

COMMENTARY ON  
COMMUNITY GENERAL PLAN INITIATIVE  
AND  
GENERAL PLAN UPDATE 4

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Helping to inform voters is the cornerstone of the League of Women Voters, and we always start by informing ourselves. On the issue of the Monterey County General Plan Update, we have participated in the entire public process, reviewing materials and commenting in writing and at Planning Commission and Supervisors' meetings. A committee of the two county Leagues reviewed GPU4 adopted by the Board of Supervisors and the Community General Plan Initiative (CGPI) placed on the ballot by petition of the people. We met with advocates from both sides to hear their positions. In doing this, it became apparent that a simple clear comparison of the two plans would be an invaluable tool for us --- and for other voters.

The League's comparisons are available in long and short forms (the short form also available in Spanish) on the Leagues' websites at: [www.lwvmp.org](http://www.lwvmp.org) or [www.sv.ca.lwvnet.org](http://www.sv.ca.lwvnet.org) ; or by calling 648-8683 or 422-2429

In addition to providing information to voters (its voter education function), the League studies issues and takes political action (its advocacy function) based on previous studies and the resulting League positions on those issues.

In terms of land use, the League supports compact and livable communities. Focused growth allows more resources to be devoted to affordable housing and adequate services including roads and schools. Having growth areas spread throughout the county makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to provide services effectively and efficiently including emergency response time. Focused growth also helps protect agricultural lands, our unique natural resources, and limited water supplies.

Our analysis found stark differences between the CGPI and GPU4. Among our key findings:

*Growth Areas*

- The CGPI (Measure A) focuses growth in the unincorporated county in 5 Community Areas
- GPU4 (Measure C) allows urban type growth and land use intensification in 56 areas (ranging from a few acres to hundreds of acres) throughout the county

### *Housing*

- The CGPI accommodates 10,600 houses in unincorporated areas. Of these, 2,400 would be permanently affordable.
- GPU4 accommodates 21,500 houses. Of these, 3,380 would be affordable with affordability assured for only 15 years.

After reviewing the facts and League positions, the League is supporting the CGPI (Measure A) and opposing GPU4 (Measure C).

The County's overly long and expensive general plan update process has, unfortunately, led to a poor land use planning document that will be very costly to Monterey County both environmentally and financially.

Carl Holm is a county planning staff member who was one of the primary authors of GPU4. In his April 8 Commentary, he critiqued the League's comparison of the Initiative and GPU4. He did not feel the comparison was "objective".

He, and the voting public, should be aware that the information in the League's Comparison is taken directly from the plans themselves. Where calculations were needed, the same method was used for both plans. In determining daily vehicle trips for example, we used two different accepted calculation methods for both plans and then included in our comparison the range of number of vehicles trips arrived at for both plans.

During our review of both plans, we contacted Mr. Holm to clarify issues on which we were not clear. At that time, he informed us that the county was doing a comparison/analysis. We asked that it be sent to us when it was available. We never received it and became aware recently that a county-prepared analysis has never been done.

Mr. Holm states that the Initiative is a 10-year plan while GPU4 is a 20-year plan and finds that this difference accounts for GPU4 having so many more significant adverse impacts than the Initiative. *The Initiative clearly states that its provisions are for 25 years* (Section 4,A,p.77). Mr. Holms also states that development in Study Areas is not assured because general plan amendments would be needed for development. One of the most notable of these study areas is the 1,493 acre Russell Road Study Area which encompasses the same area formerly included in the Rancho San Juan Specific Plan that was rejected by 76% of the voters when it appeared on the ballot.

Mr. Holm's commentary mentioned the EIR for the General Plan. What he did not say was that that EIR, the County's own document, found that the Initiative had fewer negative environmental impacts than GPU4. The Initiative was found to be the environmentally superior alternative.

The Leagues' websites include responses to Mr. Holm's other comments.

Finally Mr. Holm concludes “There are just too many references . . . that echo Land Watch sound bites to be a coincidence. I simply cannot accept this as an ‘objective’ view”. Mr. Holm seems to believe that you cannot be objective and have an opinion too. The League’s objective comparison provided the basis for our support of the Initiative and our opposition to GPU4. As noted above, the League has numerous land use and planning positions developed over 30 years that speak directly to the general plan options. We had these positions long before LandWatch came into existence.

Is it a coincidence that LandWatch has the same positions as the League of Women Voters? Or is it more likely that there are numerous public interest non-profit groups in Monterey County that support reasonable and responsible land use policies?

Be an informed voter; look at the facts of both measures. Do not make your decision based on emotional arguments from anyone on either side.

*The League’s review committee included League members who are professional planners, water regulators, former elected officials, and individuals with degrees in geography, political science, agronomy, and financial analysis.*