

March 29, 2017

Lisa Ketcham, Chair
Midcoast Community Council

Dear Ms. Ketcham and Council Members:

Supervisor Horsley and I have reviewed your letter of March 22, 2017, requesting that the County initiate amendments to the C-1 Zoning District Regulations. In considering this request, we have applied a number of factors that, as described below, lead us to conclude that:

- Existing standards and permitting procedures adequately protect community character and coastal resources;
- The analysis of, and update to, existing C-1 Zoning Regulations should not be done in isolation of other applicable policies and standards; and,
- A comprehensive effort to refine the standards for the standards for development in the commercial areas of the coast is something that may be pursued in the future, after other priority projects have been completed.

1. Existing Standards for Commercial Development

In addition to meeting the requirements contained in the zoning regulations, new development in the C-1 District must be consistent with Local Coastal Program policies, including those that protect views, community character, and coastal access, and address California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements to avoid adverse environmental impacts. These policies and requirements will be applied during the discretionary review of all coastal development permit applications to ensure that coastal resources are protected, and that coastal access opportunities (including parking) are preserved and enhanced. The ability for the County to condition projects as necessary to comply with LCP policies, and to avoid and mitigate environmental impacts pursuant to CEQA, provides an effective way to address the concerns of the MCC on a case by case basis.

2. Planning for Future Commercial Development

We agree with the MCC's statement that "thriving, attractive, bike/pedestrian-friendly neighborhood commercial districts would improve quality of life, strengthen the local economy, and reduce residents' dependence on highway travel". The County has a number of projects underway intended to achieve this goal, including Plan Princeton, Connect the Coastside, and the implementation of the Midcoast Safety and Mobility Studies. These efforts, like most zoning amendment projects, included a planning component that established project objectives, analyzed baseline and anticipated future conditions, and considered the most up-to-date data and information available relevant to the issues at hand. It is our view that achieving the MCC's stated goal for the commercial



districts necessitates a comprehensive assessment, and broader community discussion, of the specific objectives, opportunities, and constraints for future development in all of the C-1 Districts in the Midcoast.

3. Long Range Planning Project Priorities

In addition to the projects mentioned above, the Planning and Building Department has a number of regulatory updates underway, including comprehensive amendments to tree removal and subdivision regulations, as well as the proposed new short-term rental and accessory dwelling unit regulations currently pending before the Board of Supervisors. Other Department priorities include updating the County's grading regulations, analyzing possible supplements to the baseline green building requirements, completing the zoning updates required to implement the North Fair Oaks Community Plan and the County's Housing Element, and initiating the development of the Green Infrastructure Plan required by recent updates to the Municipal Regional Discharge Permit issued by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The Department is also making a concerted effort to keep pace with record numbers of permit applications, and to enhance our permitting systems and procedures. Thus, in light of existing commitments and available resources, I do not anticipate that the Department will have the capacity to undertake the type of planning effort that should accompany any proposed updates to the C-1 Regulations within the next two years.

In conclusion, the County believes that the full range of development standards applicable to new construction in Coastside C-1 Districts are adequate to protect coastal resources, community character, and physical and visual access to the shoreline. We are supportive of the MCC's desire to ensure that such development will support the local economy, reduce highway traffic, and serve local residents, and have many projects underway that will help achieve these goals. A comprehensive assessment of how we may want to modify existing standards for commercial development may also help, provided that it is done in a manner that takes current economic conditions and other relevant factors into consideration, and that provides maximum opportunities for coastside business owners and other coastside communities to participate. Unfortunately, it will be at least another two years before the Planning and Building Department will be ready to contemplate such an initiative.

If you have any questions regarding this response, or wish to discuss these matters further, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Steve Monowitz
Community Development Director
San Mateo County Planning and Building Department