

To: The Goleta Valley Planning Advisory Committee (GVPAC)
From: Brett Hodges

(If appropriate, could this please be read aloud at the meeting, so that it appears in the minutes?)

Hi – I wanted to share my family’s thoughts on the ongoing Goleta Community Plan update as it relates to our land, commonly known as the San Marcos Growers property.

Our family has owned these two parcels (totaling 33 acres) since the late 1970’s. Since that time the property has been leased to a wholesale plant nursery (San Marcos Growers) and to organic vegetable farmers. My brother, sister and I jointly own the property and are the majority owners of the nursery, though we are not involved in its day-to-day management.

When we purchased the largest of our two parcels (27 acres), it was zoned for residential development (R 4.6), but this was changed to an agricultural zoning (A-I-5) in the 1993 plan update. At that time we registered our opposition to the down-zoning, arguing that the property is ideally located near schools, shopping and transportation corridors and that its long-term use is best suited for some kind of mixed use development.

The 1993 Plan did seem to recognize the appropriateness of the property for future non-agricultural use, and the final Plan stated, “In order to preserve existing agricultural uses for an interim period, APN No. 65-040-041 shall be designated A-1. The long-term land use designation for this parcel should be mixed residential and retail/commercial. No later than 2000, the land use designation for this parcel should be reviewed to determine if it should be changed to a mixed use residential and retail/commercial designation.”

At the present time we are pleased with the use of our property. San Marcos Growers is very well-run and has built an international reputation as a leader in both California native and Mediterranean-climate plant material. Our lease of 9 acres to John and Ruth Lane for growing organic produce and operating the San Marcos Gardens farm stand, has worked out very well.

However, none of my family are involved in operating these businesses, and as time passes and key individuals retire, it’s uncertain what the family’s interest in maintaining long-term agricultural operations would be.

Given the historical 15-20 years between Community Plan updates, we would like to request that this Committee support rezoning the San Marcos Growers property for a mixed use designation. As the 1993 Plan concluded, “The long-term land use designation for this parcel should be mixed residential and retail/commercial”.

With a growing need for housing which places less of a burden on traffic and other resources, we do feel this is the best eventual use of the property. The property is perhaps the most suitable remaining large site on the Hollister Ave. corridor for a creative mixed use development. Within approximately half a mile there are two elementary schools (El Camino and Hollister), San Marcos High School, two shopping centers (Turnpike and Magnolia), two youth recreational facilities (Girls Inc. and the Page Youth Center), and the Goleta Valley Hospital.

We greatly appreciate the Committee’s hard work on the Community Plan Update.

Many thanks, Brett Hodges