

May 8, 2026

Christy Sabdo, AICP
Principal Planner
City of Monterey
580 Pacific Street
Monterey, CA 93940

RE: Conservation and Open Space Elements Focus Group Discussion

Dear Ms. Sabdo,

Thank you for including us in the City's recent Conservation and Open Space Elements focus group. I'm following up on some of the key points that we, and others, raised during the discussion.

The City of Monterey should keep Fort Ord properties as open space, and the Open Space and Conservation Elements should memorialize this as much as possible. The City doesn't need to develop Fort Ord because it can meet its housing needs with infill development downtown, which is a preferable, more sustainable option. The Fort Ord lands were never meant for residential development. The Army transferred them to the City for commercial development, a covenant that may still run with the land.

There is also the issue of explosives. Any development would need to first be cleared with the State of California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and even then, building on a site where there are undetonated, buried explosives raises serious safety concerns and liability issues. Building on Fort Ord will also result in more sprawl, as well as increased commutes and VMTs, creating undesirable climate impacts.

Keeping the Fort Ord properties as open space protects wildlife connectivity by avoiding piecemeal development on what is left of open space in Monterey County. The City acknowledged when drafting its Housing Element that the Fort Ord properties were included as a buffer for meeting RHNA requirements. By taking Fort Ord open space out of play for development, the City will compel good development - i.e. infill in city centers. Incentivizing infill achieves both equity and climate goals.

For these reasons, we encourage the City to prioritize the protection of Fort Ord when drafting the Conservation and Open Space Elements. Thank you again for including LandWatch in the preliminary discussions and for the opportunity to share our perspective.

Sincerely,

Laura C. Davis
Deputy Director