



# City of Capitola Planning Commission Meeting

September 4, 2025



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

## **Project Background**

Purpose: Address bluff erosion, sea-level rise & stormwater drainage impacts along Cliff Drive corridor

Project extends from western City limit to Capitola Village

Features: Pedestrian & bike access, connections to Hooper Beach & Wharf overlook



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

## **Project Direction**

August 2024: City Council reviewed alternatives → selected Alternative 3  
(Full Bluff Protection)

- Continuous bluff stabilization
- Class I multi-use path
- Cantilevered sections where needed
- Overlooks & reconfigured parking



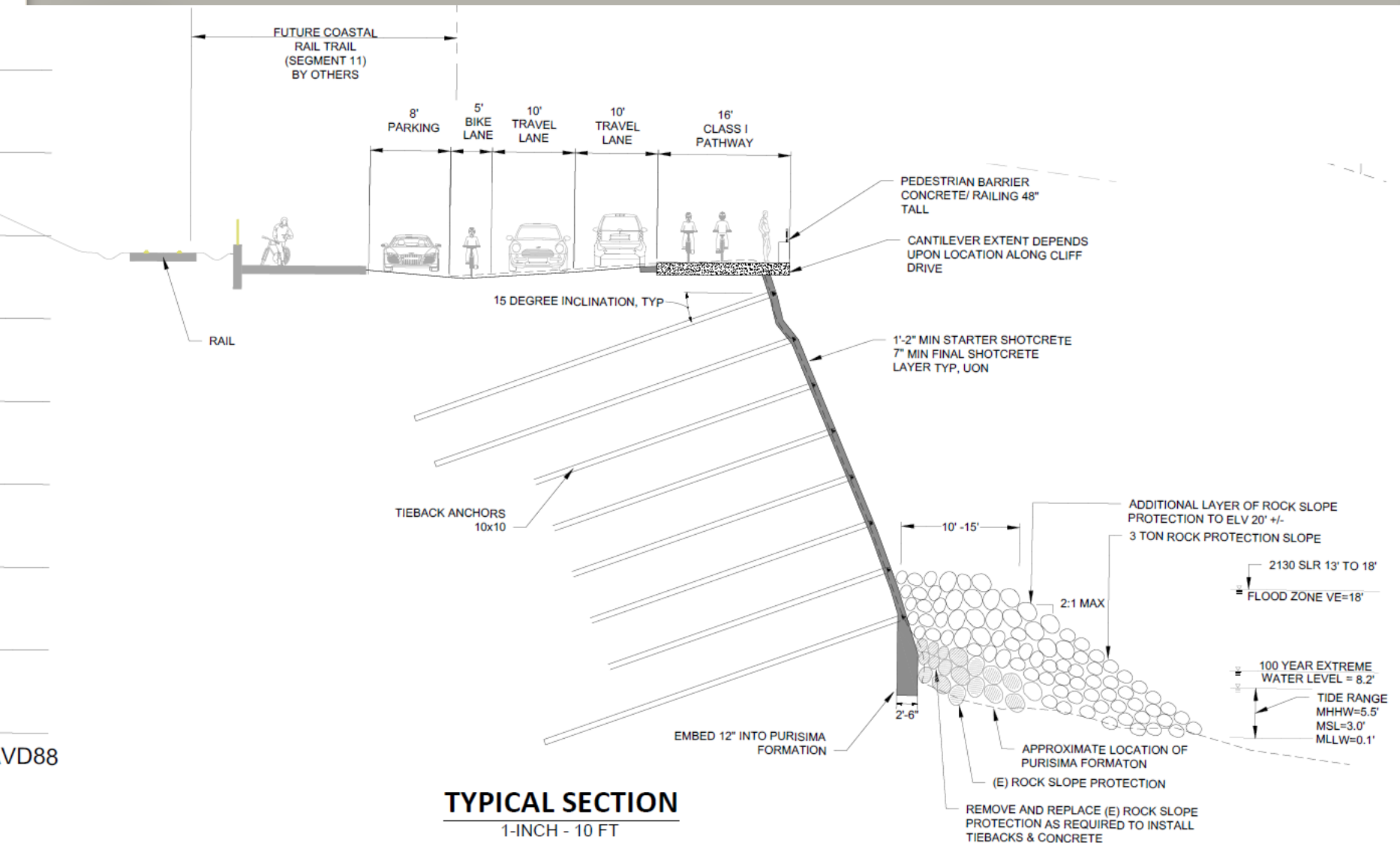
# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments







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**Budget limitations require  
focus on areas of risk**







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**Alternative 4 – Partial Bluff Protection (Phased):** Target highest-risk areas first, ensuring compatibility with full Alternative 3 design







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## **Community Engagement**

Community Meeting: August 12, 2025

Project overview & Q&A  
(Attachment 11)

City Council Update: August 28, 2025

Phased approach discussed due to \$10.5M FHWA funding  
(Attachment 9)



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

## **Why LCP Amendment Are Needed**

LCP = Policy & Regulatory Framework for Capitola's coastal zone

- Must reflect current conditions and resilience planning
- Updates ensure consistency with:
  - Sea-level rise planning
  - Public access improvements
  - Bluff stabilization & shoreline structures





# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

## **Proposed Amendments**

### Chapter 17.32 – Parks & Open Space

- Allows Cliff Drive Resiliency Project improvements
- Limits development to ensure scenic/recreational priority
- Prohibits private development on beaches

### Chapter 17.68 – Geological Hazards

- New definitions: bluff/seacliff and coastal hazards
- Expanded purpose statement
- Removes outdated report references
- Establishes 50-year minimum standard



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## **Proposed Amendments**

### Chapter 17.64 – ESHA

Clarifies exception for resource-dependent uses:

- Low-intensity public access & recreation
- Nature study
- Restoration

### Chapter 17.76 – Parking & Loading

Updates reference from Southern Pacific Railroad → Regional Transportation Commission





# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

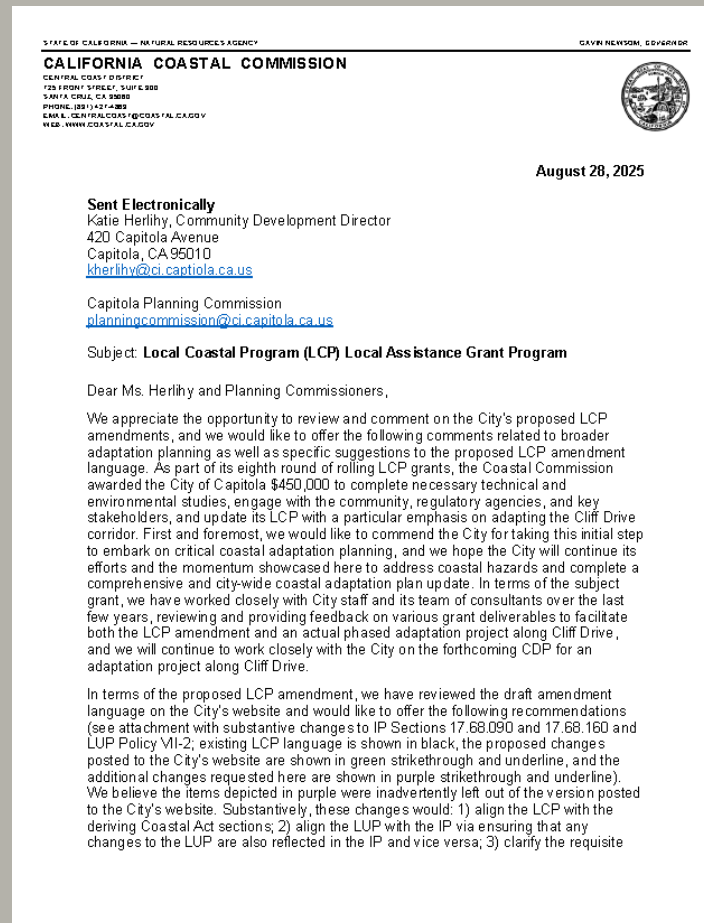
## **Proposed Amendments to LCP Land Use Plan**

1. Update existing condition descriptions
2. Replace outdated references (SPRR → RTC)
3. Amend policies to:
  - Support multi-modal enhancements
  - Enhance public coastal access
  - Address sea-level rise & shoreline structures
  - Improve drainage management
4. Climate adaptation policies to initiate adaptation planning



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

## Coastal Commission Staff Comments (Attachment 12)







# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

## What does this mean?

### **1. Reports must follow state standards**

### **2. Hazards must be evaluated for different future scenarios**

- Reports must consider different rates of erosion and sea level rise at various future time horizons (e.g., 20 years, 50 years, 100 years).
- The purpose is to identify long-term risks from coastal hazards and explore possible adaptation strategies for the proposed development.

### **3. Safety standards for development siting**

- Proposed development must be located so that it achieves at least the following minimum "factor of safety" against landslides:
  - 1.5 (static): when considering normal, non-earthquake conditions.
  - 1.1 (pseudo-static): when considering earthquake shaking forces.
- Engineering standards indicating the margin between stability and potential failure.
- This level of safety must be maintained for at least 50 years

17.68.090 Beach area regulations. In the GH district:

A. A geologic/engineering report shall be required for all developments located on or adjacent to ~~near~~ a beach, including shoreline protective measures. "Shoreline protective measures" includes the installation, in an area where coastal process operate, of any structure or material, including but not limited to riprap or a seawall, for the purpose of protecting any structure, including a road, utility or transmission line. Shoreline protection structures shall be permitted only ~~when they are~~:

1. Necessary ~~If required~~ to protect coastal-dependent uses, and/or existing development structures (other than accessory structures), or public beaches in danger from erosion; ~~or and~~

2. ~~Necessary to protect public beaches in danger from erosion, and~~ only if ~~if~~ nonstructural solutions (e.g., i.e., artificial beach nourishment, relocation of structures, etc.) and any other less environmentally damaging alternatives (such as nature-based adaptation measures) have proven to be infeasible; and

3. If they are determined to be the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative to protect the endangered structure/beach/use; and

4. If all coastal resource impacts are avoided, and where all unavoidable impacts are commensurately mitigated; including that they are dDesigned so as to eliminate or mitigate adverse impacts on local shoreline sand supply, public access, marine habitats, visual resources, ~~and~~ paleontological resources, and any other coastal resources; and

54. Designed to provide lateral and vertical public access elements where feasible (Ord. 628 §2(part), 1987).



## Coastal Commission Recommended Change:

### LUP Chapter 5 Natural Hazards: Policy VII-2:

All geologic/engineering reports required by the City pursuant to the policies of this component shall be prepared by a qualified geologist/engineer according to the guidelines for practice issued by the California Geologic Survey and shall be based on the best available, professionally accepted science and scientific guidance to project sea level rise and other climate change related environmental changes, coastal erosion, bluff failure, flooding, and other coastal hazards. Reports shall consider a range of erosion and sea level amounts based on various time horizons so as to understand the coastal hazards risks and potential adaptation pathways for the proposed development, and all development shall be sited to maintain a minimum factor of safety against land sliding of 1.5 (static) and 1.1 (pseudo static) for a period of 50 years. ~~Division of Mines and Geology, specifically CDMG notes Numbers 37 (Guidelines to Geologic/Seismic Reports), 43 (Recommended Guidelines for Determining the Maximum Probably Earthquakes, 44 (Recommended Guidelines for Preparing Engineering Geologic Reports), and interpretive Coastal Commission for Bluff Top Development.~~

**Staff Recommendation: Policy VII-2** Bluff and hillside stability evaluations shall consider a range of coastal hazards—including erosion rates, wave climate, storm surge, and sea-level rise—over an 50-year planning horizon. Proposed development shall incorporate mitigation measures designed to perform for a minimum of 50 years post-occupancy. Site-specific analysis must be prepared and sealed by a California-licensed Geotechnical Engineer (GE) or Certified Engineering Geologist (CEG) and accepted by the City of Capitola.

**Coastal Commission Recommendation:**

17.68.160 Contents of geologic/engineering reports. All geologic/engineering reports required by this chapter shall be prepared according to the guidelines for practice issued by the California Geologic Survey and shall be based on the best available, professionally accepted science and scientific guidance to project sea level rise and other climate change related environmental changes, coastal erosion, bluff failure, flooding, and other coastal hazards. Reports shall consider a range of erosion and sea level amounts based on various time horizons so as to understand the coastal hazards risks and potential adaptation pathways for the proposed development, and all development shall be sited to maintain a minimum factor of safety against land sliding of 1.5 (static) and 1.1 (pseudo static) for a period of 50 years. The required geological reports for all developments shall be prepared by a registered geologist or professional engineer with expertise in soils or foundations engineering, or by a certified engineering geologist. Because the city staff may not contain the expertise necessary to evaluate the adequacy of a report, the city may employ, at the applicant's expense, an appropriate expert to evaluate the adequacy of the report. (Ord. 628 §2(part), 1987).

**Staff Recommendation:**

17.68.160. Contents of geologic/engineering reports. Bluff and hillside stability evaluations shall consider a range of coastal hazards—including erosion rates, wave climate, storm surge, and sea-level rise—over an 50-year planning horizon. Proposed development shall incorporate mitigation measures designed to perform for a minimum of 50 years post-occupancy. Slope stability shall meet minimum factors of safety of 1.5 (static) and 1.1 (seismic, pseudostatic) unless otherwise justified by a site-specific analysis prepared and sealed by a California-licensed Geotechnical Engineer (GE) or Certified Engineering Geologist (CEG) and accepted by the City of Capitola.



## Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

Page 21 of Planning Commission Agenda Pack

Page 24 of Land Use Plan

The land adjacent to Capitola's shoreline is densely developed with residential development along the ~~Cliff Drive and~~ Grand Avenue bluffs, as well as a mixture of residential and commercial uses in Capitola Village adjacent to Capitola Beach. Vertical access to the sea from Cliff Drive and Grand Avenue is ~~virtually impossible~~ difficult due to the height of the cliff and ~~substantial~~ continuing erosion; however, there are public access stairways from both Cliff Avenue and Cliff Drive, which connect to the Village and Hooper Beach, respectively. That said, most users of the Capitola shoreline typically gain access from the Esplanade, the wharf area, or from New Brighton beach.

Vertical access to the sea from Cliff Drive and Grand Avenue is difficult due to the height of the cliff and continuing erosion; however, there are public access stairways from both Cliff Avenue and Cliff Drive, which connect to the Village and Hooper Beach, respectively. The wooden staircase is often impacted during storm events causing temporary closures to the Cliff Drive access to Hooper Beach. That said, most users of the Capitola shoreline typically gain access...



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

Page 22 of Planning Commission Agenda Pack

Page 25 of Land Use Plan

A City stairway provides access to Hooper Beach at the downcoast viewpoint. The Cliff Drive corridor does not include contiguous sidewalks or a separated bike path. In the upper Cliff Drive corridor, pedestrians and bicyclists share an approximately six foot-wide portion of the right-of-way, which may result in dangerous conflicts between pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists.

A City stairway provides access to Hooper Beach at the downcoast viewpoint. The wooden staircase is often impacted during storm events causing temporary closures to the Cliff Drive access to Hooper Beach.

The Cliff Drive corridor does not..





# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

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Page 26 of Land Use Plan

## HOOPER BEACH

This small City-owned and maintained beach is located west of the wharf. Access at the end of Wharf Road is down a roadway that is occasionally used as a boat ramp. Access is also provided via a vertical stairway along the midpoint of Cliff Drive as noted above. There are 11 public parking spaces at the end of Wharf Road; 9 in close proximity to the front of the Venetian Court and approximately 26 private spaces reserved for guests of the two motels. Pedestrian access is also obtained along the beach from the main beach to the east.

Access is also provided via a vertical stairway along the midpoint of Cliff Drive and, as noted above, is often impacted during storm events causing temporary closures. There are 11 public ...



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

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Page 35 of Land Use Plan

Policy II-97 Provide adequate parking nearby to support the wharf uses (specifically boat launching activities) and establish operational guidelines that minimize conflicts between pedestrians and Wharf traffic.

Implementation:

~~a) Acquire necessary easements for long term usage of Southern Pacific right of way for parking and utilize Coastal Conservancy funding for development.~~

a)

~~b)~~ Develop concessionaire agreements that specify and limit types of uses of wharf consistent with Policy II-68.



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

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Page 35 of Land Use Plan

## THE VILLAGE AREA:

Policy II-~~12~~10 Develop a scheme for safe bicycle connection between Cliff Drive and Park Avenue and improve bicycle parking facilities.

### Implementation:

Develop overall bicycle plan for Cliff Drive-Village-Park Avenue transition utilizing directional signing and seek ~~Regional Transportation Commission~~ funds for development.



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

Page 45 of Planning Commission Agenda Pack  
Page 83 of Land Use Program

**Policy VII-8** A geologic/engineering report shall be submitted for any bluff top or cliff development proposed within 200 feet of the cliff edge.

The City may designate a lesser area of demonstration in specific areas of known geologic stability (as determined by adequate geologic evaluation and historic evidence) ~~or where adequate protective works already exist.~~  
The City may designate a greater area of demonstration or exclude development entirely in areas of known high instability.

The ~~technical geology~~ report shall be prepared by a ~~registered geologist or professional civil engineer~~ qualified professional with expertise in shoreline processes ~~soils or foundation engineering or by a certified engineering geologist.~~ The report shall consider and analyze any information required by Policy VII-2.

## Implementation:

~~a) Revise Zoning ordinance to require geologic reports for all development proposed on coastal bluffs or beaches, including shoreline structures, such as seawalls and including provisions of Policy VII-8.~~

a) ~~b)~~ Develop maps for public information showing areas and parcels requiring the submittal of geologic reports.





# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

Page 46 & 47 of Planning Commission Agenda Pack  
Page 84 & 85 of Land Use Program

**Policy VII-11** The City shall construct future drainage projects and improve existing drainage facilities where feasible so that runoff is ~~filtered and treated, and directed away from the coastal bluffs, or if it cannot be~~ (except that where such measures are infeasible it shall be discharged in a place and manner so as not to contribute to erosion of a bluff or beach.)

As a condition of approval for any coastal adaptation strategies along Cliff Drive, ~~require the removal of any non-native and invasive plants and replacement with native bluff plants and~~ explore the feasibility of directing drainage to inland drainage systems. Ensure that drainage in coastal hazard areas does not contribute to coastal bluff or other shoreline erosion,

and camouflage all drainage elements to minimize impact to visual resources.



# Cliff Drive Resiliency Project LCP & LUP Zoning Amendments

## **Recommended Action:**

Adopt resolutions recommending City Council approval of:

1. Amendments to CMC Chapters 17.32, 17.64, 17.76, 17.68
2. Amendments to Land Use Plan Chapters 2 & 7

with the updated redlines provided during the hearing.