

# SANTA YNEZ VALLEY NEWS

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## **Community action plan — a call to action**

**By Bob Field**

Santa Ynez Valley residents interested in controlling growth and preserving the rural character of this valley need to become concerned about the future of the Community Plan. Action is required.

A small number of people who stand to gain economically and politically have been persistently waging a campaign of false information. Recently a remarkable amount of it was used by county supervisors from other districts to interfere with our local Community Plan.

First, I will set the record straight, then identify who will profit from damaging the plan, and end by saying what you can do.

Listed here is the supervisor statement, followed by the correct information:

(1) Need for “total transparency” — There is nothing secret about this Plan. The SYV plan process consisted of some 70 well-noticed, well-attended, highly interactive public meetings. This is nothing more than an inflammatory statement, seemingly used to create fear and doubt.

(2) Historic properties designation — The Plan does not designate or hurt property owners’ historic properties. The source of this misinformation is a last-minute e-mail broadcast by POLO, apparently designed to generate concern. Their document purports to illustrate this false claim with a quote from the Plan, which is in fact a misquote, seemingly altered to make their point look valid.

3) Establishes public trails on private land — Absolutely false. Twice the plan states that no trails will be built on private property or roads without owner’s consent. “Willing property owners” and “voluntary” are key phrases. Nothing would happen without consent of the owner. The trails are included as a concept only.

(4) There are 155 downzones in the plan — The correct number is seven.

(5) “Downzone” property owners need to be notified — All potentially affected owners have been sent multiple letters by the county. In addition, a local land-use attorney requested a list of all of the owners, sent each of them an alarming letter, and offered legal services.

(6) Multiple map errors — “Many” was the claim, but a single one was specified, and it took minutes to correct. This error could have been fixed prior to the hearing, but the landowner making the charge chose to withhold the information

until the meeting, apparently for effect.

(7) Not enough public notice — The VPAC meetings may have been better noticed than any other set of meetings in county history. Postcards, e-mails, and press coverage preceded all meetings. Numerous op-ed pieces and guest commentaries were published. Newspapers reported on all meetings. Affected property owners were repeatedly sent personal letters. This charge, a classic delay tactic, has zero credibility.

(8) Traffic on Highway 246 related to high-density development — High-density development was forced on this community with the housing mandate quota assigned by this Board of Supervisors. High-density requires sewer service, and the only place it is available is along 246. If the supervisors don't like the inescapable result of their action, they can relieve us of their mandate.

(9) Some properties in, some properties out — The current Plan boundary was established by this Board of Supervisors as the Study Area only. Their decision at that time was to re-evaluate at the Planning Commission after the EIR. Why complain now?

(10) Affordable housing overlay did not produce in Goleta — Well-understood by VPAC; this is not the same mechanism that failed in Goleta. This is a remarkable amount of misinformation. You should be troubled that these words were spoken by supervisors from other districts and used to interfere with our local Community Plan.

Who would gain economically from this? The largest undeveloped land owners in Los Olivos, which includes officers and directors of POLO. The largest undeveloped land owner in Santa Ynez, which is the operator of our casino gambling enterprise. Owners of agriculturally zoned land, many of whom are actively pursuing their own dreams for an extraordinary increase in Valley development, would also be winners.

Who would gain politically from a failed Plan? Supervisor Firestone's political opponents is the obvious answer. And precisely who is responsible for this misinformation?

What can you do? Let the supervisors know you are tired of special interests trying to kill this Plan — letters, e-mails and phone calls make a difference. Write letters to the editors of local papers to express your support. Come to the public meeting on Sept. 13 and help drown out the voices of the noisy few in pursuit of personal gain.

If the people who want to preserve this Valley do not speak up now, those who wish to profit from changing it will win.

About every 25 years, the Valley comes under a concentrated assault by development interests. Our predecessors have stood up to it, and that is the only reason we have this wonderful valley to enjoy today. It is our turn.

Bob Field is the former VPAC chairman. He lives in Santa Ynez.