

Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar*

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Date: April 9, 2014

To: Camille Leung, Project Planner

Subject: **PLN2013-00451 - Big Wave NPA Project Referral**

The Midcoast Community Council has the following initial comments on the 3/25/14 project referral for the Big Wave North Parcel Alternative.

Location

The first page of the referral states, "A natural drainage swale running east to west separates the two parcels and leads to the Pillar Point Marsh, a salt marsh habitat." All the marsh bordering Big Wave parcels is fresh water. Salt marsh habitat does not extend north of West Point Ave.

Project Information

The County online permit site describes the project as a 4-bldg Wellness Center (70,500 sf) and a 5-bldg Business Park (189,000 sf). The project referral variously describes a 4 or 5-bldg Wellness Center and a 4 or 5-bldg Business Park, but consistently states 97,500 sf for the Wellness Center and 162,000 sf for the Business Park, the difference being commercial Building A.

From a land-use perspective this project is a 5-building Business Park (Buildings A-E, totaling 189,000 sf) and a 4-building Wellness Center (Buildings 1-4 totaling 70,500 sf). This should be reflected in the Summary of Proposed Changes (Exhibit A, #6 and Table 2). A Use Permit for a sanitarium would not include a commercial building on a separate lot such as Building A. The initial ownership of the subdivided lots does not equate with the ownership of future buildings. The purpose of the major subdivision is so the lots, drawn as footprints of the commercial buildings, can each be sold separately.

Building Use and Heights

On page 2 of the referral, the use of the term "basement" for the ground floor is confusing. In the U.S. the ground floor is normally known as the first floor, and the term basement is used for below grade. It would be helpful to indicate here what is the building height above existing grade. In this section a pool is listed for basement (first floor?) of both buildings 2 and 3. Assuming this is an error, what will be on the first floor in place of the extra pool? Has first floor parking been considered as a beneficial use for these buildings where the living space is elevated for protection from tsunami run-up?

Exhibit A, #5, and Table 2 claim NPA reduction in maximum building height from 51 to 36 ft, whereas the project, as approved by the County but denied by the Coastal Commission, was Alternative C, with commercial buildings 36 ft high, 2-story in the front row, and 46 ft high, 3-story in the back row, as demonstrated by story poles in October 2010.

Development Density

At the 2006 Big Wave pre-development public workshop, the Business Park proposal consisted of 4 buildings, 2 stories high, containing 155,000 sf total, versus 189,000 sf in the NPA proposal. The 2006 development density was presented as fully supporting all project goals. The major issue for the Coastal Commission was the density of the Business Park that was tied to the Wellness Center. It would seem no hardship to scale back the Business Park at least to the 155,000 sf level of the 2006 proposal.

NPA development density on the northern parcel is relatively unchanged from the project that was denied by the Coastal Commission. Benefit from this alternative is dependent on protection of the southern parcel from future development and restoration of those wetlands. How can this outcome be guaranteed?

Beach Parking

The 2/20/14 Tentative Subdivision Map shows 51 beach parking spaces along the Airport Street edge of the southern parcel. Ten of these parking spaces are within the 100-ft wetlands buffer. Backing out of these 90-degree-angle parking spaces directly onto Airport Street will be hazardous. The parking will not be screened from the street and will diminish the scenic quality of the area, as well as the value of the wildlife corridor.

Plan Princeton discussions on existing conditions point out the shortage of beach parking at West Point Ave and Mavericks parking lot. The most useful location for beach parking would be on the south side of the Big Wave southern parcel, alongside the existing buildings, with at least a walking trail connection to the County overflow lot and West Point Ave. The issue of archeological site was addressed for the Dardenelle Trail and could perhaps be addressed the same way here.

Landscaping and Building Exteriors

In response to the concern that Big Wave buildings will transform natural open space views into urbanscape, altering the rural character of the area, there has been much discussion and representations made showing how 40-ft-tall perimeter landscaping will eventually hide the buildings. In choosing exterior building materials and colors, we suggest that every effort be made to have the buildings blend into the natural landscape and not call attention to themselves. Shrubs and trees would be best planted throughout the parking area and near the buildings, rather than in an unnatural narrow row around the parcel perimeter.

Water Use

The Daily Flow Analysis assumes significantly below average water use by the residents, and only bathroom use in the Business Park. No water is allocated for Wellness Center business operations, resident staff (20), or Business Park cafeterias or research and manufacturing uses. Will the existing north parcel agricultural well be used for landscaping? What will be the water source for outdoor uses on the southern parcel which has no well and is not contiguous with the northern parcel?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.