

14 March 2025

Hello San Mateo County Harbor Commissioners and Staff,

I have concerns about the San Mateo County Harbor District (HD) "Public Parking--Burnham Strip El Granada" Project described in the Staff Report (SR) by GM Pruett dated December 18, 2024. The Report notes the proposed project would be to "...increase the number of parking spaces at Pillar Point Harbor" on the north/east side of Highway 1. This is a bad idea and should be abandoned. I'm certain a large majority of El Granada residents who know about this proposal, and will come to know about it, are strongly against it, for good reasons. This opposition was voiced by ten speakers at the MidCoast Community Council Meeting of 12 March; no support was expressed by the public. Community action to prevent this parking lot from becoming reality is being organized.

First, the two noncontiguous HD parcels proposed for parking lots, APNs 047-251-040 and 047-251-140, are not "at Pillar Point Harbor" as the SR states but in the Burnham Strip Open Space of El Granada on the opposite side of Highway 1. Both parcels are located on the south side of Avenue Alhambra. Parcel 047-251-140 is small, about 6,358 square feet/0.146 acre; it contains an easement a little over 20 feet wide at the east end; whether the easement could be paved for the parking lot is unknown. Another small parcel east of Parcel -140, about ~140 feet wide, extends into the riparian vegetation of Deer Creek. If the easement cannot be used, that might be enough distance from the riparian corridor for the typically required minimum 50 foot buffer zone.

Parcel 047-251-040 is larger at about 40,113 square feet/0.92 acre, and also located where Palma Street comes off Avenue Alhambra and the local market. It extends a few feet farther into the Alhambra ROW than Parcel -140, a factor not indicated by the continuous curb along that side of the street. The HD has used both parcels in recent years to dump and spread wood chips and other organic materials, as well as mowing weeds as needed.

The subject parcels are within the "EG District" (El Granada Gateway District) with overlaid Community Open Space Conservation District/Design Review (COSC/DR) zoning. San Mateo County Zoning Regulations define what these mean: "The purpose of the 'EG' District is to provide for low intensity development of the 'Burnham Strip' in El Granada, which *preserves to the greatest degree possible, the visual and open space characteristics* of this property" (emphasis added). And, "The purpose of the "COSC" District is to protect areas designated for general open space in adopted Community Plans by providing for planned low intensity development which *preserves, to the greatest degree possible, the visual and open characteristics* of the land." The HD proposal does not conform to this definition; paved parking lots, especially when filled by vehicles, are not "open space." County Zoning Regulations (Section 6227, et seq.) do not allow parking in EG/COSC zoning with the exception of Sec. 6229.3(15), which allows "Public Parking for Surfer's Beach," that beach being a half-mile and more from the proposed parking lots. Users are unlikely to carry beach-going supplies and provisions or make children walk that distance and cross the busy highway. The existing HD upper parking lot is both closer and on the same side of the highway as Surfer's Beach, providing a better parking opportunity for Surfer's Beach users than the proposed new parking lots. The HD could provide information for visitors to Surfer's Beach at the existing parking lot. And the HD already owns a larger property on the ocean side of the highway right next to Sam's Restaurant that is closer to Surfer's Beach and other HD facilities.

The Burnham Strip is part of the National Register of Historic Places-eligible Daniel Burnham Plan for El Granada, meant to be a buffer and view-preserving zone between the town and the beach/ocean. The

development of El Granada is governed by the County Local Coastal Plan (LCP), affirmed and overseen by the California Coastal Commission (CCC). Among others, purposes of the LCP include to “protect and enhance the natural environment, and revitalize *existing* developed areas.” With the exception at Section 6229.3(15) the Strip is not zoned for paved parking lots and the HD Proposal is an affront to the Burnham Plan and the concept of Open Space.

Since the December 18th Staff Report was issued, I have repeatedly crossed gone to observe the current HD parking lots on the ocean side. Those lots have never been full at any time of day. There seems to be sufficient parking currently. The SR notes about a half dozen days annually when HD parking capacity is “exceeded,” so the HD is proposing large permanent parking lots within the Burnham Strip open space; the proposal does not comport with County zoning nor provide for preservation of open space “to the greatest degree possible.”

The SR notes “The Granada Community Services District’s proposed new public park ... will also have very limited parking and would benefit from an additional public parking area.” I was on the GCSD Board for 21 years prior to the last election, actively participating to consider and plan the proposed Burnham Strip park for over ten years. GCSD never contemplated or counted on additional parking more than 1,000 feet from the planned park, on property not owned by GCSD, and I would note that using the HD proposed parking lot would require users to either walk down busy Avenue Alhambra and/or cross private property, as well as crossing small but perennial Deer Creek (there is sidewalk on the north side of Alhambra). Due to topography and intervening development, the GCSD park location is not even visible from the proposed HD lots.

The HD Proposal would significantly increase and worsen traffic in El Granada. Caltrans is not going to allow direct access to the HD parcels from Highway 1, clearly, so access will be from Avenue Alhambra, the busiest street in El Granada. First time and infrequent visitors to HD facilities and properties will wander around to find these proposed parking lots, then realize both the proposed Granada Community Park and Surfer’s Beach are quite a distance away, and will attempt to park closer. The SR notes “The proposed parking area is directly opposite the Pillar Point Harbor Launch Ramp, Coastal Trail, and Sam’s Restaurant,” which is accurate, without noting that Highway 1 runs between these locations. SR Figure 1 shows a proposed highway crosswalk from the southernmost tip of the subject parcels/parking lots to above the Launch Ramp and Coastal Trail. I don’t believe Caltrans is at all likely to approve such a crosswalk and if it does, a traffic light would seem necessary. Further, the HD’s proposed crosswalk runs into privately owned parcels that drop steeply onto HD property, which would necessitate both access agreement(s) and a stairway or contouring path downslope on property the HD does not own. Lacking guaranteed access across private property and a highway crosswalk, parking users will need to walk either a quarter mile to Capistrano Road or even farther to the signal at Coronado Street and Highway 1. How any of these HD proposed developments will interface with Caltrans’ proposed bike lanes and removal of parking along Highway 1 is unknown at this time.

Page three of the SR contains: “As for the benefit provided to a private business, i.e., Sam’s [Restaurant], the District can potentially enter into a license agreement for use of the parking area for that business.” Prima facie, this is a blatant proposal to expend government agency funds to benefit a private business, which is illegal; the California Constitution, Article XVI, § 6 prohibits the giving or lending of public funds to any person or entity, public or private. Building parking lots to benefit a private business, even with a later license agreement “potentially enter[ed] into,” clearly is not legal; and, presumably such a later license agreement would need to ensure that parking was indeed “provided for” the restaurant by signage or other means, thereby eliminating that parking as available for HD facilities users or the general public. Would such signage or notice also mention that the HD provided this parking for Sam’s? The third paragraph on that page does discuss possibly building a “... new parking loton the west side of Hwy 1, north of Sam’s Restaurant,” citing property the HD already owns adjacent to the restaurant. The SR also notes the HD does not have

funding for either plan.

The SR does not say either the GM or the HD Board are committed to building parking lots on the Burnham Strip and ends emphasizing HD staff "is seeking guidance from the Board." There are numerous other agencies involved in any solutions for parking in the vicinity and I am hopeful the various agencies can find compromises that will help ameliorate the problem, but without paving any portions of the protected Open Space on the Burnham Strip. I ask that the Board's guidance be based on respecting the Open Space zoning in El Granada.

I am sending this correspondence in email, but I will also furnish a hard copy to the Harbor District and other concerned parties.

Cordially,



Matthew R Clark

