



LandWatch
monterey county

Post Office Box 1876, Salinas, CA 93902

Email: LandWatch@mclw.org

Website: www.landwatch.org

Telephone: 831-759-2824

FAX: 831-759-2825

July 8, 2002

Mayor and Council Members, City of Salinas
Chair and Members, Salinas Planning Commission
City of Salinas, Salinas City Hall
200 Lincoln Avenue
Salinas, CA 93901

RE: Traditional Neighborhood Design Principles For Proposed Future Growth Areas

Dear Mayor Caballero and Council Members, and Members of the Planning Commission:

We are writing to urge the Planning Commission to recommend and the City Council to adopt the attached policies, which are needed to establish Traditional Neighborhood Design principles to be followed within the Future Growth Areas designated in the Salinas General Plan. The proposed additional policies explain how “Traditional Neighborhood Development” (sometimes known as “New Urbanism”) will take place within such Future Growth Areas. LandWatch Monterey County and Creekbridge Homes have jointly developed these policies, and we jointly recommend them to you as the minimum policies needed to guide the City’s future growth in the positive, healthy direction the new General Plan envisions.

The recently-released Public Hearing Draft of the Salinas General Plan states: “New Urbanism principles were used to design a land use plan that is compact and pedestrian-friendly, with a mixture of higher density uses surrounding activity centers/neighborhood focal points.” Both Creekbridge Homes and LandWatch Monterey County applaud this statement and the positive endorsement by the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Planning Commission, and the City Council of Traditional Neighborhood Design and New Urbanism principles. We also believe, however, that the best way to translate that endorsement into real change is to augment the current General Plan language, by adding specific policy statements that will clarify how the City expects to achieve the Traditional Neighborhood Development the Draft General Plan envisions. These additional policies will help ensure that Future Growth Areas in fact develop according to the principles of New Urbanism and Traditional Neighborhood Design.

The attached policies, supported by Creekbridge Homes and LandWatch Monterey County, will help achieve all of the following objectives:

- More efficient land use, minimizing agricultural land lost to urban development
- Compact and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods
- A mixture of higher density uses surrounding activity centers
- Higher density residential uses surrounding retail, recreational, and governmental uses

- A physical design that will reduce the number of vehicle trips generated by the new development
- A mixture of housing types that will result in neighborhoods of diverse economic background, rather than segregating different economic groups in isolated neighborhoods

Although, LandWatch and Creekbridge may have additional comments on the most recent draft of the Salinas General Plan, these recommendations on Traditional Neighborhood Design are presented jointly by Creekbridge and LandWatch to highlight the strong diverse support Traditional Neighborhood Development has, and to emphasize how important it is to include such specific policy language within the final General Plan document in order to ensure that the future growth areas achieve the goals of the City.

Absent the proposed specific policy language within the General Plan, it is likely that very little of the development within the Future Growth Areas will result in neighborhoods that truly embody the principles of New Urbanism and Traditional Neighborhood Design.

If we are to move away from the long-established policies and regulations which have imbedded suburban sprawl into our codes and practices, the Council must give the City staff, future developers, and all of the other diverse participants in the growth process, clear guidance on how to achieve a healthier, more livable, more sustainable method of creating new neighborhoods.

All of the residents of our valley owe the participants involved in the drafting of this General Plan a debt of gratitude for guiding the City towards a Traditional Neighborhood Development growth pattern. With the inclusion of the attached policies in the final General Plan document we will have a clear vision of our future incorporated into our General Plan which all of the residents of Salinas can support. Naturally, both Creekbridge Homes and LandWatch Monterey County would be happy to respond to your questions and comments. We will look forward to participating in the public hearing process, and to supporting the adoption of a strong, effective plan for the future growth and development of the City of Salinas.

Very truly yours,

Hugh Bikle, President
Creekbridge Homes
Vince DiMaggio, Vice President
Creekbridge Homes

Gary A. Patton, Executive Director
LandWatch Monterey County
Chris Fitz, Deputy Director
LandWatch Monterey County

POLICIES PROPOSED TO BE INCLUDED IN THE SALINAS GENERAL PLAN, CLARIFYING HOW TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT WILL TAKE PLACE WITHIN FUTURE GROWTH AREAS

POLICY 1

The Salinas General Plan Land Use Map indicates future growth areas. Prior to permitting any development within a future growth area, the City shall approve a Specific Plan for that area, which shall identify the most appropriate location for all land uses within the Specific Plan area. The Specific Plan for each future growth area shall be consistent with the principles of traditional neighborhood development set forth in the policies below.

POLICY 2

Charrettes are strongly encouraged in the early part of the process in drafting a Specific Plan to ensure effective public participation in the planning process and to ensure that traditional neighborhood development principles are properly employed.

POLICY 3

New developments within each future growth area shall be made up of one or more “neighborhoods.” Each neighborhood shall follow a transect of land uses from an urban neighborhood center to a parkway edge.

POLICY 4

Each neighborhood center shall be defined by and shall be required to have the following urban characteristics:

- a) A civic or public open space such as a plaza or green shall be located in the neighborhood center.
- b) Retail space, office space, and residential uses shall be located in the neighborhood center, often in multi-use buildings.
- c) Except for schools, Institutional uses should also be located in the neighborhood center.
- d) Streets in the neighborhood center shall be thoroughly interconnected with the surrounding street system to provide easy, multiple accesses for cars, pedestrians, and bicycles.
- e) All buildings in the neighborhood center shall be permitted to satisfy their parking requirements with spaces located both on-and off-street within 1/8 mile of the building. All off-street parking shall be placed behind or under buildings in order to present a continuous building façade to the public street.

POLICY 5

Each neighborhood or group of neighborhoods within each future growth area shall provide for a mix of housing, workplaces, retail, and institutional uses including schools, and shall include land designated for public parks/recreation.

POLICY 6

Development within each future growth area shall be consistent with the following policies:

- a) The outer edge of development in each neighborhood shall not be more than 15 minutes walk from the neighborhood center.
- b) The average housing densities within blocks shall decrease from neighborhood center to neighborhood edge (transect).

The neighborhood edge shall be bordered either by a natural corridor, a landscaped buffer adjacent to arterials, or the edge of an adjacent neighborhood across a pedestrian-friendly boulevard or parkway; sound walls should not be allowed.

POLICY 7

In order to preserve prime agricultural land, and to achieve the other benefits of compact urban design, new neighborhoods shall be required to achieve a minimum average density of 9 units per net residential developable acre, exclusive of open space, parks, schools, streets and other non-developable areas.

POLICY 8

New residential developments shall not achieve the required average density of 9 units per net residential developable acre through an exclusive mix of low-density and high-density units. At least 40% of the housing units in new residential developments shall be of housing types that fall within the range of 7-14 units per net residential developable acre.

POLICY 9

Residential developers shall be encouraged to design new residential developments with as many discreet lot sizes and housing types as is feasible, in the interest of offering a greater number of choices across the broad range of housing prices. Several lot sizes and housing types within each block shall be encouraged, to provide variety and texture within the block, as well as throughout each neighborhood. Clustering a large group of any single housing type in several large blocks shall be avoided.

POLICY 10

The street network within each future growth area shall have the following characteristics:

- a) Traffic shall be channeled from major arterials around groups of neighborhoods on boulevards which shall have a maximum of two travel lanes and a bike lane in each direction with a large 20' to 30' landscaped median. The center medians shall allow access to every neighborhood street. Large lot homes with large front setbacks and garage access only from rear alleys shall face onto the boulevards.
- b) Parkways may be used to channel traffic from major arterials and boulevards to, but not through, neighborhood commercial centers. Each parkway shall have one narrow travel lane and a bike lane in each direction, with a large 20' to 30' landscaped median. The center medians shall allow access to every neighborhood street. Homes with garage access only from rear alleys shall face onto the parkways. The front setbacks shall progressively decrease as residential areas approach the neighborhood center.
- c) Each neighborhood shall be connected in as many locations as possible to the parkways and boulevards to disburse and calm the traffic as it leaves and enters the residential neighborhood. Collector street systems shall not be allowed.

- d) Open spaces, schools, parks and other natural amenities shall be fronted by streets or public spaces, and shall not be privatized behind backyards.
- e) “Gated” single-family home communities shall not be permitted.
- f) Individual blocks should generally average less than 600 feet in length and less than 1800 feet in perimeter, measured at the right of way line.
- g) Cul-de-sacs shall be avoided unless natural terrain conditions demand them.
- h) The street network shall be thoroughly interconnected.
- i) Streets in the neighborhood commercial center shall have parking on both sides. Head in and angle parking is preferred in the commercial center with a maximum of two 12-foot travel lanes.
- j) In order to slow traffic, standard residential streets shall be no more than 32 feet wide with parking on both sides in the last block before the street connects to a parkway or boulevard, and shall be reduced in stages to 28 feet or less with parking on both sides once away from the parkways and boulevards. In addition, the corner curb radius shall be no more than 10 feet where the neighborhood streets connect to the parkways and boulevards and shall not exceed 4 feet elsewhere within the neighborhoods.
- k) Rear alleys shall be strongly encouraged. Rear alleys must be paved and landscaped and must be maintained by a landscape and lighting district, or comparable, permanent financing mechanism.