

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SETTLEMENT HELPS PRESERVE PRIME FARMLAND IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

City of Lompoc Agrees to Reconsider Decision That Would Have Opened Door to Development of Prime Agricultural Land Within the Bailey Avenue Corridor

Lompoc, CA –Santa Barbara County Action Network (SB CAN) and the City of Lompoc have settled SB CAN's lawsuit alleging that the City violated the California Environmental Quality Act in its decision to include the "Bailey Avenue expansion area" as a proposed annexation area when it certified the Environmental Impact Report for the City's 2030 General Plan Update. Opposed by both environmental and farming groups, the Bailey Avenue development proposal would transform the 270 acre piece of prime agricultural land into an urbanized development consisting of nearly 2,700 homes and more than 225,000 square feet of commercial space.

SB CAN's decision to bring the litigation was driven largely by concerns regarding the future pattern of agricultural land conversion within Santa Barbara County. The Bailey Avenue area lies within some of the most productive agricultural land in the state, and is currently farmed largely for lucrative row food crops.

Under the Settlement Agreement, the City has agreed to reconsider its decision, including its finding that alternatives preserving the land for agricultural use are infeasible. The City will reconsider this decision prior to updating the Land Use Element portion of the 2030 General Plan Update. The future of Bailey Avenue and other land use decisions will be reconsidered this summer by the Lompoc Planning Commission in a series of public meetings, prior to the Commission then forwarding its recommendations for deliberation by the Lompoc City Council.

"We are pleased that the new Lompoc City Council has agreed to change course and revisit earlier decisions that would have all but ensured development within the Bailey Avenue corridor," stated Joyce Howerton, Advocacy & Outreach Director for SB CAN. "We look forward to working with the City Council, Planning Commission and City staff on a General Plan Update ensuring that Bailey Avenue and other prime agricultural land remain in farming production."

Mr. Ed Wineman, a farmer who has owned and farmed land in the Bailey Avenue Corridor for more than 50 years is pleased that the new City Council will be revisiting the Bailey Avenue decision. "If

we want the leafy vegetables, which are very popular nowadays, we have to preserve the areas that grow them," Wineman said. He says the 270 acres of land is precious and shouldn't be turned into homes and businesses. "We have good water. We have good land. We've got good climate," Wineman said.

SB CAN views the City of Lompoc's decision as the most important, precedent-setting annexation ever considered by the City of Lompoc, one that has County-wide implications for the future of agricultural land. The development of Bailey Avenue has long been opposed by many Lompoc residents, as evidenced by the recent City Council elections in which two Council members who voted to include the project as part of the General Plan update were voted out of office. "The City's action to settle this lawsuit is a forward-looking decision that we hope will help keep Bailey Avenue and other prime agricultural lands within the Lompoc Valley as farms rather than pavement," said Brian Segee, Environmental Defense Center Staff Attorney representing SB CAN in the case.

As determined by the recent Housing Element update which is also a part of the City's 2030 General Plan, the City of Lompoc has sufficient infill vacancies to meet State housing mandates, and development of the Bailey Avenue area is not needed to meet the City's projected growth numbers.

In addition to sending Bailey Avenue development plans back to the drawing board, the Settlement Agreement also provides that the City will conduct further analysis of greenhouse gas emissions, their impacts, and the mitigation of such impacts prior to adopting an updated Land Use Element under the General Plan 2030 Update.

The settlement is available upon request.

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Santa Barbara County Action Network works to promote social and economic justice, to preserve our environmental and agricultural resources, and to create sustainable communities. SB CAN advocates a holistic approach to community planning that integrates housing, open space, and transportation to meet the needs of all members of our community and future generations. Learn more at www.sbcan.org.

The Environmental Defense Center, a non-profit law firm, protects and enhances the local environment through education, advocacy, and legal action and works primarily within Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties. Since 1977, EDC has empowered community based organizations to advance environmental protection. Program areas include protecting coast and ocean resources, open spaces and wildlife, and human and environmental health. Learn more about EDC at www.EnvironmentalDefenseCenter.org