

MidCoast Community Council

An elected Municipal Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Serving 11,000 coastal residents

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Via Email & Fax: 3 Pages

To: San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
County Government Center, Hall of Justice & Records
400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 363-4653 Phone - (650) 599-1027 Fax

Dear President Gordon, Vice-President Hill, Supervisors Church, Jacobs Gibson and Tissier;

As the elected representative body of the 11,000 residents of the MidCoast Communities, and as the designated advisory council of those residents to your Board, the MidCoast Community Council (MCC) would like to submit our comments on the MidCoast Local Coastal Plan Update for your third hearing on March 29, 2005.

As stated in our earlier letters, we believe the package compiled by the Planning Commission is the best expression of our individual rights, community rights, and property rights – the rights to retain the value and character of our communities through reasonable development controls, preservation of open space, environmental sensitivity, and respect of precious coastal resources. We recommend that the proposal be adopted as it is presented in its entirety, but this letter will focus on just the issues scheduled for the upcoming hearing.

We also believe it is important that the issues of this update be considered in the order in which they originally scheduled, as many of the decisions your board will make on these items are dependent on base numbers and policies defined by other items. Specifically, we believe any decisions on residential uses, development controls on nonconforming parcels, and the annual growth rate limit are intrinsically tied to as to whether or not a merger policy has been adopted to determine the number of actual parcels and subsequent resultant population. We have addressed this in a separate letter dated May 3, 2005.

1 – Annual Growth Rate Limit

Given the limitations of infrastructure as demonstrated in earlier hearings, and the need for comprehensive protections for environmental & coastal resources, the MCC supports the Planning Commission recommendation to adopt the 1% growth rate with the exemptions for second units, units at designated affordable housing sites, and mixed-use and caretaker's quarters in Princeton. This is nearly identical to the historic and current rate of new units per year, and the number per year will increase as the population increases. The number provided by the San Mateo County Association of REALTORS® (SAMCAR) of taking 76 to 86 years to reach build-out is incorrect as it fails to take into account the yearly population increases which increase the number of units allowed to be built.

A 1% rate will give the County, special districts and other governments with jurisdiction in the area adequate time to wisely plan needed infrastructure expansions and protection of environmental and coastal resources. There is no substantial data we know of to support the claim that building more

houses more rapidly within the MidCoast will alleviate any sort of short-term or long-term housing crisis in the County, especially when we do not have the infrastructure or protections in place to support such a rate of growth. Nor do we believe that the finding can be made that any short-term, limited financial benefit of a continued high rate of building would offset the loss of property values and detrimental impact to the coastside quality-of-life from a ill-planned and uncoordinated rush toward the build-out limit.

The growth rate should not be allowed to be increased at any time. This will allow a predictable and constant rate of growth that is conducive to good planning practices and coordination between all jurisdictions and agencies involved. SAMCAR notes that the urban area is designated for higher *density* growth – this is true but it has no relevance to an argument for a higher *rate* of growth. The density is achieved regardless of growth rate.

The growth rate should be determined by the number of housing units – each unit is more of a load on our water and sewer systems, traffic capability, schools and parks. Therefore, the MCC agrees with the Planning Commission recommendation to count by residential units, and not building permits, as a single building permit can cover multiple units in some instances. An example would be single building permit that covers a 12 unit apartment house in the multi-family zoning district.

2 – Use of CalTrans’ Devil’s Slide Bypass Property

The MCC agrees with the Planning Commission recommendation for rezoning and re-designation of the Devil’s Slide Bypass property.

The open space and recreational uses of the Devil’s Slide Bypass property that runs through the back of Moss Beach and Montara has long become part of the character of these MidCoast communities, and are essential to our quality-of-life and maintenance of property values. The antiquated sub-standard lots underlying this property are incompatible with the conforming and larger parcel development that has occurred around them. The property is an excellent opportunity for the development of parks, trails, community recreation facilities, and essential connections to the larger State and County parks of Montara Mountain, and would bring the LCP and the San Mateo County Trails plan into conformance.

Residential development of this property would have a detrimental impact to existing communities while permanently removing the possibility for a park or open space for Montara. There is no demonstrated need for additional housing in this area, and the property is not near any sort of public transit or anywhere remotely near the proposed tunnel.

3 – Highway 1 Pedestrian Improvements

The proposal would be consistent with the findings of the MidCoast Recreational Needs Assessment, and would be extremely beneficial in facilitating access to coastal resources. The MCC supports the Planning Commission recommendation.

4 – Updating Coastal Trail Policies and Midcoast Trail Descriptions

The MCC supports the Planning Commission recommendation.

5 – LCP Tasks Assigned to the County

The MCC supports the Planning Commission recommendation “ ... to complete in a timely manner all partially completed responsibilities assigned by LCP policies ...”

6 – Codify Coastal Act Sections as LCP Policy

Our original recommendation concerning incorporation of the Coastal Act was to incorporate the entire Chapter 3, but information that came to light during the hearings concerning the validity and jurisdictional issues with the Coastal Commission led us to agree with the recommendation of the Planning Commission.

7 – LCP Policy Conflicts and Ambiguous Provisions

The MCC supports the recommendation of the Planning Commission.

8 – MidCoast Design Review Glossary

The MCC agrees with the recommendations of the Planning Commission.

In summary the MCC recommendation is for your Board to expeditiously approve the LCP update as developed by the Planning Commission. Good planning practices and adherence to the requirements for development will not only maintain our long term sustainability, but will substantially cut down the number of appeals and save San Mateo County the endless hours and expenses of dealing with contradicting standards, costs that are carried by all County residents. It will make the policies and practices implementing our Local Coastal Program consistent with coastal resource protection and a healthy, prosperous community.

Thank you for your time and attention to these important issues – please do not hesitate to contact me for any further information or clarification.

Sincerely,



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Cc: Marcia Raines, Director of Environmental Services
George Bergman, Project Planner
Chris Kern, California Coastal Commission
April Vargas, Committee for Green Foothills

MCC/cgk - 03/03/05