



The Santa Cruz City Council discusses next steps for West Cliff Drive on Tuesday afternoon. (Via City of Santa Cruz)

STORMS 2023: ROAD TO RECOVERY

Santa Cruz City Council backs proposed 50-year plan for West Cliff Drive



BY MAX CHUN

Source: [Lookout Santa Cruz](#)



The Santa Cruz City Council directed staff to move forward with developing a vision for West Cliff Drive as it faces coastal erosion accelerated by this winter’s storms. By the end of the year, city staff will aim to draft a roadmap for the next three years, as well as a 50-year plan.

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The Santa Cruz City Council unanimously passed a motion Tuesday outlining the next steps for the future of West Cliff Drive through the end of this year, including a community review and a 50-year plan for the iconic roadway.

The motion, brought by Councilmember Shebreh Kalantari-Johnson in response to requests by [Save West Cliff](#) leader Al Ramadan, provides city staff with three key directions as work continues to repair the scenic road after a [damaging series of winter storms](#). Those are:

- Bring an update on the city's West Cliff Drive work including infrastructure, transportation and the development of a roadmap for a resilient and accessible West Cliff — a document outlining immediate, medium-term (15-plus years) and long-term (30-plus years) priorities for the road;
- Launch a community review of the roadmap to collect additional input and provide an updated draft of the "[A Resilient West Cliff, Accessible to All](#)" report to the city council by the end of August. That includes starting several projects laid out in the document for the next three years, including sea cave studies, coastline monitoring and sea wall stabilization;
- Coordinate with federal, state and local entities to identify and execute nature-based solutions — projects to protect, restore and sustainably manage ecosystems, to develop a vision for the roadway beyond just the next three years, including a 50-year plan.

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Addressing the council, Ramadan argued that planning 50 years out is vital

for the road's existence. The draft roadmap covers only the next three years. A section titled "Beyond Three Years" is listed as "to be developed."

"We've got to get our eyes above the horizon here," he said, adding that he and other members of the Save West Cliff resident group are encouraged by the draft plan so far. "We must have the courage and conviction to collectively reimagine how we access our beloved and iconic West Cliff for generations to come."



A damaged section of West Cliff Drive just west of Woodrow Avenue on Santa Cruz's Westside.
(Will McCahill / Lookout Santa Cruz)

In the near term, city staff will continue community outreach for input on the draft roadmap, a planning document designed to help guide the city's decision-making for rehabilitating West Cliff Drive over the next three years. The draft, prepared by the city and Sacramento-based climate consultant firm Farallon Strategies, is expected to be updated by August.

That update will also include city staff's plan to begin several projects over the next three years, including the cave study on the west side of Lighthouse Point that [could lead to a look at whether to relocate the lighthouse](#), intersection improvements at Bay Street and West Cliff Drive, implementing a coastal monitoring program to track the changes in the coastline, and sea wall and cave stabilization.

Move the lighthouse on West Cliff? With possible sea cave collapse, city council looking at alternatives



The city is also studying the future of a one-way pilot project that currently spans the westbound stretch of West Cliff Drive between Columbia Drive and Woodrow Avenue. The one-way section has been in place since January

and has sparked concerns among local residents about increased traffic on side streets. To address some traffic concerns, the city is planning to convert Oxford Way into a cul-de-sac [at the Bethany Curve intersection](#) by the end of the month.

Ramadan said that delaying the immediate repairs could lead to further, irreparable loss of access to the road.

"We are less concerned about the one-way, two-way debate than we are about the 'no way' situation," he said. "No access is a disaster. If you think traffic in the neighborhood is bad now, wait until there's no access."

During public comment, local environmental advocate Gillian Greensite said she agreed with Ramadan's take on the immediate work.



"I think all of your resources and support should be in the direction of fixing the current damage," she said, giving credit to the public works engineers managing the projects. "I think our public works agencies can repair this in a manner that it won't happen again."

Another speaker, who introduced himself only as Andrea, argued that the one-way solution is the clear best option.

"To have access for pedestrians, cyclists, dogs, and of course, cars, one-way is the obvious solution," he said. "Cars are the least space-efficient, but we can maintain access for them if we run it one way."

Of the approximately 10 members of the public who spoke, many said they were eager to continue working through the traffic-mitigation issues. A speaker who gave only the name Nancy said she was satisfied with the conversations she and her neighbors on Oxford Way have had with transportation planners Claire Gallogly and Matt Starkey.

"Some neighbors have expressed concerns that the barriers [for the Oxford cul-de-sac] will not be robust enough; however, staff has committed to reevaluate if necessary," she said. "There have been significant steps forward,

but there’s a long way to go to ensure the quality of life for our residents.”



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