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environmental
action
committee



Tomales Design Review Board

Point Reyes Station
Village Association



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RESTORATION NETWORK



June 30, 2022

County of Marin
Board of Supervisors
Planning Commission
Community Development Agency

*Submitted via email: housingelement@marincounty.org, BOS@marincounty.org,
planningcommission@marincounty.org, and DRodoni@marincounty.org*

RE: Draft Housing and Safety Elements

The under-signed organizations and individuals appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Housing and Safety Element updates. These comments are focused on the proposed changes to the Countywide Plan (CWP) that would have long-term impacts to community-led sustainable planning.

Public Process and Inconsistencies with the Countywide Plan

While we are grateful to the Community Development Agency (CDA) for the availability of online meetings and remote access to staff for questions, the planning process has been less than ideal, and in our opinion is one of the main reasons that there are proposed precedent-setting rollbacks to the County's environmental corridors and conservation zoning folded into the Draft Housing Element. This could have been avoided up front with ground-up in-person community planning.

Site selection by the CDA was driven by consultants, rather than the local communities. The CDA provided online tools and maps to collect data and potential site locations from the general public, but they failed to integrate those resources with the CWP that is the requirement to inform future physical development in

unincorporated Marin County. Decisions on future development flows first from the CWP's policies and guidance as has been upheld and strengthened by more than 40 years of case law.

It is our understanding from the June 14th public workshop that several coastal communities have not had the opportunity to fully review plans, understand the proposed CDA changes, or effectively coordinate community engagement and recommendations into this process. This is a major change in the manner in which the County of Marin has historically engaged with the community around development planning, especially when the CDA is proposing a significant revision to expand the City-Center Corridor and potentially change A-60 zoning on multiple parcels.

There is no legal requirement for the County to change the CWP environmental corridors and or A-60 zoning. Instead, the proposed changes seem to be based solely on the RHNA and the CDA's scramble for site selection to meet the allocation. If the Buck Center (and any other A-60 parcels remaining on the list) are removed from consideration, this will eliminate the need to amend the CWP environmental corridors, change A60 zoning, and uphold the will of the residents of Novato who voted to create an urban growth boundary.

The County of Marin has a storied history of responsive community planning to proactively and sustainably plan for development. This began with the community push back to the 1960s pro-development planning that would have paved over the lands we know today as the Point Reyes National Seashore, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Marin County Parks and Open Space, Marin Municipal Water District Watershed, Gary Giacomini Open Space, and more than 136,000 acres of productive agricultural lands.

The 1970s community planning safeguarded the irreplaceable habitats and natural resources that sustain our human and natural environments. The 2007 update to the CWP was another example of collaborative community engagement and development resulting in an award-winning CWP that would protect sensitive coastal habitats; ensure resource availability; reduce greenhouse gas impacts; encourage infill and redevelopment projects to recolonize the asphalt with projects focused on underutilized development near transit and job centers.

Unfortunately, under pressure with the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) timeline, the CDA departed from bottom-up community collaboration to top-down planning that undermines the goals of our CWP, disregards the time and effort of the public participating in the comprehensive CWP updates of the past, and reduces public confidence in community engagement and outreach.

Requested Action

- We request the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors uphold the current CWP and not approve any updates that are not specifically required by the State of California. This includes not making precedent-setting changes to expand the City-Center Corridor and also removing all A-60 agricultural zoning from site selection and rezoning plans.
- We request the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors recommend the CDA conduct an update to the CWP in the coming years that will fully engage local community members and prioritize engagement with the unincorporated villages to update Community Plans to ensure consistency throughout documents and a community-led process.

Thank you for considering these comments.

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