



Testimony of Michael D. DeLapa, Executive Director, LandWatch Monterey County

[Item #11 Review Outline and Direct Staff to Release a Request for Proposals to Solicit a Developer for the City's Former Fort Ord Property](#)

Good afternoon. Michael DeLapa, Executive Director, LandWatch Monterey County.

Previously LandWatch submitted comments and I testified about the unquestioned assumptions of the EPS report on the economic viability of developing the City's property on the former Fort Ord. I pointed out a variety of significant costs and risks, including the lack of water, the lack of demand, the slim possibility for housing, and the slimmer possibility for affordable housing.

Today, I would like to highlight four reasons to halt the RFP process, save everyone's time, and save the public's money. The first is reason is economic. The ESP report makes clear that it's uneconomical to develop this property for light industrial use. More than 950,000 square feet of commercial development, 850,000 square feet of industrial development, and 150,000 square feet of office space have been approved but not built on the Peninsula. That doesn't include vacant properties and available land at Ryan Ranch, along Highway 68, at the Monterey Airport, at the Marina Airport, and in Salinas. There are also more than 12,000 approved but unbuilt residential units in the County, and more than 2,000 approved but unbuilt hotel units. Which is to say, there is a tremendous inventory of entitled but unbuilt development.

The second issue is at least a 70-year old one: the lack of sustainable water. Take a look at the [County's seawater intrusion maps](#). Saltwater has intruded into the 180 foot aquifer almost to Salinas. The 400 foot aquifer isn't appreciably healthier. The earliest we can expect a theoretical plan for groundwater sustainability is 2020. But practical solutions are likely to be decades later and hundreds of millions of dollars in cost. Why make the problem worse?

The third issue is the existential threat of climate change. All of the data suggests that we need to make it easy for people to walk, to bike and to take public transportation rather than rely on their cars. We also need to save vegetation to capture carbon.

We face a grim future indeed if a City with leaders as enlightened as Monterey's insist on suburban sprawl and the destruction of carbon-sequestering trees rather than city-centered growth and infill. There are much sensible growth strategies, including rezoning Garden Road and Ryan Ranch for mixed use, lowering barriers to accessory dwelling units, and upzoning along transit corridors, which is what Seaside is doing. All of these options are much more likely to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and garner support -- or at least less opposition -- than replacing oak woodlands with parking lots.

Finally, I ask that you to heed the lessons of Monterey Downs and Whispering Oaks. The public opposes paving open space when it isn't necessary. It is necessary. I hope the letters you've received in the last day help to make that clear.

The City can save everyone's time and the public's money by stopping the RFP process now.

Thank you.