

August 9, 2005

The Honorable Judge Anderson
Superior Court
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Judge Anderson:

The City of Carpinteria received and reviewed the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury's recent report, "An Ounce of Prevention: Toward a More Transparent and Responsive Planning and Development Process." Per the Grand Jury's instructions, the City is pleased to respond to Findings and Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 4 as discussed below. These responses were approved for submittal to the Grand Jury by the City Council on August 8, 2005 by unanimous vote.

Finding 1: Mission Statements, when available, were often outdated and did not list customer satisfaction as a primary goal.

Recommendation 1: Planning Departments should have mission statements specific to their department. These mission statements should have customer satisfaction as a primary goal.

Response: We disagree with the finding. While the City's Mission Statement dates to 1993, its age alone does not indicate that the content of the statement is outdated.

The Mission Statement for the City of Carpinteria is as follows:

Government in Carpinteria shall be open, honest and equitable and shall encourage, to the fullest extent possible, public participation in the decision-making process.

*Government shall make judicious use of the City's limited resources to promote the highest possible quality of life for all of Carpinteria's residents. **This includes providing services consistent with community needs** as well as protecting the social and physical environment.*

Government shall strive to enhance the City's economic base in a manner that is consistent with the needs and preferences of the community. The City budget shall

reflect the goals and priorities of the majority of the City residents and shall be managed in a professional and business-like manner.

The diversity of the community shall be recognized, and City government shall serve the interest of all residents, maintaining an atmosphere in which the residents feel the City has their best interests at heart at all times.

The long-range vision and course of action for Carpinteria's future shall continue to be articulated and implemented through an ongoing process of community-wide consensus building. (Emphases added.)

The theme of customer service is raised several times in the mission statement as highlighted above. The City places high import on serving its residents and invites and encourages them to participate in all aspects of local governance. The mission statement highlights the service orientation of the City. It is the City's responsibility to serve its residents in an efficient and friendly manner, to ensure that information is shared, that work efforts are coordinated, that public input is sought and carefully considered and that public members are involved at all levels of decisionmaking. This is evidenced in Carpinteria by the number of public speakers who regularly appear at City Council and other decisionmaker hearings, by the number of residents who participated in the visioning plan for the City (approximately 300), and by the volunteer technical advisory boards managed by the City (e.g., General Plan Advisory Committee, Carpinteria Creeks Committee, Bluffs Advisory Committee, Tree Advisory Board).

The Community Development Department does not have an adopted mission statement however, the City's web page describes the functions of the department as:

The City's Community Development Department provides planning, development review, permit issuance, animal care and control, as well as code compliance services to the community.

It should be noted that in the City of Carpinteria, the Community Development Department performs a broad range of functions. In addition to planning, Community Development also provides all building and safety services and all code compliance functions including parking enforcement, animal control, weed abatement, business licensing and several other functions related to carrying out the wide range of regulations in the Municipal Code. As the Community Development Department has recently undergone several staff changes, including hiring new employees in all of its professional planning positions, adoption of a mission statement may be considered to guide the new staff in carrying out the goals and objectives set by the City Council. Once the planning function is fully staffed, discussion of a mission statement will begin. And, if the Community Development Department is to develop a mission statement, the City Council might also like to consider whether other City departments ought to have their own mission statements as well. Therefore, this recommendation requires further analysis.

Finding 2: Planning Departments did not have basic customer satisfaction procedures in place.

Recommendation 2: To increase customer satisfaction, each planning department should publicly post the agency's mission statement, post timelines and mitigating factors, provide easy access to all relevant forms with adequate explanations as to their use, post a list of key personnel involved in completing an application, and clearly define the complaint process. In addition, handouts should be provided to each customer explaining the application and complaint process.

Response: The City of Carpinteria maintains a web page as well as several informative handouts that describe the permit process and provide contact information for getting in touch with all planning staff in the department. Email contacts are available through the web page using a single click of a mouse. All development applications are available online as well as the City's Municipal Code and other important planning documents such as the Housing Element. The City also has a form available at the public counter that can be used to submit complaints, commendations, suggestions, information requests, service requests work orders or other issues (see Attachment B). Given the small size of the community and intimacy of the small staff in the department and in the City in general, most issues are addressed in one-on-one conversations and are resolved efficiently.

Timelines for permit processing are set forth in the City's adopted budget in the form of Recurring Performance Measures (RPMs) that set goals for application processing completion. The use of RPMs is relatively new to the City and staff is developing ways to monitor its success in achieving its goals. The annual budget will henceforth also include an evaluation of the City's performance in meeting its RPMs.

Therefore, we disagree with the finding that the City does not have basic customer satisfaction procedures in place. In fact, the form specifically asks, "How may we be of service to you?" and has been publicly available in the City's kiosk since 1999. In addition to this form, we will respond to this recommendation by posting a customer satisfaction survey on our web site, based on the sample provided in the Grand Jury Report and customized to suit our interests and needs. Quantifiable data will be collected on an ongoing basis and used to improve the quality of customer service provided to our area residents. Therefore, we conclude that the recommendation has been implemented and that it can be further improved by providing an additional customer satisfaction survey form on our website within the next month (see Attachment C of the enclosed staff report).

Finding 3: Notification of changes to land and property use in most jurisdictions was limited to mandated State *minimum* requirements to owners only, and within 300 feet from the borders of the property site.

Recommendation 3: Notification of land use changes should include the owner *and occupants* within at least 500 feet of the border of the property site.

Response: The City of Carpinteria is located entirely within the coastal zone. As such, certain noticing requirements already include noticing of occupants within 100 feet as well as owners of property within 300 feet of the border of a project site. When an EIR is prepared, that noticing

radius is extended to 1,000 feet consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act noticing requirements. In addition to mailed notices, all noticing for public hearings occurs in the Coastal View, a free local weekly paper that is readily available throughout town. Architectural Review Board, Planning Commission and City Council agendas are all posted on the City's web page as are staff reports for the various projects to be considered at upcoming hearings. For projects in the conceptual review stage, the City provides a mailed notice to residents within 300 feet of a project site and requires that the applicant post the notice on the site. All of these efforts result in an informed public, able to participate in land use decisions at all levels of decisionmaking in the City.

Increasing the noticing requirement to 500 feet would increase costs to the City which would be borne by applicants who are required to provide noticing labels. Given that the existing system provides adequate notice as evidenced by the high level of public participation in the permit process, the City disagrees with this finding and does not intend to implement the recommendation.

Finding 4: The complaint process in most jurisdictions was not designed for quantifiable analysis and could not be used to find strong and weak points in the planning process.

Recommendation 4: Planning agencies should track all complaints and conduct random quantifiable surveys of 10% of customers who have used their services. Agencies should use the results of these surveys to make the planning process more customer-friendly. The results should also be added on a quarterly basis to the department website for public viewing.

Response: As noted above, the City of Carpinteria has a form available to obtain comments from the public and applicants regarding services they have received. However, the City agrees with the finding that a customer satisfaction survey would provide valuable information to contribute to a system of continuous improvement in permit processing and will be implemented within the next month by posting such a customer service survey on our web page and soliciting feedback from customers who have used the department's services. Therefore, we agree with this finding and will implement a procedure within the next month to allow customer service survey results to be quantified using the sample provided in the Grand Jury Report as a guide (see Attachment D of the enclosed staff report).

The City appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Grand Jury's report. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (805) 684-5405.

Sincerely,

Dave Durflinger
City Manager

The Honorable Judge Anderson
August 9, 2005
Page 5 of 5

Enclosure: City of Carpinteria Staff Report #05-77

cc: Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
Attention: Foreperson
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

STAFF REPORT
COUNCIL MEETING DATE
August 8, 2005

ITEM FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

Response to the Santa Barbara County 2004-2005 Grand Jury report, "An Ounce of Prevention, Toward a More Transparent and Responsive Planning and Development Process"

City Manager _____
Signature

Community Development Director _____
Signature

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve the proposed comments in response to the Grand Jury findings and recommendations.

I. BACKGROUND

The 2004-2005 Grand Jury of Santa Barbara County has issued a report titled, "An Ounce of Prevention, Toward a More Transparent and Responsive Planning and Development Process." The Report (attached) makes findings and recommendations related to the development review process. Staff is requesting that the City Council approve the comments in response to the Grand Jury Report. Once approved, the comments will be incorporated into a letter for the Mayor's signature and submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Santa Barbara Superior Court on behalf of the City.

There are two authorized responses to each grand jury finding:

1. The respondent agrees with the finding.
2. The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefore).

As to each grand jury recommendation, the responding entity shall report one of the following actions:

1. The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
2. The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.
3. The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.
4. The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefore.

All of the responses have been formatted according to these parameters.

II. ANALYSIS

The impetus for this report by the Grand Jury was a series of complaints received from citizens about the development review process and public information services at various local municipalities in Santa Barbara County.

Below are the findings and recommendations of the Grand Jury (full report included as Attachment A). All of the findings and recommendations were directed to the Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department and to every city in the County except the City of Goleta for which Finding and Recommendation 3 were not applicable. The proposed response to each finding and recommendation is provided below.

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III. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

None

IV. LEGAL ISSUES

The City is required by law, California Penal Code §933(c), to provide comments in response to the Grand Jury Report within 90 days of the May 17, 2005 date of receipt.

V. ALTERNATIVE

Direct staff to amend response.

VI. PRINCIPAL PARTIES EXPECTED AT MEETING

None

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Santa Barbara County 2004-2005 Grand Jury Final Report, "An Ounce of Prevention, Toward a More Transparent and Responsive Planning and Development Process"
- B. "How may we be of service to you?" Form
- C. Draft Customer Satisfaction Survey
- D. Draft Customer Satisfaction Survey Results