

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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June 23, 2010

Camille Leung, Planner
455 County Center, 2nd Floor
Planning & Building Department
Redwood City, Ca 94063

Subject: La Costanera – Permit amendment and CDP to change hours of operation
File No.: File No. PLN 2010-00494
Location: 8150 Cabrillo Highway

The Midcoast Community Council would like to make the following comments regarding the above planning item. We request that you take them into consideration in making recommendations regarding this application.

The La Costanera Restaurant is located on a bluff overlooking Montara State Beach. The Restaurant is adjacent to a State Beach, public access trails, State Park land and parking for the beach. The use permit designates operating hours to be limited to after 5:00. This permit was carefully crafted to comply with the Public Access policies of the LCP and Coastal Act. The hours were set to allow daytime parking for the beach in the parking lot. At that time it was determined that larger parking facilities would not meet scenic resources protection criteria.

The Restaurant is in a designated Coastal Scenic Corridor on Highway One. It is also located at the intersection of 2nd Street – a major access artery for residents of Montara coming from the North. This intersection has no signal or other pedestrian protecting infrastructure, and has traffic turning into parking lots at three places. This is in addition to traffic turning into Montara in the opposite direction, and pedestrians crossing the highway on foot in both directions at no designate crossing.

The Restaurant is proposing to extend the hours of operation to include daytime hours. We believe this would have a substantial impact on the community, beach users, and Highway One traffic. Accordingly any change should be considered with careful planning and analysis including the following factors:

Traffic, congestion and parking

Weekend traffic often backs up along the Highway One corridor. The limited designated parking during the day is quickly filled by beach visitor's who then park on the other side of the Highway on Montara streets and walk across the highway to the beach. If the restaurant were to be open on the weekend the parking lot would be full of restaurant patrons forcing more beach visitors to park on the shoulder and streets of Montara across the highway to the east. Parking on the shoulder of the road also blocks emergency vehicle access. This would make an existing, often dangerous problem, worse.

We have been informed that no traffic study is required due to the manner in which “peak use” is defined as Monday-Friday. This is inappropriate for this area with visitor congestion on weekends. The Devil’s Slide Tunnel will be opening in the near future and the impending traffic impact has yet to be determined. Montara State Beach is in the direct flow of any additional increase in traffic. We request that the impact of any changes to restaurant hours on traffic and the community be required prior to any decisions being made regarding permit changes.

Scenic Resources

As we have noted the Restaurant is located on a scenic bluff next to State Park Land. Any structural changes or increase in parking on the adjacent State Park land would not be consistent with the LCP’s scenic resources protection criteria. This is a highly environmentally sensitive area in the Fitzgerald Marine Preserve. Any decisions regarding commercial use should make these issues a priority.

Public Access

The LCP and Coastal Act place a high value on public access to the beaches. The limited public beaches are an asset for the Community and for the County. It is critical that public access be protected and enhanced. To reduce public parking and increase congestion at this access point would be contrary to protecting public access.

Environmental Impact

It is imperative that the environmental impact of the changes made with recent construction, and any proposed future changes in parking at the Restaurant, or other use of the bluff top be determined. The applicant recently poured concrete on the rip rap with out a permit or permission from the State Parks. The County planning site indicates that the geotechnical report is still pending. We request that the County require and enforce all applicable reports and permits required at this site.

Montara State Beach is a valuable resource to the Community and to the County. We ask that the County place the highest standard of due diligence on protecting the quality of life for residents, visitors and the environment in our midcoast community. Thank you for your consideration and contribution to our community.

Sincerely,

Neil Merriless, Chair
Midcoast Community Council

Cc: Supervisor Rich Gordon, California Coastal Commission