



THE SAN MARCOS ASSOCIATION

To:
Santa Fe County
Growth Management Department
102 Grant Avenue
Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87501

Attn: Director; Penny Ellis Green

From:
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Subject:
Comment on the Proposed Zoning Map: Ordinance 2013-6 Sustainable Land Development Code

Executive Summary

The San Marcos Association objects to the proposed inclusion of large blocks of “mixed use” and “industrial” zoning along State Route 14 between the County Jail and the Turquoise Trail Elementary School. We believe that it is not in the best interest of the County to extend predominantly urban zoning to what is currently a ranching and rural residential area. We also believe that the County should not dictate where such zoning should occur prior to prospective developer’s submittal of a master plan - especially in large ranch holdings such as those found South of the State Penitentiary. Having the County pre-zone portions of ranch-land for either industrial or urban development provides the selected land owner with an unfair commercial advantage, greatly increases the value of the selected property, changes the character of current land use, and eliminates a significant part of the application process identified in the code. Arguments are put forward in support of these objections and suggested alternative zoning, better suited to the character of the area, are advanced.

The Facts

The proposed “mixed Use” area south of the State Pen and on either side of Route 14 totals approximately 1,920 acres. Mixed use permits 2 to 5 dwellings per acre or 2 to 12 dwellings with commercial. At full build out, and assuming that (a) 40 % of the available

acreage would be set aside for houses and (b) the average houses per acre would be 4, then the property would support 3,072 houses. The maximum dwelling count could reach toward 9,000 when all incentives are applied.

If you look closely at the proposed zoning map-this mixed use acreage surrounds a proposed 320 acre industrial area that would be situated directly south of the State Penitentiary.

The joint industrial and mixed use acreage is almost surrounded by “rural fringe” zoning (1 house per twenty acres).

An existing subdivision within the San Marcos District’s ten acre zoning plan is immediately adjacent to the southern edge of the proposed southern edge of the “mixed use” area.

The code “official map” calls for a “future” road linking the La Cienega exit to the interstate with State Route 14 at the Southern Side of the proposed Industrially zoned acreage.

The Potential Effects

Placing over three thousand new residences and the infrastructure necessary to support it between the County Jail and the elementary school would dramatically alter the rural residential nature of the surrounding area, and would have a profound effect on the nature of the San Marcos District.

The proposed mixed use zone lies adjacent to “rural Fringe” and “rural zoning”. There does not appear to be any attempt to transition between what would be an essentially urban environment to the rural residential environment and ranching environment that surrounds the acreage on two sides.

The proposed zoning, once built out, would cause an impossible strain on Highway 14 traffic patterns. It would almost certainly cause the State into a decision to expand the road to four lanes - thereby destroying the road’s rural character.

Placing a high density “mixed use zone immediately adjacent to an existing “rural fringe “ community would completely depress the current subdivision homeowners real estate values.

Placing a high density “mixed use” area next to ranch land would virtually destroy the ranch land for agricultural use.

By identifying a portion of an undeveloped Ranch as industrial and high density urban housing, the county is essentially directing development to this 2000 acre area and reducing the viability of the ranch operation for the remaining 8,000 acres on the west side of Highway 14.

The County Code gives ample opportunity for a developer to request changes in zoning without having the County Planners point a finger at a specific location. A developer who wishes to exploit these specific sections, for example, can always apply for the creation of a "planned Development Zoning District as defined in Chapter 8 of the Code. There is no reason therefore to "give away" the County and its citizens' right to negotiate limits to high density development within rural areas by granting developers "future" industrial or high density housing code "rights" to a property.

According to section 8.7.2 of the code, industrial districts must be "located in areas where conflicts with other uses can be minimized to promote orderly transitions and buffers between uses". Placing ranching with industrial use and adjacent high density housing do not seem compatible with the intent of the code.

Visual sight lines. The Turquoise Trail, a nationally designated Scenic By-way Has sight lines that have already been corrupted by development from the State penitentiary and points north. If the county is to preserve its vistas to the South, then it must consider moving future high impact development as far away as possible from scenic sight lines. Designating high density housing and industrial zoning directly along side Highway 14 for an additional two miles would destroy the highway's Santa Fe "Entrada" look and feel. County "pre-zoning" in these areas could be thought of as creating a Development of County Wide Impact (DCI) without benefit of any process calculated to decrease adverse impacts to surrounding communities and to the County as a whole.

Street lighting is a requirement for any development in a "mixed use" development. This is entirely incompatible with "rural Residential" night sky sensibilities.

The properties identified for "mixed Use" and "Industrial" are both currently part of large ranch properties. County planners have stated that they would rather not zone across existing property boundaries, If that is true, then each of the two ranches should be zoned as entities. It would then be up to the property owners in the future to identify portions of their property that they may wish to rezone and develop.

By building a high density mixed use into the zoning map for a single developer or two, the county is providing that developer with an unfair competitive advantage over other property owners who may wish to build similar subdivisions. One would have to assume that all other developers would have to go through the re-zoning process as part of an application for master planning.

Adding between 3,000 and 9,000 homes would require the construction of at least three new schools. The placement of schools would more than likely not occur within the boundaries of the mixed use sections, but land sales to the County for their construction would further benefit the current land-owners.

Recommended Actions

The San Marcos Association believes that it is inappropriate to encourage the creation of a satellite city in a semi rural environment and that such zoning encouragement will only foster results that will be detrimental to the citizens and well being of the County in the future.

SMA believes that the following changes need to be made to the zoning map in order to preserve the rural residential character of the San Marcos District, and the Highway 14 scenic byway.

Consolidate “urban” growth development to properties North of the State Pen and East of the County Jail.

Specify an open space “buffer” between high density growth area zoning and rural area zoning. The “limits to urban growth” so-to-speak must be well defined.

Eliminate the southern two sections of “mixed use” and replace them with a rural fringe (1 dwelling for ten acres) zoning, or zone them as twenty acre “rural fringe” (which identifies surrounding current range land).

Change the Northern section to “residential fringe” or continue the rural fringe designation for base zoning.

Zone the current proposed industrial 320 acres as either residential fringe or rural fringe.

Either eliminate the proposed industrial zone or move the proposed “industrial zone” either north (closer to the 599 interchange) to what is identified as “mixed uses” or west, closer to the La Cienega I-25 interchange (also identified as “mixed Use”).

Direct new development traffic to the I-25 frontage road rather than directly pouring new development onto state route 14.

If the County planners believe that it is essential for future growth to identify a high density “mixed use” corridor South along Highway 14, , then rather than extending the urban growth path further and further South, they should perhaps create a band of “mixed use” that is no more than 320 acres by 140 acres per section stretching from the County jail east to Eldorado.

That would at least create the opportunity to develop a second entrance to Santa Fe, rather than funneling all traffic to Highway 14.

It would also create a defining line between urban and rural.

The SMA does not consider this to be a “preferred” option.

The 360 acre “industrial” zone might have been designed to attract a large single “intel” type business to our area. However, it is more likely to attract such “heavy” industry as junk yards, demolition business, and processing plants (metals, chemicals, asphalt,

concrete, etc., all concentrated in industrial “business parks”. Picture, if you will, Siler Road and environs in the City. “Hey” says the developer... “you are the folks that zoned the ranch for these businesses. We’re just following your lead.”

SMA does not believe that a large industrial zone south of the State Penitentiary is in the County’s best interest as it interferes with the areas tourist based economy. We believe that “industrial zoning should be left to an applicant to apply for. Once the application for re-zoning is made, the County Commission can decide if the zoning application is a compatible use.

No development in the proposed Mixed use zone, irregardless of where it is placed, should be permitted until such time as a connector to the La Cienega Interchange is built, and a link through the Community College District is developed (as an alternative to the increased use of Highway 14. This caveat should be included in the Land Use Code.

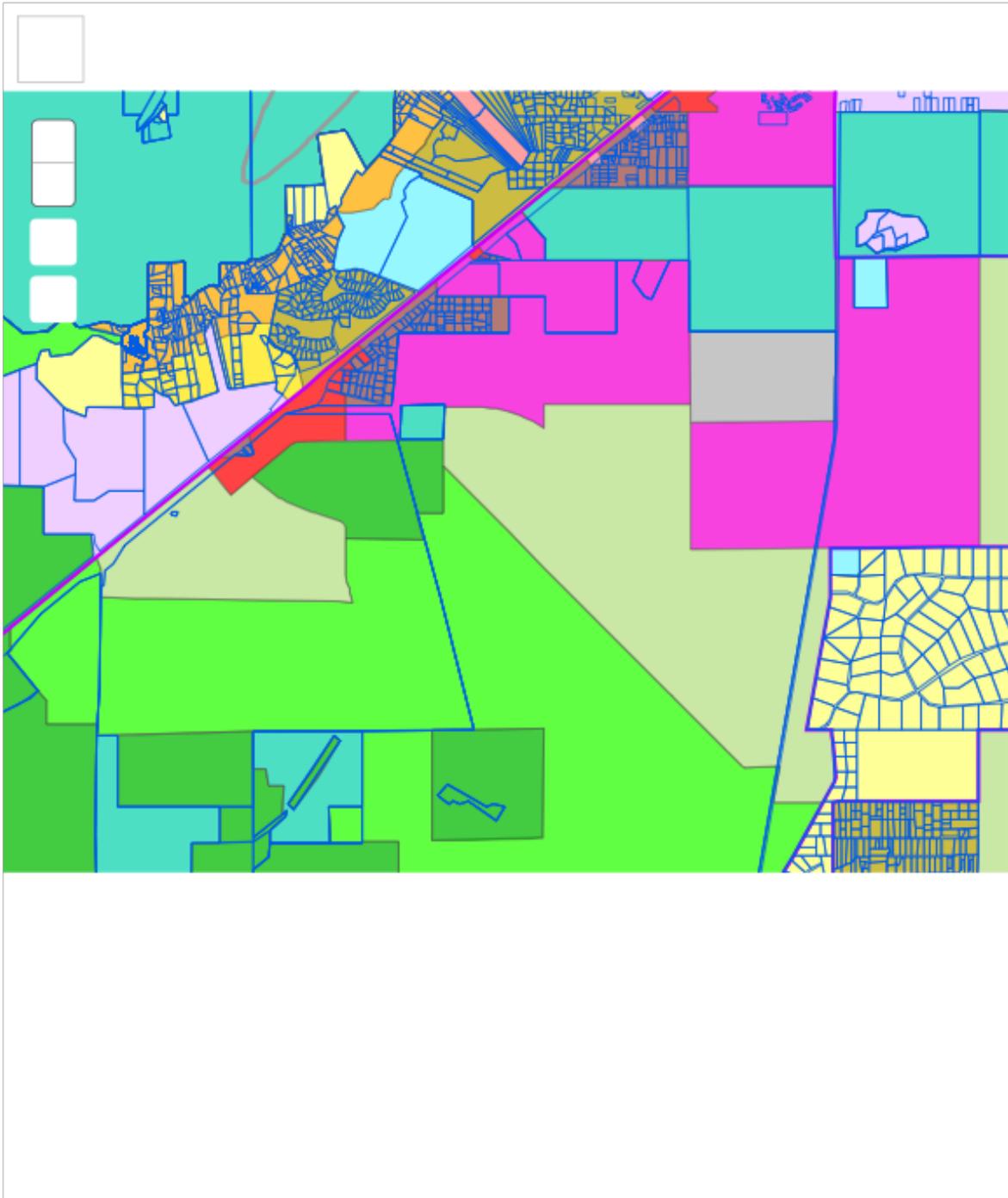
Transitions between Zones

Much of the problems with the proposed zoning map appear to be found in transitions between one zone and another. The SMA would suggest that new development that radically alter a property owner’s enjoyment of their existing residence must follow the following formula: new development in zone “A”, where “A” is located in a zone permitting smaller parcels than in an adjacent property “B” in a different zone, be required to subdivide only to one half the property “B” zoning.

For example, if property “B” is ten acres and within a ten acre zone, then property “A” subdivider may only subdivide the adjacent property”A” to five acre parcels even though it is in a “mixed use” zone permitting 5 houses per acre.

Respectfully Submitted

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Santa Fe County Proposed Zoning Districts 5/19/14, 11:01 AM

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