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## CVA URGES COUNTY TO REFORM LUAC POLICY

by Janet Brennan

Monterey County Land Use Advisory Committees (LUACs) were established in the early 1980s to provide recommendations to the Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors on land use projects within their respective planning areas. Members are appointed by the Planning Commission.

Procedures for LUACs were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1994 and 2008. Prior to adoption of current guidelines, former Carmel Valley LUAC committee members report that LUAC's scope of review was broader than currently identified. The 2008 procedures establish the following guidelines for LUACs:

"The Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) shall review and make recommendations on land use issues only as specifically set out by the following guidelines:

1. The applicable LUAC shall review projects that require the following:

a) Development requiring CEQA review [Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report (EIR)]

b) Lot Line Adjustments involving conflicts (e.g., modifications to Scenic Easements or Building Envelopes, Williamson Act, the Coastal Zone, etc.)

c) Variances

d) Design Approvals for projects subject to review by the Zoning Administrator or Planning Commission

2. The LUAC shall review any discretionary permit application for which the local area plan, land use plan, master plan, specific plan, or community plan requires review by a local citizens' committee.



Priscilla Walton

Over the strenuous objections of our supervisor, Mary Adams, the Board of Supervisors majority has called for an ordinance to allow more than 200 vacation rentals throughout the residential neighborhoods of Carmel Valley. This will change the nature of Carmel Valley forever.

Vacation rentals (short-term rentals) damage our community in many ways:

1. They decrease the number of long-term rentals in residential areas that are available to those who live and work in Carmel Valley. This creates a scarcity of housing that contributes to rising long-term rental prices;
2. They significantly alter existing neighborhoods by replacing long-term residents with transient vacationers who have no vested interest in the community;
3. They broaden the scope of tourism activity into residential areas;
4. They are unfair and disruptive to existing traditional lodging. The vacation rentals do not have to pay for staff and are not regulated like hotels. Nor do they have the oversight to manage negative and undesirable behavior; and,
5. They cause problems and complaints regarding trash, parking, road use, and noise disturbance. Many homes become party houses, making life hellish for the neighboring residents. In short, they irrevocably change the character and quality of life in residential areas.

That's why Carmel Valley Association (CVA) has taken a leading role in opposing this misguided policy. CVA has actively participated in every public hearing and has repeatedly written letters detailing the damaging impact of short-term rentals on

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

### VACATION RENTALS ABOUT TO OVERWHELM CARMEL VALLEY

communities. We have also sent many articles, data, and copies of well-written ordinances from other communities to planning staff and to the supervisors. To date, all these efforts have been to no avail.

The recent Grand Jury report on the short-term rental ordinance highlighted the inefficient process, incompetence, and length of time that it has taken (seven years) to create an ordinance for the unincorporated areas of Monterey County. The 2021 Civil Grand Jury report, "*Vacation Rentals Enforcement in Monterey County: Little Progress Despite Years of Struggle*," documented the county's seven-year effort to create workable regulations. Here are some of the jury's findings and recommendations:

"Data collection system and staffing levels are insufficient to allow timely enforcement of current and proposed regulations. Online public access to complaint information is limited by poor web portal design, the lack of a common database between Treasurer-Tax Collector and Department of Housing and Community Development, and insufficient internal staff necessary to perform timely processing of Vacation Rental complaints.

Thus far the county Treasurer-Tax Collector and the Department of Housing and Community Development have not worked together to ensure registration, permitting, licensing, and enforcement of vacation rentals. The Board of Supervisors has been slow to authorize the development of a comprehensive Vacation Rental enforcement program funded through revenue generated from TOT tax receipts, zoning permit fees, and zoning ordinance violation penalties in a manner similar to the Cannabis program."

The last supervisors' meeting on vacation rental housing all but dashed any hopes for a reasonable ordinance. Though our District

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LUAC, continued from Pg. 1

3. The LUAC shall review any discretionary permit application, and any land use matter that in the opinion of the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, or Director of Planning, raises significant land use issues that necessitate review prior to a public hearing by the Appropriate Authority. The Director of Planning shall inform the Planning Commission of a Board of Supervisors' referral.

4. The LUAC shall focus recommendations on site design and local considerations.

a. Advise the Appropriate Authority by providing comments and recommendations on referred land use planning matters pursuant to the "Guidelines for Review of Applications" in Exhibit A.

b. Reflect the perspective of the local community with focus on neighborhood character, unique community site and conditions and potential local effects or contributions that would likely result from the implementation of a proposed project.

c. Perform such other review of land use issues as may be requested from time to time by the Planning Commission or the Board of Supervisors.

d. Provide a venue for project neighbors to provide input on proposed projects.

e. Identify concerns in response to staff-provided scope of review on neighborhood, community and site issues excluding regional impacts which are the purview of the Appropriate Authority."

Over the years, county planning staff has attempted to limit the scope of review by LUACs. In a recent memorandum, staff opined that LUACs have no authority to deny a project. It is well recognized that LUAC recommendations are advisory only, and there are no provisions in the procedures indicating that LUACs are

prohibited from making recommendations for denial. Using the same logic as used in the staff memorandum, LUACs have no authority to recommend approval of a project, either!

Additionally, staff has attempted to limit review to site considerations only. For example, the staff report for the Rancho Canada Village project indicated that the LUAC's review should relate only to "layout, house design, and neighborhood character aspects." The LUAC procedures state LUACs should "Identify concerns in response to staff-provided scope of review on neighborhood, community, and site issues, excluding regional impacts...." Neighborhood and community issues included those issues raised by the community such as the need for affordable housing in Carmel Valley, impact of the project on downstream flooding, etc. These issues clearly go beyond what staff recommended for the scope of consideration.

A recent letter from CVA to the county on Rancho Canada Village identified the following requirement in CEQA Guidelines for environmental review:

"Where an advisory body such as a planning commission is required to make a recommendation on a project to the decision-making body, the advisory body shall also review and consider the EIR or negative declaration in draft or final form."

LUACs have historically been precluded from considering environmental documents in their review and recommendations. In light of the CEQA requirement, which would appear to take precedence over the adopted procedures, CVA has requested that planning staff should work with County Counsel to resolve this matter.

Finally, there are projects subject to LUAC's review that are never sent to LUACs. LUACs only learn of those projects from community members and from their own observations.



Mid Valley Farm

5 Supervisor, Mary Adams, urged a cap on vacation rentals of no more than 2% of the total of single-family houses, the board majority ignored her. What became clear was that the majority of the supervisors are either totally uninformed and/or really do not care what happens to Carmel Valley. As a result of their proposed action, our quiet residential community is about to be overwhelmed by short-term rentals, and it is about to become instead a transient destination tourism community.

We may be about to pass the tipping point of being able to manage our community. While it is true that short-term rentals bring economic benefits to communities, the vast increase in their numbers will undoubtedly impact residential neighborhoods and quality of life in highly negative and undesirable ways. The lack of appropriate county oversight and disregard of the Carmel Valley community and the Carmel Valley Master Plan by the majority of supervisors puts us at peril as a local community.

CVA has created a task force on short-term rentals that is following all of this closely and will make recommendations for action to the CVA board. We hope you will continue to support our efforts to maintain our Carmel Valley way of life and to resist the efforts to turn us into merely another soulless destination tourist point on the map.

We hope you will sign up for our free weekly e-bulletin to keep informed on this and other issues affecting Carmel Valley, and you will consider joining CVA and/or making a donation to CVA to support our efforts on behalf of Carmel Valley. To do so, please visit our website at [CarmelValleyAssociation.org](http://CarmelValleyAssociation.org).

Thank you!



ers Market on a Sunday afternoon

Photos by Mibs McCarthy

## Grab a Front-Row Seat to Experience Carmel Valley's Rural Character at Its Best

by C.S. Noel

There aren't too many places left with an outdoor setting, both beautiful and intimate, where you can watch top horsemen demonstrate their skills. But you can get a taste of it right here at the Carmel Valley Trail & Saddle Club's annual Ranch Roundup, scheduled this year on September 25-26th. This event showcases the horse-savvy and know-how essential to working the Valley's historic ranches, drawing on a long Central Coast history of fine horsemanship and cattle handling that reaches back hundreds of years to the Spanish vaqueros.

Enjoy a leisurely day in the beautiful outdoors watching our local ranchers, as well as competitors from around the state, riding in to show us tenderfoots how it's done. Winners come away with high points, prizes, and acclaim. Classes feature such crowd favorites as Ranch Riding; Old-Style Riata Roping in the vaquero tradition; Ranch Penning and Ranch Roping; classes for juniors, including the highly watchable Rancher's Choice; and Ranch Trail, where human and horse partner over, around, and through a series of obstacles.

In addition to the competition classes, enjoy a shady lunch on the club's expansive lawn set beneath towering sycamores alongside the Carmel River. You'll find everything from burritos to BBQ and lots to nosh on in between. Follow it up by browsing vendor wares with handmade craft items and leather goods, alongside a silent auction, where you'll



Photo courtesy of the Trail & Saddle Club

have a chance to bid on items such as gift certificates to local restaurants and stores and award-winning local wines. To keep the little ones entertained, there is even an arts and crafts area where kids can make their own stick horses to ride in the Stick Horse Parade!

The Ranch Roundup is open to the public. Admission and parking are free. Food and beverages available all day from 6:30am to 5:00pm.

The Trail & Saddle Club, located at 85 East Garzas Road (off of Boronda Road), was founded in 1956 and has a sixty-five-year tradition of community and family-friendly fun. Mosey on down and enjoy a galloping good time for the whole family.

[Please note that for the safety of participants and attendees, no dogs are permitted on the grounds during events.]

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# CARMEL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS LOOK AHEAD

by Andy Sudol



Photo by Randy Tunnell

To say that the Class of 2021 has grit is a gross understatement. This graduating class has experienced a very untypical senior year of high school and made the best of a challenging situation. Classes were mostly online, with activities such as athletics and performing arts returning briefly at the end of the academic year. Experiencing the challenges of Covid-19 isolation, restricted physical interaction, and calculated health risks became new concerns. Nevertheless, seniors at Carmel High celebrated with a creative outdoor prom in Carmel Valley



Photo by Andy Sudol

hosted by local businesses and parents led by **Melissa Kreuger** and **Farrah** and **Josh Rees**. Also, the graduation ceremony returned to Carmel High's stadium with the Santa Lucia mountains serving as a majestic backdrop for the festive pomp and circumstance.

Plans are underway for brighter futures at various colleges and universities, foreign countries, and our local communities. Here's a look at some young adult Carmel Valley residents and the exciting opportunities they have ahead of them:

**Cadyn Lucido** plans to be an elementary school teacher after attending California State University in Chico. **Alicia Kreuger** will head to the Big Apple to study journalism at NYU.

**Isabella Daste** will attend the University of California, Berkeley, to pursue a biology-related field of study. **Ella Fisher** is planning on attending Sonoma State University. **Paul Stracuzzi** will study business management at Arizona State University. **Tayah Grijalva** plans to work while attending Monterey Peninsula College. **Leila Chappell** is off to Boston's Berklee College of Music to study vocal performance and songwriting. **Ry Champagne** will major in entrepreneurship at Chico State and expand the Happy Girl Kitchen family enterprise. **Tyler Bianchi** will study business at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and hit the slopes in the Rockies. **John Berube** plans to earn a real estate license after attending Monterey Peninsula College. **Ananda Sudol** will attend Santa Monica College and live closer to her sister in Los Angeles. **Grayson Slocum** will study at Colorado State University. **Olivia Randazzo** will explore Oaxaca, Mexico, on a service project before commencing studies

at the University of Colorado in 2022. **Isaac Sherman** plans to visit every national park and all 50 states in the next year. **Ethan Carmichael**, **Georgia Gabrielson**, and **Justus Rees** are other seniors residing in the Valley. Congratulations to all of you! May you always consider Carmel Valley your home.



Photo from Instagram

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# HOW THE SANTA LUCIA CONSERVANCY REDUCES FIRE RISK WHILE PROMOTING BIODIVERSITY

by Alix Soliman,  
Communications & Outreach Coordinator at Santa Lucia Conservancy

Fire resilience is a top priority at the Santa Lucia Conservancy (SLC), which manages 18,000 acres of protected lands on a 20,000-acre preserve in the Carmel Valley and assists Preserve homeowners with custom fuel management plans (FMPs). This year, the conservancy has set an ambitious goal to complete 50 lot-specific FMPs by May of 2022.

These robust FMPs are designed to go above and beyond state fire prevention standards while taking into account natural vegetation and wildlife habitats, landscaping, topography, architecture, and other unique features of each home. The plans don't stop at prescribing defensible space around the home; they work to protect healthy ecosystems that stabilize the landscape to reduce fire risk and provide habitat for wildlife long-term.

When folks indiscriminately remove vegetation on their property, "they run the risk of soil erosion and possible landslides, and, as far as fire, allow the invasive plants to come in and take over," said Kevin Kamnikar, Monterey County Regional Fire District Division Chief and Fire Marshal. "[Weeds] can grow a lot quicker, and it's harder to maintain them. Genista [French broom], for instance, spreads just like wildfire."

Many of the invasive plants that encroach here are woody, dense, and dry, and they tend to thrive in disturbed landscapes, meaning that too much fuel management can

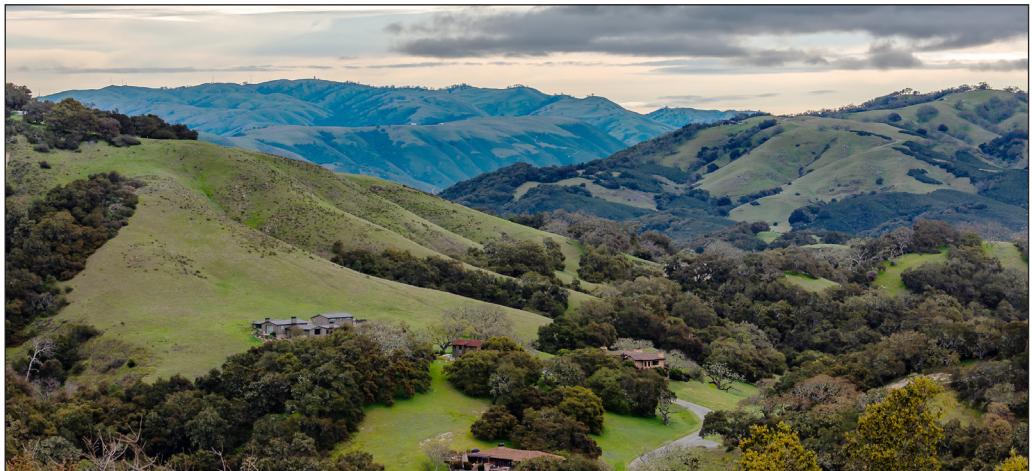


Photo courtesy of Santa Lucia Preserve

invite highly flammable weeds to move in, increasing the risk of fire burning hotter and spreading quickly into the canopy.

"There's an adage that nature abhors a vacuum, so if you create that vacuum, it's going to be filled with the most aggressive plants. Oftentimes, those are the exotic invasives," said General Manager of Wildland Resource Management Carol Rice. "If you don't create a barren landscape with too much exposed dirt, then everything will be held in balance. We don't ever want bare ground."

When we remove invasive species, carefully prune natives, and increase the space between patches of healthy habitat, we do a

better job of lowering the risk of catastrophic fire and benefit from the vibrant beauty of a healthy habitat.

A multi-layered approach and widespread community commitment to fire safety further reduces the Preserve's fire risk score assigned by insurance companies. "We've got a Preserve-wide fuel management plan, site-specific fuel management plans, a fire station on Rancho San Carlos Road, and a community service district (CSD) that maintains ample access for fire engines," Rice said. "So all of these layers of fire protection score well in an insurer's eyes."

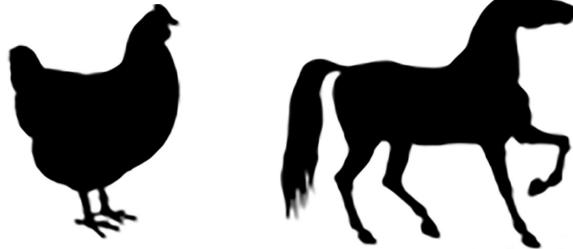
Adapting to fire risks and taking measurable actions to increase community safety and resilience has earned the Santa Lucia Preserve and Conservancy immense respect from agency partners who look to the preserve as a framework for how other communities living in rural, fire-prone areas can stay safe.

"[The Santa Lucia Preserve] is actually a role model, having put a lot of time and energy and money to come up with a plan for the open space and for the areas around the homes," Kamnikar said. "I hear it all the time: 'We want to follow SLP's model.'"

Fire safety takes a village. The conservancy is committed to collaborating with the wider Carmel Valley community to reduce fire risk in the region and keep everyone safe. If you have any questions, please contact the conservancy's executive director, Jamison Watts, at [jwatts@slconservancy.org](mailto:jwatts@slconservancy.org) or (831) 402-9694.

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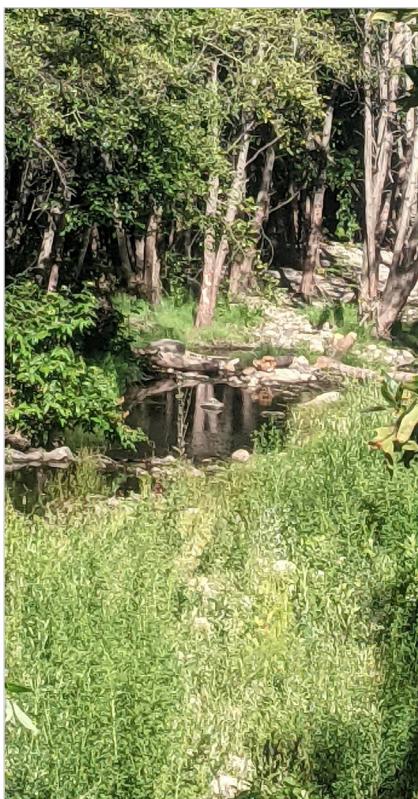
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Page 1 banner of street scene at the Barefoot Floral studio by Ron Pierce. Ron wants everyone to know that "everyone, everywhere, lives in an incredible area, if they only took time to go out and explore it." Another of his photos is below.



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