

This letter was sent to the County Planning Commission outlining the reasons the MidCoast Community Council voted unanimously to oppose the Home Improvement Exemption ordinance.

MidCoast Community Council
P.O. Box 64
Moss Beach, CA 94038

November 12, 1995

Mr. Leo Mariano, Chair
San Mateo County Planning Commission
County Government Center
401 Marshall St.
Redwood City, CA 94063

re: proposed Home Improvement Exception process

Dear Chairman Mariano,

The MidCoast Community Council (MCCC) has reviewed the proposed Home Improvement Exception process at two Council meetings, and several MCCC Planning and Zoning subcommittee meetings; all meetings were public, and noticed in accordance with the Brown Act. We received considerable public input at all meetings. In addition, Ms. Diane Regonini of the Planning Department attended our council meeting on November 8th, providing answers to the many questions of councilmembers and general public. Based on our public meetings, the input of the public, and our concern for the protection of and adherence to zoning regulations, our council voted unanimously (5-0) to request that this proposal be denied. Our specific reasons follow.

1. According to Planning department staff, the genesis of this proposal was the request of a single county resident who wished to make a change to his residence, a change that would violate zoning regulations. We believe zoning regulations, including setbacks, exist for a reason, and we should not be developing processes to make them moot. As we all know, there already exist many avenues of appeal for people who wish to request variances. In the end, though, there are simply some variances that should not and cannot be granted.
2. There is no upper limit on lot sizes in this proposed ordinance. The impact in rural areas could be that setbacks are reduced from fifty feet to three feet. This is unacceptable.
3. As you know, the issue of substandard lots is already a major concern. Providing a process that not only allows, but almost encourages, 300 square feet additions with three feet setbacks is the wrong direction to be going.
4. This proposal adds more confusion to existing zoning regulations. In our previous letter on this topic, dated July 27th this year, we recommended that, at the very least, this proposal be tabled until after the completion of the Coastal Protection Initiative.
5. The language in section 6531 of the proposed ordinance is quite vague. As stated before, zoning regulations were developed for a reason, and they should be respected and enforced. We are particularly concerned with the sentence in this section that states "Notwithstanding Chapter 4 of the Zoning Regulations, home improvement exceptions may be approved to grant relief from the strict

provisions of the Zoning Regulations for yards, lot coverage, daylight planes, and floor area ratios." In fact, everything in this particular paragraph seems designed to identify existing regulations just so they can be voided.

6. The time frames in the proposed ordinance are too short. It can sometimes take seven to ten days just to get a letter from Redwood City to the midcoast. A minimum of thirty calendar days from date of mailing of notices to affected parties should be provided.
7. We do not support the recommended notice "zone" of 300 feet; it should be 500 feet.
8. We are concerned that, since rural areas were only added to this proposed ordinance in August, other potentially interested parties or organizations may not have had sufficient time to consider the impact this ordinance might have on their communities.
9. This proposed ordinance would put people in the terrible position of being forced to tell their neighbor that they will not allow an exception. This is wrong.

In essence, this proposed ordinance represents another bite in the gradual nibbling away at zoning regulations, with no local control. There is no support for this proposal in the midcoast, nor can we see a reason for it to be introduced into any other area.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this review process, and the helpfulness of the staff in the Planning department. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

James Marsh
Chair, MidCoast Community Council

cc: Mr. Bill Rozar, Planning Department, San Mateo County
President Ted Lempert, Board of Supervisors, San Mateo County
Mr. Steve Monowitz, California Coastal Commission

[Back to the MCC Main Page](#) // [Back to the Home Improvement Exemption index](#)