

Join our PLEDGE DRIVE

We need your help now!

This is critical in our efforts to challenge the completely inadequate, fast track review of the project being conducted by the city, which is relying on reports prepared by the developer's consultants. Please see our Comments to the Administrative Record below. We have a highly regarded CEQA attorney and independent traffic consultant standing by. With your help we can give them the green light to determine the true impacts of this massive project at the intersection of West Cliff and Bay. **ACT NOW** so we have better chances of successfully fighting the Dream Inn Expansion!

To: Santa Cruz City Council and Planning Staff
From: Save Santa Cruz West Side (SSCWS)
April 3, 2019

Comments for the Administrative Record on the proposed 190 West Cliff Drive Project.

Note: "Tiering" refers to using the analysis of general matters contained in a broader EIR (such as one prepared for a general plan or policy statement) with later EIRs and negative declarations on narrower projects.

Tiering does not excuse the lead agency from adequately analyzing reasonably foreseeable significant environmental effects of the project and does not justify deferring such analysis to a later tier EIR or negative declaration.

Title 14 California Code of Regulation; Sec. 15152. Tiering

RECOMMENDATION: The city, as lead agency, should undertake a full EIR to properly assess the environmental impacts of the project under CEQA. The current approach of using an environmental checklist to "tier" environmental review on the 1990 – 2005 General Plan and the Beach South of Laurel element, or the 2030 General Plan is FAILED and INADEQUATE in that these did not anticipate or assess the impacts of a project similar in size and scope to the proposed expansion on the Dream Inn parking lot. Given the significant impacts of the project, a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration would be completely inadequate.

Checklist Item

Comment

TRAFFIC:

The intersection at Bay and Westcliff is already rated Level Of Service E (*"Unstable flow, operating at capacity. Flow becomes irregular and speed varies rapidly because there are virtually no usable gaps to maneuver in the traffic stream. Any disruption to traffic flow, such as merging ramp traffic or lane changes, will create a shock wave affecting traffic upstream. Any incident will create serious delays*).

At the very least a Focused Traffic EIR would need to study whether the project will: *Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to existing capacity of street system?* The project would include the following:

- 89 Residential Condominiums
- 8,265 Square Foot (SF) of General Retail Space
- 1,646 SF of Office Space
- 7,525 SF of Restaurant / Food & Beverage
- 421 Parking Stalls on 3 Levels underground**

It is inconceivable that a project of this magnitude will not create a significant increase in traffic. Yet the developer's traffic consultant amazingly concluded in a report to the city that mitigations proposed for the project (either a roundabout or traffic light) would improve the intersection to the highest level of service, LOS A. **This conclusion alone calls into question the methodology used by the developer, and demands rigorous independent impact analysis by the city.**

An EIR would need to study whether the project will *Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature?* There will be hazards resulting from an enormous increase in pedestrian traffic crossing West Cliff to access the residences and commercial attractions in the project. There needs to be appropriate *demonstrated* mitigations for pedestrian and bicyclists safety crossing West Cliff. Presently, valet parking staff from the hotel is the primary foot traffic.

PUBLIC SERVICES: The environment checklist being used by the city is inadequate to assess the delays to first responders – fire, police, lifeguards, EMT - created by layering additional auto and pedestrian traffic on an existing LOS E intersection. Such delays could seriously impact responses to events on the Wharf and Boardwalk, and the Dream Inn itself.

GEOLOGY/SOILS: An EIR should study whether the project is *being located on geologic unit or soil that is unstable?* Sections of West Cliff in the vicinity of the project are regularly subject to erosion and instability from continuous wave and wind action and runoff from rains. It is difficult to imagine that the excavation required for a three level underground parking garage will not further destabilize the area. There need to be *independent* analysis done of the adequacy of underlying soil and rock to support the project.

HOUSING: An EIR should study whether the project will *Displace substantial numbers of existing housing?* The project has the potential to displace scores of affordable units at Clearview Court. This impact needs to be fully analyzed.

Additionally, there has been little analysis of the impacts on local traffic, intersections and residences caused by the caravans of heavy equipment and large trucks that will be needed to excavate the site, haul away and replace soil, and bring in and stage construction materials and infrastructure. Limiting truck traffic to night time to minimize traffic impacts will have a major impact on surrounding residences. The

mitigations in this case are more complex than simply watering the soil to bank dust and PM10.

AESTHETICS: At the least, there should be a full computer analysis of the project's shadow and visual impacts on Clearview Court and the nearby condominiums. At its proposed height of 54 feet the project will cast a block-long shadow during the winter months and obscure a significant portion of the sky from Clearview Court.

MANDATORY: *Does the project have impacts that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable?* There is substantial ongoing and planned construction in the Beach South of Laurel study area. The effects of the project need to be assessed in connection with the effects of other current and probable future projects. The developer's traffic consultant gives cursory attention to cumulative impacts.

SSCWS is prepared to provide extensive video and photographic documentation of the existing gridlock conditions in the area, and to offer independent analysis of significant impacts from the project.

Contact: For additional information contact Bruce Hubley, 831 421 0711, or go to our website: <https://savesantacruzwestside.org/>

