
Re: Proposed Zoning Changes for 600 Park Avenue - A Call for a Balanced Solution

From Elisabeth Silverstein <elisabethsilverstein@gmail.com>

Date Wed 9/10/2025 4:53 PM

To City Council <citycouncil@ci.capitola.ca.us>

Nevermind found it apologies!

On Wed, Sep 10, 2025, 4:48 PM Elisabeth Silverstein <elisabethsilverstein@gmail.com> wrote:

Just confirming you received as I don't see this reflected on the Detailed Agenda for tomorrow.

Lizzy

On Tue, Sep 9, 2025, 8:59 PM Elisabeth Silverstein <elisabethsilverstein@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear City Council,

My name is Lizzy, and I am a homeowner at 113 Wesley St. My property is located directly behind the 600 Park Avenue parcel slated for rezoning to high-density residential (RM-H).

I am writing to you today with urgent concerns about the proposed development standards and to offer constructive solutions that I believe will lead to a better outcome for both the city and its current residents.

I understand that Capitola is working to meet state-mandated housing goals (RHNA), and I support the need for new housing in our community. However, I believe the current proposal for 600 Park Avenue, as outlined in the city's planning documents, is not the right way to achieve this goal. The plan fails to balance new development with the stability and quality of life of the adjacent single-family neighborhood. My primary concerns are as follows:

1. **Severe Impact from Insufficient Setbacks and Excessive Height:** The proposal to allow 36-foot-tall buildings just 10 feet from our property lines is untenable. This will create a shear wall, destroying our privacy with direct lines of sight into our homes and yards, blocking essential sunlight, and fundamentally altering the character of our neighborhood. As a first-time homeowner, my home represents my family's life savings, and this proposal directly threatens not only our quality of life, but our primary investment.
2. **Inadequate Environmental and Infrastructure Review:** I question whether the issued "Negative Declaration" under CEQA adequately assesses the true impact of such a drastic increase in density. Specifically, has the city conducted detailed studies on:
 - **Local Wildlife:** The impact on sensitive species in our area, including bald eagles.
 - **Infrastructure Capacity:** The ability of our local roads, parking, sewage, and water systems to handle this large-scale development. Who will bear the cost of the necessary upgrades?

- **Geological Stability:** The impact of major new construction so close to the coastal bluffs.
3. **Lack of Mandated Privacy Protections:** The current plan places the entire burden of lost privacy on existing homeowners. There are no provisions requiring the developer to mitigate these impacts, leaving us to personally fund solutions like mature trees or privacy fencing to shield our homes from a three to four-story apartment building.

Proposed Solutions for a Better Project

I urge you to amend the development standards for the 600 Park Avenue site *before* final approval. A compromise is possible:

- **Solution 1: Implement Transitional Zoning Standards.** Introduce "step-backs" for the 600 Park Ave site to create a buffer between the high-density development and the existing single-family homes. This is a common and fair planning tool. I propose:
 - **Increased Setbacks:** Require a minimum setback of 25-30 feet for any structure adjacent to a single-family residential lot.
 - **Tiered Height Limits:** Limit building height to a maximum of 30 feet within 50 feet of our property lines, allowing the proposed 36-foot height only on portions of the parcel further away from our homes.
 - **Mandatory Privacy Buffers:** Make it a condition of approval that the developer must install and maintain a substantial landscape buffer, including mature trees and fencing, on their side of the property line to provide a visual screen.
- **Solution 2: Prioritize High-Density Development in More Suitable Locations.** While 600 Park Avenue can contribute to our housing stock, the city's most intensive density goals would be better met at the **Capitola Mall**. This underutilized commercial site has the space, parking, and infrastructure access to support a large number of new homes without the same negative impacts on an established residential neighborhood.

This approach would still allow for new housing at 600 Park Avenue while protecting the character of our community and the investments of your residents.

Thank you for your time and for your service to Capitola. I ask that you seriously consider these reasonable solutions to create a project that benefits everyone.

Sincerely,
Lizzy (Elisabeth) Toth
113 Wesley St, Capitola, CA, 95010
elisabethsilverstein@gmail.com