

920 SUMMIT ROAD
FINAL MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
RESPONSE TO COMMENTS
AUGUST 27, 2009

INTRODUCTION:

An Initial Study was prepared for the 920 Summit Road (Montecito Country Club (MCC)) project because the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that an environmental assessment of the proposed project be provided. The Environmental Analyst found that, although the proposed project could potentially have significant adverse impacts related to Biology, Cultural Resources, Geophysical Conditions, and Water Environment, mitigation measures described in the Initial Study and agreed to by the applicant would reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels. In addition, recommended mitigation measures were identified to reduce less than significant impacts associated with Aesthetics, Air Quality, Hazards, Noise, Public Services, Recreation, and Transportation/Circulation.

A Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared for the proposed project, and a public review period was held from May 22, 2009 to June 22, 2009. On June 11, 2009, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing to accept testimony regarding the Draft MND.

Responses to the public comments received on the Draft MND are provided below, and comment letters received are attached. In some instances, the text of the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration has been revised or augmented in response to comments.

The purpose of this document is to respond to specific comments received pertaining to environmental issues in the Draft MND. While letters of general support or opposition to the project are acknowledged and included in this document for the record, no formal response is provided. In addition, comments received not related to the environmental issues outlined in the Draft MND, such as land use issues and social or fiscal impacts of the project, are outside the scope and not addressed in this document. However, all comments will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration.

The Response to Comments document is organized with responses provided to the subject matter raised by the comment(s) rather than individual responses to each comment letter.

The project was revised following the end of the public comment period in response to concerns raised by the public. Staff has attempted to clarify in our response, where appropriate, how the project has changed to address some of the concerns raised by the public. However, the Initial Study itself has not been revised to incorporate the recent changes to the project.

During the comment period on the Draft MND, the following correspondence from was received from the public:

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- 37 letters/e-mails commenting on the Draft MND
- 1 letter signed by 44 neighbors commenting on the Draft MND

At the public hearing on the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration, held on June 11, 2009, the following testimony was received:

- 14 people expressed support for the project and/or commented on benefits of the proposed project
- 2 people raised concerns regarding the project and the MND

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

COMMENT: Emergency Access/Evacuation – Closing the access point located south of the convergence of Rametto and Summit Roads poses a danger to human life relative to emergency evacuation/escape. The MND does not consider access to/from the adjacent neighborhood relative to the closure of the existing access gate. The MND does not address the issue of sundowner winds and their potential impact on the Eucalyptus Hill neighborhood. The Eucalyptus Hill neighborhood is in the High Fire Hazard Area, closing the access would reduce public safety. An alternative route out of the neighborhood is essential. Public emergency access should be improved, not reduced. The access provides another entry point for emergency vehicles. If fire reaches Alston Road, residents of Rametto and Summit Roads would be stuck if the existing access point is eliminated. The existing gate was opened in the two recent fires for emergency access.

RESPONSE: The text of the Initial Study, Section 11 – Transportation, has been revised to address this comment more thoroughly.

The City's Wildland Fire Plan was adopted by the City Council in May of 2004. The Wildland Fire Plan provides guidance for homeowners and the City to use appropriate construction and landscaping techniques so that structures are fire resistant and provide defensible space around homes, as well as vegetation clearance on public lands and roadways. Once a fire threatens an area, the Wildland Fire Plan identifies evacuation from a wildfire as the first and most important step the public can take in protecting themselves and their family. Evacuation during a wildland fire is the primary responsibility of the Police Department and cooperating law enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, areas to evacuate and routes to be used during an evacuation are typically determined from information received by Fire Department units responding to a fire based on fire behavior conditions and fire movement.

During the development of the Wildland Fire Plan, City Fire, Police, and Public Works Departments worked with a County Pre-Fire Mitigation Task Force to address wildland fire evacuation planning. The task force also included Santa Barbara County Fire, Sheriffs and Public Works Departments, Montecito Fire Protection District, Carpinteria/Summerland Fire Department, California Highway Patrol, California Department of Transportation, and various homeowners associations throughout the Santa Barbara area.

The work completed by this task force is the development of an evacuation preplan (Santa Barbara I-Zone Major Incident Preplan) that outlines Fire Department response routes, probable public evacuation routes, traffic control points, and staging areas that would be used in the event of a wildland fire evacuation. The interagency plan is used by law enforcement, fire, and public works agencies during a wildland fire evacuation. It can be used by agencies as an educational tool for the public, but it must be noted that changes may be made based on actual fire conditions occurring in the field. Therefore, the identified evacuation routes are considered probable evacuation routes.

The evacuation preplan separated the high fire hazard areas throughout the Santa Barbara front country into evacuation areas or "evacuation blocks". Development of the evacuation blocks was determined by the configuration of major canyons and road systems. Within Santa Barbara City, 26 blocks were identified. For each evacuation block a template and a map of the area were developed. The template outlined the traffic closure points, fire response routes, fire resources that would respond to a fire based on first, second, and third alarm, probable evacuation routes, incident command posts to facilitate management of the fire, fire staging areas for fire equipment, collection points (evacuation centers) for civilians and animals, and any additional risks that exist for each evacuation block.

Within each evacuation block, the road systems were evaluated to determine the best routes to use for fire response equipment and probable evacuation routes. Every effort was made to separate fire response routes and evacuation routes; however, in many evacuation blocks this was not possible because of the existing road system.

The evacuation preplan identified Summit Road, Summit Lane and Rametto Road residents as evacuating to Alston Road. The private gate at the north end of the Montecito Country Club was not considered during the development of the evacuation plan. The City does not have control of this gate to ensure it is opened in the event of an emergency and there can be no guarantee City personnel will be available to ensure it is opened in a timely manner for evacuation purposes.

To ensure an orderly evacuation occurs in the event of a wildland fire, it is the preference of the Fire Department that residents use the identified routes to help assist police and fire personnel. This will ensure greater accountability of residents and allow a higher degree of control during the evacuation for police and fire personnel.

Approximately 66 homes are accessed via Rametto Road, Summit Road or Summit Lane from Alston Road. Alston Road has a minimum paved width of 24', which widens in areas to approximately 36', as the right-of-way (ROW) width also varies from approximately 35' to 60'. The section of Hot Springs Road between Alston Road and Coast Village Road is paved for a width of approximately 36 feet and has a ROW width of approximately 55 – 60 feet. The capacity of the two lane road segments of Alston, Hot Springs and Eucalyptus Hill Roads is approximately 3,500 vehicles per hour, which is sufficient to handle evacuation of the subject area in the event of an emergency

Nevertheless, the applicant has recently amended their proposal to address neighborhood concerns regarding the closure of the gate at Summit/Rametto Roads. The proposed solution would involve the installation of a security gate with a Knox box and providing a 12-foot wide turf-covered lane with a reinforced base for vehicle egress in the event of an emergency. Vehicles using this route would drive across the grass in the event of a mandatory evacuation declared by the City of Santa Barbara. Provision of this access is contingent upon the City taking the responsibility for opening this gate in the event of an emergency and holding the Montecito Country Club harmless in the event of any injuries incurred while using this supplementary escape route. At this time, it is not clear whether the City would be willing to

take on the additional responsibility for opening this gate, and therefore the Initial Study has not been revised to include the proposed revision to the project description. Because the potential environmental impacts have been determined to be less than significant, provision of this supplementary escape route is considered to be a policy matter for decision-makers, rather than an environmental issue.

COMMENT: Pedestrian Access – Eliminating the existing pedestrian and bicycle access through the Country Club results in dangers to pedestrians and bicyclists who use the Country Club as a safe route to Hot Springs. Alston Road, the only alternative to the Country Club route, is a narrow, heavily traveled route with blind curves. Access through the Country Club property is the only walking access to the beach. Closing this pedestrian route will force people into their cars and discourage alternative transportation.

RESPONSE: The text of the Initial Study, Section 11 – Transportation, has been revised to address this comment more thoroughly.

Characteristic of the Eucalyptus Hill neighborhood, Alston Road has no bicycle lanes or sidewalks. It has a minimum paved width of 24', which widens in areas to approximately 36', as the right-of-way (ROW) width also varies from approximately 35' to 60'. Alston Road has striped shoulders ranging from a few feet up to 8 feet in width on both sides of the road between Eucalyptus Hill Road and Summit Road. Between Summit Road and Hot Springs Road, sections of Alston Road have unimproved (not paved or striped) shoulders primarily on the south side of the road. Between Alston Road and Coast Village Road, Hot Springs Road has bicycle lanes in both directions, but no sidewalk until near the Vons Shopping Center. This section of Hot Springs Road is paved for a width of approximately 36 feet and has a ROW width of approximately 55 – 60 feet.

Per the City's available data (2009), the number of Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on Alston Road ranges from 2,056 to 3,417 between the 800 and 500 blocks of Alston Road. The ADT on Hot Springs Road is 11,300 as measured on the segment closest to the Hot Springs and Coast Village Road intersection. The posted speed limit on both Alston and Hot Springs is 35 mph. Only one collision has been reported on Alston Road in last five years, involving a single vehicle. According to the City's data, no bicycle or pedestrian collisions have been reported in this time period.

Rametto Road and Summit Road south of Alston Road are paved approximately 18 – 20 feet in width, with no formal striping. Per the City's available data (2009), the ADT on Summit Road is approximately 337. No reported collisions have occurred on these roads in the past five years, with the exception of the above mentioned single vehicular collision near the intersection of Summit Road and Alston Road.

COMMENT: The situation regarding water supply has changed recently. Additional water-conserving measures should be included as project conditions.

RESPONSE: The project is not anticipated to increase water usage at the site, but rather, is anticipated to result in an overall decrease in water consumption. Therefore, impacts to water supply would be less than significant compared to existing conditions. Nevertheless, recent events have affected the City's water supply, and conservation and use of recycled water to the

maximum extent feasible are prudent for a project of this size. These suggestions will be forwarded to decision makers for possible inclusion as conditions of approval for the project.

COMMENT: Recycled water should be used to the maximum extent feasible.

RESPONSE: The project site has used recycled water on the golf course for 20 years. Over 95% of the course is irrigated with recycled water; however, the tee boxes and greens are not irrigated with recycled water. Information from the applicant indicates that monthly usage of recycled water is approximately 3-4.5 million gallons per month. The project is anticipated to result in an overall decrease in water usage, therefore, impacts to water supply would be less than significant compared to existing conditions. Nevertheless, use of recycled water to the maximum extent feasible is prudent for a project of this size. Specific suggestions regarding potential uses of recycled water will be forwarded to decision makers for possible inclusion as conditions of approval for the project.

COMMENT: Additional mitigation measures related to asbestos and air quality should be included.

RESPONSE: The identified mitigation measures are standard conditions of approval, and as such have been added to the Section 2 – Air Quality, of the Initial Study as Recommended Mitigation.

COMMENT: The dates identified in the biological mitigation measure related to protection of nesting birds should be revised.

RESPONSE: The mitigation measure text for BIO-3.2.b and BIO-3.2.e has been revised in accordance with the most current recommendations from the California Department of Fish and Game to expand the duration of bird nesting season.

COMMENT: Will the sediment basin become a breeding ground for mosquitoes or other insects? Will there be any monitoring to ensure water flow?

RESPONSE: Sedimentation basins will empty within a matter of hours after a major storm event, which should discourage breeding. There is no monitoring proposed, but periodic maintenance of the sedimentation basins has been proposed to clear out accumulated sediment.

COMMENT: Will the sediment basin accommodate the maximum historical flow so that there is no flooding?

RESPONSE: The sedimentation basins will be designed to accommodate 100-year storm events

without water backing up onto adjacent properties.

COMMENT: Does the project have adequate access to maintain public utilities?

RESPONSE: Existing easements required for maintenance of public utilities will remain as part of the project. Therefore there will be no impact associated with maintenance of public utilities.

COMMENT: Does the project have adequate access to maintain the culvert?

RESPONSE: The applicant's engineer has determined that the culvert in question is on the property of an upslope neighbor, not on the Montecito Country Club property.

COMMENT: The 1st and 2nd tees pose a safety concern due to golf balls exiting the course and entering adjacent backyards.

RESPONSE: All of the golf holes have been designed to accommodate sliced or hooked tee shots and to provide a safety zone around the tee box so that the risk of golf balls leaving the course is minimized. However, there is and continues to be an inherent risk of stray golf balls existing the property for neighbors and/or the public in close proximity to the course. The risk of golf balls entering adjacent yards is considered minimal, and no greater than would occur under existing conditions.

COMMENT: Will there be any change in the number of employees that work at the Club?

RESPONSE: The number of employees at the Club is not anticipated to change as a result of the project. The Club currently employs approximately 90 people; however, no more than 60 employees are typically at the site at a given time.

COMMENT: Will Summit and Rametto Roads be used for construction activities? This could present significant environmental impacts.

RESPONSE: Due to the length of the proposed construction, construction traffic impacts are considered a less than significant impact, as discussed in the Initial Study. However, the standard condition of approval related to construction traffic (Recommended Mitigation Measure T-1) has been slightly revised to ensure that temporary adverse impacts to Rametto and Summit Roads, north of the project site, are minimized.

COMMENT: Has a prescriptive easement been established through the Country Club property?

RESPONSE: Consideration of prescriptive easements is not appropriate as part of the environmental analysis of the project. However, the underlying environmental issue – that of pedestrian access through the site – is addressed in Section 11.e of the Initial Study. See also the topical response regarding pedestrian access above.

COMMENT: The Club makes excessive noise day and night that impacts neighbors.

RESPONSE: The Club operates 7 days a week from 7:00 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. (except December 25th and January 1st) for use by members and guests. The Clubhouse dining room and meeting rooms may also be rented to outside groups for Special Events (weddings, parties, luncheons, meetings), which typically occur in the afternoon or evening hours. Approximately three to four Special Events occur per week at the Club. Maintenance activities at the Club typically start at 6:00 a.m. and finish by 2:30 p.m. Operation of the golf course would be expected to result in similar noise levels being generated to those that are currently generated. The project is not expected to result in a substantial increase in noise and therefore project noise impacts remain less than significant. The Club has documented one noise complaint

COMMENT: Closing off access will devalue adjacent properties.

RESPONSE: The Initial Study does not consider the financial implications of a proposed project. Comment will be forwarded to decision makers.

COMMENT: Existing trees (primarily Eucalyptus) block views of the ocean from the adjacent neighborhood.

RESPONSE: The project site does include many large skyline trees, including eucalyptus trees that are approximately 100 feet in height. The project includes the removal of many trees, and the associated aesthetic impacts to public views were analyzed in the Initial Study. Tree removal has been an on-going discussion issue for this project, as there are potential aesthetic and biological impacts from tree removal. Conversely, there has been some discussion of removing the eucalyptus trees within the riparian areas to create a more native and appropriate habitat restoration.

This comment relates to the absence of existing private views due to the location of the existing trees. Some trees would be removed but the project would not result in increased blockage of views. The trees represent an existing condition, and the proposed project will not worsen this condition.

An additional concern with the loss of these existing trees is the potential loss of biological habitat. The project biologist has observed the identified eucalyptus trees as being used by

raptors as roost trees and by acorn woodpeckers as granary (food storage) and possibly nest trees. As such, there is concern that removal of these trees would cause an adverse biological impact.

COMMENT: Consider potential impacts to public views from Old Coast Highway.

RESPONSE: The project includes a berm approximately 500 feet in length located in the southwestern portion of the project site. The berm would have a 13-foot maximum height. The peak of the berm is approximately 50 feet from the Old Coast Highway right-of-way. The project applicant has provided additional exhibits, photographs and photo-simulations to address this concern. Based on this information, it has been determined that the project, including the proposed berm along Old Coast Highway, would not result in the loss of mountain views, as seen from Old Coast Highway. Additional text has been added to Section 1.a of the Initial Study.

COMMENT: Provide additional information about the proposed pond liners and whether the use of an impermeable system is appropriate.

RESPONSE: The project includes the use of impervious liners primarily in order to provide a barrier to prevent the upward migration of brackish groundwater into the proposed ponds. If brackish water were to infiltrate the pond(s), it would alter the chemistry of the water and kill freshwater marsh vegetation that is proposed to be planted around the ponds, and could introduce odiferous, sulfur laden water into the site. Another consideration in the choice of an impermeable liner is to avoid directly injecting non-potable water into the groundwater table. Because the golf course uses reclaimed water, which will enter into the ponds, this could be an issue for the State Water Resources Control Board.

Functionally, an impermeable clay liner is no different than an impermeable synthetic liner. The project site does not contain suitable material from which to create a clay liner, therefore a clay liner would require additional truck trips to import appropriate soils. This would result in temporary, adverse construction-related traffic impacts to surrounding residents and businesses.

COMMENT: Consider ways to reduce transportation demand, such as single resident occupancy units or shuttle service.

RESPONSE: As discussed in Section 11.a of the Initial Study, the project will not result in a long-term increase in traffic. However, the applicant is proposing to offer free bus passes to employees who commute by bus, and a rideshare board will be posted in the employee lounge to encourage carpooling. Additionally, new bicycle racks will be provided at the maintenance building and the clubhouse for use by employees and guests. The applicant has also revised the project description to include a studio unit within the maintenance building, which would be occupied by an employee of the Club.

COMMENT: Include information on the Club's composting program.

RESPONSE: The golf course contracts with Marborg industry to collect the site's green waste for recycling/composting. The golf course also has a chipper that is used for on-site composting, when necessary. Over the last six years, Marborg has collected over 320 tons of greenwaste from the Club.

The applicant has prepared an Environment Policy, pursuant to the International Standards for Environmental Management Systems, ISO 14001:2004. Two of the six environmental principles identified in this Policy are: effective and responsible waste management and disposal, and promoting reuse and recycling of products.

COMMENT: Study solar energy opportunities at the site.

RESPONSE: The project would not result in significant energy use, and is not anticipated to contribute substantially to the generation of greenhouse gas emissions (refer to Section 2.b – Air Pollutant Emissions of the Initial Study). This comment will be forwarded to the applicant and decision makers. No further response is required.

COMMENT: Include history of the site's tennis courts in the Historic Resources discussion.

RESPONSE: Tennis courts were originally added to the Club property in the early 1920's. The tennis courts are located to the northwest of the Clubhouse. On their south side, a sandstone retaining wall extends along the length of the of the tennis courts' platform. The entrance to the courts is flanked on its east side by a one-story tennis pavilion, designed in 1998. In 1949, three grass tennis courts and a grandstand were added to the site. The project proposes to demolish the existing tennis courts, tennis pavilion and sandstone retaining walls. The tennis courts were determined to not be eligible for listing as a significant historic resource. Recommended mitigation measure CR-5 requires photo-documentation of the tennis courts and sandstone walls prior to their demolition. The photo-documentation has already been submitted to, and accepted by, the City. Refer to Exhibit H for the complete Historic Structures/Sites Report.

COMMENT: Address the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on the site.

RESPONSE: The project design includes several features that will reduce chemical and fertilizers in runoff. Primarily, the project includes significantly more natural filtering than currently due to the revised grading of the site, proposed habitat restoration areas, the detention basins, the daylighted drainages and the ponds. The use of a computer-controlled irrigation system will also reduce runoff that enters the storm drain system. The applicant has also prepared a Water Quality and Monitoring Protocol, which has been attached to the Initial Study as Exhibit L.

Mitigation measure BIO-7 requires implementation of an Integrated Pest Management Plan in order to minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides for landscape maintenance

CONCLUSION

The environmental analysis demonstrates that, with the identified mitigation measures agreed to by the applicant, the project as proposed would not result in significant environmental impacts. The project therefore qualifies for a Mitigated Negative Declaration and no further analysis of alternatives is required as part of the environmental document. However, comments regarding the merits of the project, design alternatives, land use compatibility with surrounding residential uses and other planning issues are forwarded to decision-makers in the context of their consideration of project permits and planning policy consistency.

- Attachments: 1. Public Comments Letters
2. Planning Commission Minutes, June 11, 2009