

Coalition for Sensible Planning Comments on Community Plan Draft

Public Services & Facilities, pp. 93 - 151

We believe that the GVPAC and the County must consider Public Health & Safety as the highest priority for any future planning or development. Any future development that does not reckon with this standard, which is a mandate for government to fulfill, is very dangerous to our health and safety!

**Emergency Services**

Considering Emergency Services immediately comes to mind. The Draft document on page 98 states that "land use planning is intrinsically tied to the provision of services, since staffing levels, size, type and siting of facilities, and response standards are determined by population..." The document is correct in listing population as the first determinant. Right now during an emergency (fire, tsunami, earthquake or man-made disaster), we are unable to evacuate safely.

Being geographically isolated as we are, surrounded by mountains and ocean, there are very few evacuation routes. For the main corridor transversed by Highway 101, we are already overbuilt in terms of our ability to evacuate safely in an emergency; there is no way that everyone could use 101 to leave in either direction. Right now, evacuation would create pandemonium, something the GVPAC must consider and impress upon County leaders.

County planners state that until we know what the emergency is, they cannot make an evacuation plan. It is true that emergency events are unpredictable, but that is no reason to do nothing. Many cities have well-marked evacuation routes along main roads. **SOME** plan is better than no plan! After the emergency event occurs, it will likely be too late to identify what to do.

With this in mind, we believe that Policy ES-EGV-1.1 on page 103 is impossible with the current population level in the South County:

*"The County shall facilitate effective emergency response systems in the event of an emergency in Eastern Goleta Valley."*

County officials do not seem to take this problem seriously, so it is up to our Community Plan to not worsen the existing problem of overpopulation in our area. Until County officials have published a genuine Emergency Evacuation Plan for the entire population, it is foolish and dangerous to add more people to our area. Publishing and marking an effective emergency and evacuation route is the first step in providing adequate Public Health & Safety for all our residents.

We request that any newly-proposed development be required to have an Emergency Evacuation Plan for those additional residents it would bring. It would state how adding residents to the proposed area would still fit within the County's overall Emergency Evacuation Plan and not overburden it. We request this as a necessary condition for any residential development approval, with no mitigation possible on this issue whatsoever. In allowing new residential units to be built our community, the County must first ensure that Public Health & Safety of all current residents is its highest priority.

## Transportation - Transit for We who live here

The Community Plan draft appears to suggest that building high-density, multi-story condos will improve transportation options. It is important to remember that this Plan is for those of us who live and pay taxes here, not for developers and not for those who would like to live here.

Smart Growth links high density housing to public transit, arguing that it is necessary to have density in order to support alternative transportation. But it is not necessary to build high density housing in order to improve transportation! Instead, it is necessary to improve transportation options for our current situation. However, the Draft Plan uses a pro-development argument on page 130:

*"Public transit options ... do not provide an adequate range of services for those wishing to commute for work or shopping using public transit exclusively within and outside Eastern Goleta Valley. To address this issue, this Plan promotes increased ridership, infill development near destination nodes..."*

This Draft Plan is for us who already live in our community, who do not yet have multiple transit options. Building new high density infill development is NOT going to fix the current lack of public transportation! Bringing more people to our area with multi-story condos will truly make the situation worse, which is the opposite of the stated Plan goal!

For example Goal #9 on page 141 is to minimize Average Daily Trips and Vehicle Miles travelled. These concepts must be applied to the suburban structure that currently exists. The Plan attempts, by advocating for high density housing along transportation corridors, to concentrate public transportation along those corridors. But that approach does not fit the majority of our residents who live in suburban settings. These are the residents for whom this Plan must provide transit solutions.

If the goal is truly to minimize Daily Trips and Vehicle Miles travelled, this could easily be implemented by expanding bus service to serve deep within residential neighborhoods. Very few buses stop off the main thoroughfares with the result that many residents are not well served and use their car instead. We suggest using smaller commuter buses in residential areas, thus increasing the coverage without using the larger, noisier polluting vehicles.

The transportation goal for this Plan must be to find transit solutions for those of us who live here, within currently existing infrastructure. Building high density housing along transportation corridors is no solution to our transportation needs whatsoever and would create many additional problems.

### Program TC-EGV 1B

*"The County shall programmatically redevelop/retrofit Goleta Valley Community Corridors to best serve as multi-modal Complete Streets."*

This is a wide-open statement which gives the County permission to "redevelop" Hollister, Turnpike and Calle Real into high-density, multi-story condos with minimum setback and minimum parking facilities. This is powerful pro-development language that argues for redeveloping our area into high density zoning with little or no

constraints. Our community does not want these three main streets "redeveloped" and totally changed to become very high density.

We request that the words "redevelop" and "retrofit" be removed from this Program TC-EGV. Redevelopment is a blank slate for high density that the community does not want!

Meanwhile, the Plan's narrative on page 130 states that

*"this Plan prioritizes siting development on public transit routes to grant residents and employees the option to take transit to and from destinations."*

And this is clearly illustrated in the "After" photograph on page 142. These corridors, now green and low-density, would be lined with multi-story condos with little setback. This is NOT what the residents of the Eastern Goleta Valley want for their lovely valley!

#### Quantifiable, Mandated Traffic Standards

The Plan should require that there be thorough local studies as to the actual traffic impacts of any new development. These studies should specifically describe the impacts in percentages and with quantifiable standards that are mandated. These studies must address the actual situation and not be taken from some other city, but from this location, this area!

#### **Parking Issues**

Residents of the Eastern Goleta Valley are united in the desire that that parking must remain ample and available, as it is now. Many residents from other areas shop in our area because parking is plentiful and non-stressful. Why would we want our parking situation to become degraded when that is not necessary?

So our community is unified in its opposition to DevStd TC-EGV-3A on page 151:

*"Alternative parking solutions, such as underground garages, lifts, and shared lots, shall be considered for commercial and mixed-use structures, properties, and neighborhoods."*

The concept of a "shared parking lot" is a nightmare. Think of the shared lot at Trader Joe's on De La Vina. Many avoid the area because it's impossible to park without spending time hunting for a space. What a shared lot means is that parking for proposed high-density condos will spread out into adjoining low-density neighborhoods. No one wants that. Therefore, we request that you modify this DevStd and remove language regarding "shared lots".

