

**Submitted to County of Santa Barbara on 2-22-11**

**CSP Comments on the term “infill” –**

The term “infill” or “infill housing” has been used often in our Community Plan and mentioned at nearly every GVPAC meeting,, although this controversial term means different things to different people.

County planners say that the term “infill” simply means a planned development in proximity to other developed areas; that is does not imply high-density development. However, right after this explanation, developer Craig Zimmerman of the Towbes Group, in proposing high-density development on the organic San Marcos farmland, described his proposed development as “infill”. By that, he meant building a high-density and multi-family project.

So it is useful to see how this term has fared in the planning processes for other areas. Longtime observers of Santa Barbara’s planning process believe that the term "infill" has been used repeatedly by the City of Santa Barbara to circumvent all of their zoning, parking, density, set back rules, and more. These residents have noticed that inclusion of the term “infill” has become a means of evading all of the important planning rules and regulations that have been enacted to preserve the community safety, character and quality of life.

This important lesson from our Santa Barbara neighbors should be deeply considered by the GVPAC committee.

An egregious example of the use of this term is on page 48 of the Draft Plan Update:

“Policy EGV-3.3: Infill commercial, residential, and mixed-use development shall be provided in the urban area prior to rezoning/converting rural lands to urban uses.”

Developers such as Zimmerman/Towbes could easily interpret this to mean that our entire area can be built out with high-density “infill” development such as what they proposed, with no intention of matching the existing single family housing tracts and no thought about impacts to infrastructure or the environment or emergency services.

Even within the GVPAC committee members, there seems to be no consensus about the term. Some say that creating a new definition of this word will solve the problem, while others consider it confusing and want it removed.

The use of this word opens the door to struggles and controversy in the future, which can and should be avoided. Very few of us will be present 10 or 20 years down the road to explain what the committee intended in allowing this word to become part of the Plan Update.

We want our Community Plan to be the clearest, most direct document that can be written. There is no place for terms that have confusing or unclear connotations. So we are concerned that any use of this controversial word will mislead both residents and developers. What we need is clarity, not confusion.

Therefore we ask that every instance of the word "infill" be replaced by the phrase "well-planned development which must maintain the character of the surrounding areas".