

One-way traffic on West Cliff quashed by Santa Cruz City Council

By [Jesse Kathan](#) | April 9, 2024 | Tags: [City of Santa Cruz](#), [climate change](#), [environment](#), [erosion](#), [Jesse Kathan](#), [Santa Cruz City Council](#), [transportation](#), [West Cliff](#)



Storm damage prompts authorities to close West Cliff Drive near Woodrow Avenue in January 2023. (Stephen Baxter — Santa Cruz Local file)

SANTA CRUZ >> The Santa Cruz City Council on Tuesday unanimously rejected a pilot program for one-way traffic on West Cliff Drive.

The plan would have converted the eastbound lane of West Cliff Drive from Bay Street to Natural Bridges State Beach into a two-way bike lane. Many lower Westside residents at the meeting strongly opposed the change, and some said they felt blindsided by the proposal.

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A \$3.5 million state grant application to pay for the one-way pilot program opened in late March. City staff had little time to publicize it before Tuesday's council meeting.

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The one-way plan came on the heels of a draft 50-year vision for West Cliff that included input from several public meetings and a [survey of 1,120 people](#) in December 2023 and January 2024. About 60% of survey respondents favored a one-way street with a separate bike lane. About half of neighbors near West Cliff Drive in the survey supported a one-way street.

Tuesday, the city council voted to:

- Adopt the [50-year Community Vision for West Cliff](#).
- Approve several amendments to the 50-year vision that add a focus on community engagement and clarify that creating a one-way road on West Cliff Drive would require a council vote.
- Create a city council committee to give city staff guidance on the implementation of the 50-year vision and a community advisory body for the city's climate resilience strategies.
- Direct city staff to return by the end of December with a 10-year roadmap and financing plan to carry out the 50-year vision.
- Approve a preliminary study of strategies to address erosion on Lighthouse Point.

One-way pilot

Santa Cruz City Planner Claire Gallogly was met with boos from some meeting attendees as she presented a proposed one-way pilot program.

City staff asked the city council if they could apply for a \$3.5 million state grant to pay for the pilot project. Due to budget cuts, the grant may not be offered again, Gallogly said.

The two-year pilot would have included:

- A separated bike lane between the walking path and westbound lane.
- Traffic calming measures such as speed bumps and roundabouts on some surrounding streets.
- Removable barriers without permanent changes to West Cliff Drive.

Santa Cruz City Planner Claire Gallogly, left, talks to residents about West Cliff Drive at a meeting at the London Nelson Community Center in April 2023. (Michael Warren Mott – Santa Cruz Local file)

City staff presented the pilot program as a proactive approach to dealing with erosion and frequent road closures on West Cliff.

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Long-term plans

A one-way street on West Cliff Drive is an option included in the city's 50-year vision for West Cliff, a long-term plan for adaptation to rapidly eroding bluffs. A draft version of the plan was published in February and an updated version published in March.

"What we thought would take 30 years to happen with climate change took two sets of storms," said Santa Cruz Assistant City Manager Laura Schmidt. "We need to be proactive."

By 2100, West Cliff bluffs are expected to erode up to 7 feet, said Santa Cruz Transportation Manager Matt Starkey. In the future, the city may need to move the road inland, potentially buying property from homes along West Cliff Drive, he said.

A survey in 2023 suggested that respondents wanted one-way traffic on West Cliff Drive. (City of Santa Cruz)

Read more:

- [West Cliff survey favors fewer cars, more recreation](#)— Feb. 1, 2024
- [Input wanted on 50-year vision for West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz](#) — Aug. 18, 2023
- [Future of West Cliff Drive explored by residents, city staff](#)— April 28, 2023
- [One-way West Cliff Drive pilot advances in Santa Cruz](#)— Feb. 28, 2023
- [Plans emerge to revive downtown Santa Cruz, reshape West Cliff Drive](#) — April 27, 2021

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