

Comment Letter: July 25, 2023

Special City Council\Planning Commission Workshop
Goleta City Council
Goleta Planning Commission

RE: Housing Element 2023-2031 Sites Inventory Rezoning Study Session

Dear Council Members and Planning Commissioners,

I am in agreement with the 50 plus neighbors in the Andamar Park area that attended a “meeting in the park” last evening that upzoning 625 Dara Road to High Density Residential, or even Medium Density Residential, would have impacts inconsistent with city and state goals. For example, it would increase automobile Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). No employment centers are adjacent to 625 Dara and bus routes to employment centers on the South Coast from this residential neighborhood are limited. So travel would be by automobile. Access to retail centers which are close but not immediately adjacent would also be by automobile. Consequently, the project would increase Greenhouse Gas Emissions and be inconsistent with the State’s Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure.

I’m also in agreement with the Andamar Park neighbors who would welcome development of the property under the current zoning of 625 Dara Road as Single Family Residential. This would be context sensitive to the neighborhood’s character and transportation infrastructure while still providing much needed additional housing in Goleta. The total number of new units that could be constructed if accessory dwellings are considered would be (I believe) between 12 and 38. Considering the distance between 625 Dara and employment centers and retail, it would seem that some development, but not too much to exacerbate VMT, would strike the right balance.

I’m concerned that so long as the Andamar Park neighbors are not on the same page as the City Council, Planning Commission and City Staff with regard to 625 Dara, the City’s entire effort to get a Housing Element accepted by the State’s Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) will be sunk. I can foresee this coalition of neighbors taking its concerns directly to the State’s Department of Housing and Community Development, by letter, phone and even meetings in Sacramento. I can foresee the neighbors asking HCD directly to reject the City’s revised Housing Element because 625 Dara is not a “buildable” location for high-density housing in the next 8 years due to neighborhood opposition and inconsistency with local and state goals. In the interim, as HCD considers the neighborhood’s concerns and evaluates the revised Housing Element, the neighbors will use the time to become more organized and perhaps even hire legal representation in anticipation of the City having to prepare a new iteration of the Housing Element later this year.

To avoid this conflict, I would ask that you leave 625 Dara “as-is” at this time and explore the neighborhood’s tolerance for higher than currently approved housing densities through outreach and meetings for the next go-round of the Regional Housing Needs and Housing Element cycle. Perhaps with a “visioning” process, some compromise might be able to be reached with the neighbors, City, and property owner. At the meeting in the park, Councilmember Kyriaco mentioned the Valle Verde senior housing complex in the Hidden Valley area of Santa Barbara as high density but not having impacts like a high density project. Let’s take the time to have more discussions about developments of this sort, perhaps including a tour of Valle Verde, and see if we can’t all get on the same page for the next RHNA and Housing Element update cycle.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SV' with a stylized flourish.

Steve VanDenburgh
5731 Cathedral Oaks Rd.