



## Newsletter July 2023

*Collaborating with all interested Nipomo and central coast stakeholders to maintain and enhance Nipomo's rural character, unique biodiversity and economic vitality which is essential for a healthy and sustainable quality of life for people, wildlife, native plants and trees for generations to come.*

### Something's missing in the Dana Reserve Development Plan: Constructive Community Input

As we all await the Final EIR on the Dana Reserve, it's valuable to look at how the County process for the Dana Reserve project has reduced community involvement.

Changes in 2019 Affordable Housing Ordinance allows developers to work more closely with county staff in the planning process to assist the developer from snags or lawsuits that may impact or delay project approval. In practical terms, the change effectively limits public involvement in the planning process, especially at the formative stage so the project is closer to being "sewn up" before the public sees the details. The worthy goal of getting affordable housing built sooner would be better served to engage the community proactively throughout the planning process.

This is playing out now as the DR developer and County staff work closely to tweak and modify the plan behind the scenes. The result is an uninformed public that is limited to addressing its comments to the original and possibly outdated aspects of the Draft EIR. When the Final EIR comes out in just a few weeks— it will be a rush to the gate to catch up with changes and only days to prepare for

a long overdue public forum held by the South County Advisory Council (SCAC) scheduled for July 24.

Such forums should happen at the outset when community input can actually help shape a proposed development plan to fit the community needs. At this stage the forum becomes a referendum for or against the project. We can expect to hear frustrated community members who have been dis-enfranchised from the process finally getting their say. To add to community frustration the final EIR and forum are only a few weeks before the Planning Commission's critical consideration, where well informed stakeholder feedback could significantly help commissions address the problems in the project, such as **the 6 unmitigatable impacts already identified in the Draft EIR.**

Rather than being community driven, this project could accurately be characterized as a dangerous developer-led shape-shifting process with a complicit County Staff.

Also at this stage, the developer and County Planning are too enmeshed and both extensively invested in the final EIR, and are more likely to push for approval than consider constructive input from community members.

If this project does end up in a lawsuit, the Dana Reserve may be the SLO County's first large test case for a new legal precedent. A recent decision ([Save Civita Because Sudberry Won't v. City of San Diego \(2021\) Cal.App.5th](#)) allows developers to work more closely with county planning staff and is not required to show all the changes in the DRAFT EIR in the planning process.

This is too big of a project with too many moving parts and too many changes behind the scenes with too little community involvement. With the imminent release of the final EIR and the upcoming July 24, Town Hall Meeting, now is the time to be heard. **Ultimately it will be citizens who fully confront the problematic elements of this project. We hope our County representatives are listening .**

### IMPORTANT UPDATES AND ACTIONS

**The target release date for the Final EIR is 1st week of July. Letter writing campaign to begin— stay tuned!**

**July 4 —Nipomo 4th of July auto parade with Nipomo Action Committee presence 10a.m.**  
*come show your support!*

**July 9—Community Meeting w/guest speaker Stephanie Pincetl—Olympic Hall , Nipomo High School 4-6p.m.**

Stephanie Pincetl is an American academic specializing in the intersection of urban policy and the environment, particularly in California. She is the Director of the UCLA Center for Sustainable Urban Systems in Los Angeles. <https://www.spincetl.com/about>

**July 24 —SAVE THE DATE: Town Hall meeting with SCAC and Supervisor Paulding-Olympic Hall Nipomo HS**

For more info. <https://stopdanareserve.com/>



This is a picture from the LiveDana-Reserve website about the neighborhoods of the Dana Reserve. Yet, with the housing proposed and the already over-capacity local schools, **what is the development's response to the 25% increase in Nipomo's population it will create?**

- \* Reduce the overall number of houses built in the neighborhoods? **NOPE!**
  - \* work with the school district and the community to ensure sufficient *classrooms* for children? **NOPE!**
  - ✓ Convert a significant chunk of the housing restricted to 55 and older? **Yep!**
- Number 3 was the response to an official letter from the Lucia Mar School District reporting that the impact fees from his project were millions of dollars short from covering the cost of building the additional classrooms necessary to host students from the proposed Dana Reserve