

SANTA BARBARA
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SECTION **G**

TRAVIS ARMSTRONG Editorial Page Editor
voices@newspress.com / 564-5215

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Voices

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Our tax dollars at work?

Workshops reveal city's misguided planning priorities

I was very disappointed with the recent Plan Santa Barbara workshops on density and unit size. The hired consultants showed what it would take for a private-sector developer to produce more workforce housing at a profit.

Since when is our planning process concerned with the developer's profit?

The most upsetting part of the presentation was that for this developer to make a minimal 15 percent profit with a viable project, the density would have to be 62 units per acre. Our current zoning allows 20 to 28 units to the acre, with some additional units if they are affordable.

What was proposed by the consultants was a huge increase in density, totally out of scale for our city. Why were they not informed by the planning staff that Santa Barbarans do not like massive, monolithic buildings and that this big city-type solution was not acceptable or workable in our city?

From professional consultants, one would expect information that should address the needs of our unique city. What we heard were plans that work in large cities like San Francisco. We need ideas that fit Santa Barbara's small-town character and work for our city.

The question-and-answer period revealed that the consultants had not examined the economics of mixed-use projects, where commercial subsidizes the residential. Nor did they examine transfer-of-development rights, where if a project is all residential on land zoned for commercial, the developer can sell the commercial development rights to another project.

We already have a glut of expensive housing, so we don't need a huge project where the majority of the units are market-rate housing and only the remainder are "affordable" workforce units for those making \$120,000 to \$200,000 a year. The service worker demands needed to maintain expensive units, that put us even further behind in the jobs-housing imbalance, were not considered as part of the study.



Cathie McCammon

The author is a candidate for Santa Barbara City Council.

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Why is city planning geared toward developer profits?

■ **McCAMMON**

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The proposed unit size is 950 square feet. Parking spaces are to be purchased separately on the assumption that not everyone would buy one. Thus the project is proposed to have an average of only 1.5 parking spaces per unit. Apparently no one would be forced to buy a space, and since no one can control the number of people living in a unit and the number of cars they own, this easily could lead to adjacent neighborhoods becoming impacted with the parking overflow.

According to the consultants, the ideal size for this type of project is one acre. Where do we have one-acre parcels? The only way this could come about is by combining parcels, and the shining example of this is Paseo One — an example of what we don't want in our city.

The increased density for this type of transit-oriented development would come from reducing density elsewhere. The proposal is to remove variable density from the R3 multi-family zones. This down-

zoning would effectively destroy the opportunity for small developers to build smaller, inexpensive projects, which could be scattered in the area. They would be much more suitable for our community and keeping within our style. This was not part of the study.

In summary, this presentation and the workshops were a complete waste of our city's money. The information presented was incomplete, and their conclusions and model have no potential for success in the downtown or upper State Street areas.

This plan is to be part of Plan Santa Barbara, the general plan update. The results of these workshops will be presented to the Planning Commission on July 23. Residents need to tell City Hall that this type of huge proposed project, driven by a developer's need to make a profit, is not acceptable.

What we want are proposed projects that will fit within our limited resources of air quality and water, and infrastructure compatible with Santa Barbara's unique character. We are not San Francisco.

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