

On Monday, October 19, the Pacifica Planning Commission will again hear and deliberate on the current application for the Vista Mar project, an ill-conceived development on a very steep part of Monterey Road, just above the intersection with Hickey. Developer John Kontrabacki and his designer/engineer Javier Chaverria (yes, the same Javier of Harmony @ 1 fame) will try to defend their ridiculous proposal for eight 3-story luxury condominiums on this 1.2-acre site with an **average slope of 52 percent**.

The proposed project:

(1) **Ignores the history of major erosion and landslides** in the area (10 and counting), including three landslides on the project site itself documented in several 1991 geotechnical reports. The General Plan talks about the geologic hazards of this hillside in particular and recommends a full geological analysis, and yet the city has required only two soils borings, neither of which were done where the buildings are going, and neither of which go to the depth of the proposed excavation. The downhill neighbors along Monterey and Nelson have experienced major flooding and erosion for years, including, according to Lynn Adams of the Pacific Beach Coalition, "enough water to move cars." The city has a responsibility to ensure that the project will not create additional hazards for the community, and this inadequate report does very little to assuage our concerns.

(2) **Proposes to so alter the topography that the hillside** will no longer be recognizable, with a sea of retaining walls up to 25 feet in height, more than 6000 cubic yards of excavation, more than 3000 cubic yards of soil off-hauled over a two-month period, and up to 18 feet of new soil fill to level the north end of the site, which would put the height of

the building at about 57 feet above the sidewalk. Some 57 trees would be removed, including seven heritage Monterey pines. No attempt has been made to save any heritage trees.

(3) **Proposes to pave over a wetland** with a driveway access that snakes around uphill to the rear of the units. (The city hasn't even bothered to thoroughly analyze the wetland, even though its likely presence has been confirmed by at least three biologists, as well as Fish and Wildlife.)

(4) **The project violates the General Plan** and other city codes that restrict such disruption on a steep, highly visible hillside, and yet the Planning Department still argues in favor of approval, because it recognizes the difficulty in designing projects on steep hillsides, and so is willing to overlook areas where the project does not comply. What kind of twisted logic is that? And what a dangerous precedent this will set for other hillside development projects! Have other designs been considered that could actually comply with city codes? We're not opposing all development, only arguing that this one is poorly conceived.

(5) **The project's environmental analysis under CEQA is a joke.** It argues that several of the environmental concerns, such as the biology (plant, animal, wetland), air quality, geotechnical, and hydrological, can be mitigated to less than significant levels by conducting more in-depth studies. What? So it's basically admitting that it doesn't understand the issue completely, but that whatever concerns might turn up can definitely be mitigated. I'm not sure how that argument would stand up in any court of law.

(6) **On the issue of aesthetics (also part of CEQA),** project planner Bonny O'Connor told the project sponsor in an email on 2.14.15 that 3D renderings of the project would not be enough to satisfy the city, and that a consultant would

need to produce 3D visualizations (presumably including adjacent structures for context). Not only has this study not been done as required by CEQA, the project plans do not include ANY elevations of the entire project showing the view from the street, which is a basic requirement of a Development Permit Application. In addition, most coastal cities (Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Half Moon Bay) require story poles, even for small projects such as single-family homes, to give the commissioners and neighbors a better idea of the project massing in relation to its place on the site. How does Pacifica manage to avoid such studies? It brings to question whether Planning Department staff is really acting in the interests of the community.

We encourage you to learn more and raise your voice now before the project is approved. The agenda with drawings, expert reports, and neighbors' comments can all be found in the [agenda packet](#) for Monday's meeting. Be patient when viewing/uploading as it is a VERY large file. The Planning Department will continue to accept letters from the public until 4 p.m. on Monday, October 19 to be included in the public record. Please email o'connorb@ci.pacifica.ca.us to add your comments.

For more information about the project and how you can be involved in the neighbors' review efforts, please [email VistaMarPreservationAlliance@gmail.com](mailto:VistaMarPreservationAlliance@gmail.com)

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