

**Planning & Zoning
Committee of the
MidCoast
Community Council**
PO Box 64, Moss Beach
CA 94038
Serving 12,000 residents

April 24, 2006 FAX/EMAIL

To: Matt Seubert
San Mateo County Planning and Building Division
Mail Drop PLN122, 455 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063
650.363.1831 - FAX: 650.363.4849

Re: PLN2005-00349. Consideration of a negative declaration, public-hearing level CDP and Use permit, Staff-level design review for five new commercial buildings at 265, 269, 273, 277 & 281 Ocean Blvd, Princeton.

Matt:

The Planning and Zoning Committee of the MidCoast Community Council reviewed the above-referenced project on March 29, 2006 with the applicant in attendance. We have the following comments:

In General

In general this project gives the appearance of complying with County zoning regulations. In theory, the two lower floors are designed for commercial, so is being built to comply with zoning. The third-story is also designed to be commercial, but the zoning allows for residential use on the third floor, but there are supposed to be size-restrictions for the residential floor. We don't know if this third floor meets the size restrictions for residential use.

The design and materials used make it clear that the intended end-use for this property will be residential. In fact, of the many recent waterfront buildings of this style, not one is currently being used for "marine related commercial use". This land is so precious, we hate to see it consumed with these "residential buildings" in an area zoned waterfront. According to the zoning, these buildings are supposed to be used for water-fronted marine-related commercial. Shoreline "W" district: Purpose of the "W" district is to "provide for a working waterfront. Enhance...protection and development of coastal resources....." Instead, it appears that the intended use of this proposed project is to (a) make the appearance of complying with existing zoning codes, and (b) create luxury waterfront residential lofts for speculative sale.

The applicant explained that the owner of this project is the proprietor of "Fish" in Sausalito. "Fish" is a fish processing facility for sushi-level restaurants, and that is the intended purpose of the largest section of this project. However, the design of this portion appears to contain a three-story atrium, which makes it clear that fish processing is not the intended use. Moreover, the remaining three sections are being built to sell.

As there are a number of existing (recently constructed) waterfront structures which were built as "marine related commercial", and in fact are being used as residences, we request that the County investigate the Use Permits for the existing Commercial buildings. It appears that none of these existing buildings is being used for "marine-related" commercial as required by the "W" zone.

We believe that the County should do an inventory of the current use permits and not allow any further three-story buildings to be built which essentially wall-off the water-front and do not, in fact, comply with the intent of the "W" zoning despite giving the appearance of doing so. We request the County review the policies that have led to the 3 story residential development of the Princeton waterfront, and decide if current planning guidelines are resulting in compliance with the LCP, and if not, fine tune the Waterfront zoning.

Sea Wall

There is an existing seawall which is approximately 50 years old. The beach in this area is under water at high tide. One requirement is, according to the county, that anything built here has to be viable for 50 years without any additional sea walls or reinforcements. We ask the county to consider whether this project is set back far enough, from the mean high-tide line to survive 50 years. Considering we lost 10 feet, ten years ago, the county may want to consider that the south corner of the seawall won't last 50 years and we question whether the remainder of the seawall will survive 50 years. One corner of this proposed structure is within 20' of an unprotected shoreline.

Parking

In the Princeton neighborhood there are numerous fences posted with "no parking" signs built directly on the right-of-way. This prevents public parking and restricts public access to the nearby beach and is in violation of law. Thus, we ask that a condition of approval be an explicit restriction on any action of any kind that prevents people from parking on the right-of-way, including fences, "no parking" signs, and landscaping that would impair parking.

Design

The design of this project is nearly identical to the several recently built "commercial buildings" along the waterfront in Princeton. However, we don't believe those buildings nor this project comply with the design requirements of the LCP:

LCP 8.13 provides that you should "use pitched rather than flat roof with non-reflective roofs." This project has metal siding and a metal roof.

LCP 8.13.b.1 provides that for commercial development, you are to "design building that reflect the nautical character of the harbor setting of wood or shingle siding, employ natural or sea colors and use pitched roofs." This project meets none of these characteristics.

The Planning Commission recently wrestled extensively with these LCP requirements when trying to work with the design of the Harbor District bathroom project. Considering these buildings are on the waterfront and visible from the ocean, we feel it is even more imperative that they reflect the nautical character of the harbor setting and not continue the industrial "airplane hanger" look of the adjacent buildings.

Thank you for your help. We request that you keep us informed of any further developments, redesigns, hearings, approvals or appeals concerning this application.

For the MidCoast Community Council Planning & Zoning Committee,

Sara Bassler
Chair, MCC Planning & Zoning Committee

