

Linda Ann Kuller

From: David Kane <dbkane@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2018 1:42 PM
To: Adam Zack; Comp Plan Update
Subject: Comments: Final Report San Juan County Vision 2036 Update Process .

Hi Adam,

A big thank you to you and Linda for all the great work on the comp plan, keep up the good work. Here are comments on the 'Final Report San Juan County Vision 2036 Update Process' that I'd like added to Public Comments for the Vision Statement. Some may be of interest to you.

See attachment

 **Final Draft Vison Comments 2/15/2018 David Kane**

Thank you,
David Kane
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(360) 298-4840

2/15/2018 Comments

Intended Audience: Planning Commission and SJC Comp Plan Staff.

Commenting on : 'Final Report San Juan County Vision 2036 Update Process' (Report¹) <https://www.sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/13890>

Given the significant public engagement, meetings and outreach spanning many months and the incredible response to the online Survey we can feel confident that the 'Final Report San Juan County Vision 2036 Update Process' (Report¹) reflects the wishes of the Community.

In my reading of the report I wanted to know the opinions of my fellow citizens and ensure that proposed amendments to the Vision were proportional to the Community input. Given the breath of the 464 page Report¹ and 21 page Staff² 'Proposed Vision Amendments' there nearly 500 pages to absorb. After reading the documents I took an analytical approach and ran word counts on the Report¹ and compared those to the Staff² proposal. The instances of each term in the Report¹ we're tallied and cross referenced to the existing Vision Statement and Staff² proposal.

The resulting tallies show Housing as clearly number 1 priority and Agriculture as a close number 2 priority. Next most important theme was close to my heart, but a bit of a surprise, Bikes/Cyclists, but with only half the mentions of Agriculture and one third the mention of Housing. Huge ideas like Climate Change and Drinking water were mentioned 20-25% as often as Housing and Agriculture. It was good to see my neighbors had so much care for People and Place.

The analysis revealed a few 'Opportunities'... I'll get to those after I show you the numbers and a 'Cliff Notes' style summary of the Report¹ and Staff² proposal.

Housing: 59 instances in report. 2 in current Vision. Staff² proposes to Create new Vision Element and add 4 instances.

Agriculture: 39 instances in report. 2 mentions of Agriculture in current Vision. No Staff² proposals. We have an 'Opportunity' here. See more below...

Bike / Cyclist: 19 instances in report. 1 in current Vision and Staff² proposes to add 1 new instance.

Shoreline: 13 instances in report. 3 in current Vision. Staff² proposes add 1 new instance.

Climate Change: 12 instances in report. 0 in current vision. Staff² proposes to Create new Vision Element add 3 new instances.

Drinking Water: 7 instances in report. 1 in current Vision and Staff² proposes to add 1 new instance.

Health: 4 instances in report. 1 in current Vision. No Staff² Comment.

Food: 2 instances in report. 0 in current Vision. Another opportunity to prioritize Local Food.

Elder Care: 2 instances in report. 0 in current Vision and Staff² proposes to add 1 new instance.

Proposal / Justification:

As we can see, Agriculture is the second most important topic discussed in this Report¹, however it has not yet been addressed by the Draft Staff² Report, perhaps in the next draft?.

As it is, a real 'Opportunity' exists to look more closely at the narrative of Report¹ as it says much about the communities interest in Preserving Agricultural Land, while Reinvigorating and Promoting Local Sustainably Produced Food.

Proposed additions to Vision Statement for 2036 to better align the Vision with findings of Report¹, I plan on more comments, but for the moment I'll limit the comment to Agriculture as it's not yet represented equally.

Basic Human Needs: Include 'Local Sustainably Produced Food'.

Economy:

For consistency 'Agriculture' should replace 'Farming'.

Land Use:

'Agricultural Land held in Public Trust is Preserved for Sustainable Agricultural Productivity and Soil Health'

Supported as a Planning Priority as seen by the a 81% vote (Page 149 of Report¹).

See following many many pages of excerpts from the Report¹ supporting these notions.

Frequent Mentions

- Housing affordability
- Rural character
- Agricultural economy

Other Mentions

- Uniqueness of the county's population
- Increasing ethnic diversity of the county's population
- Attachment to the islands' character
- **New approaches to agriculture and land production**

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Table 02 – Primary interview topics

Topic	Comments
<i>Housing affordability</i>	Many of the interviewees noted that housing is difficult to find, even though there are plenty of units on the island. Proliferation of second homes makes the ownership market tight, with seasonally-occupied houses consuming a lot of the housing supply. Conversion of long-term rentals to short-term or seasonal rentals, a product of tourism's success, makes the rental market tight and drives up rents for units still available.
<i>Rural character</i>	Most appreciate the wooded hills and open fields, but there's little else to define what "rural character" means beyond its aesthetic quality. Concern over incremental subdivision of the rural landscape repeated among interviews.
<i>Agricultural economy</i>	The agricultural economy is changing. Previous productive farmland in crops or livestock have given way to fallow ground or grass farming. New innovations in marketing and product development are changing the way the islands farm and process agricultural goods.

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Table 03 – Secondary interview topics

Topic	Comments
<i>Uniqueness of the population</i>	Those who choose to live in the San Juans – and those who have continued to live here – develop a unique commitment to the place. Though they may disagree on various political issues, they all share a love of this place, the sacrifices living here demands, and the desire to be nowhere else.
<i>Increasing ethnic diversity in population</i>	People living on the islands are not the same as they were when the vision was written 20 years ago. The population is more racially diverse, it's older, it tends to earn less, and the percentage of those households who rent rather than own has increased.
<i>Attachment to island character</i>	Whether it's the rural landscape, the in-town character of Friday Harbor and Eastsound, the hamlets, or the resorts, interviewees acknowledge a deep attachment to the general feel and ambiance of the islands.
<i>New approaches to agriculture and land production</i>	Some interviewees went into detail about how the agricultural economy is shifting, building on the increasing focus on local food and a new social movement of getting people farming again. An interisland farmers' cooperative is attempting to revive smaller farms, and a land trust program is active in preserving farmland and putting it back into crop and livestock production.

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quality of ocean waters. It appeared that the popular sentiment generally reflected the topics and direction included in the current vision, with additional emphasis placed on housing, the tourism economy, the shifts in agriculture and the

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market. Groups also identified the gradual transformation of the island's rural landscape to large-lot subdivision, sad about the decline in productive agriculture and concerned about the changing character of fields and forests. At

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to housing availability, housing costs and declining potency of the island's traditional agricultural sector. Participants also identified

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Respondents also favor preserving agricultural land, just as much for its aesthetic values as for its ability to sustain or re-enter agricultural production. Diversifying the economy and concentrating on

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Conversation

Economic influences hinted at in the existing vision have become more potent, exacerbating the availability of affordable housing, shifting the character of island agriculture and placing increasing emphasis on income from tourism. These three topics repeated in various forms throughout the vision conversation.

Agriculture

While the rural character of the islands is cherished, there is not a strong agricultural economy in place to support it. Much of the land historically used for farming and livestock operations has dropped out of production, in many cases making the transition from crop to grass farming, going fallow or being subdivided into smaller acreage. There is some activity focusing on reinventing San Juan County's agricultural economy, concentrating on local food ethics and resilience, niche value added production, cooperative marketing and transport, and agritourism. These efforts represent a fundamental change in the economics of agriculture in the islands, potentially creating a sector that will become more significant if they succeed.

While the vision may need to adapt to increasing concerns about tourism's dominance, it may also need to address more clearly hopes for a reinvention of the agricultural sector and the sustained diversity of economic activity overall, ensuring a robust and capable service and trades sector to serve the needs of island residents and businesses.

Conversation

Process participants almost universally consider the San Juans a rural landscape, with fields and forested mountainsides defining the county's overall character. There's a sense of nostalgia over the past these landscapes imply and a hope that the same type of overall landscape will persist even as the economy and conditions on the islands have changed.

Core issues

- Rural character is becoming less about actual agricultural use and more about the atmosphere and aesthetics provided by open fields and forests.
- Housing is not easily available for people living year-round on the islands and part of the workforce.

model applicable countywide. They want to see trust land put to use to revitalize local agriculture, writing down the cost of land ownership to allow local farmers to compete. This might inject alternative nuance into the vision's agricultural reference, confirming agriculture's importance but implying use of a trust to lower barriers to entry.

Revitalizing the ag economy

Whether it is supported by a land bank and trust's charter or driven entirely by private initiative, people support a new agricultural economy. They want to see land that was historically used for crops and livestock put back into production. County policy may intervene to influence or encourage a return to production, and that would likely win general support.

accepting of others. The principal point of alignment is concern over rural character, so any potential County policy on this should prioritize compatibility with the rural landscape and the opportunity to restore historic agricultural activities in the future.

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Mini-Poll: "Planning Priorities" - Thoughts?

Increase land for businesses	10.24% 17	17.47% 29	64.46% 107	7.83% 13
Increase land for homes	15.98% 27	28.40% 48	51.48% 87	4.73% 8
Preserve agricultural land	81.15% 155	15.18% 29	3.66% 7	0.00% 0

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¹ Final Report San Juan County Vision 2036 Update Process (Report¹)

<https://www.sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/13890>

²Draft Vision Amendments dated February 16, 2018

<http://www.sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/View/14433>

Thank you,

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