

**Gautho, Julia**

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**From:** Santa Cruz YIMBY <santacruzylimby@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 27, 2025 8:41 AM  
**To:** City Council  
**Cc:** Herlihy, Katie (kherlihy@ci.capitola.ca.us); Goldstein, Jamie (jgoldstein@ci.capitola.ca.us)  
**Subject:** [PDF] Comment on Agenda Item 9.C, August 28  
**Attachments:** Santa Cruz YIMBY input on Agenda Item 9.c.pdf

Mayor, Vice Mayor and Council Members,

Please see the attached comment on Agenda Item 9.C for the August 28, 2025 meeting.

Thank you,

Janine Roeth  
Rafa Sonnenfeld  
Jocelyn Wolf  
Hope Armstrong  
Ryan Meckel  
Volunteer leads, Santa Cruz YIMBY



August 26, 2025

To: Capitola City Council

Re: Agenda Item 9.C, Capitola Mall Update

Mayor, Vice-Mayor and Council Members,

We are writing regarding Agenda Item 9.C: Capitola Mall Update and Amendment to Agreement with Ben Noble Planning. We urge the Council to support **Option 2 – Expedited Objective Standards**.

**The Capitola Mall site is the most important housing opportunity in the Housing Element, providing the great majority of the RHNA units and nearly 40% of the required affordable homes, largely on the Merlone Geier property.**

Programs 1.6 and 1.7 were designed to enable redevelopment of the Mall through objective standards, and zoning that supports housing and mixed-use opportunities appropriate to the site. **Program 1.7, focused specifically on the shopping mall, is among the most consequential Housing Element programs, with a firm deadline of December 31, 2025.**

We applaud the ongoing conversations with Merlone Geier to shape the City's options, and we urge the Council to support Merlone Geier's recommended approach, **Option 2 – Expedited Objective Standards**. This option is:

- The quickest and least expensive path to compliance;
- Fully consistent with Housing Element requirements and deadlines;
- Aligned with the property owner's preference to move forward; and
- Predictable in producing coherent urban design and placemaking outcomes.

By contrast:

- Option 3, with its highly prescriptive form-based codes and regulating maps, would undermine Programs 1.6 and 1.7 and cause the City to miss the December 31, 2025 deadline.
- Option 1 is unnecessary. Capitola already completed citywide objective standards and developed the Housing Element with extensive community input. The task now is simply to modify the standards to the Mall site. Option 1 wastes additional city dollars, and also risks missing the December 31, 2025 deadline.

**It's critical that Capitola meet the December 31, 2025 deadline for Program 1.7. If the deadline is missed, the state could take away Capitola's Housing Element certification, which would mean losing local control over development and opening the door to "Builder's Remedy" projects that bypass city zoning.** Even without decertification, missing the deadline could still invite lawsuits and make it easier for developers to submit Builder's Remedy projects the City would have to approve.

We respectfully urge you to act decisively on Thursday to keep Capitola on track, protect local control, and position the City to deliver the housing and revitalization opportunities promised at the Capitola Mall. **Support Option 2 – Expedited Objective Standards.**

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to meeting Capitola's housing obligations.

Sincerely,

Janine Roeth, volunteer lead, Santa Cruz YIMBY  
Rafa Sonnenfeld, volunteer lead, Santa Cruz YIMBY  
Jocelyn Wolf, volunteer lead, Santa Cruz YIMBY  
Hope Armstrong, volunteer lead, Santa Cruz YIMBY  
Ryan Meckel, volunteer lead, Santa Cruz YIMBY

*Santa Cruz YIMBY Mission: We envision a community where our neighbors of all ages, cultures, abilities, and incomes, can make Santa Cruz County their home. In response to the ever-increasing cost of living, we advocate for more affordable housing to meet the needs of our growing population.*

*Santa Cruz YIMBY is a chapter of YIMBY Action, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization.*