

## Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Municipal Advisory Council to the  
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors  
Serving 12,000 coastal residents*

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### Standing Committees

**Parks and Recreation**

**Paul Perkovic, Chair**

**Planning and Zoning**

**Chuck Kozak, Chair**

Sarah J. Wan, Chair and Members of the Commission

California Coastal Commission

45 Fremont St.

San Francisco, CA 94105-2219

**SUBJECT:** San Mateo County LCP Amendment 3-00 - MidCoast Residential House Size Limits

Dear Chair Wan and Members of the Commission:

The MidCoast Community Council supports certification of San Mateo County LCP Amendment 3-00 proposing MidCoast Residential House Size Limits. As the elected body for the unincorporated MidCoast area, the Council was involved in the development of this Amendment, held hearings to solicit public comment and gave testimony before the San Mateo County Planning Commission and the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in support of its adoption.

In certifying this Amendment, the Council asks that the Commission recognize three areas of concern:

1. House size alone does not determine whether or not a project is in keeping with the scale and character of the community/neighborhood in which it is proposed. In addition to quantitative concerns there are qualitative considerations dealing with visual proportion, style and character. We appreciate the County's increasing awareness of these aesthetic criteria and anticipate that the establishment of a MidCoast Design Review Committee, as provided for in the Amendment before you, will provide an appropriate vehicle to address these issues effectively.
2. The question of substandard lots, their legality and their relationship to the final build-out numbers and population density is a vital one. San Mateo County has pledged to deal with this issue in more detail during the Local Coastal Program Update Project, currently underway. A copy of the scope of study for this review was attached to Supervisor Gordon's May 30 letter to your Commission. We anticipate a detailed and comprehensive exploration of this topic complete with recommendations which can be implemented in a timely fashion.

The Council supports the improved floor area ratio of 48%-53% which is more restrictive than the 60% proposed in 1997. When considering the Amendment, however, we request that the Commission make a finding that certification of this

Amendment in no way changes the legal or illegal status of any particular property. A possible text for such a finding could read: The LCP Amendment is limited in scope to more restrictive house size, shape, and design. It does not directly or impliedly support any claim of legality of a parcel and applies only to legal nonconforming lots which are otherwise developable.

Council members have individually requested that County Counsel and legal counsel for the Granada Sanitary District meet and discuss the complex issues involved in determining lot legality. We favor a unified and constructive approach to these matters and again emphasize that only through a process extending far beyond the determination of Floor Area Ratio alone can the appropriate policies for treatment of substandard parcels be developed and implemented.

The County has promised to address "the broader issue of substandard lot buildout levels" in its LCP Update process. In the interim, pending Coastal Commission approval of an LCP Amendment in this regard, efforts should be made to minimize development of nonconforming (and possibly illegal) lots so that the policy resulting from the current LCP Update process is not adopted too late to be effective. The County of San Mateo has a written Merger Policy addressing merger of non-conforming lots. The County requires contiguous lots in common ownership to be merged to create a conforming parcel prior to allowing construction. This requirement has the effect of further clarifying that adjacent parcels held in common ownership should be developed as one conforming lot. The County has not submitted its Merger Policy to the Coastal Commission for approval as part of an LCP Amendment. The MidCoast Community Council requests that this Merger Policy be strictly applied and that an improved Merger Policy be a part of the County's future LCP Amendment addressing the nonconforming (substandard) lot issues.

3. The Urgency Interim Ordinance, under which these revised standards were proposed and adopted by the Board of Supervisors, is due to expire on November 13, 2001. It cannot be extended. Failure to certify the Amendment before this date will eliminate the possibility for these more restrictive standards to be permanently adopted by the County. In essence, two years of effort will be nullified and the community will be forced to begin this process again. We ask that the Commission certify the Amendment, taking into account the areas of concern which we have outlined above, and work with the County to resolve any outstanding issues in advance of the November 13 deadline.

We thank the Commission for your consideration of these issues and request that our comments be included as part of the revised Staff Report for the proposed Amendment.

Sincerely,



Laura Stein  
Chair, MidCoast Community Council  
650-712-0225

cc: Supervisor Richard Gordon