



**SAVE
WEST
CLIFF**

**Public comments at April 9th city council meeting.
By Save West Cliff**

Mayor Keeley, Council members, City Staff, and community members,

"We are the first generation to feel the consequences of a warming planet and the last generation that can steer a different course."

Words from "California Against the Sea", a book published a few months ago.

The author, Rosanna Xia, examines how California coastal communities are approaching the impacts of climate change.

At the core, it's about ALL of us:

- Taking collective responsibility.
- Having the courage to embrace change, and
- Being open to reimagining a new and different future for the places that we love.

Fifteen months ago Save West Cliff was founded and we - the collective we - began our own journey to reimagine our beloved and iconic West Cliff.

And here we are today, reviewing a final draft of our 50-year vision.

It's unprecedented in the history of Santa Cruz and it will almost certainly set the standard for other communities to follow.

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Today we say thank you City Council and City Staff for taking responsibility and buying us some time.

Without your collective efforts and the Granite Construction team building three infill walls under impossible deadlines, the storms of Dec 28th, Dec 30th, and Feb 5th would have destroyed much of what was left of the roadway and pathways.

We also thank the Coastal Commission for working with our city and community.

We were excited to hear that the city received permit approval for the final piece of the puzzle at Bethany Culvert last week!

We would like to propose a community gathering near Columbia St to celebrate what we have collectively achieved sometime soon. We will bring cocktails!

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We also want to thank you for having the courage to run a process for a 50-year vision for West Cliff.

50 years is a long time for humans but short in geological time.

My favorite professor, Gary Griggs, reminds us that it's not a question of whether the cliff will disappear; it's WHEN.

Maybe 100 years, maybe 300. The power of the Pacific Ocean will ultimately prevail, he says. It always has.

So let's be clear.

It's not a question of IF we see another dangerous West Storm, it's a question of WHEN.

It's not a question of IF our local ecosystem gets changed forever, it's a question of WHEN.

This question of WHEN is at the core of the anxiety we all feel about our 50-year vision.

We know things will change but WHEN?

And what are the steps we need to take to adapt to that change?

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We would like to provide a special shout out to Matt Huffaker, Laura Schmidt and Erika Smart from the City of Santa Cruz for their commitment to this visioning process.

We acknowledge it has been a heavy lift and at times it has felt like mission impossible.

In the months since the first draft of the 50-year vision was published, there has been a great deal of community input and some public outbursts.

We know this is part of the public process - but we also know we have to keep moving - so while some people have arrived late to the visioning process, the wonderful thing is they are now engaged.

Which is perfect because now the real work begins as we translate this 50-year vision into plans and action via what the City of Santa Cruz calls a Resilient West Cliff Accessible to All Roadmap.

The Roadmap for the next decade is the first step toward implementation and activation.

It will set the foundation for the decades that follow.

We believe there are two big strategic questions for our First Decade Roadmap.

1. Can we move the wave energy away from our cliffs and coastline to slow erosion?
2. How do we manage access and transportation in such a dynamic environment?

Let's start with the challenging topic of access and transportation.

While the 50-year vision focuses on 2074, there are many unanswered questions about the here and now.

Questions like:

- How much clifftop space do we have to work with?
- How much room do we need to meet our collective needs?
- Can we rearrange the existing configuration to accommodate these needs?
- Is there a way to add more pedestrian and bike lanes?
- Does it have to be all or nothing, or can it be a mix?
- What are the likely impacts on local neighborhoods of new configurations?
- Beyond the local neighborhood, where would traffic get routed, and what impacts would it have on our City?

These questions need answers before meaningful change can be proposed.

We believe maintaining two-way traffic should be the starting point for the First Decade Roadmap discussions.

And we don't support the one-way trial as proposed.

So today, we are asking the City Council to move forward with approving the 50-Year Vision for West Cliff and take the additional action to appoint an Ad-Hoc City Council committee comprised of Councilmembers Golder, Kalantari-Johnson, and Mayor Keeley, that will outline for the community the following:

1. Implementation priorities for the First Decade Roadmap including any readiness actions that should be part of this 10 year implementation period.

2. Neighborhood engagement commitments for informing the community about any findings related to the questions identified above.
3. Development of a charter for the proposed Sustainability and Resilience Committee along with a stand alone West Cliff implementation committee focussed on the needs identified in the 50-Year Vision and the development and implementation of the First 10-Year Roadmap. The charter should identify scope, goals, membership and terms of service. We believe it needs to include community representation from each of the key districts including District 3 and District 6.

We would like these answers in the next nine months. This effort cannot wait.

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Turning to the other strategic question of whether we can move the swell energy away from the coastline to slow coastal erosion.

The biggest threat to West Cliff comes from extreme west swells. Damage from these storms is the reason we have one-way and no-way traffic right now.

Dr. Griggs has been warning us for four decades.

We believe we should dedicate more time, energy, and money to this topic than any other, including the one-way debate.

In the 50-year vision process, we explored four different approaches to adapting our coastline.

The community identified two popular alternatives but then the process was abruptly diverted back to the one-way debate.

We were disappointed that we could not take this discussion further. It was a missed opportunity to build community consensus around the biggest question.

We believe Natural Feature Restoration should be the starting point for our First Decade Roadmap. It has the most potential to move the swell energy away from the cliffs, and we can always revert to Hybrid at any time.

We ask the West Cliff implementation committee, as their first priority, to begin the investigation of these concepts through science and engineering evaluation and bring those findings to the community.

There are two missing pieces to completing these analyses:

1. Accurate nearshore bathymetry adjacent to West Cliff Drive and

2. a risk assessment model that can identify cliff erosion, sediment transport, and storm wave run up.

We request the City pursue funding to complete these as soon as possible, with as much vigor as the one-way trial.

We support the Lighthouse Point Hazard Analysis and Engineering Study, and we ask that the Living Shorelines, Nature-Based Solutions, and Sand Management Feasibility Study include a public outreach component.

We hope that there will be a thorough presentation to the Council in twelve months on these two studies and their findings.

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Finally,

We cannot do this alone.

We need a coalition of partners working with us. Partners include the California Coastal Commission, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, California State Parks, local non-profits, and many others.

We ask the city to provide the community with quarterly updates on cross-agency activities and an update on the Silver Jackets engagement.

As Mr. Phelps from the television show “Mission Impossible” would say, “City Council, this is your mission, should you choose to accept it”.

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Armed with the information outlined above, we believe our community can take the first step towards our 50-year vision by embracing our First Decade Roadmap.

We are proud of our community and city for taking responsibility for our beloved West Cliff.

We are committed to working through these challenging issues.

And we remain hopeful that we can continually reimagine West Cliff as we enter each new decade towards our 50 year anniversary.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Save West Cliff