



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

Consider County recommendations to the  
Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) regarding the FORA Transition Plan

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

I am not going to mince words. Extending FORA for another 10 years would be a horrendous waste of taxpayer dollars.

First, the FORA model has failed by virtually every measure. Of the 16,000 jobs it promised, FORA takes credit for 4,200 – about 25% of its goal. But virtually all of those jobs are at CSUMB, where FORA played no role. Of the 3 million square feet of new commercial development that FORA projected, they delivered about 20 percent. And of the 6,160 new homes, FORA claims 1,020 or less were built, about 15%. That's roughly 50 houses per year over the past 24 years. That is the definition of failure.

And what about blight? The amount that remains is disgraceful. The blighted buildings linger because FORA decided to assign removal responsibility to cities and the county, and spend monies for roads instead.

And a long-term sustainable water supply? Zero progress.

All of FORA's promises and projections were unrealistic. Ten years from now, they'll still be unrealistic and we'll be having this same conversation.

FORA's financial model is also broken. Capital improvements depend on land sales that aren't going to happen. As Marina points out, FORA is \$67 million short.

FORA is a black hole for bureaucratic costs and government waste. \$6 million a year. The executive director pulls in \$342,000 in salary and benefits, with no accountability. That's government at its worst.

Second, despite a clear legislative mandate, there is no FORA transition plan. In 1994 we were told FORA would sunset in 2014. They had no transition plan then and they don't have one now. Don't believe me? Ask LAFCO. FORA has only been able to generate a long list of questions that should have been answered in 2014 at the very latest. Unfortunately, they have ignored creating a transition plan for 24 years. Do you think those fat salaries and lack of accountability have something to do with it?

It's clear that local governments would be better off working together and crafting their own agreements rather than relying on FORA. The Wildan report shows that Seaside would be \$30 million better off. We all know Marina wants out, and Seaside will, too, after November. I encourage you to review carefully the memo that LandWatch provided which describes a realistic transition plan.

Third, FORA has cost the County a lot of money. Consider the \$1 million in outside legal fees that Monterey County and FORA lost on the Eastside Parkway. That doesn't include the time and costs of your own staff and this Board. We expect FORA will approve an even worse Parkway, that it will be litigated or referended, and that the County will lose even more money because FORA is insulated from the public and ignores what the majority of residents want. Imagine how much better that money could be spend serving County residents.

The public trusts you, our elected officials, to hold government accountable. For far too long, FORA has been unaccountable. It set but didn't meet goals. It grossly overpromised and underdelivered.

Please don't reward failure. Please hold FORA accountable, just like you would hold your own staff accountable. For the benefit of Monterey County taxpayers, don't extend FORA. Please end it.