



August 29, 2003

Fernando Armenta, Chairperson  
Monterey County Board of Supervisors  
240 Church Street  
Salinas, CA 93901

RE: Results of the GPU Refinement Group Process

Dear Chairperson Armenta and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

At this point in the General Plan Refinement Group process, Common Ground would like to provide some clarification about the results of the meetings that have taken place so far. We thank you for the opportunity to participate in this open dialog concerning the General Plan, knowing that the ultimate goal of the General Plan is to protect the public health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Monterey County.

The Refinement Group has been an important part of the public process that will ultimately produce a plan that will guide our County for the next 20 years. Not only has there been a wide variety of public comment during the Refinement Group meetings, but the opportunity to form a dialog between opposing points of view is something that has been lacking in the General Plan Update process up to this time.

Most of the members of the Refinement Group participated in the meetings in good faith, willing to listen to the other side and benefit from an increased understanding of the issues. We found that in some cases, misunderstandings were at the root of conflicting viewpoints. Several of these conflicts were clarified and resolved, particularly those having to do with affordable housing. In addition, the group was able to specifically identify a matrix of issues that are of concern to the entire group.

Unfortunately, a few groups purposefully created obstacles to resolving conflicts, using procedural technicalities and filibuster-like tactics to disrupt and stonewall the proceedings. While not unexpected, such tactics reveal an unwillingness to participate in the public process in good faith.

Regardless of the tactics that rendered the group less effective than it might have been, we recognize that a forum of this type has had positive results. The dialog was heated at times, but issues were made clear and some common ground was achieved. In the original motion, the Board of Supervisors intended that, "The number of meetings and the allocation of time for issues will be left to the group to determine." The motion also states that, "An estimated time for the completion of the group's work is the end of September with preparation of recommendations shortly thereafter." This process is far too valuable to allow a small few (perhaps 5 of the 30 participants) to derail the entire proceeding.

Regarding the cost of the meetings, the cost of not continuing to resolve issues will certainly be higher than the cost of continuing. As has been pointed out, thousands of staff hours will be required in the future to deal with issues that are left unresolved. To save additional money, the group can probably function with one facilitator rather than the three current facilitators.

We encourage you to continue on with the Refinement Group process and ignore the self-fulfilling prophecies of those who predicted the failure of the group from the beginning. We strongly believe in the capacity of the citizens of Monterey County to help create a General Plan that will provide for the well-being of not only those who come here to work, but also to those of us who live here and have deep-rooted commitments to this community.

Sincerely,

*Signature on File*

Tom B. Carvey, Executive Director  
Common Ground Monterey County

cc: Monterey County Board of Supervisors  
CAO Sally Reed  
Members of the Refinement Group  
Monterey County Planning Commission