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# CITIZENS COORDINATE FOR CENTURY 3

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## C-3 SPEAKS – JUNE 2018 BREAKFAST DIALOGUE RECAP

### *The Urban Evolution of North County: Opportunities and Challenges*

In case you haven't visited lately, the San Diego North County cities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Vista have become a hub of urban activity. Linked by the SPRINTER light rail line with 15 stations, State Route 78, and the Coaster commuter rail line, these cities have banded together to promote the economic prosperity of the sub-region. During the past thirty years, this part of North County has evolved from a mostly rural and suburban area to one with multiple urban nodes, robust employment centers, institutions of higher education like Cal State San Marcos and Palomar College, and a variety of types of homes to meet the needs of a diverse population.

In June, C-3 invites North County leaders to discuss changes that are making this area a hub for innovation and the challenges and opportunities to house new residents and develop new kinds of communities. What can the San Diego region learn from these North County cities?

**Panelists:** Mary Jane Jagodzinski, Vice President Development, Community Housing Works; Gary Levitt, Owner, Sea Breeze Properties, LLC; Christie Marcella, Economic Development Manager, City of Carlsbad; Sarah Villarreal, Associate Vice President, Community Engagement, CSU-San Marcos

**Moderator:** Diego Velasco, AICP, Principal, M.W. Steele Group, C-3 Boardmember

"It's not good enough for cities to think about themselves as isolated pockets."

These were the opening comments from Christie Marcella, Economic Development Manager for the City of Carlsbad and participant in Innovate 78, a collaborative among five cities to boost economic prosperity along the 78 corridor. Her comment summarized the sentiment of C-3's June Breakfast Dialogue to learn about the urban evolution of North County.

"I was lucky enough to develop in an area with no residents," joked Gary Levitt, owner of Seabreeze Properties, LLC, and developer of North City which is bringing thousands of new townhomes and apartments to San Marcos as well as student housing, new retail shops, and entertainment venues through the North City development. His statement refers to the fact that the homes he is building are surrounded by commercial and institutional land uses, underscoring the need and opportunity for homes in the area. The project advertises itself as "moving our community forward and away from the mundane suburban lifestyle."

“More people are moving to the suburbs, but they want an urban experience there, reflected Ms. Marcella. “They don’t want single family homes on lollipop streets, and urban centers are too expensive. The North City project provides that type of desired experience.”

Ms. Jagodzinski reiterated this sentiment. Her nonprofit organization, Community Housing Works, is developing housing projects with densities at 70 dwelling units / acre, and their affordable housing projects are among several others in Vista and Escondido. She explained how more multi-family housing is coming online in North County, with some opposition because of traffic concerns, but mostly support as residents see the symbiotic nature of housing with economic development, more jobs, and more retail. The gradual evolution over a period of years has helped garner more support.

Ms. Marcella went on to describe the work of Innovate 78, which is collectively advertising the benefits of living and working in North County. The group encourages businesses among various clusters such as high tech, craft beverage manufacturing, etc. Their collective goal is to attract talent that can be used by local companies.

Sarah Overreal talked about her university’s work to do just that – supply the talent desired. With 17,000 students – and growth at 2,000 students per year – CSU San Marcos collaborated with Seabreeze Properties to build student housing through a public private partnership – the only campus with this model among 23 California State campuses. Ms. Overreal participates in the Innovate 78 meetings with the goal of supplying the classes at Cal State to educate talent in the fields desired. The university will offer a degree in software engineering for the first time in the 2018-2019 school year based on discussions with North County cities in Innovate 78.

