



## Housing, Transportation and Community Development

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Santa Barbara County Democrats believe that the common search for shelter, home, and a broader human community is a universal drive that should remind us that this question cannot be left to the whims of the real estate market. **Housing, transportation, and community development form a nexus** at which every major issue of economic inequality, educational disparity, racial and class segregation, and environmentally-friendly development come together.

When housing values rise so high that working people and their families cannot afford to live close to where they work, the demand for transportation resources and the resulting strain on our transportation network increases; as a result, the environment is degraded by ever-expanding sprawl and increased emissions from commuters, the high cost of gasoline and the hours lost to commuting exact a further burden on working people and their families, and the outward search for affordable housing continues to spiral outwards, until the fabric of our communities can no longer stretch. When there is affordable housing close to where people work, communities become more economically and racially diverse, the forces that lead to sprawl are counter-acted, open spaces are preserved, emissions decrease, and people have more time to build stronger families and stronger communities.

### Housing

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In order to build a pathway to a more socially and environmentally sustainable community, we need more affordable housing in Santa Barbara County. Affordable housing development should respect our County's environmental and agricultural resources. Planning should be comprehensive and geared toward providing housing linked with transportation so as to minimize both pollution and sprawl, and "green building" should be required.

We believe that government should be proactive in keeping people housed. This can be done through:

- Preventing predatory lending.
- Providing protections for renters and encouraging the building of rental housing.
- Providing emergency shelter that rapidly re-houses all people losing their housing or who are homeless and want permanent housing.
- Providing very low-income housing with supportive services necessary to address homelessness in our community.
- Encouraging building with materials that are fireproof and earthquake-proof.
- Enabling people to live and work in the same community.
- Promoting the use of mixed-use buildings with businesses and affordable housing.
- Ensuring that in-lieu fees are used specifically to develop affordable housing instead of general fund support.
- Supporting the work of the City and County Housing Authorities in providing public and non-profit housing.
- Supporting experiments in cooperatively-financed housing, and exploring state and federal funding for such initiatives.
- Developing programs to make foreclosed homes available to low and moderate income residents.
- Encouraging housing developments which include recreational areas on or very near the project.
- The exploration, by cities and the county, of establishing rental assistance programs to help offset the high cost of housing in Santa Barbara County.

## **Transportation**

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Transportation infrastructure must serve pedestrians, transit-riders, bicyclists, and drivers. However, sound transportation planning should reduce automobile dependence, congestion, pollution and the use of non-renewable energy. This means focusing resources on mass transit, pedestrian and bike travel.

Public transit should be affordable, accessible, and convenient. We believe:

- Local governments should be encouraged and supported in working together to find regional solutions to transportation issues.

- Bus service must be expanded in Santa Barbara County for both transit-dependent people and choice ridership. This means constructing more express services between large population centers, and more local services to give residents alternatives to car travel in their own communities.
- Public transportation works best when fees are affordable for all members of the community. To that end, we support capping general ridership fees at the cost of inflation, and the establishment of a program of free bus passes to support seniors on limited incomes (with or without health concerns), disabled residents and the working poor and their families, in order to enhance their ability to travel freely and enjoy a quality lifestyle.
- Every new housing development must have a transportation element in it and when possible, housing should be built along transportation corridors.
- People should be able to walk safely in neighborhoods. Planning should emphasize complete streets that include dedicated bike paths with adequate lighting.
- Employers should be encouraged to provide incentives for employees using public transportation.
- Local government should work hard for a system of affordable high-speed rail linked with commuter trains, including routes from Santa Barbara to Ventura, LA to San Francisco, and from Santa Barbara to LAX Airport. Parking and buses should be available to rail passengers.

## **Community Development**

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If we focus solely on the bricks and mortar questions of housing and transportation, we will only move half-way towards our goal of a high-road strategy for development. We must do more than building houses and transportation facilities; we must work to build the human resources that are the foundations of healthy communities. To that end, the Democratic Party of Santa Barbara County supports increased funding for Human Services Programs and Community Development Grants. These funds support important services that provide housing, health, transportation, education, employment, employment training and recreation to our community.