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March 16, 2011

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VIA E-MAIL: ELEACHMA@CO.SANTA-BARBARA.CA.US

Chair Olson and Members of the Goleta Valley Planning Advisory Committee
County of Santa Barbara
Office of Long Range Planning
30 E. Figueroa Street, 2nd Floor
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: San Marcos Growers Site
GVPAC Meeting of March 17, 2011

Dear Chair Olson and Members of the GVPAC:

Our office represents The Towbes Group, Inc. ("TGI"), which as you know has been advocating an urban land use designation for the San Marcos Growers site in the Eastern Goleta Valley. The Goleta Valley Planning Advisory Committee will be providing recommendations to the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors regarding the Goleta Community Plan for the unincorporated eastern Goleta Valley. The County has gone on record in strong support of the principles embodied in AB 32 and SB 375 and in State housing law. If the Goleta Community Plan is to comply with these principles, the San Marcos Growers site must be studied as an urban infill site for the development of housing.

Assembly Bill 32, passed in 2006, enacted the California Climate Change Initiative. This sweeping enactment authorized the adoption of regulations governing all sectors of the California economy, including construction, transportation, oil and gas exploration, power generation, industrial processes, and agriculture. The goal of AB 32 is to reduce the production of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in California to 30% below business as usual by 2020.

The California Air Resources Board, which has broad powers over the implementation of AB 32, has begun the process of adopting and implementing such regulations throughout the California economy. AB 32 recognizes that transportation emissions are a very large source of California's GHG production -- up to 33% of AB 32's goal must be accomplished through reduction in transportation emissions. While some emission reduction can come from measures such as improved vehicle fuel efficiency, technical fixes such as this can provide modest emissions reduction at best. It is only reduction of Vehicle miles Traveled (VMTs) that can effectively reduce GHG production from vehicle emissions.

Senate Bill 375, signed by the Governor in 2008, is a landmark enactment that seeks the reduction in VMTs that is necessary to reach the State's AB 32 goals for GHG reduction. The legislation links land use decisions to transportation funding decisions through the regional transportation planning process. In each metropolitan region of the State, a new regional land use plan, called the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), will be developed by the local agency responsible for regional transportation planning, which in Santa Barbara County is the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG). All local governments with land use authority must cooperate in the preparation of an SCS that meets SB 375's GHG reduction goals.

The SCS must coordinate regional transportation, housing, and land use planning in a way that reduces transportation emissions. This is done by:

1. promoting compact development patterns located near transit corridors
2. coordinating the location of employment and housing
3. supporting transit use
4. concentrating economic activities into existing communities, and
5. incorporating a mix of housing types.

If such strategies are employed, the results will produce growth patterns with numerous benefits:

1. shorter commutes, VMT reduction, and congestion relief
2. reduced GHG emissions and air pollution
3. less fossil fuel consumption
4. opportunities for more housing choices for all economic segments of the population, including anticipated population and employment growth
5. reduced infrastructure costs, and
6. higher quality of life.

The California Air Resources Board, in commenting on Santa Barbara County's plans to develop a Sustainable Communities Strategy, has identified as a key problem the County's jobs-housing imbalance. Workers commute long distances from their homes to reach employment centers in southern Santa Barbara County. Under the requirements of SB 375, Santa Barbara County will be required to reduce the GHG production that is created through commuting through encouraging infill development.

Santa Barbara County has recognized that it has a serious jobs-housing imbalance, with a daily in-migration of over 30,000 commuters who live outside the South Coast. This

exacerbates the creation of air quality impacts. In cooperating with SBCAG to develop a SCS, the County's focus will be to facilitate the development of additional urban in-fill housing and mixed use development in existing urban areas close to urban services and transit. This will create affordable and workforce housing, protect open space and agricultural land while supporting builders, revitalize semi-rural centers, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Santa Barbara 2003-2008 Policy Achievements, Housing Element, p. 290). It is the rural areas of the County, which contain large expanses of agriculturally productive land but few large employment centers, that are the focus for protection under the County's SB 375 efforts (Santa Barbara County Land Use Planning 2010-2011 Work Program, p.8; Santa Barbara 2003-2008 Policy Achievements, p. 313).

The requirements and goals outlined above are consistent and can be achieved by developing housing at the San Marcos Growers site. It is located along a major transportation corridor and is near jobs, housing and shopping. It has been designated for housing uses for years. As TGI has pointed out before, the San Marcos Growers site is surrounded on all sides by urban uses that are incompatible with agricultural use on the site. It meets all of the criteria necessary for the County to fulfill its SB 375 obligation by planning in a manner that reduces production of GHGs caused by commuting. In summary:

1. It promotes compact development near transit corridors: the property is surrounded by urban uses and located on a major transit line connecting Santa Barbara, Goleta, and the Goleta Valley.
2. It coordinates the location of employment and housing: the property is near numerous employment centers, both within walking distance and via transit routes.
3. Development of the site for housing obviously promotes transit use.
4. Use of the property for housing concentrates economic activities (housing, employment, and shopping) within the heart of the urban core of the South Coast.
5. The housing development which has been proposed for the property incorporates a broad range of housing types for all segments of our community.

The County recently received a letter (dated February 9, 2011) from the state Department of Housing and Community Development regarding the status of the County's Housing Element. In the letter, HCD finds the County's Housing Element to be in compliance with legal requirements. However, the letter sounds a strong note of caution, expressly stating that HCD's finding is dependent on the County's demonstration that (i) the Isla Vista Master Plan is effectively providing housing sites and (ii) that the Goleta Community Plan is redesignating adequate sites for higher densities. The letter shows that HCD will be closely monitoring the County's actions regarding designation of sites to insure that genuinely adequate provision of higher density housing sites occurs.

The record so far is not encouraging. The IVMP's proposal to provide housing through mixed use designations was not accepted by the California Coastal Commission. New mixed use designations proposed for the Goleta Community Plan will not produce the housing density necessary to meet the requirements of state law. Finally, recent GVPAC

determinations do not appear to take seriously the state's mandate that higher density housing sites be provided.

For all these reasons, we urge that the GVPAC and County staff consider site suitability when applying land use designations and apply SB 375 principles in practice when determining the location for future urban development in the Goleta Valley. Providing an urban designation for the San Marcos Growers site will reflect a genuine commitment by the County to the SB 375 and Housing Element planning processes. Failure to do so will call that commitment into question.

Very truly yours,



Peter N. Brown

Attachment: 2/9/11 Letter from Dept. of Housing and Community Development

Cc: Jeff Hunt: jhunt@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
June Pujo: jpujo@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
Erika Leachman: eleachma@co.santa-barbara.ca.us
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February 9, 2011

Ms. Chandra L. Wallar
County Executive Officer
County of Santa Barbara
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Ms. Wallar:

RE: Review of the County of Santa Barbara's Adopted Housing Element

Thank you for submitting Santa Barbara County's housing element adopted November 2, 2010 and received for review on November 12, 2010. The Department is required to review adopted housing elements and report the findings to the locality pursuant to Government Code Section 65585(h).

As you know, the Department's June 11, 2010 review found Santa Barbara County's revised draft housing element addressed the statutory requirements of housing element law. The finding was conditioned on including a program(s) to annually evaluate the effectiveness of sites identified in the Isla Vista Master Plan (IVMP) and revising Program 1.3 to include a commitment to rezone higher density sites as part of the community plan updates. As the adopted element includes programs as described above and is substantially the same as the revised draft, the Department finds the element in compliance with State housing element law (Article 10.6 of the Government Code).

Please note, however, the Department's finding of compliance is conditioned on the implementation of Program 1.13 to annually evaluate the effectiveness of sites identified in the IVMP and identify additional sites and strategies as necessary. Program 1.13 is necessary to demonstrate adequate sites given the potential for non-residential uses, the extent of non-vacant and small sites (less than three fourths of an acre) in the IVMP. In addition, the Department's finding is conditioned on the implementation of Program 1.3 to rezone sites to higher densities as part of community plan updates including updating the Eastern Goleta Valley Community Plan by July 2012.

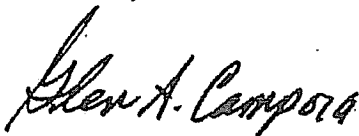
Ms. Chandra L. Wallar, County Executive Officer
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Further, Program 1.2 to mitigate the impact of regulatory requirements and modify the land-use and development code and Program 1.4 to establish land-use tools to promote a variety of housing opportunities are necessary to demonstrate compliance with housing element law. As a result, the County must monitor and report on the implementation of these programs through the annual progress report, required pursuant to Government Code Section 65400. If these programs are not effective in mitigating regulatory constraints or facilitating the development of a variety of housing types, the element should be amended to identify alternative strategies and add or revise programs, as appropriate.

Maintaining adequate sites at appropriate densities to accommodate Santa Barbara County's regional housing need, including lower-income households, throughout the planning period is required pursuant to Government Code Section 65863. In addition, Section 65863 specifies no local government action shall reduce, require or permit the reduction of, the residential density or allow development at a "lower residential density" for any parcel identified in the site inventory unless the local government makes written findings, the reduction is consistent with the adopted General Plan, and the remaining sites identified in the element are adequate to accommodate the jurisdiction's share of the regional housing need. As defined by statute, "a lower residential density" refers to allowing fewer units on the site than were projected within the sites inventory of the housing element. As noted in the prior review, the County should adopt a program to facilitate compliance with these requirements. However, it does not appear a program was adopted. As a result, the County should establish a procedure to monitor approved development relative to capacity estimates in the housing element to ensure compliance with Section 65863.

The Department appreciates the efforts and cooperation of Messrs. Nathan Eady, Senior Planner, Peter Imhof, Supervising Planner, and Paul Clementi, Assistant Planner, throughout the course of the review. We wish Santa Barbara County success in implementing its housing element and look forward to following its progress through the General Plan annual progress reports pursuant to Government Code Section 65400. If the Department can provide assistance in implementing the housing element, please contact Paul McDougall, of our staff, at (916) 322-7995.

Sincerely,



Glen A. Campora
Assistant Deputy Director