

February 27, 2010

To: Goleta Valley Planning Advisory Committee  
Community Meeting

Please include the following in the record of this meeting:

The Visioning Document was meant to be used as a guide for the GVPAC, since it represents what the residents envision for our community for the future. It specifically states that there is to be no net loss of agricultural land in the Eastern Goleta Valley. The community at large does not want the land re-zoned.

WHY IS THIS OPTION EVEN BEING CONSIDERED BY THIS COMMITTEE?

Agricultural land is needed for many different reasons. If ag land is re-zoned, the Eastern Goleta Valley will change dramatically. To replace farmland with housing is short-sighted and even places the residents in jeopardy.

In an emergency, finding ourselves cut off from outside services, local farms could be our primary food supply for an extended period of time. Looking at the long-range view, the loss of farmland in our country could eventually force us to become dependent upon foreign food imports where we will have no control over quality, selection, use of pesticides, and price. We will find ourselves in the same position with food that we are in with oil, ie, eventually trying to extricate ourselves from dependence upon foreign imports. It will be too late once the land is paved over.

There are many farmers in our local community who love the land and want to continue to farm. It is in our best interests to help them to purchase land that other farmers wish to sell, not to build houses that we don't need or want.

The people who want to sell their ag land to developers know that that will get them multimillions of dollars. Instead, they could be selling to farmers who are eager to remain farmers, and keep this important resource for our community. It is a viable business for many and widely supported at the various farmers' markets. If we helped our local farmers to purchase land to farm, there would be more local farmers and fewer farmers from out of the area at our local farmer's markets.

It is not your responsibility to assist farmers to enrich themselves, especially at the expense of the wider community, our quality of life, and when it is counter to our vision for our community.

I have commented below on specific items and wording in your Land-Use Goal-Making Matrix that are disturbing:

I. Page 19: Urban Agriculture: the words "Urban Agriculture" are disturbing. The county requested and was able to get a designation as an "urban county." The urban designation allows for higher density. That whole section is problematic for a variety of reasons.

- County shall explore new zoning (overlay?): We don't want an overlay because it opens the door to re-zoning to something else. For example, once an overlay of housing is on ag land, this opens the door to re-zoning to housing.

- County shall explore new zoning (overlay?) for specific urban ag lands that can no longer support the business of crops for profit. This was put in at the behest of a man who grows flowers. Apparently, his business has declined and he wants to sell his land to developers. Why re-zone for him (so that he can garner big bucks) and destroy our community when he could sell to someone who wants to farm the land.

- Other wording that is problematic because it is unspecific: "County shall explore new Parcel Specific Development Standards (in the South Patterson Block) Comprehensive Plan.

- Use of the word "connectivity" and in other parts of the document, the word "contiguous." Like the word "infill," the meaning of these words is vague and can be construed to mean such things as connecting neighborhoods, connecting transportation, etc. Everything would be open to development.

II. Page 20: Preservation of Viable Agricultural Operations: the 3rd item says: "the financial analysis of future agricultural operations shall be used for evaluating the viability of agricultural lands." This leaves the door open for the financial analysis to conclude that a piece of ag land is no longer viable for farming because someone (such as the flower grower) can't make a living at it. It doesn't consider that the land can be sold to another farmer.

III. Page 22: Housing Location

- "Housing development is limited to infill projects contiguous to existing developed areas." Everywhere is "infill" and "contiguous" would define our neighborhoods. This is a developer's dream come true. "Infill" is also a way of avoiding regulations.

IV. Page 25: Other or Additional Goals

- 1st sentence talks about right-of-way through private properties. Love that idea! Whose private property do developers have an eye on?

V. Recommended Planning Tools:

- smart growth. this equals high density
- high density, residential second units, infill projects, mixed use
- density bonus
- etc. All of this flies in the face of the Vision Document

It is clear that the primary objective of the committee's work has been to pave the way for development, in particular, high density development, even though we said we don't want it. Sadly, members of this committee were chosen to guarantee this outcome. Anyone on the committee who did not want re-zoning would be outnumbered.

Public comment periods have been a sham. You have created the impression that public comment is a necessary evil to be gotten over with as quickly as possible instead of recognizing that we have knowledgeable community members with important information to share - people who recognize that words and phrases can have unintended consequences.

They have been dismissed, sometimes rudely, and you have only listened to the one-sided information that has guided you to the pre-ordained goals we now have before us - goals that include re-zoning and high density housing that we do not want.

In the Eastern Goleta Valley we have the highest per capita housing for those with low and very low incomes. We do not have a jobs-housing imbalance. The city of Santa Barbara has the jobs-housing imbalance and we should not have to fix their problem and ruin our community.

High density will not only change the character of the Eastern Goleta Valley and affect our quality of life. It will also cost us more in property taxes because it will remove property from the tax rolls.

Our community plan should reflect the desires of this community. It should not be a product of any members' personal preferences. It should not be a product of political pressures or a citizen's financial gain. It should not be a product of county staff who represent other interests. You are there to represent us. The staff should be helping you to do that. Instead, you have allowed them to deftly guide you to shape a plan that we do not want.

If you were not willing to uphold the community vision established by the Visioning Committee and to represent our preference for how we want our community to look for the next 10-20 years, then you should not have joined the committee.

If you think that because few people have come to the meetings people are not interested, you are very wrong. The few represent the many who are not able to come or who do not feel comfortable speaking out. WE DON'T WANT AG LAND RE-ZONED.

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