



LandWatch

monterey county

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Mayor Jerry Smith and Council Members
Seaside City Council
Seaside City Hall
440 Harcourt Avenue
Seaside, CA 93955-0810

RE: Proposed Seaside Housing Element Meeting of May 15, 2003 - Agenda Item # 15

Dear Mayor Smith and Council Members:

LandWatch Monterey County has reviewed the draft Seaside Housing Element that will come before you on May 15, 2003. We can summarize our views by saying, "Seaside can (and should) do better."

We note, preliminarily, that Pages H-1 and H-2 of the draft Housing Element claim that "public participation played an important role in the formulation of Seaside's housing goals and policies." From our perspective, this statement is simply not true. The "comprehensive update to the City's General Plan" referenced on Page H-2 hasn't taken place yet, and the "public participation component" to that General Plan Update process has not occurred. Therefore, since it hasn't occurred for the entire General Plan Update, it hasn't occurred for the Housing Element, either. In fact, LandWatch last wrote Seaside on April 7, 2003, in a letter to your Planning Service Manager, complaining about the lack of public participation in the General Plan Update process. Subsequent to our letter, the City held a brief session, with hardly any public notice, on the Saturday before Easter, which did nothing actually to involve the public in the General Plan process. As far as we know, that's about "it" where public involvement is concerned.

We request the City of Seaside to defer action on the Housing Element until after the city has, in fact, given the public the right to learn about, and comment on, the proposed Housing Element. When the Planning Commission met to consider the draft Housing Element, members of the public were interested in a further opportunity to be involved, and the Planning Commission (urged to this position by the city staff) refused to schedule another meeting to involve the public. It's not too late to get the public involved. We hope you will do so.

On the substance, we think that Seaside should do better, in terms of including policies within the Housing Element that will help ensure that there will be at least some opportunities in the future for average and below average income persons to buy and rent homes in Seaside.

As noted on Page H-4 of the draft Housing Element, from June 2001 to June 2002, the median sales price for a home in Seaside was \$306,000. That price has escalated since. We think that you should require the latest data available, up to and including the last six months of 2002. The most recent data will make even clearer that moderate, low, and very low income persons are essentially “priced out” of the Seaside housing market.

Whatever may have been true in the past, Seaside is no longer providing any affordable “for sale” housing opportunities. As existing Seaside homes are sold at market prices (which are significantly more than an average or below average income person can afford) the composition of the community will change—and most working families will no longer be able to afford a home in Seaside.

There is something that can be done about this. The City of Seaside should include in its Housing Element provisions requiring that all new developments contain a minimum percentage of housing that will be available for sale or rent to very low, low, and moderate income persons, and that will further require that this housing be permanently protected in terms of affordability for persons within those income ranges.

This is not a “new,” or “unknown,” or “unprecedented” approach. The City of Marina faces the same kind of market conditions that are affecting the housing market in Seaside. The City Council there just adopted an updated Housing Element on April 13th, earlier this week, and that Housing Element contained specific commitments to provide permanent affordable housing, by establishing “inclusionary” housing opportunities in all new housing developments. Marina made a modest commitment to a 20% inclusionary requirement. If Marina can do this, so can Seaside!

Specifically, LandWatch urges the City of Seaside to include the following policy in its Housing Element:

Whenever housing is newly constructed in Seaside, a percentage of that housing, included within each new development, shall be permanently protected for sale or rental to persons and families with very low, low, or moderate incomes. At least six percent (6%) of all the new housing constructed in Seaside shall be affordable for rental or sale to persons with very low incomes (up to 50% of the median income of persons then residing in Monterey County); at least seven percent (7%) of all the new housing constructed in Seaside shall be affordable for rental or sale to persons with low incomes (from 50% to 80% of the median income of persons then residing in Monterey County); and at least seven percent (7%) of all the new housing constructed in Seaside shall be affordable for sale to persons with moderate incomes (from 80% to 120% of the median income of persons then residing in Monterey County). The permanent affordability of this housing for persons and families in these income ranges shall be ensured through deed restrictions or other equivalent and effective methods.

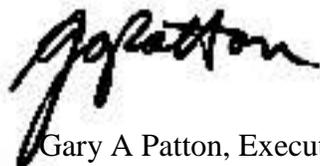
Conclusion

LandWatch Monterey County is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public benefit organization working throughout Monterey County on the important land use policy issues that will affect the future of our communities. We are specifically committed to policies that will make sure that new residential developments provide affordable housing opportunities for working families. LandWatch believes that the current and future residents of Seaside will be grateful if the Council does everything it can to create and then permanently maintain the maximum

amount of “affordable” housing possible, since unless your Council takes action now, escalating housing prices in the future will eliminate the ability of average and below average income families to own a home (or even rent) in Seaside.

Thank you for taking our views into consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Patton". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

Gary A Patton, Executive Director
LandWatch Monterey County