

March 16, 2026

Mayor Tyller Williamson  
City Council  
City of Monterey  
580 Pacific Street  
Monterey, CA 93940

RE: Item 14: 2025 General Plan Annual Report for Review and Comment

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

LandWatch writes in response to the General Plan annual report, specifically as it relates to the Housing Element. We commend the City for making substantial progress in implementing a number of important programs and policies. There is one major issue, however, which we find problematic and easily fixable: the City's assertion that a lack of available water is impeding housing development. In fact, the City has water available right now, and it should not hold off any longer in allocating it. We urge the City to reconsider its November 2025 decision to delay water distribution from Pure Water Monterey. It is fully within the City's power to make water available now. The City, not the CDO, is what is standing in the way of development.

The staff report states that "The number one constraint to housing development is water supply which is currently limited by a State issued Cease and Desist Order (CDO). Without resolving the City's water supply issues, housing production will not meet State goals." This is not the full story. Last week the Planning Commission unanimously expressed serious concern over the City's delay in allocating water and the impact that delay has on housing.

In November 2025, the City Council considered how and when to distribute water from MPWMD. There was extensive discussion around the CDO and whether it was necessary for the City to wait until the State Water Resources Control Board lifts the CDO moratorium on new connections. David Stoldt, General Manager of the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD) explained that the CDO moratorium does not apply where there is no change in the type of development at the site, e.g., no zoning change is required. In those cases, he said, it is permissible to distribute more water. The City could have started to allocate water in November for those types of projects. Instead, the Council voted 3-2 to wait.

While the City Council believed in November that the CDO would be lifted in just a few months, it is now spring, and no one knows how much longer it will take. The City can't afford to put housing development on hold while it waits to find out. By continuing to withhold available water, the City is delaying and discouraging development projects that would otherwise alleviate Monterey's housing shortage. This translates into a serious setback in the City's efforts to meet its RHNA.

Every jurisdiction in the MPWMD is already using, or is poised to make use of, new water allocations. There is no rationale for withholding the water when it is available and ready to use. And the City certainly should not shift the blame onto the CDO when it comes to lack of water for housing construction. For that reason, we ask City Council, prior to approving the General Plan annual report, to correct the misinformation stating that the CDO is responsible for a lack of water for housing.

Finally, we urge the City Council to reconsider the issue of postponing the water allocation, and that the City make the decision that will most benefit the community: to distribute water that is currently available so that much needed housing development can move forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael DeLapa". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Michael DeLapa  
Executive Director