

To: Calaveras County Project Planner Katherine Stefani

From: Muriel Zeller, 2640 Stagecoach Drive, Valley Springs, CA 95252

Regarding: Proposed FAIRFIELD HOTEL/RESTAURANT in San Andreas

Date: September 16, 2024

*Via Email*

Dear Ms. Stefani,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the proposed Fairfield Hotel and Restaurant project in San Andreas.

The IS/MND says, "Based on Initial Study findings, the project would have no impact or a less than significant impact on the environmental categories listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines." The categories are subsequently listed and include open space in the form of Agriculture and Forestry Resources.

The county cannot issue a building permit unless the project is "consistent with the local open-space plan (Government Code Section 65567)."

The Calaveras County General Plan tells us, "The Resource Production Element fulfills state requirements for the Conservation and Open Space Element with respect to agriculture, timber and mineral resources (Page-INT 6)." It also tells us, "Agriculture, timber and mineral resources are key assets to the County's economic health. The Resource Production Element provides policies and implementation measures to protect and enhance their value (Page-RP 1)."

Since the County opted for a separate agricultural element, i.e., the Resource Production Element, the County is subject to certain requirements, which are not, for the most part, met in the General Plan. Nevertheless, a substantial portion of the County's open-space plan is contained in the Resource Production Element. As you know, "'Local open-space plan' means the open-space element of a county or city general plan adopted by the board or council, either as the local open-space plan or as the interim local open-space plan adopted pursuant to Section 65563 (Government Code Section 65560 (g))."

"If a city or county chooses to develop an agricultural land component of the open-space element or an agricultural land element, the agricultural land component of the open-space element or the agricultural land element shall do the following (Government Code Section 65565:(a)," and this is followed by a litany of requirements, most of which the County has not done.

In order to support long-term protection of agricultural land, the County may, but is not limited to "prioritizing the development of housing, including affordable housing, and commercial development within existing areas zoned for housing and commercial development, when feasible (Section 65565 (a) (2) (H))." So why would the County rezone land that would accommodate multi-family housing (R3), and in particular low-income multi-family housing, in the county seat which is within walking distance of the Government Center when the largest employer in the County is the County? Of course, walking or biking to work also reduces GHG emissions.

In order to further protect agricultural land from sprawl, the Code goes on to give the County the option of "Establishing streamlined procedures for the development of housing within areas identified as adequate housing sites in the housing element developed pursuant to Section 65583" and "Promoting the development of housing and utilizing the reforms and incentives to facilitate and expedite the construction of affordable housing that are identified in Section 65582.1 (Government Code Section 65565 (a) (3) (C) and (D))."

Finally, I will simply remind you that in the allocation of water and sewer hook-ups, priority is given to affordable housing (Government Code Section 65582.1 (d)). As I understand it, San Andreas Sanitation District has already gone through one building moratorium and current hook-ups are limited.

Land to the north and south of the project site is zoned residential, both single and multi-family. To retain the existing zoning would not be inconsistent with the area and would provide the opportunity for additional housing during a time when any kind of home is financially out of reach for too many of our citizens. Ask yourself, do our people need a hotel room or a home?

Sincerely,

Muriel Zeller

CC:

Peter Maurer, Calaveras County Interim Planning Director  
Julie Moss-Lewis, Calaveras County Deputy County Counsel  
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Megan Fiske, Community Action Project Outreach Coordinator  
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