

CITY OF SAN BUENAVENTURA

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September 22, 1998

The Honorable Charles W. Campbell
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Ventura County Superior Court
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

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Subject: Grand Jury Final Supplemental Report July 1998 -
Ventura County Redevelopment Study

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The Honorable Judge Campbell:

Thank you for the opportunity for the City of San Buenaventura to consider the recommendations included in the 1997-98 Grand Jury's Final Supplemental Report dated July 1998. Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933.05, this letter transmits the San Buenaventura City Council response to the Final Supplemental Report recommendations on Ventura County Redevelopment Study.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury's Ventura County Redevelopment Study yielded two recommendations which are below. The City of San Buenaventura's response to the recommendations follows.

1. *"In order to avoid conflicts between adjoining cities and the potential for costly litigation, it is believed that elected city officials and/or administrative staff should collectively petition the State Assembly for aid in setting up a State Mediation Board to help settle regional disputes over redevelopment actions."*

A State sponsored Mediation Board may be a reasonable approach to encouraging cities to mediate rather than litigate. However, many cities avail themselves of the mediation process. In fact, the City of Ventura engaged in a mediation process with the City of Oxnard last month. This particular mediation process utilized the office of retired Supreme Court Judge Robert Weil. Although not yet concluded, the City of Ventura is open to and will continue to avail itself to the mediation process. Since mediation is already utilized as a method for settling disputes, this recommendation is not warranted for the City of Ventura.

answered
No

2. "Loopholes in AB 1290 which define blight need to be tightened. City personnel might lobby for the improvement"

The California Redevelopment Associations (CRA), a professional association of California redevelopment agencies, is implementing this recommendation. The City of San Buenaventura Redevelopment Agency is an active member of CRA. CRA works with lawmakers on an ongoing basis to modify and refine redevelopment law, such as the definition of blight. CRA was instrumental in the adoption of AB 1290, which is considered landmark redevelopment reform legislation. The City of Ventura supports the CRA's and the Legislature's efforts to refine AB 1290 and other redevelopment legislation to be more effective for the resident throughout the State of California.

*Answer
all ready in
operation*

Findings

The City of Ventura is appreciative of the Grand Jury's efforts to provide the public with an overview of redevelopment and its activities in the Western part of Ventura County. The jurists who met with City staff were well versed in redevelopment law and had clearly taken the time necessary to have an understanding of the role redevelopment plays in municipal revitalization efforts.

In the findings portion of the report, some material information is not correct. Although it is not directly related to the Grand Jury's recommendations, the City felt it is necessary to correct the public record.

In 1985, City of Ventura filed suit against the City of Oxnard's Specific Plan and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Town Center Regional Mall & Hotel/Conference Center Proposal. The EIR failed to consider or study the traffic impacts on the Highway 101 bridge over the Santa Clara River or the City of Ventura. A settlement agreement resulted requiring Oxnard to reconstruct the 101/Highway 1 Interchange and that the bridge over the Santa Clara River be widened prior to going forward with any further development. As articulated in 1985, without a widening of the bridge and improvement of the interchange, the proposed project's vehicle trip impacts will significantly degrade the quality of life for residents of Ventura, as well as other County residents utilizing the 101 and the 101/Highway 1 interchange.

Recent litigation centers on the fact that the Town Center site does not meet the definition of blight for inclusion in a redevelopment project area because it is utilized as agriculture land. Oxnard states that the land has been zoned as commercial property for more than eight years; however this is immaterial and does not answer the question of whether or not the land is blighted for the

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purpose of redevelopment. Redevelopment law requires that a land included within a project area meet the definition of both physical and economic blight.

The City of San Buenaventura appreciates the opportunity to consider the recommendations included in the 1997-98 Grand Jury's Final Supplemental Report. Staff is available to provide additional information or to answer any questions the Grand Jury may have.

Sincerely,



James J. Friedman
Mayor

C: Stella Spray, Grand Jury Foreman
City Councilmembers
City Manager Donna Landeros
City Attorney Robert Boehm