

Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan – Position Paper

The Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan (Plan) has potential to support County objectives for sustainable planning, job growth, economic vitality, environmental quality and improved variety of housing and transportation choices. The Santa Cruz County Business Council (SCCBC) supports this type of planning effort built on principles of sustainability.

SCCBC’s mission statement advocates economic vitality as its guiding principle. This aligns with the Plan’s proposed “Economic Vitality Guiding Principle” to “ensure that County regulations encourage private investment and allow for economically feasible development projects consistent with sustainability goals.”

SCCBC supports this Economic Vitality principle as the fundamental basis for successful implementation of the Plan. To add depth to that, SCCBC recommends the following:

1. **Emphasize the goal of “ensuring that regulations encourage private investment.”**
Through simplification and flexibility, the review process in the Plan area can encourage private investment by working to make projects both economically and functionally viable.
2. **Simplify the Plan’s multiple commercial districts.** Reduce the Plan’s zoning category complexity (service commercial, visitor commercial, workplace flex, office, etc.) down to one or two commercial designations that encompass a broad range of potential uses.
3. **Add specific policy language to make viability and functionality the key elements in project review in the Plan area.** Focus on performance standards to allow variation in application of specific requirements where variations can be done successfully while still meeting the intent of related County policy.
4. **Re-focus the design review process in an intentional and constructive way.** Identify the most important design issues in the Plan area. Focus on a few key priorities with specific rationale and in enough detail so as to provide real guidance. Pay particular attention to the interface between the public and private space in key areas where design can catalyze change. Simplify the overall review process if the zoning and design criteria meet established, previously communicated standards.
5. **Work on ways to address the interface between Plan corridors and adjacent areas.** Sustainable development demands greater height and scale in urban corridors, but also must transition to adjacent areas used to a lower scale. Analyze conditions and understand where/how to implement a workable design and regulatory framework for making transitions.
6. **Deal with traffic/mobility issues holistically.** Emphasize and use the General Plan and Circulation Element for long range traffic planning. Use project level review in Plan areas to fine-tune implementation of transportation objectives and traffic measures.