

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**Staff Report for Santa Barbara County**  
**Housing Rezone Options Discussion**

**Hearing Dates: May 24, 2006**  
**Staff Report Date: May 15, 2006**  
**Case No.: N/A**

**Supervisorial District: All**  
**Staff: John McInnes**  
**Phone #: 568-3552**

## **1.0 PURPOSE**

Staff requests that the Planning Commission:

- a) Receive a report on the status of efforts to identify sites that have the potential for meeting the state mandate to rezone 62 acres of land countywide to accommodate the County's fair share of statewide housing need as documented in the adopted Housing Element;
- b) Consider revisions to its November 30, 2005 action to include ten sites for analysis in the Housing Element Action Phase Environmental Impact Report (EIR); and,
- c) Provide direction to staff concerning the inclusion of additional sites in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR.

## **2.0 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DIRECTION**

On May 9, 2006, the Board of Supervisors voted 4-0 to adopt the Draft Revised Housing Element (see Attachment 1). The State Housing and Community Development Department (State HCD), in a letter dated December 2, 2006, notified the County that adoption of the document would result in the County gaining compliance (certification) with State housing law. However, the Housing Element contains a number of action items that must be implemented within one year of DRHE adoption. Failure to implement these action items could result in the County losing its Housing Element compliance status with State HCD.

Action item 1.10.1 of the newly revised Housing Element commits to rezoning 62 acres of land countywide to a minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre to facilitate the development of for-sale and rental multifamily housing. The Board, in its May 9 action, directed staff to consider the Village Center concept in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR and noted that the Planning Commission will be responsible for identifying sites for analysis in the Housing Element Action Phase Environmental Impact Report as part of the initial effort to satisfy this action item.

## **3.0 EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL REZONE SITES**

Housing Element Action Item 1.10.1 requires that 62 acres be rezoned to a minimum of 20 dwelling units per acre. The Isla Vista Master Plan and Santa Ynez Community Plan have identified potential housing sites and are expected to contribute (preliminary estimates range

between 10 and 17 acres) towards meeting this total. Therefore, over 50 acres of land must be identified, analyzed, and rezoned if the County is to maintain compliance with State housing law.

Previous Planning Commission Actions: Anticipating that the County would be required to rezone sites, the Ad Hoc Housing Subcommittee (Subcommittee) considered several options in the Fall of 2005. The Subcommittee utilized site identification criteria and the results of previous community deliberations as a basis for establishing an initial range of sites for future consideration and review. As part of this effort, the Planning Commission members of the Subcommittee visited each of the potential sites as well as others in the communities to gain a greater understanding of the potential for and appropriateness of increased density. The Subcommittee members used additional filters when determining which sites to recommend for further analysis in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR, including:

- Compatibility of increased density with surrounding development;
- Existing site characteristics (e.g., proximity to services, physical constraints);
- Level of community support for increased density; and
- Potential benefits of rezoning to surrounding community (e.g., support of downtown revitalization, opportunity for other community amenities as part of a housing development on the site).

Recognizing that a) the County was about to embark on the initial phase of updating the Goleta Community Plan and b) other areas of the South Coast Housing Market Area are largely developed, the Subcommittee focused its efforts on the housing market areas in the North County. The results of the Subcommittee's site identification discussions were presented to the full Planning Commission on November 28 and 30, 2005 in a public hearing. After careful deliberation, the Planning Commission selected ten sites totaling approximately 122 acres for analysis in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR. Staff subsequently began gathering additional materials on each site to provide to the environmental consultant selected to prepare the EIR for use in the environmental analysis. Staff also continued discussions with the owners of each of the identified sites (e.g. Key Site 3) to determine the appropriate developable area on each of the identified sites. A preliminary review of the resulting materials and property owner discussions indicates that the identified acreage total (122 acres) includes some lands with clear physical and/or environmental constraints. Therefore, the ten identified sites, if included for analysis in the EIR, will include no more than 92 acres. If property owners choose to initiate development applications for portions of their sites not being analyzed in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR, it is important that they are encouraged to incorporate site designs that are consistent with the proposed project description identified in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR project description.

The Planning Commission's November 30, 2005 action to identify sites for inclusion in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR was conditioned (see Attachment 2) on the identification of potential sites by the Goleta Vision Committee. In the event the visioning process did not identify enough acres to contribute significantly to the environmental review process, all sites would return to the Commission for reconsideration.

Goleta Visioning Committee Action: The Goleta Vision Committee (GVC) considered identifying sites for inclusion in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR analysis in a number of meetings between January and March, 2006. On March 20, 2006, a majority of GVC members forwarded a letter (see Attachment 3) to Supervisor Susan Rose outlining the group's consensus with regard to the task. The GVC decided that it could not recommend any sites from the Eastern Goleta Valley for analysis in the EIR by April 2006. In summary, the GVC believes that site identification should follow the updating of the Goleta Valle Community Plan.

#### **4.0 REVISIONS TO PREVIOUS PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION**

Since the GVC did not recommend sites for inclusion in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR, the Planning Commission action on November 30, 2005 requires that the ten previously identified sites be reconsidered for inclusion in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR. As previously discussed, these sites were deliberated by the Planning Commission on November 28 and 30, 2005 and determined to be appropriate for consideration and analysis. Therefore, staff requests that the Planning Commission reconsider that portion of the November 30, 2005 action which conditions the evaluation of the sites on additional sites being identified in the Goleta Valley community.

#### **5.0 INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL SITES FOR ANALYSIS**

South Coast Housing Market Area: At the Planning Commission meeting on May 20, 2006 a special hearing date was calendared for the purpose of considering additional sites from the South Coast Housing Market Area for inclusion in the Housing Element Action Phase EIR. Should the Planning Commission desire to consider additional sites as part of the analysis, staff will apply previously discussed site identification criteria to the South Coast Housing Market Area and present its findings on June 22, 2006.

Village Center Concept: The Board of Supervisors' May 9, 2006 action to adopt the Draft Revised Housing Element included directing staff to include the Village Center concept in the preparation of the Housing Element Implementation Phase EIR. The Board considers the Village Center concept a possible solution to resolving the County's rezone requirement without altering current land use designations in existing unincorporated communities. This concept involves establishing a new Village Center (New Town) in a currently undeveloped or heavily underdeveloped area of the County.

The Village Center concept represents a thoughtful and farsighted approach to satisfying the County's RHNA requirements for potentially several Housing Element planning periods and resolving many of the County's severe workforce housing needs. However, one significant factor appears to preclude a potential Village Center from satisfying the County's rezone requirement for the current Housing Element planning period (2003-2008). State housing law specifies that in order for a site to be counted towards a jurisdiction's rezone requirement it must be reasonably developable within the current planning period. The law specifies criteria for determining reasonable development potential including access to water and sanitation services.

The Village Center concept typically relies on development in an undeveloped or heavily underdeveloped area that would require significant infrastructure improvements before water and sanitation services would be available. This, in addition to the fact that a specific location(s) has not been identified for application of the concept and will not be identified for many months, leads to the tentative conclusion that a Village Center may not serve as a satisfactory resolution to the County's 2003-2008 rezone requirement. However, the Village Center concept can be incorporated as a potential development scenario in the EIR through establishing and analyzing minimum geographic area and unit count estimates. The information gained from this analysis can provide valuable information for the future environmental documentation required for full implementation of the concept. Staff will ensure that the Village Center concept is analyzed in as much detail as possible as an EIR alternative, particularly given the concept's potential to meet RHNA requirements for the upcoming 2009-2014 planning period as well as future Housing Element planning periods.

## 6.0 HOUSING ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The Housing Element Action Phase involves implementing the actions identified in the Housing Element which are necessary to accomplish the goals of the plan. This includes preparing a Notice of Preparation for an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), gathering public input, conducting environmental analysis, and holding public hearings to consider rezoning land and making other amendments to County ordinances and policies. The table below lists the anticipated process for the implementing the DRHE's action items.

Summer 2006	Circulate Notice of Preparation of an EIR
Summer 2006	Scoping period and scoping hearings to gather public input into potential impacts to be analyzed in the EIR
Early Fall 2006	Release Draft EIR for public comment
Late Fall 2006	Release Final EIR
Winter 2006/07	Planning Commission hearings to consider Final EIR and recommend sites for rezoning
Winter 2006/07	Board of Supervisors hearings to consider Final EIR and select sites for rezoning
Spring 2007	Analyze and verify cumulative impacts based on selected sites and ordinance amendments
Spring 2007	Board of Supervisors hearings to adopt rezones and ordinance amendments

The EIR will analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the Housing Element action items. These include changes to the County's zoning ordinance to encourage mixed use development, modifying development standards that can constrain well-designed housing development, and establishing a variable density program, in addition to the action item committing the County to rezoning 62 acres of land to higher density.

The EIR will include detailed analysis of all potential traffic, air quality, water, sanitation, biologic and other impacts associated with implementing the action items. The EIR will also identify potential mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate potential impacts.

Santa Barbara County is somewhat unique in that it has created a number of community plans which serve as extensions of the Comprehensive Plan for a number of communities. Some of the action items, including rezones, will require revisions to the County's community plans. To maintain consistency, revisions to community plans would occur concurrently with rezones and zoning ordinance changes made to implement these action items.

Since the adopted DRHE requires that certain action items be implemented by May, 2007 it is imperative that potential rezone sites be identified so that the EIR process can commence and be completed in the above listed timeframe.

## **7.0 ATTACHMENTS**

1. May 9, 2006 Board of Supervisors Minute Order
2. November 30, 2005 Planning Commission Hearing Action Letter
3. March 20, 2006 Goleta Vision Committee letter