



West Cliff Drive Webinar February 13, 2023: Q&A

I. General meeting questions:

Q: Will this meeting and slides be posted after the meeting on the city website?

A: Emergency Response Webpage: www.cityofsantacruz.com/WestCliffTrafficControls

Q: Is the city collecting data on traffic diverted into surrounding neighborhoods? What are the plans to address this?

A: Traffic counts are underway to establish a baseline of the diverted traffic. These counts will inform future actions that may occur in adjacent neighborhoods. The posted detour aims to keep vehicles on arterial and collector streets. When visiting West Cliff, you can help by NOT cutting through the neighborhoods. The action by City Council on February 28th authorizes staff to investigate traffic calming features “in and around Columbia Street, Ammar Avenue, and Delaware Avenue” and then bring a recommendation to Council in May 2023.

Q: Is there a place to donate to support Santa Cruz County’s rebuilding efforts?

A: Santa Cruz County Community Foundation.

II. Climate Action Questions:

Q: How much does car traffic contribute to the erosion? Does auto traffic contribute to climate change and the impacts we’re seeing on West Cliff today?

A: Internal combustion engine vehicles emit greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. During the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan development, we did not necessarily parse out the attributable contribution of various sources of erosion. We have identified increased wave action, stormwater runoff, use of informal trails, ice plant, and other sources of erosion but not specifically car traffic.

Q: What’s an example of investing in adaptation strategies too early? Sea level rise is happening now.

A: The statement was made that using triggers and thresholds allows us to transition to the next step of adaptation strategies without making investments too early or too late. An example of investing in an adaptation strategy too early would be replacing storm sewer lines well in advance of any evidence of potential problems due to sea level rise or storm flooding and connectivity to low-lying areas. Through monitoring sea level rise and flooding via instruments to be installed as part of the coastal change monitoring network, we can anticipate those problems and time any replacements accordingly.



Q: What does managed retreat mean? Is managed retreat being considered for the long term given that erosion will continue? How will the City approach public engagement for this strategy? Would this create more spaces for people walking and biking?

A: Managed retreat or planned relocation means moving infrastructure and/or people away from the coastline and is discussed in more detail in the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan's [Alternatives Analysis](#). Managed retreat was explored during the Resilient Coast Santa Cruz initiative in 2019 – 2021 and one-lane, one-way transportation corridor concepts were considered. While the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan did not recommend going to a managed retreat option in the near term, we acknowledged that it would continue to be an option on the table, and that further discussion with the community and regulatory agencies, as well as monitoring triggers and thresholds, will help us determine when we should move to that approach. Two cost thresholds established for the Mitchell's Cove area were exceeded during the bomb cyclone event, indicating that the community must seriously consider managed retreat earlier than expected.

In the case of a one-lane, one-way configuration, the concept included discussion of shifting the bike-pedestrian path to the closed lane of traffic, potentially separating bikers and walkers. Doing so would expand the space available for bikers and walkers.

Q: What are the constraints/thresholds/triggers for dealing with retreat and private property.

A: As explained in the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan's [Alternatives Analysis](#), managed retreat strategies can be implemented in various ways, some in the form of changed policy, zoning, or setback regulations. In others, purchase of property, transfer of development rights, or eminent domain could be used to acquire portions of properties to facilitate the realignment of the West Cliff Drive corridor. The goal of managed retreat is to preserve the public interest and access to the coast while providing an equitable solution for private property owners and those that rent private property. Managed retreat tends to be highly dependent on economics, legal and property rights, and must balance public and private interests. There are few examples of proactively managed retreats of private property in California.

The City has established triggers and thresholds across four sections or zones of West Cliff Drive that, when exceeded, indicate the need to seriously consider and shift to a managed retreat approach. In the case of the Mitchell's Cove area, managed retreat was indicated as a long-term strategy and was initiated for consideration when the bomb cyclone event caused damage that exceeded two thresholds: (1) more than two major infrastructure repairs over a 5-year period and (2) when repair costs from impacts exceeded \$500,000.



Q: Where can you find the Virtual Reality app?

A: The City's Resilient Coast Santa Cruz webpage, www.cityofsantacruz.com/resilientcoast, has links to all coastal climate change visualization products for the community to explore including the Sea Level Rise Explorer app which can be accessed online (<https://virtualplanet.tech/santa-cruz>) via cell phones or Oculus headsets.

Q: How would a sea wall affect the surf?

A: We have not studied how a sea wall would affect surf breaks. Any sea wall design would require close collaboration with the surf community to understand potential impacts and how they might be mitigated as was done in the Pleasure Point East Cliff Drive Sea Wall project.

III. Planning & Public Works:

Q: Can you share a rough timeline for the start of repair and substantial completion of repair of the retaining structures, roadways, and Bethany curve bridge?

A: As we're working through the process for the public assistance program through FEMA and FHWA, we want to make sure that we're seeing what we're qualified for, but we also know we need to do some immediate repairs. Our hope is to have something in place by the Summer/Fall of 2023.

Q: I'd like to be on the signage committee. How do I sign up?

A: There is no signage committee currently. City staff are scoping a master signage project to pursue grant funding for the development of a Master Signage Plan described in the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan.

Q: What was the process for assessing that damage and can those estimates be updated? Will we be able to update the 5-million-dollar figure if needed?

A: Initial Damage Estimates (IDE) are performed by licensed professional engineers with experience in providing construction estimates and project implementation. IDE's can and will be updated as additional information is collected and analyzed.

Q: Does FEMA typically fund emergency Coastal armoring?

A: Based on initial conversations with FEMA staff, coastal armoring may be an eligible disaster recovery expense. The City is in the process of applying for the Request for Public Assistance (RPA) program. The application has been submitted and is under review by FEMA. Additionally, we need to work within regulations and approval processes for any armoring work in this area.



Q: Can the FHWA funding be used for Bethany Curve? What is the timeline for the implementation and are there any limits on the timelines for using that funding?

A: City staff has submitted initial damage estimates to FHWA and is awaiting field meetings to review damages, including those at Bethany Curve. Because West Cliff Drive is designated a federal aid-route, it is very likely that Bethany Curve will receive disaster funding through FHWA. No timeline has been received from FHWA on when field meetings will be performed but staff anticipates some time within the next few months.

Q: What is the status of the Dream Inn project?

A: The City Council's approval of the project at 190 West Cliff Drive (the parking lot across the street from the Dream Inn) was appealed to the Coastal Commission in late 2019. The Coastal Commission staff are still reviewing the project, and the next step will be a hearing before the Coastal Commission. If the Coastal Commission rules to have the Council's decision stand, or if it takes jurisdiction and approves the project itself, then the next step would be to apply for building permits and public improvement permits. As of February 2023, we do not have a definitive Coastal Commission hearing date. Given that timing uncertainty and the need for building and public works permits following the Coastal Commission's decision, any construction commencement would likely be at least one year from now.

Q: Is the City coordinating with the rest of the region on recovery?

A: The City continues to collaborate with County and regional partners on coastal resiliency through a variety of practitioner forums.

Q: Are there lessons learned from East Cliff? Have you engaged with the County on that project?

A: Yes, the City looked closely at the Pleasure Point East Cliff sea wall, the conditions leading up to its installation, its design and outreach process, and community perceptions post-installation. County staff involved in the East Cliff Sea Wall project also participated in the technical advisory committee for the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan.



Q: What role does the Coastal Commission play in the new plans for West Cliff?

A: The Coastal Commission has varying levels of oversight for actions that occur within the Coastal Zone. The City has a Local Coastal Program (LCP) that has been approved by the Coastal Commission. The LCP provides policy guidance for how the CA Coastal Act will be implemented in the City. Generally, changes in the Coastal Zone are evaluated for consistency with the LCP. Many changes in the coastal zone trigger coastal permits, and those permits must be found consistent with the LCP. The City issues most coastal permits through a noticed public hearing. In some instances (e.g., when the project is within the Coastal Appeal Zone), the City's action on a coastal permit can be appealed to the Coastal Commission. In other instances (e.g., if the project is on the beach or in the water), the City does not have the authority to issue a coastal permit, and the coastal permit must be obtained directly from the Coastal Commission.

When thinking about long-term plans for West Cliff, some of those plans may not be supported by the policies in the current LCP, which dates back decades. If the City has a new policy document (or portions of a new policy document) that it wants to be considered in approving coastal permits, the policies need to be incorporated into the City's LCP. Any changes to the LCP require City Council and Coastal Commission approval. The City has a series of policy updates that it has either recently worked on or is currently working on that will ultimately be considered by the Coastal Commission as changes to the LCP. An update to the LCP is in process, and more information can be found at <https://www.cityofsantacruz.com/Home/Components/Topic/Topic/11324/3916>.

Given the Coastal Commission's initial reactions to the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan, it remains to be seen how that plan will ultimately be considered by the Commission. Various options are on the table. Portions of the policy work may be incorporated into the City's larger LCP update. The City may pursue individual coastal permits for the work identified in the plan (or may group projects together under a single coastal permit), using the analyses and information in the plan to support the coastal permits. Or the City could pursue having the Coastal Commission approve the plan as a "Public Works Plan," which would serve as a type of master permit for the work, though this approach may be unlikely given Coastal Commission's initial comments. Regardless of the path, City staff will continue to work closely with Coastal Commission staff on advancing plans for West Cliff.



Q: How does this erosion impact approvals for new developments on West Cliff?

A: Most development occurs on the inland side of West Cliff Drive. Even then, new developments on West Cliff Drive typically are issued conditions of approval stating that neither access nor utilities are guaranteed due to the dynamic nature of the coastline. For those projects that involve armoring of the bluff, the Coastal Commission would typically have permit authority. In some instances, the Coastal Commission has allowed for armoring in areas where armoring is necessary to protect existing structures and existing infrastructure. Each project must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and coastal permits must be done where necessary. If a coastal permit does not require direct approval by the Commission, the City can review the project and issue a coastal permit, which would require consistency with the City's adopted local coastal program. Depending on the location, coastal permits issued by the City are sometimes able to be appealed to the Coastal Commission, in which case the Coastal Commission weighs in on them directly. The City is also looking at updating our local coastal program to help guide how and when we are placing armoring as well as where we would be considering managed retreat. These policies will also inform future development allowances.

Q: How will the cave under West Cliff under 1030(ish) West Cliff Drive be addressed?

A: Pursuant to the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan, filling the sea cave across from 1030 West Cliff Drive is slated as a near term action scheduled to occur by 2031.

Q: What are your strategies to encourage pedestrian and cycling traffic on West Cliff?

A: We are bringing back bike share and continue supporting an annual Open Streets event. The West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan also calls for increased bike parking along the entire corridor.

Q: Many rip rap boulders have fallen into the surf zone. Is there a plan to remove those?

A: For the rip rap repairs identified in the West Cliff Drive Adaptation and Management Plan, we confirmed that cranes can reach fugitive rocks so that they can be restacked. However, not all rocks in the surf zone can be accessed via cranes and the City does not have plans to remove those not associated with the rip rap repairs identified in the Plan.



IV. Traffic and One Way – One Lane Questions:

Q: In the one-way, what are the thoughts about separating bikes and pedestrians? Concerns about e-bikes.

A: A one-way roadway would free-up space to provide an on-street two-way separated bike lane for cyclists, removing them from the shared-use trail and leaving it for pedestrians. E-bikes (and other electric micro-mobility devices) are gaining popularity and introducing new people to our bike lanes and sidewalks. They travel at speeds similar to bicyclists, if not a bit faster, and would be fit for operating in the possible separated bike lane.

Q: How can residents advocate for a one-way plan?

A: The website cityofsantacruz.com/westclifftrafficcontrols offers a comment section to share your thoughts.

Q: How will the City maintain quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods? Vehicle traffic has increased exponentially, as has the accompanying noise level.

A: City staff will collect data and implement appropriate traffic calming measures.

Q: How is data being collected on traffic impacts in these areas?

A: An initial round of traffic counts was collected in February 2023 to establish a baseline of the traffic impacts. The study approved by the City Council on February 28, 2023 directs staff to continue monitoring the impacts and provides funding to collect additional data. Traffic monitoring will be completed with manual counts and “big-data” location-based sources to ensure we fully capture the diverted traffic.

Q: How will you get the rerouted traffic on Woodrow to go down Delaware. Right now, they are using Woodrow into the Circles, a small neighborhood.

A: The City Council provided direction on February 28, 2023, to investigate traffic calming measures to on the roadways adjacent to the impacted areas of West Cliff. The measures may include additional changes to circulation patterns and introduce more substantial barriers to control traffic and reduce volumes on the neighborhood streets and divert them to major routes like Delaware.

Q: Will the City Council approval for the current detour plan include the Public Works approved closure of Oxford, Alta and Plateau Streets at the Bethany Curve pedestrian crosswalks to prevent those streets from being heavily used by drivers instead of the marked detours on Almar and Delaware as they are now?

A: The action by City Council on February 28th authorizes staff to investigate traffic calming features “in and around Columbia Street, Ammar Avenue, and Delaware Avenue” and then bring a recommendation to Council in May 2023.