



LandWatch

monterey county

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October 10, 2001

Chairperson and Members
City of Salinas Planning Commission
Salinas City Hall
200 Lincoln Avenue
Salinas, CA 93901

RE: "Preferred Alternative" For Salinas General Plan Update

Dear Members of the Commission:

Designating a "preferred alternative" that will be used as the basis upon which to prepare the draft Salinas General Plan Update is the second most important decision that will be made in the entire GPU process. LandWatch is delighted that your Commission, and the City Council, will each hold one or more public hearings prior to a City Council decision designating the City's "preferred alternative." This letter is to urge the Commission to make some specific recommendations to the City Council:

1. **Rancho San Juan:** Members of both the Planning Commission and the City Council have stated their opposition to the proposed Rancho San Juan development. In fact, the City of Salinas has officially opposed this development. If the City believes that the Rancho San Juan development is not the kind of development that would benefit Salinas, then the City of Salinas should not adopt a plan that would permit it to go forward. If members of the Planning Commission don't think that the Rancho San Juan development is desirable, then the Commission should recommend that the "preferred alternative" not include provisions that would allow Rancho San Juan.

Presumably, the only reason for the City to plan for a development that it doesn't want is because the development is "inevitable," and the City's efforts might, in some way, result in a "better" development than the County of Monterey would otherwise approve. However, Rancho San Juan is far from "inevitable," and if Salinas indicates in its new General Plan that it is proposing development on Rancho San Juan, then this will tell the County that development is "alright" from the City's point of view. If the City of Salinas doesn't want development on Rancho San Juan, it needs to state that clearly--and to let the County know its position. Taking the position that the development is "ok" if done by the City will be an argument in favor of the Rancho San Juan development. Again, the City of Salinas should only plan for the development that it really wants.

Planning Commissioners (and City Council Members) should realize that the County is redoing its current General Plan. The current General Plan would permit the development of Rancho San Juan, but the official General Plan objectives for the new General Plan actively discourage developments like Rancho San Juan. A specific designation of Rancho San Juan as an "Area of Development Concentration" was removed from the statement of objectives adopted by the County Planning Commission and the County Board of Supervisors--and the Board's decision was unanimous.

There is no reason to believe that the Board of Supervisors is committed to building Rancho San Juan. It is true, under court order, and under the current County General Plan, that the Board of Supervisors must consider a Specific Plan that would allow the Rancho San Juan development. They have to "consider" it, but they don't have to approve it. If Salinas indicates that the development of Rancho San Juan is "ok," then that will be an argument that will be used at the Board of Supervisors in support of the Rancho San Juan development. If the City of Salinas doesn't think that the development of Rancho San Juan is a good idea, then that development should be removed from the City's "preferred alternative."

2. **Population Growth To Be Accommodated By 2020:** We urge the Planning Commission to recommend to the City Council that the new General Plan accommodate the population growth that the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) has projected for Salinas over the next twenty years. AMBAG is the regional agency officially charged with the responsibility for making population projections for this region--and AMBAG says that Salinas should expect 39,863 new residents between the year 2000 and 2020 (not 90,000).

"Natural growth" in Salinas (births over deaths) is projected at 29,000 from 2000 to 2020. If the City of Salinas adopts a land use plan that will accommodate 90,000 new residents (when only 29,000 new residents will be added by "natural growth"), then Salinas is saying that it wants to bring 61,000 new residents into Salinas from other places. This means that Salinas will be planning to be a "bedroom community" serving the Silicon Valley.

Again, the City of Salinas should plan for what it wants. If the City wants to become a bedroom community for people who move in from elsewhere, then the 90,000 figure makes sense. But if that is not what Salinas wants, it needs to plan accordingly.

Typically, residential growth does not pay for itself. It brings major community impacts, and lots of community costs. That is why jurisdictions in the Silicon Valley try to "spin off" their residential growth to outlying areas (like Salinas). For every seven new jobs created in the Silicon Valley, only one new house is built. People attracted by Silicon Valley jobs are coming to Salinas, looking for the homes that cities in the Silicon Valley aren't providing. If Salinas adopts a land use plan that provides the houses to accommodate the workers whose jobs are in the Silicon Valley, then Salinas will be agreeing to take the costs of residential growth, without the benefits of the jobs. Is this really your "preferred" alternative?

Another way to approach this issue is to designate land for residential development only for the AMBAG projections (39,863 instead of 90,000), but to incorporate policies in the General Plan that directly tie the approval of new housing to the creation of new jobs in Salinas. If the jobs come, then that would justify going beyond the 39,863 figure. New housing would be allowed *only* if the jobs came at the same time. The Planning Commission should recommend that the Council only plan for the housing needed to go along with jobs actually created in Salinas.

3. **Urban Growth Boundary:** Based on an analysis of where the best farmland is, most people agree that new growth in Salinas should generally be directed to the East and North, away from the most productive agricultural lands. LandWatch urges the Planning Commission to recommend that the City Council establish a strong "boundary" to protect those agricultural lands that should not be converted for development.
4. **Schools and Infrastructure:** Past residential growth has overwhelmed local schools, and has overtaxed other aspects of the infrastructure needed to service the new growth. The City's "Land Use Plan" is not only a "map." It's a statement of policies, too--and depending on how those policies are written, the Land Use Element of the City's General Plan can provide great protection to current and future residents, making certain that new growth doesn't overwhelm the services that such new growth requires.

LandWatch urges the Planning Commission to recommend to the City Council that the "preferred alternative" for the General Plan Update include a "Schools and Infrastructure Policy" that will require new development to provide necessary school capacity and other necessary infrastructure and services *before* development can proceed.

Housing For The Essential Workers of Salinas: New housing should serve local working families. Tying new housing developments to new jobs created in Salinas is one way to make that happen. Two other policy requirements can also help.

LandWatch urges the Planning Commission to recommend to the City Council that the "preferred alternative" for the General Plan Update include a "Housing For Salinas" policy that would include both of the following provisions:

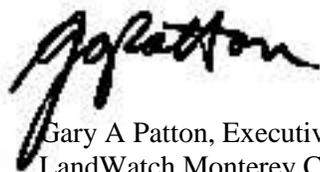
- ž Any annexation of land to the City of Salinas for residential development will only be pursued by the City if an enforceable agreement has first been entered into between the City and the land owner, committing the land owner (or any successor in interest) to develop housing on the land that is enforceably restricted and permanently protected for sale or rental to persons who have incomes that exactly reflect the range of incomes of the residents of Salinas at the time the annexation is proposed. [In other words, as an example, if 60% of the families of Salinas have incomes of \$40,000 or less, then 60% of the housing build on the newly-annexed land must be sold or rented to families with incomes of \$40,000 or less].
- ž Any residential housing development constructed in the City of Salinas shall provide that at least 25% of the new housing built shall be enforceably restricted and permanently protected for sale or rental to families who have family incomes equal to or lower than the median family income in Salinas at the time that the housing development is approved. No "in lieu" payments should be permitted, and actual construction of the housing, included within the new development, shall be required.

LandWatch thinks that the "preferred alternative" for the General Plan Update should actually be something that the City "prefers." The ability of the City to shape its future through strong and focused General Plan policies is real--but the kind of future the City prefers won't happen automatically:

- If the City wants infill, and compact, city-centered growth (which LandWatch strongly supports) then the policies of the General Plan need to insist that the future growth of Salinas conform to these standards.
- If the City wants to preserve the commercially productive agricultural lands that surround the City, then the City needs to provide long-term protection for those agricultural lands that are not specifically designated for development.
- If the City wants to make sure that new growth doesn't overwhelm our infrastructure, and result in continued and further school overcrowding, then the City needs to put policies in place that will prevent that result.
- If the City wants new housing to serve the working families of Salinas, and wants that housing to relate to job growth here--not somewhere else--then the City needs to specify that this is the type of housing it will approve--and not housing does not meet these critical community needs.

There are literally hundreds of policies that will comprise the kind of General Plan that will really be "preferred" by the current and future residents of the City of Salinas. LandWatch hopes that you will urge the Salinas City Council to insist that the new General Plan Update fully reflect the community's hopes and dreams for its future.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Patton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary A Patton, Executive Director
LandWatch Monterey County

cc: Members, Salinas City Council