

SUSTAINABLE TAMALMONTE
215 JULIA AVENUE
MILL VALLEY, CA 94941

June 27, 2011

Marin County Planning Commission
3501 Civic Center Drive. Suite 308
San Rafael, CA

Re: June 27, 2011 Staff Report pertaining to Proposed Amendments to the Marin County Development Code (Title 22)

Dear Marin County Planning Commissioners,

In regard to the Staff Report made in preparation for the June 27, 2011 Public Workshop relative to the Marin County Development Code – Title 22, the Sustainable TamAlmonte Executive Committee wishes to make the following comments and recommendations:

Regarding Page 7; Primary Goals; 1. Cost Controls; c. Procedural Changes:

We disapprove of the following ways to better control permit costs: 1) Eliminating public hearing requirements whenever possible; 2) Eliminating transmittal requirements whenever possible and 3) Eliminating public notice requirements whenever possible.

Eliminating public hearing requirements, transmittal requirements and public notice requirements whenever possible would obviously constrain public input on planning decisions. This is in direct opposition to looking out for the best interests of Marin residents. Time and time again, the planning department has demonstrated a lack of knowledge of the Tam Valley and Almonte communities. Only with local input, did the department become aware of crucial information.

Recommendation: Public hearing requirements, transmittal requirements and public notice requirements should be strengthened not weakened.

Regarding Page 8; Permit Thresholds; b. Master Plans/Precise Development Plans:

Affordable housing should NOT be exempt from Master Plans.

Time and time again, exceptions are being made for affordable housing in regard to development standards, density levels, acceptable vehicular levels of service, requirements for infrastructure & public services, water & sewer requisites,

development limitations based on hazardous conditions, and mitigation of adverse impacts, etc. Now planning staff suggests exempting affordable housing from Master Plans. All such exceptions should be stopped. Development of affordable residential units should be treated like any other development. Master Plans and development standards & requirements exist for public health & safety, protection of the environment & wildlife, community values and for preservation of a high quality of life.

Recommendation: Do NOT allow the proposed amendments to expand the types of projects that are exempt from Master Plans to include affordable housing.

Regarding Page 9 & 10; 4. Countywide Plan Implementation:

Affordable housing should **NOT** be exempt from complying with the restriction of maximum residential density for properties that have sensitive habitat or within the Ridge and Upland Greenbelt or the Baylands Corridor and properties that lack public water or sewer systems in accordance with Countywide policies and programs (Policy CD-1.3, Programs CD-1.c, CD5.e, CD6.a, DES-4.e)

To exempt any housing from such constraints is completely irresponsible and to exempt affordable housing is even more so. Such an exemption would hurt sensitive habitats, rather than protect them as the above policies and programs were meant to do. Furthermore, the exemption would constitute environmental injustice as it would exacerbate the disparities between high-income households and low to moderate income households, especially if the properties lacked public water and /or sewer systems.

Recommendation: Eliminate the sentence that states; “Affordable housing projects should be exempt from these restrictions.” from section 4. Countywide Plan Implementation.

Regarding Page 11; 6. Summary of Other Major Amendments:

Number 8 states; “*Providing the Director with the authority to schedule an applicant-initiated Countywide Plan and/or Community Plan amendment for a preliminary hearing by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors to solicit public input and to provide preliminary feedback.*”

The 2007 Countywide Plan should NOT be amended. The County spent much time, money, and resources going through the 2007 Countywide Plan Update process. Many groups representing a wide variety of interests also spent tremendous time, money and resources to research and make comments & recommendations during the 2007 Countywide Plan Update. The county does not currently have the funding or resources for another thorough review of the Countywide Plan and it is doubtful that all the parties that were previously involved in the 2007 Countywide Plan Update would be able to perform the same

diligence at this time. Therefore, any amendment would most likely result in an inferior plan.

Moreover, no Countywide Plan or Community Plan amendment should be allowed to be initiated by an applicant. A Countywide Plan amendment should only be initiated by the Marin County Board of Supervisors. A Community Plan amendment should only be initiated by the Community.

If staff is making this recommendation to amend the Countywide Plan and/or Community Plans in order to comply with the latest unrealistic Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), as described in the Initial Vision Scenario, we are just as adamant in our position. The population growth that the 2007 Countywide Plan allows exceeds the County's ability to provide for that population, as it cannot properly provide for the current number of residents. To further exacerbate our natural resources, natural habitats, infrastructure and public services with the potential for even greater population growth, is irresponsible and will lead to the detriment of our environment, public health & safety and quality of life.

Recommendation: Eliminate Number 8 from Section 6. Summary of Other Major Amendments.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Very truly yours,

SUSTAINABLE TAMALMONTE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Sharon Rushton, Adrian Gordon, Lynn Reid, Ann Spake, Gene Spake, Camille Johnson, and Sandy Glading

Cc: Marin County Board of Supervisors