

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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DATE: March 29, 2000
TO: Coastal Commissioners and Interested Parties
FROM: Steve Monowitz, Analyst, Central Coast District Office
Renee Brooke, Analyst, Central Coast District Office
SUBJECT: Avila Beach Redevelopment Status Report

ONGOING REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES - APRIL, 2000**1.0 Specific Planning Process**

The Avila Beach Specific Plan was approved by the San Luis Obispo County Planning Commission on November 15, 1999 and is scheduled for review by the County Board of Supervisors on April 11, 2000. Staff is continuing to work with the County through the local review of the Specific Plan to ensure that coastal resource and access issues are effectively addressed by the eventual submittal of the Specific Plan for Commission certification.

2.0 Specific Plan Issues

Staff has received the Planning Commission Hearing Draft of the Specific Plan and the Final EIR, with the County's response to our comments on the two draft documents. A review of these documents and subsequent conversations with the County indicate that the following measures have been incorporated as a means of addressing our initial concerns.

- Design Guidelines for new development have been incorporated into the Specific Plan that will help maintain the unique character of Avila Beach, which makes it a popular destination for coastal recreation.
- Potential environmental impacts of the proposed bike path route (existing path is proposed under the bridge crossing of San Luis Obispo Creek) have been address through additional mitigation measures. Proposed measures suggest that a mitigation plan be developed and implemented to offset impacts to sensitive species or wetlands; however, if these impacts cannot be offset, the bike path should be re-routed to cross Avila Beach Drive at a signalized intersection and terminate at Earl's Alley parking lot.
- Potential impacts to grunion spawning activities have been addressed by limiting night-time lighting of Avila Beach.
- The Specific Plan provides additional information regarding the proposed in-lieu parking fee program. The program would require Front Street property owners to pay fees instead of

supplying parking on-site for businesses on their property (preliminary estimates are \$5 per square foot of building area). The revenue generated by these fees would be used to construct parking improvements, maintain existing supply and/or provide remote parking lot and shuttle/transit subsidy.

- The use of significant setbacks and a landscape buffer along Avila Beach Drive are proposed to minimize the visual impacts of development in the woodland areas.
- Improvements to the stormwater drainage infrastructure are proposed. Best Management Practices and pollution control devices will be utilized where feasible to minimize pollution impacts to the natural water systems. A more detailed discussion of these measures is provided in the Front Street Reconstruction section of this report.
- New development in the floodplain is required to be constructed one foot above the 100-year flood elevation and geotechnical studies, addressing necessary foundation or construction measures, will be conducted.

Although many of the staff's initial concerns have been addressed throughout the local proceedings, several outstanding issues remain. One of the most significant outstanding issues is the impact of the plan on visitor-serving opportunities.

Several proposals within the Specific Plan have the potential to result in a loss of visitor-serving uses and commercial development. Most significantly, the Specific Plan suggests that residential uses be listed as "principally permitted," rather than "conditional" uses in Commercial Retail areas. Although the provision of additional multi-family and affordable housing in Avila Beach is recognized and supported by the Commission staff, Coastal Act Policies state that private lands suitable for visitor-serving commercial recreational facilities shall have a priority over private residential development.

The Specific Plan suggests that Avila Beach can support an estimated total of 70,000 square feet of retail commercial uses and 272 hotel units, based on an economic analysis that has attempted to balance the amount of future visitor-serving commercial development with expected demand. The Specific Plan does not, however, ensure the provision of such visitor-serving facilities. As noted above, staff is concerned that the allowance of residential uses in commercial areas may limit the provision of adequate facilities to meet this demand.

To address this concern, the Specific Plan requires that the approval of residential development in the Commercial Retail area be accompanied by a finding that confirms an adequate supply of land remains available for visitor-serving commercial uses. However, additional specificity regarding what amount of land is considered to be adequate, and exactly how and where the demand for visitor-serving facilities will be met, appears to be necessary to address the requirements of Coastal Act Section 30222.

Another unresolved issue related to the protection of coastal access and recreation opportunities is the provision of adequate parking. The Specific Plan includes calculations of estimated parking supply and demand which indicates that there may be a deficit of parking spaces during

peak periods of beach use. Additionally, a proposal to reduce on-site parking requirements for residential multi-family areas (parking requirements of 0.25 guest spaces per dwelling unit may be waived for residential projects within 200 feet of a public parking lot) will further increase this discrepancy between parking supply and demand. Commission staff will be working with the County to ensure that the Specific Plan includes adequate parking provisions and transportation programs necessary to protect coastal access and recreation.

Finally, a primary feature of the Specific Plan is the proposed closure of a section of Front Street to vehicle traffic, and the use of this area as a pedestrian plaza. Front Street's connection with Avila Beach Drive will also be closed, and a park constructed at this intersection. While these proposals appear to have benefits for general coastal access and recreation, concerns have been raised regarding impacts on the character of Avila Beach, beach parking, and on individuals who desire to launch small boats. These issues will be further considered and deliberated throughout the local process and during the Commission's review. One proposal for resolving some of these issues that has recently been incorporated in the Specific Plan calls for the Harbor District, the San Luis Yacht Club, and other interested parties to develop a Public Access Management Plan for the Avila pier.

3.0 Front Street Reconstruction

As local review of the Specific Plan is being completed, the reconstruction of the town's infrastructure removed during excavation has been progressing. One of the primary components to this reconstruction is the replacement of Front Street and associated seawall. To date, the replacement seawall is being completed, and the design plans for Front Street have been approved.

Currently, a primary focus of the Commission staff, working in conjunction with the County and Unocal, is to ensure that the drainage features included in the rebuild include appropriate best management practices for the control of polluted runoff. In particular, the Commission staff has been working with Unocal to incorporate vegetated strips and a detention basin within and adjacent to the improved parking lot inland of Front Street that will filter runoff, detain sediments, and reduce the amount of impervious surfacing. The Commission staff is also in the process of reviewing the types of stormwater filters that have been proposed in most of the storm drain catch basins along Front Street. The Commission staff will be working with the County to ensure that appropriate and adequate filtration systems are installed and accompanied by detailed maintenance provisions.

4.0 Disbursement of Settlement Agreement Money

The Commission staff is working with the Department of Fish and Game's Office of Oil Spill Prevention and Response ("OSPR") to disburse monies held in trust by the OSPR per the MOU that was entered into by the CCC and the OSPR on September 16, 1998. The staff has worked with the OSPR to solicit project proposals, and a total of eighty-two were received within the given timeframe, and are available for review by the Commission, upon request. The ranking of project proposals is proceeding as follows:

- In February/March, 2000, involved agencies reviewed and preliminarily ranked the project proposals;
- A public meeting to gather community input is tentatively scheduled early April 2000, in San Luis Obispo County;
- At the May Commission meeting, the staff will update the Commission on the ranking procedures and status of the draft restoration plan(s); and
- Final projects and restoration plan(s) will be chosen.