

Local Government Scorecard
Santa Cruz City Council Meeting
October 22, 2019

Issue

190 West Cliff Drive Mixed Use Project

Staff Direction

“As conditioned, the proposed project meets the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance and provides a development that is compatible with the surrounding area in terms of its use, scale, and design. A thorough environmental analysis has been conducted, and mitigation measures have been incorporated as conditions of approval. Therefore, staff recommends that the City Council acknowledge the environmental determination and approve the Coastal Permit, Design Permit, Special Use Permit, Density Bonus Request to exceed height, Encroachment Permit for street and intersection improvements, and Tentative Map for the proposed project based on the Findings below and the Conditions of Approval in [Exhibit A](#).”

Background

This project involves a 95,055 square foot parcel that is zoned RTB(PER)/(Motel Residential Performance Overlay)/CZ-O (Coastal Zone Overlay)/SP-o (Shoreline Protection Overlay). The proposal for said parcel is to construct a four-story, multi-use project with two levels of underground parking, commercial space on the ground floor and 89 residential condominiums. In order to promote development that is favorable to tourists and residents, design, landscaping and review of site planning will be prioritized.

In June 2017, during the early phases of the project proposal a community meeting was held so as gain feedback from residents. This meeting resulted in a change of architects due to community feedback. In February of 2018, a formal application for the project was submitted and was followed by two community meetings in December of 2018 and in July of 2019. The meetings were attended by members of the project

development team, city staff members and members of the Planning Commission as well as approximately 210 community members between the two meeting dates. A website for the project was also established and provided a portal for community members to submit comments. Out of these forums for public comment came these key concerns:

- Slope stability due to excavation for the underground garage
- Traffic Impacts, specifically the West Cliff Dr./Bay Avenue intersection and cut-through traffic on neighboring streets
- Impact of a roundabout and access for emergency vehicles and response times
- The level of CEQA environmental review
- Vibration impacts from construction on the Clearview Court mobile homes
- Noise amplification from the new structure
- Shadow impacts on Clearview Court
- Parking impacts

The Planning Commission's motion to recommend approval included the following additional recommendations:

1. Staff is directed to augment the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Checklist as follows:

- Incorporation of a Noise Impact analysis to include vibration impacts on surrounding development during construction.

- Linking General Plan 2030 Environmental Impact Report mitigation measures and uniformly applied development standards to impacts associated to the project.

2. The Conditions of Approval shall be revised to include the following additions:

- Revise condition number 46 to include "Prior to removal of any heritage tree, the applicant shall consult with a tree moving expert to

determine the feasibility of moving the trees, as long as the moving of the tree(s) does not affect the feasibility of the project.

- Deck railings on the side of the buildings facing Clearview Court shall be an opaque material.

- An internal traffic management plan shall be developed.

- The project buildings shall be LEED Gold Standard Certified (at a minimum).

- The developer shall assure the availability of access to Wi-Fi to Clearview Court and shall not be reduced from its present level.

3. The Planning Commission requested that staff include the following in the staff report to City Council:

- Clarify the interpretation of Zoning Code Section 24.10.617.2(4)(c) regarding third story step backs.

Council Action -

After a thorough staff report and initial questions from the City Council members, and detailed description from the applicant, the Mayor opened the discussion to the public. The discussion (pros and cons) on the project were drawn between local neighbors who see the project as too large, does not address transportation, geological issues, solar and shading on the adjacent neighbors and a host of environmental issues related to slope and location on busy corridor. The opponents argued the project required a full EIR. The proponents focuses their opinions on the need to address the city's affordable housing requirements and that this project would provide 8 very low income units, plus a public space and other community benefits. The conversation lasted well into the late evening, where the city staff and legal, and environmental consultants addressed the issues brought forward by the public and the City council.

Summary of Motion -

There were two motions:

Motion 1: Councilmember Krohn motion with a second by Councilmember Brown moved to request that the Council require the applicant and the city to complete a full EIR to address what they considered to be inadequate findings. The environment consultant provided details as to why that EIR was not required.

That motion failed on a 3-4 vote.

Motion 2 - A second motion was moved Mayor Watkin with second by Vice Mayor Cummings to approve the 190 West Cliff Project as presented with adding minor amendments.

That motion passed on a 4-3 vote

Council Vote –

Motion 1 - Yes: Councilmembers Krohn, Glover and Brown

No: Mayor Watkins, Vice Mayor Cummings, Councilmembers Mathews and Meyers

Motion 2 – Yes: Mayor Watkins, Vice Mayor Cumminngs, Councilmembers Mathews and Meyers

No: Councilmember Brown, Glover and Brown

Chamber's Position

The City of Santa Cruz has an opportunity and responsibility to meet our housing needs. The Council must take a stand that responds to really deep rooted anti-development comments that permanent city planning commission and city council meeting. All housing projects in our community face a wrath of public scrutiny that requires the city staff, the planning commission and the City Council to take seriously the lack of housing to meet our community needs. This project has addressed the community input and made concessions to respond to the residents concern. Therefore the Chamber is in full support of this project proposal as we strive to enhance the community through economic vitality of which housing is a key aspect to address our short and long term affordable housing needs.