

# Next to the surf, turf battle brews

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Seaside residents and developers have been struggling to work out a vision for the El Granada waterfront for more than a year, but about all they can agree on is to keep meeting.

The issue that continues to divide them is buildings-versus-vistas.

The El Granada waterfront is still largely a haven of seagulls and surf — and many of the mid-coast's most vocal residents want to keep it that way.

But property owners, backed by zoning laws,



GEORGE WOLF — Staff

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vow to build on San Mateo County's prime seaside property stretching from Princeton-by-the-Sea to Miramar and valued at \$500,000 per acre.

The feuding sides — brought together in a group known as the El Granada Waterfront Task Force — have been meeting regularly in attempts to avoid legal wrangling, lengthy appeals and general bitterness in the community of approximately 12,000.

The goal is for developers to accept scaled-back plans in return for promises of a truce.

But as the group — formed in the wake of an arson fire at a seaside construction site — completes its mission in June, prospects for common ground appear dim. It remains to be seen whether the year-long exercise in fostering good relations between coastal developers and residents has been productive, or an exercise in futility.

"If you say, 'Thou shalt not violate a view,' what does that mean?" said task force member Chris McComb, who also serves on the MidCoast Community Council.

"What I'm fighting for is to keep everyone at the table talking."

The task force's founders have faced opposition from those who say they're sleeping with the enemy by talking with prospective developers. Still, the founders insist an important milestone has been achieved: for the first time, the public is

reviewing development proposals before they go to county supervisors.

Meetings, sometimes attended by more than 100 people, have been heated at times, particularly when development plans are floated. And the range of ideas on the task force is extreme: some want a moratorium on all coastal development, others envision seaside motels surrounded by new homes.

At least one development proposal is being considered for a 55-acre area south of Pillar Point Harbor known as Mirada Surf, and others may be in the works. Property owned by the San Mateo County Harbor District has also long been slated for commercial development and a visitor center.

Harbor Commissioner Sally Campbell said residents' arguments against building are getting more and more radical.

"They absolutely want no development," she said. "Us property owners that have been attending these meetings have been getting extremely frustrated. The property owners are receptive, but the community won't bend."

"I'm afraid the property owners will say if we can't negotiate, we'll go for the max. It may not happen in a year, but it'll happen eventually."

Land use attorney Michael McCracken, a co-owner of the Mirada Surf property, agreed that those who want nothing built are fooling themselves. And he said that although the

task force is playing an important role, it holds no legal weight.

Early plans for the Mirada Surf area include hotels on the 15 acres west of Highway 1 and homes to the east. The plan is likely to be narrowed down after June.

McCracken and his partner, Burlingame attorney David Byers, are in for a fight, say an organized group of El Granada residents. In recent weeks they attended meetings en masse, signed petitions and handed out fliers in front of the town's post office.

"It really is just incomprehensible to me how anybody can think to build some huge building on the waterfront when it can go somewhere else. It is absolutely impossible to justify to me," said Leonard Woren, a task force member and mid-coast activist. "My sentiment is that 95 percent of the people from Montara Mountain to the south end of Half Moon Bay don't want to see any further development of the waterfront."

Ric Lohman, chairman of the MidCoast Community Council, which will review the task force's progress tonight, said if residents want the seashore to remain as is, they will have to contribute time, energy and even money.

"If you asked people would they prefer to have no development, you'd get 100 percent of people saying yes, but the big question is now that you've said that, what do you want to do about it?" Lohman said.