-law Bob Alm has been the most consistent speaker and they all live in the southland and drive up for the meetings since recently becoming aware of them. Some of the other owners should start showing up as well since I have made them aware of the process and got them on the notification list. Almost all did not know of our committee or of the work on the new Community Plan taking place. Because of my own time constraints, and the difficulty in reaching some of the owners, it has taken me longer than I thought to get the information I was looking for and to hopefully engage some of these stakeholders in the process.

I plan to do a presentation when it is my turn to talk about agriculture and I have sought out the counsel and advice of two of you (limited by Brown Act) as well as staff and the Agricultural Commissioner’s office, and others. I very much want to include all committee members as much as possible as this is a difficult and sometimes controversial topic and without background it is all the more difficult to try and explain to a larger body, so I am hoping you will take some time to go to a few of the businesses and see for yourself, talk to the owners and walk the properties. This is specific to the South Patterson Ag Block:

Ron Caird/Por La Mar Nursery, 905 Patterson Avenue. Suggestions: Ron has been a part of the County Planning more than the others (in the past particularly) and is not that open to anyone coming on to his property but I recommend that you drive down Patterson and you will begin to see the start of his operations at Ekwill St. (where we stopped on the Tour; and Ekwill is also the dividing line between Goleta & EGV) and as you continue south, everything on BOTH SIDES of Patterson until you come to the bridge are his properties, so you can see from the street the size of his operations. You may remember from the May meeting that Por La Mar and Givens Farms are slowly moving their operations to Santa Maria due to the problems and costs of growing in an urban environment, and the advantages of having workers, wells, and large land plots available to them further north.

If you park your car where the large boulders are next to the bike path (just short of the bridge) and walk across Patterson to the east side of the bike path and cross over this other bridge you will come out to a “V” and take the path to the LEFT a few feet and you will see the triangular parcel that Ron Caird owns and leases to John Givens for his organic farming. This is the type of pocket farming that John Givens spoke to us about and how difficult it is to get tractors and equipment in and out. You can see for yourself the proximity to housing, the bike paths, the creek, slough, etc., as one of the few interesting infill properties left.

Paul Nielsen, Groen Rose Company (& Central Coast Plant Co.), 1170 More Ranch Road, 967-2411, or cell: 331-8375 Suggestions: Paul is very open to showing you their property and welcomes anyone, staff, committee or otherwise to come by either with or w/o an appointment but he can personally take you around and explain their operations if you arrange ahead. He will be out of the office from Nov. 6-16<sup>th</sup> so if that is when you come by then you will have to get out of your car and walk around by yourself. DIRECTIONS: After leaving the parking area next to the bike path, get back on Patterson and go south, over the bridge and then immediately you will make a RIGHT TURN at More Ranch Road. Continue as it curves around the bend and eventually up a road to where a private gate is. Just past the gate on the right is the Gas Co., and on the left is where you will turn (BEFORE the large barn) LEFT and go down the narrow road all the way until you see a small office on the left. Park to the right next to the greenhouse and either go to the office or get out and walk the length of the greenhouses that go back towards the cliffs. Look inside each of them and you will see which ones are usable and which ones not. Those that have potted plants in them are leased by Ron Caird on temporary basis. I am enclosing a letter written by Paul Nielsen and two photos.

#### ANDERSON LANE/DORWIN – COASTAL BEACH ACCESS

As you leave the Groen Rose Co operations and head back down to Patterson, take a RIGHT turn at the stop sign and go up Anderson Lane. On the RH side you will see several growers such as SeaView Nursery, Meyers, and Por La Mar on the right and Sea Crest Palm Nursery to the left. These are all WHOLESALE nurseries along this Block and some are easier to view than others. You would have to make appts. to see Sea Crest, off of Anderson, for example. This narrow lane also has housing and at the end there is a private gate installed by the owners along Dorwin Lane. To the LEFT of the gate you will see some pavers to walk around that take you inside and somewhere at the end is where those who know it's there continue to gain public access to the beach, at their own risk apparently. This is listed in the 1993 Community Plan.

**Replacement Text:**

DEIGAARD NURSERY (Palms), 5295 Shoreline Drive, 967-1131.

Suggestions: You will have to call and make an appointment to walk the grounds, ask for Trina or Skip. They have a safety concern so you may just want to drive up their entry to see the location and turn around and drive back down.

Directions: Come back down Anderson Lane and turn RIGHT, Patterson has now turned into Shoreline Drive. Just past West Covina Nursery (you have to make an appt. to see the owner Doug Zylstra if you want to walk around there and talk to him: 964-8270) you will see Deigaard Nursery's entry up the long driveway.

~~DEIGAARD NURSERY (Palms), 5295 Shoreline Drive, 967-1131. Suggestions: Come back down Anderson Lane and turn RIGHT, Patterson has now turned into SHORELINE DRIVE. Just past West Covina Nursery (you have to make an appt. to see the owner Doug Zylstra if you want to walk around there and talk to him: 964-8270) you will see the sign for Deigaard and turn RIGHT and go up the drive and the left at the top and go all the way down to see the office on the left hand side. Ask for TRINA or SKIP to let them know you would like to see the nursery, and in particular go to the cliffs to see what area that Bob Alm and Mark Molina spoke to in terms of their idea to potentially open that up to the public. The owners live down south and the managers know that you will come by, no appointments necessary.~~

As you come out of Deigaard, look to the EAST and at the bend where Shoreline curves up to become Orchid Drive, is where the County park property begins. It is not kept up and you will see that parking is limited, but 35 acres belongs to the County and has potential for more public access in the future if ways are found. And of course you know that More Mesa is just beyond from the Tour.

If you want to see more, I will be happy to drive you around and point out who the other owners are and what the situations are but you'd have to make an appt. with me too as I have my own schedule outside of GVPAC, like you do. But please feel free to call me and I will do whatever it takes to get you the information you need or take you to the properties if you are short of time, whatever. Bonnie, 683-1878

## **Historical Fact Sheet and Commentary**

Groen Rose Co., Inc  
1170 More Ranch Rd.  
Santa Barbara, CA 93111

Prepared by: Paul Nielsen  
805-967-2411 business  
805-331-8375 cell

10-24-2009

Groen Rose Co., Inc purchased the property (Parcel # 65-250-28) in 1949 and started greenhouse construction. At the time of purchase the property was fallow, had no water on it and never had irrigated crops on it. From then until 1980 the company constructed 287,844 sq ft of greenhouses. Production from these greenhouses was primarily cut roses that were sold at the Los Angeles Flower Market. After 1980 the company started diversifying into potted plant crops.

When the property was purchased, it was considered rural land and had no zoning. When the County of Santa Barbara first rezoned it from a rural designation in the late 1950's and until the inception of the Coastal Commission in the 1970's the Groen property and all the other nurseries were zoned either 10-R-1 or 20-R-1. The properties were then rezoned to conform to the Coastal Commission's statutes to A-5 or A-10 to be consistent with their current use at that time and lost their residential zoning.

To the best of our knowledge, no nursery in the area that was rezoned from a residential designation to A-5 or A-10 at that time as part of the Coastal Commission action has ever been able to subdivide their property to take advantage of even that minimal zoning.

Beginning in about 1980 there was significant and ever increasing pressure on the economic viability of domestic cut flower production from imported offshore production primarily from Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico. In 1980 there were over 240 domestic cut rose producers in the U. S. and today the estimate would be that only about 10% remain. And for those few, cut roses are no longer their primary crop.

In the late 1980's the company joined with several of its neighbors to propose a master development plan for the area as part of the last Goleta General Plan Update that started in 1988 and was finished in late 1992. That proposal consisted of 10 landowners representing 14 parcels totaling 247 acres and was called the Patterson Park Golf Community Project. That comprehensive land use plan was ultimately denied inclusion into the Goleta Community Plan with the further stipulation from planning staff that zoning on all the parcels in the South Patterson Ag Block should remain as it is for the life of that plan. A new plan is now being prepared and now is the time for change.

With increasing economic pressure on our company from offshore cut flower competition, the lack of family succession to the business, the age of the principal owners and deteriorating efficiency of the aging greenhouses, Groen Rose Co., Inc decided to cease production in March 1993.

Some greenhouse space was leased to neighboring nurseries that produce potted plants. Some space remained empty. As of this date 186,089 sq ft of greenhouses are unoccupied and have deteriorated to the point that they can no longer be used practically or efficiently for either cut flower or potted plant production. (See attached photos) Only two greenhouse tenants remain as of this date occupying just 101,478 sq ft. One of them is a shareholder in Groen Rose Co., who is operating a separate potted plant business on the property. There is no economic prospect to leasing the remaining space because of its deteriorated condition and inefficient layout.

With the recent economic downturn, the lack of new construction and water restrictions in Los Angeles and Orange counties, which limit the amount of water that can be used on landscapes, the producers of potted plants and container nursery stock whose customers are in those areas are now facing similar economic hardships just as the cut flower producers did in the late 1980's and early 1990's. This development makes remodeling and facility updating risky and uneconomical for the future.

It is now time in this Goleta General Plan Update to allow the nursery properties on the western end of More Mesa from the Orchid Drive and Austin Road area and west to the SoCal Gas Company property and south of Maria Ignacia and Atascadero Creeks some alternative zoning or other land use option. The current General Plan specifies that this area could be considered for development after 10 years have passed. That interval has passed several years ago. The nurseries in this area are:

Santa Barbara Orchid Estate  
Cal-Orchid  
Deigaard Nursery  
Wes Covina Nursery  
Seacrest Nursery  
Seaview Nursery  
F. W. Meyer Inc  
Por La Mar Nursery  
Groen Rose Co., Inc

Along More Ranch Rd. alone, where Groen Rose Co. is located, there are currently 13 dwelling units. And although there are three nurseries on the road, the appearance and residential character of the area is much the same as the Orchid Drive and Austin Road area to the east, which is entirely developed as ½ acre lots. It would not be inappropriate to rezone all of the nursery properties to 20-R-1 or some similar designation that would allow for ½ acre development consistent with the rest of the parcels in the area. And at the very least the new general plan and zoning ordinances should stipulate that the

owners of the parcels may apply for a zoning change, lot split or present a development plan on a case-by-case basis in the future that will be heard by the county.

The area is already extensively urbanized and the urban/ag conflicts will continue to intensify in the next few years making long term use of this area for nurseries impractical and uneconomical. If the owners of the nurseries have no alternatives in the new Goleta General Plan, which will no doubt have a new 10-15 year life, then they have no choice when their economic need arises but to sell the property to a single owner. This may be sooner for some and later for others. In this scenario the properties will no doubt be developed into private family compounds to the maximum allowed under current ag zoning statutes with only partial ag use. Santa Barbara is a desirable place to live and fortunately for some of us there are individuals looking for this type of beachfront property. Allowing some development in this urban coastal section, which is already extensively urbanized, may offer some alternative to increasing development along other coastal areas of the county.

It seems prudent that some comprehensive alternative land use should be allowed in this area while the opportunity exists in the development of this new general plan rather than have the parcels developed in the future on a single ownership and piecemeal basis.

Groen Rose Co., Inc  
Photos taken 10-11-2009

