

Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar*
P.O. Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0248 - www.MidcoastCommunityCouncil.org

Chris Johnson **Lisa Ketcham** **Dan Haggerty** **Erin Deinzer** **Dave Olson** **Laura Stein** **Claire Toutant**
Chair Vice-Chair Secretary Treasurer

May 25, 2016

Mr. Bijan Sartipi, Director
Caltrans District 4
111 Grand Avenue
Oakland, CA 94617

Subject: **Preservation of public coastal views of Point Montara from Highway 1**

Dear Director Sartipi:

An online petition (<http://chn.ge/1X5kiGa>), signed by 122 supporters at this writing, requests that Caltrans not allow planting or growth of vegetation in the Caltrans right-of-way that will mature to a size that obstructs public ocean views in the Highway 1 Scenic Corridor in the area of the historic Point Montara Lighthouse. This iconic coastal view is enjoyed by motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians on the highway and California Coastal Trail which coincides with the highway there.

Protecting this public view was the main concern of the Midcoast Community Council (MCC) and community members when the houses west of the highway at this location were rebuilt by a prior owner 15 years ago. To protect the view, the Coastal Development Permits (CDP) for 200 and 198 14th Street (PLN2000-00080 and PLN2001-00241 respectively) limited building height to less than 16 feet, on the grade which is 25 feet below the highway. Specific landscaping requirements were included as Condition of Approval to screen the development without blocking the public coastal view (see attached photos & text). As designed and conditioned, the projects were found to comply with San Mateo County's Local Coastal Program (LCP) policies:

- Policy 8.12.b – Locate and design new development and landscaping so that ocean views are not blocked from public viewing points such as public roads and publicly-owned lands.
- Policy 8.13.a.5 – To the extent feasible, design development to minimize the blocking of views to or along the ocean shoreline from Highway 1 and other public viewpoints between Highway 1 and the sea.

If the private landscape screening required by the CDP Conditions of Approval was ever planted, it clearly no longer exists. Instead, a row of staked young cypress trees appeared in the Caltrans right-of-way, growing high up on the road embankment that slopes down west of the highway. Cypress trees grow fast to 40 feet high and wide. These are just shrub size now, but closely growing like a hedge, soon to completely block the public coastal view. Their branches will grow out over the guardrail into the bike lane requiring ongoing disfiguring maintenance pruning. In response to a citizen request, Caltrans removed the most recently planted trees on the north end of the row; however, the neighboring property owner west of the highway wants Caltrans to leave the remaining young trees.

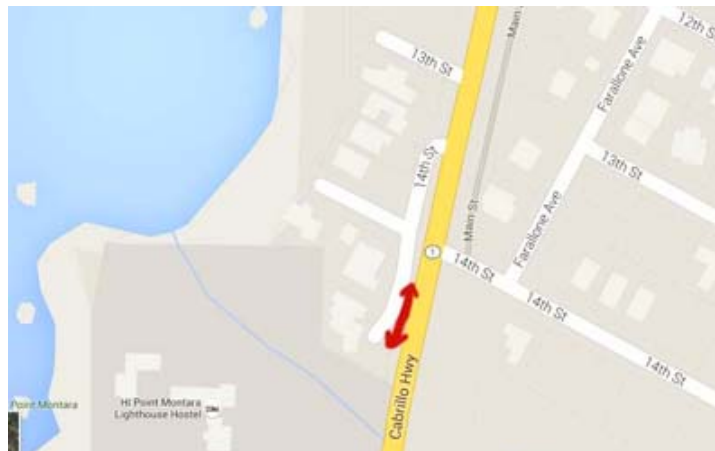
The MCC suggests that if the neighboring property owners at 198 and 200 14th Street desire landscape screening, it should be planted on their private property, using plant material that at maturity will not exceed 16 feet, as called for in the CDP Conditions of Approval of those homes. This will provide privacy for their single-story homes and enhance rather than block the public view.

The MCC supports the citizen petition and requests that Caltrans improve and preserve public ocean views from scenic Highway 1 wherever they occur in the Midcoast, as these are part of the heritage and wealth of our community. Prolific Monterey pines and cypress trees, along with Pittosporum and other invasive alien shrubs will continue to sprout in the right-of-way and, with benign neglect by Caltrans, will eventually close off the remaining coastal views from the highway. Please remove shrubs and young trees from the highway right-of-way, whether planted or naturally occurring, that will grow to block these views.

Thank you for your consideration.

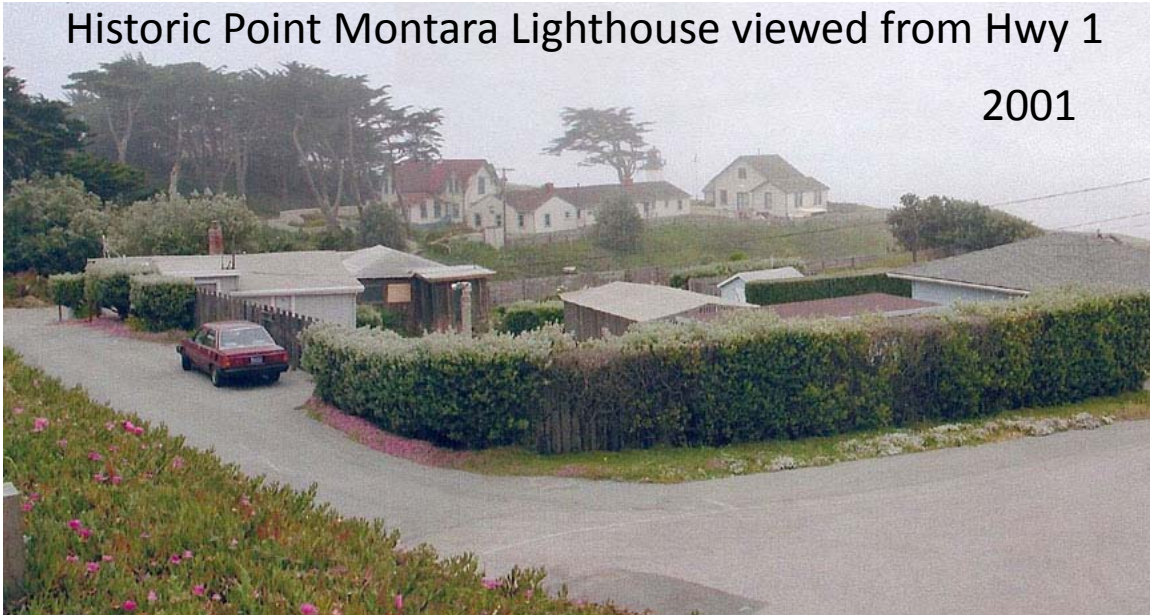
MIDCOAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL
s/Chris Johnson, Chair

cc: Supervisor Don Horsley
CA State Senator Jerry Hill
CA Assemblymember Kevin Mullin
Jim Porter, SMC Director of Public Works
Caltrans District 4: Jeanne Gorham, Lorena Wong, Ray Kwan



Historic Point Montara Lighthouse viewed from Hwy 1

2001



2001 Permits to redevelop 198 and 200 14th St. complied with LCP visual resource policies by limiting development to one story (<16 feet) and including detailed landscaping Conditions of Approval for each house to soften the impact of the buildings:

2016



The plan shall include a minimum of 2 trees on the (north) 14th St side, 4 trees on the (east) Cabrillo Hwy side, and 3 trees in the rear (south). A minimum of 20 shrubs shall be included in the design for front, rear, and left side of the residence. All trees and shrubs shall have a mature growth height that does not exceed 16 feet.

2016

View from Hwy 1 of 200 – 14th St
with Point Montara in background



Young cypress trees that will block
public coastal views from Hwy 1

View from entry road to 200 – 14th St
below Hwy 1 embankment



A glimpse of Point Montara from Hwy 1



Pittosporum and other invasive exotic shrubs have escaped gardens and invaded our coastal bluffs and cliffs.

Here a wider view of Point Montara is lost behind large Pittosporum shrub that volunteered and grows neglected in the Hwy 1 ROW.