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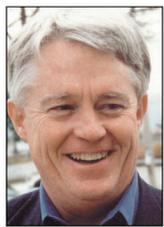
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## It's a matter of priorities

The local General Plan is the community's "Constitution for land use." Sound General Plan policies can guide future growth and development in ways that will help strengthen the local economy, protect the environment, and achieve greater social equity. Recently, LandWatch Monterey County and 17 other community groups developed a "Community General Plan" that will help achieve many economic, environmental and social equity goals.



**Insider  
view**

**■ Gary Patton**

The "Community General Plan" is explicitly based on the 12 guiding objectives adopted by the Board of Supervisors in July 2001. This means that the "Community General Plan" fully reflects the priorities of the community, as those priorities were expressed not only in our seven community forums, but in literally hundreds of public meetings held throughout the county as part of the county's General Plan Update process.

The "Community General Plan" increases the basic affordable housing inclusionary percentage from 20 percent to 25 percent and requires 40 percent affordable housing when farmland is converted to housing, or when housing is built on land

owned by Monterey County. That's twice as much affordable housing as would be produced under the county's current rules.

Among a number of other policies that support affordable housing, this "Community General Plan" also provides strong encouragement for the development of high quality housing in community areas, for projects that contain 45 percent affordable housing (for very low, low, and moderate income fami-

**'Proposed projects will have to comply with the General Plan. No more changing the General Plan to facilitate the pet projects of favored developers.'**

lies) coupled with an additional 40 percent of "workforce" housing, truly to meet the full range and diversity of housing needs within the community.

No stronger affordable and workforce housing program has ever been proposed for Monterey County.

The "Community General

Plan" is emphatically not a "no growth" plan. It provides for enough growth to meet the AMBAG forecasts for Monterey County — and then some. However, it also provides strong protection for the county's productive farmland, and actually removes planning controls over routine and ongoing agricultural activities, to help farmers focus on farming, keeping them out of the permit process!

The "Community General Plan" will not allow developments to proceed unless the service and infrastructure demands they create are fully met at the time that construction occurs. No more promises that are never fulfilled. The "Community General Plan" directs growth to community areas, where services and infrastructure can be most economically provided, reducing the demands placed on the public to finance more services for new rural growth.

The "Community General Plan" contains strong policies to protect the natural resources of Monterey County, and to ensure that spectacular areas like Big Sur, Elkhorn Slough, Arroyo Seco, and the county's coastline will not be damaged by new development. This is critically important to our visitor-serving economy.

The "Community General Plan" meets all state law requirements, and does so in an

easy to understand, straightforward way. The plan will be easy to administer, and will help speed the permit process. Furthermore, the "Community General Plan" gives direct and explicit protection to private property rights. It also contains strong provisions for enforcement of General Plan policies, including a provision allowing for "citizen enforcement" when the county fails to enforce its own General Plan rules.

Finally, the "Community General Plan" will prevent the Board of Supervisors from amending the plan to allow a development project that violates plan policies. Proposed projects will have to comply with the General Plan. No more changing the General Plan to facilitate the pet projects of favored developers.

The "Community General Plan" is a balanced and far sighted way to insure that future growth supports our mainstay industries, while making sure that this new growth doesn't undermine environment. Probably most important, its strong housing provisions will ensure that new development increases instead of diminishes social equity goals.

**GARY A. PATTON** is executive director of LandWatch Monterey County, a group which works to promote sound land use policies in Monterey County through grassroots community action.