



October 26, 2026

Supervisor Lopez, Chair, and Members of the Board of Supervisors
County of Monterey
168 W. Alisal Street
Salinas, CA 93901

Subject: Support for Adoption of the Sixth Cycle Housing Element Update (REF220020), Board November 3, 2026 hearing

Dear Chair Lopez and Members of the Board:

LandWatch Monterey County urges the Board to adopt the Sixth Cycle Housing Element Update, certify the Final Programmatic EIR, approve the implementing General Plan and zoning amendments, and direct staff to transmit the package to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) without delay.

LandWatch has engaged with this Housing Element through each of its three submissions. Our goals have been consistent throughout: that the County comply with state housing law as quickly as possible, and that it do so with a plan that directs growth to infill sites with infrastructure, serves local working families, and protects farmland and natural resources. We have not agreed with every choice in the plan, and we have said so in our June 2025 and February 2026 comments. But the plan before you is the product of years of work by staff, the public, and this Board, and HCD has found the third draft to be in statutory compliance with state housing law. It is time to finish the job.

Adoption matters most for what it makes possible: a finding of substantial compliance from HCD. The County is now nearly three years past its December 2023 statutory deadline. As the staff report notes, HCD cannot find the Housing Element in substantial compliance until the Board adopts it along with the required policy amendments and rezonings. Until HCD makes that finding, the County remains exposed to the Builder's Remedy, under which developers may propose projects that disregard the County's General Plan and zoning so long as they include a modest share of affordable units.

The recent proposal on Highway 68 at Laureles Grade Road shows what that exposure means in practice. An out-of-area developer has filed for roughly 950 apartments across two parcels, including three 17-story towers, on land that County staff report has no water or sewer service. The Housing and Community Development Director has publicly questioned whether the project has

any feasible future, and LandWatch shares that skepticism. But a project need not be built to do damage. Applications like this one consume staff time and public resources, invite litigation, and erode public confidence in the planning process. The Highway 68 and Carmel Vista proposals are the predictable result of a County without a certified Housing Element, and more will follow for as long as that condition persists.

The surest way to close that door is to adopt the Housing Element now, complete the required rezonings promptly, and secure HCD's substantial compliance finding as quickly as possible. We urge the Board to treat certification, not adoption alone, as the finish line, and to direct staff to report back on the timeline for HCD review and any remaining actions the County must take to obtain it.

LandWatch will continue to work with the County on implementation, including the density protections in Program H-3.A and the County's approach to agricultural land mitigation, so that the sites in this plan deliver the affordable homes our community needs. Thank you for your leadership in bringing this long effort to a close.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael DeLapa", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael DeLapa
Executive Director

cc: Craig Spencer, Director, Monterey County Housing and Community Development
California Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Policy Development
Division