

September 16, 2002

Supervisor Dave Potter, Chair
Monterey County Board of Supervisors
Monterey County Courthouse
240 Church Street
Salinas, CA 93901

RE: "Room Enough" For Future Growth

Dear Chairperson Potter and Members of the Board:

This letter is to present our just completed report, "Room Enough." This report is particularly timely, as you decide whether or not to designate additional land for future subdivision and development in the unincorporated and rural areas of Monterey County. As the title of the report indicates, there is already "room enough" to meet projected housing demands, without the need to designate additional rural and unincorporated lands for development.

The "Room Enough" report contains a detailed examination of lands available for residential development in Monterey County. LandWatch used the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments' population forecasts, and employed the countywide average of persons per household, to determine how many new housing units must be constructed between now and 2020, in order to accommodate expected population increases. Using AMBAG figures, and looking at both incorporated and unincorporated areas, the County's total household population in 2020 is projected to be 506,678 persons. With a countywide average of 3.14 persons per household, a total of 40,093 new housing units will be needed to accommodate the expected population increase.

The results of the analysis done by LandWatch are definitive. Existing lots, current projects, and current Spheres of Influence (with only minor expansions) provide more than enough opportunity to provide for needed housing in Monterey County. No significant new development in the unincorporated area is needed.

To provide needed housing to the year 2020, only 1,112 acres of agricultural land will need to be converted to urban uses during the next twenty years.

Monterey County can meet projected housing needs by following the simple steps listed below:

1. Build on existing legal lots of record in the cities and unincorporated areas.
2. Build at medium residential density in existing Spheres of Influence (and in areas immediately adjacent to Spheres where acreage is insufficient).
3. Build the permitted number of new residential units at Fort Ord.
4. Utilize existing units scheduled for rehabilitation at Fort Ord.
5. Build projects already in the project approval "pipeline."

As you know, the Draft General Plan Update you are considering reflects strong public sentiment that the future growth and development of Monterey County should be accomplished by directing that growth into the incorporated cities, into appropriate and limited areas immediately adjacent to incorporated cities (the City Spheres of Influence), and into “Community Areas” and “Rural Centers” that are already committed to urban levels of development.

This kind of growth is not only what the public says it wants, this is what planning professionals call “Smart Growth.” Growth that proceeds in this manner costs the taxpayers less, preserves natural resources and economically productive agricultural lands, and helps build stronger, more vital, and more socially equitable communities.

The “Room Enough” report validates the Twelve Guiding Objectives that the Board has adopted as the basis for its General Plan Update. It is a particularly good time for the Board to remember this, since you have received more than two hundred property owner requests, urging the Board to permit additional development in the unincorporated and rural portions of Monterey County. As the Board considers these property owner requests, and as it considers proposals to expand the “Rural Center” and “Community Area” boundaries, it can feel entirely comfortable in knowing that no significant expansion of development into rural areas is needed to meet projected housing needs.

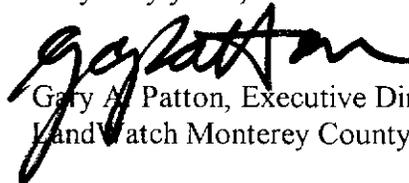
The “Room Enough” report was prepared by Land Systems Group, a respected local consulting firm with a special expertise in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping and analysis. It is fair to say that the maps and tables prepared in connection with this report now constitute the most definitive information currently available on the developability of land within Monterey County. LandWatch will make all that data and analysis available to city and county governments, and to the Local Agency Formation Commission. Naturally, LandWatch and our consultants will be happy to respond to questions and comments.

The “Room Enough” report takes a very “conservative” approach. It is a detailed and rigorous analysis. It is worth reading at length. We hope that you and your staff will do so.

The conclusions of the report are quite striking. The County of Monterey, and each of the cities, can meet projected housing demand, and can accommodate their “fair share” of the state’s future growth, without the need to allow significant new development in rural and agricultural lands.

Again, please do not hesitate to contact LandWatch with any questions or comments on the attached report.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary A. Patton".

Gary A. Patton, Executive Director
LandWatch Monterey County

cc: County Administrative Officer
County GPU Planning Staff