



Letter of Support for 841 Capitola Road

From: Workbench

To: Santa Cruz County Planning Commission

Re: 841 Capitola Road – Five-Story, 57-Unit Multifamily Housing Project

Dear Commissioners,

Workbench is proud to present the proposed housing project at **841 Capitola Road**, a thoughtfully designed, five-story community that reflects the very best of Santa Cruz values: sustainability, inclusivity, and smart urban infill. This 57-unit project, which includes **one very-low-income, and three extremely-low-income homes**, represents a tangible step toward meeting the County's housing and climate goals while enhancing neighborhood livability and transportation choice.

Advancing Housing Opportunity

Santa Cruz County faces one of the most severe housing shortages in California. Under the State's **6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)**, the County must plan for **4,634 new homes between 2023 and 2031**, with more than **3,000 of those units required for low- and moderate-income households**. Despite recent progress, there is a gap in projects required to meet these numbers.

Projects like 841 Capitola Road are exactly how Santa Cruz closes that gap. Each home permitted here directly advances our community's RHNA targets and our shared responsibility to create housing opportunities across income levels. The inclusion of very-low and extremely-low-income units ensures that the benefits of growth are shared equitably, while the remaining homes increase overall supply and ease upward pressure on rents and prices countywide while accounting towards the market rate RHNA needs.

By building within the Urban Services Line, the project also implements **Program H-1B** of the County's Housing Element, which calls for new high-density infill housing on already-urbanized parcels. The result is a project that is both **responsive to the housing crisis** and **consistent with state housing law**, transforming a single under-utilized lot into dozens of much-needed homes.

Consistency with the County's General Plan Vision

The County's recently updated **General Plan** envisions *"safe, healthy and attractive neighborhoods with a diversity of housing choices and mobility options available to all."* The 841 Capitola Road project directly fulfills this vision by locating new housing in a transit-rich, walkable neighborhood where residents can live, work, and shop without relying on long car commutes.

Key General Plan policies specifically support this form of development:

- **BE-1.2.2** – Encourage compact infill housing within one-half mile of high-quality transit corridors.
- **BE-1.2.3** – Promote high-intensity residential and mixed-use projects along multimodal corridors.
- **AM-1.1.2** Transit Infill Development. Prioritize infill development near high-quality transit, including near the Santa Cruz Branch Line rail corridor, and near job centers that reduce urban sprawl and encourage the reduction of VMT per person.

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The 841 Capitola Road proposal embodies these policies. It concentrates new housing along a primary transit and bicycle corridor, within walking distance of employment, grocery stores, schools, and parks. It is precisely the type of **location-efficient development** the General Plan identifies as critical to reducing greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions and preserving the County’s rural lands from sprawl.

Sustainability and Transportation Choice

Transportation is the largest contributor to local GHG emissions, and the surest way to cut those emissions is to build housing close to jobs and transit. The 841 Capitola Road project makes sustainable mobility the default by offering:

- A **resident bike-share program** on-site.
- Planning for a reserved **Zipcar space** for shared vehicle use.
- Available **Free bus passes** for residents.
- Direct access to an existing **BCycle station** just steps from the property.
- **Maximum feasible parking** provided within site constraints, balancing car access with sustainability.

These measures go beyond compliance—they represent a commitment to culture change. Santa Cruz is already a national leader in active transportation, boasting the **second-highest bicycle-commuting rate in the United States (13.2% of residents bike to work)**. By adding new homes in this context, 841 Capitola Road amplifies that success—making it easier for future residents to embrace a car-light lifestyle that saves money, improves health, and protects the environment.

Design that Respects the Neighborhood

Great infill design is about fit as much as function. From the outset, our design team sought to **minimize neighborhood impacts** while maximizing community benefit. The building massing has been carefully placed **toward the back of the site**, stepping away from adjacent properties to preserve light, privacy, and scale transitions as much as possible. Landscaped setbacks and tree buffers soften the visual edge and enhance the street frontage while retaining safety for Fire Department access.

At the same time, the architecture reflects Santa Cruz’s approachable character—modern but warm, with durable materials and an emphasis on pedestrian connectivity. The result is a project that **adds vitality without overwhelming** the surrounding area. It demonstrates that density, when done thoughtfully, can strengthen community character rather than diminish it.

Helping Meet Countywide Climate & Equity Goals

The General Plan’s Sustainability Update identifies compact urban development as one of the most effective strategies for reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and achieving carbon-neutrality. Each household that can live near transit instead of driving from the outskirts meaningfully lowers emissions. The 841 Capitola Road site, surrounded by transit routes, bike lanes, and essential services, offers exactly that outcome.

The project also supports **Goal 3 of the Housing Element: “Facilitate development of affordable and equal-opportunity housing.”** By providing deed-restricted very-low-income units, it promotes social inclusion and economic diversity within an area of opportunity. It is a visible example of what it means to “build for everyone,” not just the few who can afford today’s market rents.

In this way, the project simultaneously advances three pillars of County policy: **housing production, climate action, and equity.**

Economic and Community Benefits

Beyond policy alignment, the project delivers tangible community value:

- **Local Economic Stimulus:** Construction will generate high-quality local jobs and millions in economic activity, with lasting fiscal benefits through new property-tax revenue.

- **Support for Small Business:** By adding customers within walking distance, the project strengthens the local retail and service economy along Capitola Road.
- **Public Infrastructure Efficiency:** Infill housing uses existing roads, water, and sewer infrastructure, reducing strain on County finances compared to sprawl development.
- **Reduced Regional Commuting:** More residents living near employment centers means fewer long car trips over Highway 1—relieving congestion and cutting emissions.

A Model for Smart Growth in Santa Cruz

Workbench believes that 841 Capitola Road can serve as a model for future housing in Santa Cruz County—an example of how we can meet RHNA requirements while building communities that are vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive.

The project shows that density and design excellence can coexist, that housing policy can align with climate action, and that local builders can deliver solutions that honor Santa Cruz’s unique identity. It exemplifies the County’s commitment to “accommodate residential needs, promote economic growth, and conserve natural resources”—language drawn directly from the General Plan’s guiding principles.

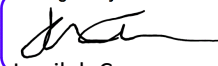
Conclusion

As local builders, architects, designers, and community members, we share the County’s goal of creating a Santa Cruz where housing is attainable, neighborhoods are walkable, and environmental stewardship is second nature. The proposed 841 Capitola Road development represents that vision in action. It:

- Adds **57 new homes**, including **one very-low-income and three extremely-low-income units**;
- Provides robust **alternative-transportation programs** that cut emissions;
- Respects neighborhood context through careful design; and
- Directly contributes to the County’s **RHNA and Housing Element objectives**.

We appreciate the Planning Commission’s continued leadership in guiding projects that embody Santa Cruz County’s values and long-range goals. Workbench is grateful for the opportunity to help deliver housing that serves our community today and builds a more sustainable, equitable future for tomorrow.

Sincerely,
Signed by:



Janice Cannon

Workbench

10/17/2025