

PLEASURE POINT COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS

COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP #1
January 20, 2007

WORKSHOP SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

The Pleasure Point Community Planning Process, initiated by the County of Santa Cruz in fall 2006, is intended to guide future development in the Pleasure Point area. It will be based on an analysis of Pleasure Point's natural systems, social and cultural resources, land use and development, building character, and transportation and circulation and findings from three community workshops.

MEETING FORMAT AND CONTENT

On January 20, 2007, approximately 65 community members and 10 County staff members convened for the first of the project's three Community Planning Workshops. The purpose of this workshop was to develop a community-supported vision for Pleasure Point. The workshop was held from 9 AM to 12 PM at Simpkins Swim Center.

Jan Beautz, of the County Board of Supervisors (representing District 1, including the Pleasure Point area), opened the meeting and introduced the project. Tom Burns, Director of County Planning, welcomed community members and encouraged people to think of creative solutions to issues confronting the area. Daniel Iacofano of Moore Iacofano Goltsman (MIG), Inc. provided an overview of the agenda, project and planning process, and introduced the project team.

Anchi Mei and Mukul Malhotra, of MIG, presented their preliminary analysis of Pleasure Point's assets, issues and opportunities, and the area's urban design "streetscape language". Daniel Iacofano facilitated a discussion in which workshop participants provided feedback on the overall vision and goals for the area, key assets, primary issues and opportunities, and urban design considerations. Anchi Mei and Mukul Malhotra graphically recorded the meeting.

The workshop culminated in interactive, small group discussions, facilitated by MIG and County staff, in which community members identified Pleasure Point's priority issues, opportunities, and challenges. The groups reported back to the larger group, identifying additional assets, issues, opportunities, potential improvements, and common vision elements.

A reduction of the wall graphic, with recorded comments from the workshop, is attached to the end of this summary.

WORKSHOP COMMENT SUMMARY

The following is a summary list of comments made orally by participants during the workshop and in writing on the comment cards provided. The comments are organized under the following headings:

- I. ASSETS**
- II. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS**
- III. VISION**
- IV. NEXT STEP**

I. ASSETS

A. Natural Systems, Parks and Open Space

- Ocean and beaches
- Ocean + beach + grass
- Intact natural systems such as Moran Lake and Creek and Corcoran Lagoon
- Two coastal lagoons – Moran and Corcoran – and their complex ecosystems and associated wildlife
- Inter-tidal regions, which contain many tide pools
- Natural, informal open spaces
- East Cliff pocket beaches
- Light, air and sun
- Native trees
- Non-native trees (e.g. eucalyptus)
- Wildlife
- Floral Park
- High number and variety of great surf spots – a tremendous open space/recreational resource

B. Social, Cultural, and Community Resources

- Small-town feel
- Close-knit community/neighborhood and good neighbor interactions
- Close social interaction
- Unique social fabric and social needs
- Diversity of residents in age, careers, and income
- Surfing culture/lifestyle – outdoor lifestyle
- Tourism is big – beach and surf experience
- Students and surfers contributing to active streets
- Close to downtown venues and two universities
- Historic buildings, including beach cottages

- History of area – reuse of buildings
- Live Oak Resource Center
- Library
- Locally-owned businesses such as Kong’s Market and coffee shops
- Access to political leadership

C. Land Use, Development, and Building Character

- Access to ocean
- Open space, natural areas near residential areas
- Small-scale homes that preserve light, air and views for homes and streets
- Human scale/proportion – houses smaller than trees
- Pedestrian scale/dog scale
- Small-scale community feeling
- Eclectic range of housing styles
- Variety of lot sizes
- Irregular grid
- Balance of old and new buildings
- Beach cottage atmosphere
- Mobile home park provides affordable housing
- Mix of high densities, such as mobile home parks – these home are smallish and fit the narrow streets and small lots of the area
- Proximity of some homes to small shops
- Narrow streets with no sidewalks provide rural feel

D. Transportation and Pedestrian Access

- Good walkability: easy access to open space, stores, food, community facilities
- Walkable community (kids, dogs, etc.)
- Narrow streets and on-street parking calm traffic
- General traffic flow is good
- New sidewalks and trees on 30th Portola, lower 41st are positive improvements
- Speed bumps 30th St. are good

E. Identity and Sense of Place

Pleasure Point's identity and sense of place is a generalized perception of the community's qualities based upon the above assets (i.e. natural systems, parks, and open spaces; social, cultural, and community resources; land use, development, and building character; and transportation and pedestrian access).

- The ocean
- Outdoor, natural lifestyle, respect for nature
- Surf village quality
- Rural feel
- No sidewalks, gutters
- Wildlife, eucalyptus
- Walkable
- Comfortable, people out and about, lived-in
- Peaceful setting and community
- People interacting
- Laid-back neighborhood
- Small community
- Strong sense of boundaries
- Coastal garden community with "soft edges"
- Neighbors home during the day
- Diversity, eccentricity of residents; variety of ages, backgrounds, careers.
- Single-family homes, mostly
- Small beach cottages with gardens
- Small cottages as jewels with solar access
- Eclectic, funky
- Organic growth and sense of evolution
- Constantly changing adds to uniqueness
- Simplicity
- Small is beautiful
- Live and let live attitude
- A uniquely American neighborhood that values limited government regulation and freedom of expression and private property rights
- A unique small neighborhood in close connection with work, elementary schools, library, downtown, UC Santa Cruz and Cabrillo College
- Small houses and narrow streets encourage people to get out and interact, and beautiful outdoor spaces keep them outdoors
- Few vacation homes so far
- A visitor destination that generates income for the county

II. ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

A. Natural Systems, Parks, and Open Space

ISSUES

- Development impacts on natural systems
- Groundwater recharge
- Poor water quality at Corcoran Lagoon and Moran Lake
- Unfiltered urban runoff is threat to inter-tidal regions/tide pools
- Odor at lagoon by library
- Floral Park underutilized
- Pollution and trash
- Dog poop on beaches and in parks, dog behavior
- Eucalyptus trees in danger of falling down
- Don't cut down all (or even most) Eucalyptus trees
- Maintenance of grass at Floral Park
- Heavy use of Floral Park volleyball courts by outsiders
- Erosion along East Cliff Road, endangering road and pedestrian access
- Poison oak
- Water quality at Moran Lake
- Moran Lake Park underutilized
- Underground drainage system and watershed that feeds Moran Lake from Upper Live Oak is severely impacted
- Moran and Corcoran Lagoons are impacted by road crossings

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

General

- Protect and improve intact natural systems
- Preserve all remaining open spaces
- Limit density and intensity of development
- Encourage local infiltration of runoff through permeable pavements, maintained swales
- Improve quality of streets as usable open space by calming traffic, maintaining rural feel
- Nurture more large trees
- Encourage native pines rather than eucalyptus
- Remove eucalyptus in other than protected Monarch roosting areas
- Manage unfiltered urban runoff to intertidal areas/tide pools – implement Stormwater Runoff Management Plan

Land Acquisition

- Purchase available vacant lots for use as undeveloped open space
- Purchase S-curve property for use as wild, undeveloped open space
- Save the Roadhouse property to preserve the large open space behind it

Land utilization

- Add jogging paths or park around sanitation facilities
- Reconfigure 38th Ave. Park to increase utilization
- Explore “Dirt Farm” site on ocean side of East Cliff as a possible park
- Create a dog park

Moran Lake Park

- Expand Moran Lake Park
- Beautify Moran Lake
- Conserve/restore Moran Lake and its watershed
- Improve water quality and habitat at Moran Lake, perhaps through aeration
- Improve Moran Lake park with paths and picnic areas but NOT lots of cement hardscape
- Improve Moran Lake and Sanitation Facility Area
- Add bicycle/pedestrian path midway across Moran Lake and Creek to improve access.
- Add S-turn parcel that helps frame entrance to Moran Park to the park – helps make beach access area of Moran a real treasure
- Preserve/enhance Monarch Butterfly habitat

Corcoran Lagoon

- Improve water quality and habitat at Corcoran Lagoon
- Conserve/restore Corcoran Lagoon and its watershed
- Eliminate industrial-looking pipes at road at Corcoran Lagoon
- Add walkway along Corcoran Lagoon to improve access

East Cliff Drive

- Control erosion along East Cliff Drive
- Increase public space on bluffs and Improve railing along East Cliff Drive
- Add public amenities near the ocean
- Protect and improve Ocean View Way, East Cliff open areas, Rockview overlook
- Don't make it just like West Cliff Drive

Maintenance

- Add trash cans at visitor nodes along East Cliff
- Control dog poop in parks and beaches
- Control poison oak
- Improve grass maintenance at Floral Park

B. Social, Cultural, and Community Resources

ISSUES

- Possibly decreasing economic diversity
- Young families leave
- Absentee landlords
- Short-term vacation rentals
- Few neighborhood stores

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

- Maintain diversity of people and homes
- Increase the number of small, locally-owned stores
- Replace or improve small markets such as Elizabeths's and Kong's; add outdoor tables.
- Establish Portola as a village-like commercial area
- Establish a Pleasure Point Village to keep local businesses viable
- Add a bakery/café at Sunny Cove (outside of study area)
- Maintain economic diversity by keeping rental properties and mobile home parks
- Require preservation of low-income housing
- Discourage vacant properties; use taxation to encourage occupancy by owners or renters
- Discourage short-term rentals
- Conserve beach and surf aesthetic
- Improve pedestrian access to library from all neighborhoods
- Add a community center and history museum, if possible at the Roadhouse
- Respect the character of the community that long-term residents chose; help new people understand what the community character is.
- Keep things the same

C. Land Use, Development, and Building Character

ISSUES

- Preserving eclectic nature of neighborhoods
- Preventing "monster," big, boxy homes
- Some houses are too large and walled off; not welcoming
- Too much speculative building
- Maintaining character within a certain neighborhood
- T-III siding on big box homes is unappealing
- Impact of rooflines, not just height on sunlight and neighborhood character
- Impact of additions and new building on neighbors' light and air access
- Deteriorating housing stock; improving run-down properties
- Purpose of homes changing (e.g. larger families, second homes, vacation rentals, etc.)

- Transformation to large homes facilitates purchase by wealthy for second vacation homes and vacation rentals – undercuts sense of community because homes often empty
- Region is/could become focus of speculative development for vacation homes and vacation rentals – this leads to large, boxy homes to maximize space
- Building character not reflected in current regulations
- Freedom of architectural expression and property rights
- Be careful of “planning” – embrace freedom
- Over-regulation may discourage renovation, rebuilding, and lower property values
- Difficulty subdividing large lots
- Road/alley ownership issues
- Restrictive regulations on rebuilding after fire if 75% of home destroyed
- Need different set of rules for smaller lots with limited space for expansion
- Small cottages increasingly “flipped” for larger homes
- Overdeveloped lots – “monolithic” compounds
- Many small cottages are coming to end of their useful life and will be rebuilt; new houses should be of reasonable size, respectful of neighbors, built well and sustainably.
- Economics of renovation, rebuilding (not economically feasible to rebuild small house at same size)
- Addressing parking problems by increasing off-street parking can lead to unattractive streetscapes of blank garage fronts
- Pleasure Point Drive is eroding into the ocean; might basements destabilize the cliff?

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Limiting large houses and guiding design

- Reduce FAR; encourage smaller homes
- Restrict building height and lot coverage to prevent monster houses.
- Protect neighbors’ access to light and air
- Encourage designs that limit impact on neighbors, and allow neighborhood participation in permit process
- Require use of story poles to indicate size/impact of proposed new houses/additions prior to County approval
- Allow larger lot coverage on first floor to reduce upper story bulk and preserve solar access for neighbors
- Allow individual neighborhoods to permit only 1-story homes
- Encourage granny cottages, not large houses
- Increase design review
- Have a design guideline oversight committee such as those in Pacific Grove, Capitola, Mendocino
- More important to look at design than just size

- Study Seaside, Florida's New Urbanist design guidelines to see what they drew from existing communities such as Pleasure Point
- Start eaves at 10', not 16' to mitigate bulky appearance
- Encourage sloping roof for second units to preserve solar access for neighbors
- Encourage rooflines that preserve neighborhood character and preserve access to sun
- Encourage livable basement spaces to allow for increased square footage while limiting height increases (for example, basements with ceilings 24" to 30" above ground level could be excluded from FAR calculations).
- Match house size to lot size
- Prevent overuse of residential lots
- Encourage façade articulation
- Encourage garage doors that look like part of home (see craftsman home #18)
- Prohibit side-by-side 2-car garages fronting on street (tandem okay)
- Encourage permeable/vegetated paving of driveways (see craftsman home#18)
- Discourage ultra-modern styles
- Discourage/prohibit Orange County/San Jose subdivision-style houses
- Create a toolkit for developers and remodelers that provides information to help them minimize the impact of a house on neighbors
- In toolkit, educate homeowners about ongoing costs from building a house bigger than necessary
- Modify building permit system to address bulk and mass of new buildings, to be more sensitive to neighboring buildings and neighborhood character
- Establish standards for building mass, bulk, and scale
- Consider implementing a three tier building permit system based on the size of improvement:
 - Small additions and modest new homes that are at 90% or below of the size (% of lot) or below of the average development size or FAR of the immediate area would go through on a building permit (i.e. the simple, no hearings, no review building permit system in place now for most of Pleasure Point);
 - Additions and new homes that are at 90% to 110% of the average development size or FAR of the immediate area would be reviewed by an urban designer for mass and bulk placement (based on mass and bulk standards), with no public hearing; and
 - Additions and new homes that are at 110% or greater than the average development size or FAR of the immediate area would require a discretionary permit and public hearing
- If you want a big house, buy a big lot
- Keep things the same, retain smaller "beach bungalow" type houses that are integral to the Pleasure Point character
- The 0.5% FAR was a pretty arbitrary standard when County set it, maybe it is time to lower it, at least for Pleasure Point

Preserving stylistic freedom and property rights

- Need tighter bulk, mass, and size rules for new and remodeled housing, but not style rules. Style rules will only push the area toward homogeneity and away from the eclectic feel that is so highly valued
- Preserve eclectic tradition of the area
- Encourage variety in building design
- Housing design is like free speech—let people express themselves. Don't set arbitrary style rules or prohibit specific styles
- Establish guidelines and incentives to encourage more variety in house styles
- Less regulation, not more; do not scare away builders and buyers with excessive regulation
- Protect property rights
- Do not try to impose a particular set of social values on individual homeowners
- Maintain but do not tighten existing FAR, setbacks, height limits etc
- Allow for building larger houses to suit needs of today's families
- Allow more than one unit on large lots now zoned R-1-6,000
- Encourage renovation or replacement of older homes by owners and families so they are not used as cheap rentals waiting to be torn down
- Protect opportunity for small houses to be upgraded
- Reduce parking requirements for small lots
- Make it easier to subdivide large lots
- Change is not bad; enough regulation is currently in place

Preserving social diversity

- Don't turn mobile home park into expensive condos
- Provide support for low-income residents

Improving planning process

- Increase regulatory transparency and reduce subjectivity in application of regulations
- Minimize discretionary handling of permit applications by the planning department.
- Let residents decide community character, not developers, architects, realtors and builders

Preservation and green building

- Some houses in poor condition not worth preserving
- Significantly non-conforming rules forces total teardown; have to fight to save existing structures; cannot touch existing nonconforming part of structure
- Emulate City of Santa Cruz regulations on green building
- Decrease over-cementing or over-asphalting every driveway and other ground area between street and dwellings

D. Transportation, Pedestrian Access, and Infrastructure

ISSUES

- Overhead utilities are unsightly and intrude on streets
- 26th Ave. not safe for children and other pedestrians; too much fast traffic
- On 26th Ave. pedestrians must step off road to let cars pass.
- Live Oak Library is hard to walk to from 26th; it's hard to cross Portola to new path on north side
- Roads should be for pedestrians and bicycles, not just cars
- Off-street parking leads to wider, faster, less pedestrian friendly streets
- Private encroachment on public right of way—fences and bushes push pedestrians, parking into travel lanes
- Lack of parking – too many cars parking on streets
- Coastal Commission may require more parking for visitors
- East Cliff Drive erosion
- Existing street lighting is obnoxious and too bright
- Don't want cell towers
- Poor drainage in many areas
- Poor drainage on 26th Avenue – soft drainage
- Two-foot gully full of water during winter season along certain streets
- Palisades and Anchorage drainage problems

OPPORTUNITIES AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Streetscape/Infrastructure

- Put utilities underground, but realize it may be too expensive for County to pay for – set up a special district?
- Clean up streetscape
- No cell towers
- Make streets cleaner but not antiseptic
- Improve street lighting, being careful of light pollution
- Put shades on top side of street lights to reduce impact on houses

Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Flow

- Improve safety and access for bicyclists
- Emphasize pedestrian and bicycle access (both residents and visitors) in all public projects, particularly road design
- Do not view East Cliff Drive as a major artery for county traffic
- Calm traffic on 26th Ave for children and other pedestrians
- Add speed bumps on 26th Ave.
- Make Portola between library and 26th, and 26th Ave. safer for children
- Add sidewalks, curbs, trees on 26th Ave.
- Address visibility impaired by parked cars on 26th Ave.
- Too much mud along 26th in winter; need paved shoulders or curbs

- Add stoplight at 41st and Portola.
- Increase width of pedestrian- and bike-ways
- Do not add more solid no-passing striping on roads
- Add speed bumps; preserve fire/ambulance access with breaks in bumps sized for emergency vehicles
- Design streets for adequate fire protection
- Slow traffic by stop signs, speed bumps, one way streets
- Make streets smaller, narrower; widen pedestrian lanes, narrow vehicle lanes
- Open pathways to 41st and 26th at the ends of Floral
- Add stop signs on Portola at 26th, 34th and Floral
- Improve bike safety on East Cliff Drive at Moran
- Add lights in pavement at crosswalks and overhead lights above crosswalks, esp. along Portola

Sidewalks

- Do not add sidewalks; rural feel is best
- Do not over-citify; curved roads and natural –looking paths are better than straight and hardscaped paths
- When sidewalks are necessary, make them soft, e.g. surfaced with California Gold (?), decomposed granite, not concrete
- On Portola, pathways are better than sidewalks
- Add sidewalks on arterials only
- Add pedestrian space, not sidewalks, to streets
- Add a sidewalk on south side of Portola so kids can get to school and library
- Improve pedestrian access to library
- Add sidewalks to 26th Ave. to improve pedestrian safety and reduce mud

One-way Streets

- Do not add more one-way streets
- Return East Cliff Drive to two-way traffic; move the seawall out to provide the space
- Make East Cliff Drive two-way with esplanade along the sea
- Establish more one-way streets in order to increase room for parking, pedestrians
- Establish one-way motor vehicle traffic on most north-south streets to allow 2-way bike paths, sidewalks and trees so kids can walk or bike safely to school and friends' houses
- Make East Cliff Drive one-way the whole way
- Reverse direction of one-way flow on East Cliff from east to west bound – better and safer for checking surf while driving

Pedestrian Access to Open Space

- Improve pedestrian and bike access at Corcoran
- Keep sand and vegetation off East Cliff Drive in Corcoran area to maintain pedestrian and bike access
- Improve access at 38th St stairs

- Add a bike/walking path midway across Moran Creek to connect east and west sides of town
- Improve jogging paths around Moran Lake—connect to 30th Ave; enlarge restrooms
- Add path on East Cliff Drive so you don't have to walk in traffic between 17th and 30th Aves.
- Widen space for bicycles, pedestrians all along East Cliff Drive
- Put esplanade along the ocean, just above the water
- Keep current access to beach available, as currently at Moran Lake and Corcoran
- Improve access to ocean and views along cliff for pedestrians of all ages; provide for vehicle cruising, dogs, surfers
- Add restrooms and benches, safe access to beach.

Parking

- Relieve parking crunch
- Increase off-street parking
- Encourage narrow streets and on-street parking
- Prevent parking outside white line
- Enforce public right-of-way; require fences and hedges to be on private property, preserving on-street parking spaces.
- Establish alternate side of street parking

Drainage

- Solve drainage issues on all streets in an ecofriendly way
- Opportunity to capture and use stormwater vs. curb/gutter/sidewalk
- Restore natural drainage and filtration systems
- Improve drainage without adding sidewalks
- Improve drainage but don't add curbs and gutters to non-arterial streets
- Add pipe drainage underground where there is standing water
- Improve swale system; improve grading, maintenance so swales don't fill with dirt and weeds.
- Use vegetated drainage areas and French drains
- Encourage or require porous paths and driveways
- Use drywells to recharge groundwater
- Harvest rainwater with cisterns
- Establish storm sewer access between every other lot so people with flooding can pump into sewer

III. VISION

The eight goals listed below express the overall vision for the Pleasure Point community, based on workshop comments noted above and noted below (bulleted).

1. Retain “small town”/beach community character (i.e. smaller lots, small-scale homes, and narrow, shared streets).

- Keep it the same
- Similar to today
- Mostly the same except home building and remodeling is frequent and artistic but house size is small
- If it ain't broke, don't fix it
- Small town feel continues
- Maintain maverick identity
- Simplicity
- Less is more
- Make it so people can still keep chickens
- Less density, multi-family
- Trade off density in some neighborhoods for more on Portola
- Garden community, low density
- A community with housing that young families can afford
- More of a family-oriented area with month-to-month rentals as opposed to vacation rentals
- Few part-time residents
- Hotel for visitors along the coastal trail
- Pleasure Point is a historic district, a special coast community that retains its small-scale, eclectic, garden beach cottages
- Pleasure Point Roadhouse is a community center and history museum with outbuildings used for community groups
- An area where there is interchange between residents and common goals for maintaining/improving our community
- Maintain sense of community as a small safe place where people know and trust their neighbors and can fully relax in their homes

2. Afford personal expression in building character and landscape.

- Eclectic housing
- Flexibility of design and size
- Freedom of choice
- Eclectic but not LA.

- 3. Ensure complementary scale of new improvements to adjacent buildings.**
 - It will be different than it is today as today is different than 20 years ago. There will be replacement homes
 - Don't have houses dominate community
 - New larger houses, changes to existing houses should fit into context of current character – large developments should have some scrutiny so not invasive, intrusive
- 4. Preserve access to light and air in private development and on streets.**
 - Buildings should not cast shadows on adjacent streets to enhance the pedestrian experience
 - New development should respond to light and air access/needs of adjacent houses
- 5. Enhance and encourage natural landscapes and systems.**
 - Try to keep it the same: soft rather than hardscape
 - Work with nature
 - Natural areas not built up
 - Lots of beach and lagoon access while retaining big trees and natural landscape
 - Barn owls return
 - Preserve Moran Lake with soft development
- 6. Retain and enhance the walkable and “bikable” character of the area.**
 - Walkable streets with parks and trees
 - Seawall and promenade on East Cliff Drive
 - Safe streets for pedestrians, bikes. and kids
 - Safe walkable paths
 - Streets as public open space
 - Put cars at periphery and use golf carts within neighborhoods
 - Create a national showpiece walking community; eliminate all cars
- 7. Provide for infrastructure improvements (i.e. drainage improvements and overhead wire removal).**
 - Cleaner streetscape, no overhead utilities, reduced drainage problems
 - Minimize drainage to private property caused by poor drainage/flooding
- 8. Establish clear and simple design standards and permitting process for building improvements.**
 - Building regulations should be easy to understand
 - Process should be easier, less bureaucratic – a simpler process

IV. NEXT STEP

The next community workshop (date TBD) will re-affirm the vision and goals for the community and to review preliminary design elements.