

Moorpark Vision

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What will happen here in Moorpark in both near and the extended future regarding growth, development, and the preservation of our open space and quality of life? Whether we are government officials or just ordinary citizens, we all have a vital role to play to help shape Moorpark's future.

Contrary to what a recent, well-known retiree said and implied, it is not necessary to be an elected or appointed official to care about Moorpark or to make a difference here. Let me speak directly to all Moorparkers and urge you to take action.

Just as it is their duty as members of the Planning Commission or the City Council—it is OUR duty as citizens—to ask the following questions:

- What is my vision for the City of Moorpark?
- What can I do to help Moorpark grow to meet that vision, the one I think is the direction Moorpark should go?

I urge all of you, and especially everyone who tries to follow city issues carefully, to seriously ponder what YOU think in response to those two questions. Whatever it is, we all have a duty to speak out and let our decision-makers know what we think. They are responsible for listening to the people and making decisions accordingly.

Here's my vision for Moorpark:

- Moorpark was, is, and should remain a relatively small town, with a semi-rural character—as compared to our neighbors: Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Camarillo, and Oxnard. Moorpark should not try to become a mini-clone of any of them.
- Moorpark should build out and grow from within our existing city limits first. Jumping outside city boundaries before development within the existing city is complete is a classic example of urban sprawl and is not in the best interests of Moorpark.
- Moorpark should preserve existing rural, open space, and agricultural zoning to the greatest extent possible and should not allow the lure of dollars from speculative developers to cloud our judgment about what's best for our current citizens and city.
- Moorpark should not try to compete "head to head" with the more established cities for retail dollars. We should be realistic! While we can increase our retail tax base some (and we must), there is nothing we can do to truly compete with Simi Valley or Thousand Oaks. They are big cities compared to us.

We don't have a big Freeway running through the heart of our city. They do. That's why they're big, and we're small. That's why we'll always be small. In a "head to head" contest for retail dollars against them, Moorpark will always lose. So, let's not play that game! Let's accept our smallness and work to make us better as a small community. Otherwise, we'll get "too big for our britches" and will fail our current businesses and residents.

- Moorpark should build up our business base in the central city we now have (High Street Downtown area and New Los Angeles Avenue corridors).

These areas, especially downtown, should be made to be attractive, unique, and vibrant so that people would want to go there to shop, eat out, etc.—to be in a place that is not the same as everywhere else in the county.

- Moorpark should generally not approve projects that would require the City to annex any new land on which to build—especially if that land is currently zoned open space or agriculture by Ventura County. Indeed, we should not even consider such proposals—unless and until all “inside the city” growth and development has been completed (at whatever level it is eventually approved), all infrastructure for it is in place, and our citizens have been able to see the impact of that much new growth. (Current city figures project almost another 3000 homes and about 10,000 new people for this “inside the city” growth.)

To responsibly manage this much new growth should take at least 10 years—maybe more. Why try to grow more quickly than this?! Our current lack of tax base proves that we cannot yet successfully sustain the level of growth we already have. Annexing new land for new homes in a more spread-out city is NOT the answer!

More than doubling our “new” residential base would only double the number of new people who will cost us money to service but will still leave and spend their retail money elsewhere!

Annexing vast land outside our city is a recipe for disaster that will harm businesses inside the current city limits. Creating an entire new mini-city outside our current city boundaries before we have a strong central business district is cutting off our nose to spite our face. Why make it difficult for business inside our existing city, while allowing competition in areas that are not ever going to be adjacent to the existing businesses—no matter what?!!!

- Moorpark should follow its own guidelines for open space. The Moorpark General Plan Open Space Element says: “The importance of open space resources is based on priorities established by the citizens of Moorpark.” As citizens of Moorpark, everyone needs to ask, “what are MY priorities for open space versus development?”

I believe that dedicated public natural open space is just as important to a city as dedicated residential and commercial space. Right now, to my knowledge, we don't have any dedicated public natural open space under City jurisdiction! That's simply not right.

I'm going to be watching our decision-makers to see who shares my vision for Moorpark. I'm going to be looking for leaders who will no longer support the last City Council's direction of seeming to approve every project that comes along, with few if any changes to moderate the certain negative impacts—which they always admit, but then often ignore. I want to see leaders who will attempt to consider the cumulative impacts of all the proposed projects before approving any of them.

I hope everyone decides what vision they have for Moorpark. And if you share my vision for Moorpark—or at least most of it—I hope you'll help me and others who share this vision to inform our planning commissioners and our council that we want decisions that will reach more toward OUR vision for Moorpark and not one that competes with it.

I know that sincere people disagree and that some will not share my vision—and that's ok too. These people should also speak out.

But if you feel as I do—that Moorpark has not necessarily been going in the right direction in the last several years, then let's do something about it. YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE, but you have to be persistent and speak out. We all have to work together to make sure the will of the people is expressed clearly, loudly, and over and over and over again. Otherwise, our leaders will not realize or accept how many of us there really are, who put as high a premium on public natural open space as we do on our existing businesses.

—Roseann Mikos, Ph.D. has lived in Moorpark for 16 years.