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August 29, 2003

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

RE: LandWatch Participation in GPU Refinement Group

Dear Chairperson Armenta and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

The purpose of this letter is to communicate a decision by the Board of Directors of LandWatch Monterey County, which has directed its staff to cease any further participation in the Monterey County General Plan Update Refinement Group. We will attend the last currently scheduled meeting of the group, on September 4, 2003, but will not participate thereafter.

The motion establishing the GPU Refinement Group, which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on June 24, 2003, made very clear that the Refinement Group effort was to be an “adjunct” to the legally-required public process. LandWatch will very definitely continue to participate in that public process—which we believe is the very best way for Monterey County to deliberate about and then make decisions about the vitally important land use policies that will guide the future growth and development of Monterey County.

So far, the County has devoted more than three years, and more than \$3 million dollars, to the GPU effort. The shortest and most cost effective way to conclude this effort is to follow the public process established by state law. This means the release of the “next draft” of the GPU for public comment and environmental review, hearings before the Planning Commission, followed by hearings before the Board of Supervisors, and ultimately followed by your decision adopting a final document.

In voting to set up the Refinement Group, the Board of Supervisors was clearly responding to a number of individuals and organizations who have opposed the draft GPU so far, and who argued that an “alternative” to the normal public hearing process could be effective in bringing diverse points of view together to find “consensus.” This was not, as I’m sure you’ll recall, what LandWatch advocated. We opposed calls for some sort of “special group,” and strongly urged that the Board continue to pursue the normal (and legally required) public process. Once the Board set up the Refinement Group, however, LandWatch did agree to participate. We did so, in large part, because the motion to establish the group was very detailed, and set up a number of procedures that might have made the process effective. For example, the Board’s motion specified that the purpose of the Refinement Group was to “focus on specific policies where there is disagreement and to seek to resolve them with specific recommendations for language

modification.” Specifics, not “speeches,” were to be the order of the day. The Board’s motion also stated that the Refinement Group was to “review the plan published according to directions #1 and #2.” This means that the group was supposed to work, very specifically, on the “next draft” of the GPU, when published according to the Board’s direction.

Unfortunately, as I am sure you are all aware, the Refinement Group did not, in fact, follow the directions in the Board’s motion. Perhaps because of this, or perhaps because of the extreme imbalance in the composition of the group, or perhaps because of the lack of the “experienced land use mediator” called for in the motion, or perhaps for a number of other reasons, the Refinement Group has not been an effective way to bring diverse points of view together to “focus on specific policies where there is disagreement and to seek to resolve them with specific recommendations for language modification.”

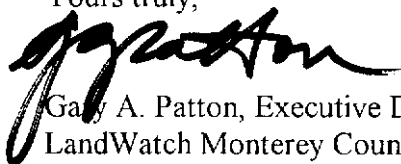
Above all, from the point of view of LandWatch, which is a small nonprofit organization that is attempting to participate effectively in land use policy deliberations from the City of Monterey to the City of Greenfield, the process as it worked in practice has been both time consuming and unproductive.

At its regularly-scheduled meeting on August 27, 2003, the LandWatch Monterey County Board of Directors directed its staff to terminate its participation in the GPU Refinement Group, at the end of the last meeting currently scheduled for the group, on September 4, 2003.

I, personally, want to thank Board members for having been willing to try an experiment that *might* have worked—and that many of those individuals and organizations who have opposed the current draft GPU said they thought would work. Unfortunately, it *didn’t* work, and LandWatch continues to believe that it will be through the normal, legally-required public process that the Board, acting on behalf of the public, will ultimately best be able to make the difficult, and critically important, policy decisions that will determine the future growth and development of Monterey County.

As you know, LandWatch strongly believes that the twelve Guiding Objectives upon which the Board has based the draft GPU are a good foundation for the future, and we will look forward, in the public process, to working with the Board, the Planning Commission, our members, the public, and other interested individuals and organizations, to make sure that those twelve Guiding Objectives are realized in the details of the General Plan Update that will determine the future of this wonderful place, in which we are all so privileged to live and work.

Yours truly,



Galy A. Patton, Executive Director
LandWatch Monterey County

cc: Members, LandWatch Board of Directors
CAO Sally Reed
Members, Refinement Group
Planning Commission
Other Interested Persons