



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA BARBARA, INC.

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Statement to Joint Meeting of Santa Barbara City Council
and Planning Commission on September 10, 2007

Subject: Plan Santa Barbara and Community Design Issues

I am Connie Hannah, speaking for the Santa Barbara League of Women Voters. Many of our members have attended your small, informal meetings around the City, and many of us are eager to read the Community Input Summary Report. We wager that it will sound a lot like the City's Downtown-Waterfront Vision of 1998. For over 80 years the people of Santa Barbara have been remarkably consistent about what they want. They live here because they like the City small, the way it is.

Eight League members attended the July 18 Workshop, and some of us were puzzled about the possible results. We were very clear that it was good for the four City planning bodies to talk to each other, and we think you should do that at least annually. Now we find in the staff report that there were positive messages received. We hope that everyone agrees that the existing rules and guidelines enable planners to say no to excessively large projects. The League will also support establishing additional findings and changing the variable density provisions.

We think the additional findings for the Architectural Board of Review and the Historic Landmarks Commission are excellent, and suggest that they be adopted as soon as possible. We believe that the findings regarding height, bulk and scale of buildings and providing sufficient open space and landscaping could help to resolve many of the public's concerns, if they were followed by every planning body. Given today's report, we do not understand why tomorrow the Ordinance Committee will be dealing with changes in the Zoning Ordinance that would reduce open space and setbacks.

League was interested in the discussion of requiring developments to provide community benefits. This should be part of Plan Santa Barbara. We are anxious to see workshops soon that will deal with all of these really hard issues that we have been discussing since the beginning of the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance revision. It is clear that all the coastal cities are dealing with similar growth problems and we know that environmental protection and historic preservation are essential in the City of Santa Barbara.