



## Overview of Comments

The numbered/**bolded** items represent recommendations that the Santa Cruz County Business Council (SCCBC) made during the development process of the draft Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan (Plan). These recommendations were arrived at through internal deliberations amongst our members. Originally, when submitted to County officials in June 2014, we outlined seven (7) recommendations. After our review of the draft Plan, we have narrowed the list down to five (5).

Our analysis of the Plan is based upon how the Plan addresses these recommendations:

1. **Emphasize the goal of “ensuring that regulations encourage private investment.”**
  - a. Our comments related to the County’s Economic Vitality Strategy (EVS) mention the draft Plan quite often, so it is only fitting that we mention the EVS while commenting here. Having a streamlined, predictable, easy to navigate planning process will be the first key to succeeding in the encouragement of private investment. The Sustainable Plan should have language in support of the EVS’s goal 2 strategies and recommendations which address internal Planning processes.
  - b. We are supportive of zoning flexibility through greater use of overlay districts, which encourage but do not mandate particular uses. These new zoning designations overlay existing designations to promote additional uses that would not be allowed under current zoning. We hope that the portfolio of new designations will have a flexible element to it, so as to not create challenges to certain projects that may require some variance to specific land use designations.
  - c. We see positive steps toward feasibility of sustainable development through:
    - i. floor area ratio (FAR) requirements allowing square footage to determine potential for zoning adherence rather than basing decisions off number of potential units. This will encourage the high density projects needed within the Plan’s focus area.
    - ii. changing the mixed use FAR requirements for multifamily units from .5 to 1.5.
    - iii. easing height restrictions for mixed development and projects meeting set “community benefit” criteria (ex: allowing for 4 stories at 50 feet, with commercial units on the bottom);
    - iv. the recognition that mixed use development reduces the demand for further parking (if the developer can submit a study showing that a project will have little impact on parking);
    - v. creating a max level of parking per transportation district; among others.
  - d. Providing incentives for projects that meet “community benefit” criteria
    - i. Establishing this type of incentive program will encourage private investment. Specific incentives allowing density bonuses, reduction in parking requirements, reduction in planning/permitting fees, and expediting project permits, will go far in encouraging investment. As elements of this Plan are put into practice, we would like to see the



## Santa Cruz County Business Council

County continue to work with community stakeholders to audit the incentive program on a regular basis. The purpose being to determine if the program is accomplishing its goal of incentivizing projects that provide “community benefit.”

### **2. Simplify the Plan’s multiple commercial districts.**

- a. The draft Plan does not simplify the number and type of commercial zoning designations. Rather than simplifying the number of zoning designations, the Plan introduces a number of “flex” designations and “overlay zones” which all have associated recommended uses. While we understand that the intention behind these different zoning designations is to improve flexibility, we have concerns that the various designations could provide roadblocks to certain projects in the future.

### **3. Add specific policy language to make viability and functionality the key elements in project review in the Plan area.**

- a. We feel this recommendation has been addressed through the draft Plan’s narrative and many of the specific action items. Again, while the wording of this may seem vague, we are asking that the project review process be mindful of developers’ ability to make projects feasible.

### **4. Re-focus the design review process in an intentional and constructive way.**

- a. Refer to comment 1(a) made above referencing the draft EVS.
- b. We are encouraged by the draft Plan’s thorough analysis of existing land use designations, traffic patterns, and an assessment of “community character.” The draft does a good job evaluating existing uses along key corridors, including residential, educational, medical, commercial and industrial. It also takes into account demographic and future growth trends.
- c. In terms of simplifying the overall approval process for various uses, the draft Plan attempts to do this by providing various new zoning overlays. However, these new overlays, as well as the proposed land use designations, may provide added scrutiny for projects during the review process. That being said, should projects meet the outlined criteria listed in the “focus areas” (chapter 7), the review process could be relatively streamlined.

### **5. Deal with traffic/mobility issues holistically.**

1. We appreciated the direct, data driven approach to traffic and mobility planning. The identification of key circulation patterns already in effect, and promotion of further sustainable transportation patterns within the core areas of focus, is a step in the right direction toward laying the groundwork for broad mobility planning.
2. In “Chapter 8 - Implementation,” necessary next steps are identified to create a countywide vision for multimodal transportation. Key metrics for future evaluation, including the reduction of total Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT), and acceptable levels



- of service as defined by the county (LOS), are also addressed. Additionally, the draft Plan proposes to create a multi-modal checklist for each focus area, as well as the preparation of both a Transportation Demand Management Program and a set of Transportation Impact Analysis Guidelines. All of these recommendations are supportive of holistic traffic/mobility planning which we feel is key to future transportation infrastructure in the Plan area. Having specific, set guidelines will help mitigate time and effort spent dealing with traffic issues on a project-by-project basis.
3. The Plan has to take Highway 1 into account. Traffic and mobility in the Plan area are greatly impacted by the flow, or lack thereof, on Highway 1. Recommendations related to transportation and mobility should place emphasis on expediting auxiliary lane completion, improved on-/off-ramp flow and other traffic mitigating measures.