

ISLA VISTA – TAKE CHARGE!

For decades, much has been written about Isla Vista, usually not complimentary. The 2002-2003 Grand Jury acknowledges the tremendous efforts of all contributing parties to the newly released [Re]Vision Isla Vista: Interim Draft Isla Vista Master Plan (3/12/2003). Many people are spending countless hours working on the “Isla Vista Master Plan” in order to make Isla Vista a wonderful, vibrant and safe community in which to live, work and visit. We encourage all of Isla Vista to work together for the common good of this unique community.

INTRODUCTION

Due to overwhelming public interest in Isla Vista, the 2002-2003 Grand Jury elected to review the 2001-2002 Grand Jury report, “**Isla Vista – Who’s in Charge**”. Since the responses by the affected agencies were not received prior to the end of the 2001-2002 Grand Jury’s term, this year’s panel chose to evaluate the responses to determine if any further recommendations were required. To read the 2001-2002 Grand Jury report and the affected agencies’ responses, go to www.sbcgj.org.

BACKGROUND

Many of the responses to the Findings and Recommendations in the 2001-2002 Grand Jury report on Isla Vista made reference to the “Isla Vista Master Plan”, which was expected to be available in draft form by early fall of 2002. The Grand Jury decided to see if the issues in last year’s report were adequately addressed in the “Isla Vista Master Plan”.

The three sponsoring agencies of the “Isla Vista Master Plan” are: 1) Santa Barbara County – through the Board of Supervisors, the Planning and Development Department and the Redevelopment Agency; 2) the Isla Vista Recreation and Park District; and 3) the University of California at Santa Barbara. These sponsors are advised by the Project Area Committee (PAC), which also serves as the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The PAC/GPAC is composed of volunteers who represent student, tenant, business, property and homeowner interests in Isla Vista. To learn more about the status of the “Isla Vista Master Plan”, go to www.islavistaplan.org.

The [Re]Vision Isla Vista: Master Plan Design Workshop April 9-16, 2002 Workshop Summary Report (the precursor of the [Re]Vision Isla Vista: Interim Draft Isla Vista Master Plan) was provided to the 2002-2003 Grand Jury in November 2002. This Jury found that there were several very important Findings and Recommendations from the 2001-2002 Grand Jury report that continue to be inadequately addressed:

- Finding 1 stated that “No single agency has been assigned the responsibility to address Isla Vista problems...beyond the planning process.” Recommendation 1 was for the “Board of Supervisors...to designate an agency, department or individual to have primary responsibility to implement programs and policies...” The August 2002 joint response from the Board of Supervisors (BOS) and the Redevelopment Agency (RDA) to Recommendation 1 was that “...it will not be implemented because it is not warranted.” They referred to the “Isla Vista Master Plan” as the solution to the problems plaguing Isla Vista.
- The BOS/RDA joint response to Recommendation 3 recognized the need to “move forward with proposals for a parking district or authority within one year.” Will they meet their own deadline of August 2003?
- The BOS/RDA joint responses to Findings 12-15, and Recommendations 3, 9, and 14 (all dealing with parking issues) stated the need for “further analysis” of the Recommendations. When will they move from "analysis" to action?

The 2002-2003 Grand Jury does not agree with these joint responses. Isla Vista cannot afford any further delays.

According to the County of Santa Barbara Fiscal Year 2002-2003 Operating Plan Proposed Budget, the “[Re]Vision Isla Vista: Draft Isla Vista Master Plan” was scheduled for release October 2002. Assuming no further delays, this draft is now scheduled for release June 2003, more than eight months late. The Environmental Review (scheduled to take eight months) is to be followed by adoption hearings (an additional year) before “Implementation” and “Ongoing Work” can begin. It is anticipated that it will take two to three more years before final implementation occurs. In light of these delays, and because the “Isla Vista Master Plan” deals with housing among other things, it appears to the Grand Jury that the newly formed Housing and Community Development Department would be better suited to oversee and implement the redevelopment of Isla Vista.

Members of the Grand Jury met with concerned individuals and attended meetings of various groups within Isla Vista and at the County level. Government agencies, as well as interest groups within Isla Vista, resort to finger pointing instead of bearing responsibility for many of Isla Vista’s problems. It appears to the Jury that there is no

united voice, because there is little unity. Why is it that many who live and work in Isla Vista do not say much about what others have to say about them? Could it be that the silent majority feels helpless, while the vocal minority is satisfied with the status quo?

The Third District encompasses 950 square miles, with 39,939 registered voters (as of May 2003). Approximately 20 percent of these voters live in Isla Vista, which is only about one half square mile in size. The Third District Supervisor should not be expected to oversee the needs of so many distinct groups in such a small geographical area, and still be able to deal with the needs of the rest of this large and diverse District.

How can Isla Vista take charge? The registered voters of Isla Vista have the privilege and responsibility to hold their elected officials accountable for their decisions. The voters need to determine their own goals and decide what services they want to control. They must learn how they can and will benefit by taking charge of what various multiple districts now provide. **They can accomplish this by establishing a Community Services District, and electing its own Board of Directors which will be accountable solely to the community of Isla Vista.**

DESCRIPTION

A Community Services District (CSD) would provide the necessary services required by a populated area within the unincorporated part of a county. It would establish local political control and retain its financial resources. All funds generated by the District would be for the District and remain in the District. These funds would not go into a general account available to the larger community. One example of how this would immediately benefit Isla Vista is the Goleta West Sanitary District (GWSD). As of the date of this report, the GWSD has over \$20 million dollars in reserve, of which approximately 20 percent would transfer back to Isla Vista, if the voters choose to include sewage services as one of the powers of the CSD.

PROCEDURE

A Community Services District (CSD) is formed according to California Government Code Section 61000 (www.leginfo.ca.gov/calaw.html). The process of establishing a CSD can be initiated by: 1) “a petition... signed by at least 10% of the qualified voters of the proposed district area”, or 2) a legislative body (Board of Supervisors) may adopt and file a “resolution of application”. After an open hearing, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) evaluates the petition or resolution for approval of the formation of a district, after which an election is held in the proposed district.

Currently, the only entity under local control is the Isla Vista Recreation and Park District (IVRPD). A Community Services District can assume the services of the IVRPD, and add additional powers (even if not initially included in the “petition for formation”) such as water, fire protection, collection and disposal of garbage, street lighting, police protection, and others. (For a full list of “Purposes and Powers”, see California Government Code Section 61600). However, the cost of services must be thoroughly evaluated, and the method(s) of financing them, clearly defined.

CONCLUSION

The [Re]Vision Isla Vista: Interim Draft Isla Vista Master Plan was released March 12, 2003. Many hours are still being spent working on the Draft by sponsoring agencies and advisory groups. The “[Re]Vision Isla Vista: Draft Isla Vista Master Plan” is due June 2003. Public input is still an important step in this process.

The Grand Jury encourages the residents of Isla Vista to take charge of the future of their community and not settle for the status quo. Take responsibility and take advantage of all that will be available to you through the “Isla Vista Master Plan”, which will be “incorporated into amendments to the Isla Vista Redevelopment Plan and relevant parts of the County Comprehensive Plan.” (See “Isla Vista Master Plan Update – Spring 2003”.) It is not too late to let your voice be heard.

All of Isla Vista must take a more active role in determining its future and not wait for the County, UCSB or some other agency to make decisions for it. Be proud of your community! Take the necessary time to become knowledgeable about how Isla Vista can and should Take Charge!

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1

As an unincorporated area, various county agencies provide services to the residents and businesses of Isla Vista. The Isla Vista Recreation and Park District is the only local district providing limited services exclusively to Isla Vista.

Recommendation 1

Establish a Community Services District which will expand and improve the services provided to Isla Vista. Combine the services of outside agencies with those currently provided by the Isla Vista Recreation and Park District into an efficient, fiscally responsible and locally controlled district.

Finding 2

Parking problems continue to plague Isla Vista. Prior reports have recommended parking permits and/or parking meters. As of the writing of this report, nothing has been implemented.

Recommendation 2

Without delay, establish a parking permit program for the streets of Isla Vista, and install parking meters in the commercial area. After installation, provide for diligent enforcement, with all revenue remaining in Isla Vista. Do not wait for more Grand Jury reports to be released.

Finding 3

The Redevelopment Plan for Isla Vista is currently under the auspices of the Planning and Development Department.

Recommendation 3

Transfer the Redevelopment Agency responsibilities for Isla Vista out of Planning and Development and into the Housing and Community Development Department, for continued development and final implementation.

AFFECTED AGENCIES

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Findings 1, 2, 3

Recommendations 1, 2, 3

Santa Barbara County Housing and Community Development

Finding 3

Recommendation 3

Santa Barbara County Planning and Development

Findings 1, 3

Recommendations 1, 3

Santa Barbara County Public Works Department

Finding 2

Recommendation 2

Isla Vista Recreation and Park District

Finding 1

Recommendation 1