

**Coalition for Sensible Planning Comments on Community Plan Draft**

**Community Development and Land Use**

February 7, 2011

Why did we fight so hard for this plan? What do we want to accomplish with it?

Let's start with the words "plan" and "planning". In the endless march towards "growth", planning has become synonymous with development, in the sense of "planned growth". We want to be clear that this is NOT what we meant when we fought so hard for long 6 years for a timely update to our Community Plan.

What we want our Community Plan to support is our relaxed, non-urban pace of life, our low density neighborhoods.... And we see the planning process as a way to preserve our beloved agriculture and remaining open spaces. To achieve this, there must be very rigid controls on development, especially infill development, and on boutique transportation plans that do not serve our existing communities. We do not want our Community Plan to become an open avenue for developers to build masses of high-density condos around fantasy transportation plans.

We who live here intuitively understand that there are limitations to what our area can provide – in terms of water, clean air, traffic circulation, and so on. Developers seek to defeat the idea that we have limited resources. They like to pretend that there are no limitations on unlimited growth, and that everything is possible in that sense. But that is a false concept, because every room, every building, every block, every neighborhood, and every community has a CARRYING CAPACITY. The limit has nothing to do with what any of us want, rather it has to do with what our space and our environment can withstand. When we experience freeway congestion at rush hour and learn of overdrafts to our water supply --- these are very clear signals that we have already reached our carrying capacity.

Also, the fact that there is very little money, public or private, to radically change our community at this point, has perfect synchronicity with our goals. In a very uncertain economic future, we envision only modest changes to our community.

How do we see our community, now and in the future?

We see our area as suburban and semi-rural. Most of our neighborhoods are close to or surrounded by local farms. That is why we moved here. We do not want this suburban, semi-rural context to change. We are a place between two cities and we accept that graciously. We do not need to compete with either city in importance or in commerce.

We have few businesses, of which most are small and non-obtrusive, and that suits us well. We envision an expansion of small, neighborhood-oriented businesses, as mentioned in the draft Plan. These businesses can be home-based, cottage-style and entrepreneurial, which is likely to be the best engine for economic recovery at this point.

What strategies can we use to further develop our foundation as a sustainable community (in terms of increased oil prices and transportation, energy efficiency and subsidized housing)?

#### Transportation:

Although our neighborhoods are low-density, the existing grid of roads serves us well. Most homes are within reasonable distance of a main thoroughfare, such as Hollister, Calle Real, Turnpike, Patterson or Cathedral Oaks. So walking and bicycling are options for our younger, energetic residents.

However, many residents are older and need more assistance. This could be a business opportunity for small-business owners, based on the model used by airport-transportation companies and senior-service nonprofits. These schedule and pick up riders based on their location, thus sharing the overall transportation costs. Entrepreneurial folks could operate home-delivery services for less mobile residents. The bus service could definitely be improved. And another opportunity for young entrepreneurs could be to implement bicycle-powered wagons or transportation carts such as were seen in downtown Santa Barbara. These were hugely popular, but not well-suited to such a dense environment as theirs. Our wide streets could be more accommodating, especially as increased oil prices lessen average daily car trips.

#### Energy:

One of the easiest ways to conserve begins with learning what consumes the most power. Homeowners could be encouraged to receive an energy audit (both gas and electric) which would form the base of their energy conservation plans.

Many homeowners have ventured into solar power, mostly for hot water heaters and landscaping which are excellent starting points. The conversion to solar power could be encouraged by the County or other entity by holding public workshops and providing pragmatic advice. This could become a training opportunity for young people interested in green careers. Further, it is actually quite easy to construct a simple solar panel which could be used for outdoor use and small appliances that accept less-than-perfect electrical power.

#### Housing:

Our area already provides the largest per-capita subsidized housing on the South Coast. We as a community already offer a full range of housing options, for both affordable and market rate

homes; our area contains one of the largest number of entry level or “starter homes”. In terms of subsidized housing, the Eastern Goleta Valley already provides 1 subsidized unit for every 15 people, the highest contribution to subsidized housing anywhere on the South Coast.

So we have already done our part. It is up to other communities to come forward with subsidized housing developments if they believe that the need still exists. But frankly, since the recession has transformed the market, that has made a large number of condos and homes “affordable” at their current price points (which may still decrease).

To convert undeveloped properties to housing at higher densities would only exacerbate infrastructure problems and reduce the quality of life we now enjoy. At least as much consideration should be given to those who are already here, as that given to those who are yet to come.

#### What is our attitude regarding infill development?

Because we see our area as suburban and semi-rural, infill development is completely inconsistent with our community vision. As one GVPAC member said “ I have never heard anyone testify that they wanted high-density development”. That says it perfectly.

The Goleta Vision (GVC) document which provides the guidance for our Community Plan, strictly limits the development of high-density infill development. It states that high-density infill development be limited to selected parcels of 2 acres or less. The current Community Plan Draft needs to have strong, measurable and enforceable limits that restrict the amount of infill development in our area, including how such parcels are selected and vetted for development.