

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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May 10, 1999

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Mary Hobbs, Chair

Planning and Zoning

Ric Lohman, Chair

Public Works

Joe Gore, Chair

Mary Griffin, President, and Members of the
San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
455 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063

re: Proposal for Public Meetings for San Mateo County's Unincorporated Midcoast

Dear President Griffin and Members of the Board:

We thank the Board for your concern expressed at a recent appeal of a development on a substandard lot in El Granada. We concur with the Board members who asked that measures be taken to address the problem of building on substandard lots, and the all-too-often granting of exceptions or variances from zoning standards in the MidCoast.

The Midcoast Community Council (MCC) requests that the time of one-half planner, which has been offered to support MCC planning, be used in helping the MCC:

1. Hold public meetings to discuss the observations and concerns listed below, and
2. Help reach public consensus on recommendations to make to the Board of Supervisors to remedy these areas of concern.

Our goals in this series of public meetings are to:

- A. Bring our development closer into alignment with our carrying capacity;
- B. Save applicants, community members, and San Mateo County staff time and money applied to the unending appeal process;
- C. Align our development with the Local Coastal Program (LCP);
- D. Align our development with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) plan and our direct neighbors in Half Moon Bay; and
- E. Address the concerns of the Coastside community.

The following items are recommendations that have been made over the last several months of means to address the community's concerns. We wish these to be included as a starting list of items to be discussed in our proposed series of public meetings.

1. Allow no additional zoning changes or new subdivisions that create additional residences beyond those allowed by current zoning, including rezoning of lands zoned PAD, RM, and COSC zoning to residential zoning or primarily residential uses.
2. Reduce annual growth rate to that which can be smoothly absorbed by our overburdened infrastructure. As a minimum, do not increase our growth rate beyond the 125 annual limit on building permits in the LCP.
3. Eliminate variances and exceptions. Setbacks to property lines, creeks, cliffs, septic systems, water wells, etc. should be inviolate, or only allowed in extremely unusual circumstances on legal conforming lots.

4. Enact strict property requirements for setbacks, lot coverage, and floor/area ratios. Building appropriate sized cottages would also help the affordable housing shortage. Half Moon Bay has already set these requirements which should be investigated for possible use in our region.
5. Revise Design Standards that have already been incorporated into the LCP from our original community plan/general plan to bring them up to contemporary standards.
6. Follow the ABAG next step recommendation to have "liaisons from the four elected bodies to sit down together to begin crafting a strategy for implementing the Report's recommendations."
 - a) "To that end, the liaisons have expressed support for establishing task forces in each of the three issue areas and have agreed that additional funding from ABAG and other sources should be pursued.
 - b) To succeed, this subregional planning effort will require the ongoing participation of agency staff, elected officials and community stakeholders."

We have a number of observations that show we have a serious problem:

- (A) The recent subregional planning study sponsored by ABAG for Pacifica, Half Moon Bay, and the MidCoast and the projected traffic study sponsored by C/CAG make the following statements:
1. The subregion [the Coastside] suffers from some of the worst peak-hour traffic in San Mateo County where congestion increased 125 percent between 1995 and 1996, a rate more than double any other county in the Bay Area. Traffic on Highways 1 and 92 at peak hours is already at service level "F".
 2. Reforming land use policies and plans to improve the jobs-housing balance is identified in the County's Congestion Management Program as a method for achieving the region's congestion reduction goals.
 3. In its current form the proposed balanced growth strategy [of the County] does not address the Coastside subregion's unique jobs-housing imbalance where, in contrast to every other subregion in the county, a lack of job growth is projected to create a substantial surplus in housing.
 4. In developing land use policy for the Coastside, it is crucial for the County to acknowledge the importance of promoting a jobs-housing balance in the subregion by fostering additional job growth while exploring the feasibility of allowing other land uses in areas now zoned exclusively for housing.
- (B) The Half Moon Bay City Council recently voted unanimously to reduce the total buildout numbers in their LCP.
- (C) A new initiative is to be placed on the HMB City ballot to reduce the RATE of development.
- (D) The MidCoast Community Council members are hearing from the Coastside public that excessive traffic is already a major problem and will only grow worse in the future.
- (E) The LCP residential buildout numbers, development projections, and infrastructure plan were based on the number of conforming residential lots. Although no exact accounting of the exact number of buildable substandard lots has been made, preliminary studies indicate that building on substandard or non-conforming lots will far exceed the carrying capacity of our infrastructure, especially roads.
- (F) The ongoing trend of approvals for variances, exceptions to zoning standards, development on substandard and non-conforming lots, and subdivisions makes a bad problem worse.
- (G) Each development application has been evaluated without regard for the cumulative effect on the overall development plan for the Coastside.

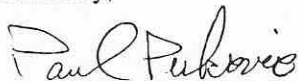
(H) Two of the purposes for which the Midcoast Community Council was formed are:

1. To seek to preserve the rural small-town character of the area by protecting the existence of agricultural lands, commercial fishing activities and the natural marine environment; supporting the retention of a greenbelt around urban areas of the County of San Mateo; maintaining the coastal protections afforded by the County Local Coastal Plan and Measure A (1986), and seeking to manage growth in a manner which is consistent with the present character of the area;
2. To assist the Community in developing and expressing a long range vision of the Community which meets the goals of its residents for an improved quality of life, protection of the environment, and sound economic planning.

Because of the severity of our current problems in overtaxing our infrastructure, we request that the County immediately join with us in planning these meetings. We also request that, while these meetings are taking place, the County institute a moratorium on residential construction on substandard and non-conforming lots, conversions of PAD, RM, and COSC zonings to Residential, and approval of new subdivisions. Reaching consensus on solutions to these ongoing conflicts will be of a major benefit to the County and to the local public.

As a help in defraying the costs of this project, the Coastal Commission staff has pointed out that funds may be available from the State under a local assistance grant program called RECAP. About \$500,000 are to be made available for regional efforts to solve LCP-type problems like ours. We request the County actively pursue these grants as a way to help pay for our proposed meetings and studies.

Sincerely,



Paul Perkovic
Chair, Midcoast Community Council