

8. SCENIC AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The Coastal Act requires protection of scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas as a resource of public importance. New development must be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas. Development must also minimize landform alteration, be compatible with the character of its surroundings and, where feasible, restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. In highly scenic areas, new development is required to be subordinate to its setting. The Coastal Act also requires that Highway One remain a scenic, two-lane road through the rural areas of the state. The Coastal Act also specifically protects the character of special coastal communities that may have unique characteristics or are popular visitor destination points (Sections 30251, 30253).

A. Protection of Scenic Viewsheds and Rural Landscapes

1) Summary of *Preliminary Periodic Review Findings* (Exhibit A pp. 303-318)

The *Preliminary Report* pages 303-318 found that the LCP implementation has resulted in protection of some highly scenic areas within the coastal zone through acquisition of public lands. However, cumulative development patterns in rural areas have resulted in some incremental erosion of scenic rural landscapes within public viewsheds as a result of implementation of LCP policies. The *Preliminary Report* noted that LCP policies should be updated to allow for more comprehensive evaluation and policy approaches for addressing proposed development, particularly in rural areas.

From the Commission's evaluation it appears most LCP implementation to date has addressed protection of viewsheds through screening conditions on permit approvals. However, monitoring and reporting designed to assure the effectiveness of mitigation is not always carried out. The *Preliminary Report* found that, in order to assure that LCP implementation is consistent with protection of scenic and visual resources, avoidance of impacts through site selection and design alternatives is the preferred method for preserving scenic views over mitigation through vegetation screening.

The recommendations of the *Preliminary Report* suggested that the LCP policies be revised and expanded to enact a Critical Viewshed Policy similar to that in place along the Big Sur coastline in order to adequately protect scenic resources (PR 8.1.). Viewshed protection policies of the LCP should also be implemented to protect public views from offshore boating and recreation areas in state waters (PR 8.6). Development of a Scenic Sensitive Resource Area (SRA) overlay in the LCP (PR 8.2) could strengthen protection of sensitive resource areas as required by other sections of the CZLUO (23.01.043). It noted that the County is proposing revised Critical Viewshed policies as part of its Area plan Updates. The *Preliminary Report* suggested guidance for development of the revised Area Plan policies. In addition, the *Preliminary Report* (page 319) also recognized the need to strengthen condition compliance and monitoring. It suggested enhanced coordination with Coastal Commission staff on condition compliance and enforcement

issues may improve implementation of the LCP (PR 8.3). It identified additional options that could be incorporated into the LCP in order to assure that the LCP will be implemented in conformity with the Coastal Act Sections 30251 and 30253, including pursuing formulation of an Open Space District to acquire scenic lands (PR 8.4) and pursuing National Scenic Byway Designation for Highway One in the North Coast and Estero Planning Areas (PR 8.5).

2) Comments Raised

San Luis Obispo County Response (Exhibit C)

The County agrees to consider adding/clarifying a scenic SRA classification and standards as suggested by Recommendation 8.2 and to consider clarifying the extent of viewsheds and permit requirements as suggested by Recommendation 8.6. The County comments note that Recommendation 8.1 should be modified to define “critical” viewsheds and policies. It suggested implementing the policy through the Area Plan updates and performance standards for a project-level visibility analysis and siting prohibition in visible areas. Coastal policies and ordinances could be amended with prioritized limitations, criteria and findings. Policies and standards could be reviewed for more explicit and consistent interpretation of standards. The County agreed to pursue recommendations 8.3, 8.4 and 8.5 provided staffing and funding is available.

Public Comments (Exhibit D)

Public comments were received in support of the recommendation for development of a Critical Viewshed Policy that would extend the Big Sur critical viewshed policy to the North Coast Area of San Luis Obispo County.

Other comments generally supported protection of critical viewsheds but suggested that viewshed should be carefully defined based on detailed visual resource analysis and mitigation measures available. Concern was noted that viewshed protection measures could be so strict as to unreasonably restrict any uses or priority uses such as agriculture buildings. Comments noted that the recommendations would extend viewshed protections to cover any public viewing area—including views from Hearst Castle and the water and were overly broad and beyond the scope of the Coastal Act. Some comments suggested that Coastal Act policies require that impacts be minimized to the extent possible but not completely eliminated. Other comments also note that the recommendations may conflict with the limited scope of existing view easements gifted by the Hearst Company to the state. Comments note that recommendations 8.1, 8.2 and 8.6 when taken together would effectively prohibit development in almost all locations between the water and Highway One or would require development to be located in artificial berm pits.

Comments from agriculturists noted that scenic viewshed protection recommendations appeared to restrict agricultural production activities and development of principal agricultural residences and agricultural buildings. The Port San Luis Harbor District also noted that the district is generally supportive of viewshed protection but also supports mitigation to visual effects of a development when other Coastal priority uses are jeopardized and recommended that the

Commission specifically address the Harbor Terrace property by developing recommendations which allow for visitor-serving improvements if proper mitigation measures are implemented.

3) Analysis

Critical Viewshed Policy

The *Preliminary Report* found that the scenic and visual resources of San Luis Obispo County are a significant resource that is threatened by the incremental erosion of scenic rural landscapes through new development. Between 1988 and 1998 more than 40 projects were approved in the North Coast and Estero Planning Areas that raised issues of protecting scenic and visual resources.

The County has implemented the LCP to mitigate impacts to scenic resources, primarily through vegetation screening. However, the Commission has found in assessing development in San Luis Obispo County, and in other areas such as the Big Sur coastline, that adequate protection of scenic and visual resources in conformity with the Coastal Act may require standards that first seek to avoid where feasible any new development within view of Highway One and other areas designated as critical viewsheds, including views from state waters. Recommendations 8.1, 8.2 and 8.6 suggest the need for a more comprehensive approach to evaluating impacts to public views in highly scenic areas and outline policy approaches to help maintain the significant rural landscapes of the County.

However, the Commission finds that some modifications to the recommendations are necessary in order to provide more clear objectives for a Critical Viewshed policy and other policies to protect scenic resources throughout the coastal zone. As modified, the recommendations suggest standards for development of a Critical Viewshed policy that would, in effect, extend the Critical Viewshed policy from the Big Sur area of Monterey County. As the northern part of San Luis Obispo County is an extension of the Big Sur coastline and contains scenic resources equal in significance, development of a compatible policy would assure protection of these scenic and visual resources of statewide, national and even international importance.

To address lands adjacent to Highway One and other scenic public viewing areas that are zoned Agriculture, the policy could provide for exemptions of certain agricultural structures from the viewshed standards in order to support continued protection of coastal agricultural operations consistent with Sections 30222 and 30241-30242 of the Coastal Act. The Commission notes that the County is developing significant new Critical Viewshed policies as proposed in the North Coast Area Plan Update Project Description, January 2000. However, the Commission comments have noted that the Update standards may not go far enough to adequately protect these landscapes by ensuring that no development is visible from public areas. Recommendations 8.1 and 8.6 suggest further guidance and criteria for developing and implementing a Critical Viewshed policy that would improve protection of scenic and visual resources. Also, a Critical Viewshed designation should be reserved for those areas that are generally accepted as "highly scenic" (in the meaning of Coastal Act Section 30251). And to

address Coastal Act Section 30250c, Recommendation 8.1, as modified, identifies exceptions to accommodate visitor-serving development within existing recreational nodes.

Recommendation 8.2 suggests implementation through a Scenic SRA would also help protect scenic and visual resources. In addition, Recommendation 8.6 provides overall protection of visual resources throughout the coastal zone. Only minor text changes are proposed to Recommendation 8.2.

The policy could include an approach to resolve situations where the stringent implementation of coastal resource protection provisions would preclude a reasonable economic use of land because alternatives that would comply with resource protection standards are not feasible. In addition, as noted in the ESHA chapter of this report, Recommendation 4.10 is proposed to address the wider range of circumstances where an established methodology of balancing coastal resource protection with the constitutional rights of private property owners is anticipated to be needed.

Recommendation 8.1: Enact a Critical Viewshed Protection Policy ~~that precludes any~~ for the North Coast Area that applies to any new development within “critical viewsheds” to be designated north of Cayucos (except any location within the Urban Reserve Lines at Cambria or San Simeon Acres, or in San Simeon Village, or the existing community of Harmony) and for the Estero Area that applies to portions of the Morro corridor. The following actions should be taken to develop this policy: areas in those areas designated as critical viewsheds.

Designate “critical viewsheds” in these areas by taking into account all public vantage points from:

- State Highway Route One,
- public beaches, shoreline recreation areas and offshore state coastal waters,
- bluff overlooks, turnouts, and designated future public use areas (particularly, between the first public road and the sea outside of the designated Urban Services Lines).

Develop standards for new development within designated Critical Viewsheds that provide:

- no new development will be allowed that can be seen or that could potentially degrade public views (e.g., construction and grading that can be seen by normal, unaided vision from any public vantage points)
- mechanisms to resolve private property takings concerns where it is not feasible to comply with the critical viewshed protection policy and standards (alternatives include incorporating review procedures within the LCP as outlined in Recommendation 4.10 of this report as well as development of as a Transfer of Development Rights program.
- all new parcels must contain building sites outside the critical viewshed (i.e., at least one location per parcel that will accommodate a reasonable residential development that will be entirely hidden from public view). Residential development includes any grading needed to provide a driveway or other improvement.
- underground utility placement, restoration, public access improvements and intensification, demolitions, resubdivisions, and temporary events can be allowed within the Critical Viewshed;
- Provide strict design, density and mitigation standards that allow improvements and enhancements of recreational support facilities within existing, isolated commercial visitor serving nodes (Harmony, San Simeon, Piedras Blancas, Ragged Point).

Additional standards should be considered to guide review of development in Critical Viewsheds. For example:

- Provide for project specific visual analysis with story poles or comparable demonstration techniques, including consideration of views from state waters.
- Avoid viewshed impacts through application of sensitive design measures and siting that uses existing topography. Allow landscape screening with planting, earthen berms or other measures only where no building site can be concealed from view and where such measures would be in keeping with the character of the surrounding areas and also be consistent with all other resource and protection policies.
- Provide guidelines for preferential use of non-reflective, earth tone building materials for mitigating public view impacts;
- Provide that all exterior lighting (except traffic signals, navigational aids and similar safety devices with no reasonable alternative) shall be concealed or shielded so that no light source is directly visible from public viewing areas, and that no artificial lighting of the shoreline or sea results.
- Require utility extensions to be installed underground or otherwise concealed from public view (e.g., suspended under bridges); pursue all opportunities to remediate existing visually intrusive utility lines (e.g., undergrounding, conversion to shared poles, etc.).
- Where fencing is required, standard range fencing that does not impair public views, nor the passage of light, air, or common native wildlife is preferred. Fencing that interferes with public views should be avoided.
- Address maintenance of landscaping where landscaping could either block important public views or is specifically required to mitigate impacts to public views by screening development.
- Provide exceptions for development that requires a location in the viewshed in order to properly function and no other location is feasible for such things as necessary public facilities (including public access improvements), agricultural improvements needed to support grazing operations and crop production, and necessary resource protection and restoration projects.

~~These areas should include all of the North Coast rural areas with exceptions for the urban nodes of San Simeon Acres and Cambria.~~

In developing the Critical Viewshed Policy and standards, approaches of the Coast Highway Management Plan being developed for the Big Sur Coast in Monterey County under the National Scenic Byways program may provide possible guidance.

Recommendation 8.6: Strengthen Public Viewshed Protection Policy Language

The LCP should be amended to clarify that scenic viewsheds need to be protected from all public viewing areas, including state coastal waters. This could be accomplished through additional language in existing LCP visual policies and ordinances. For example, ~~amend~~ Policy 2 could be amended as follows:

Permitted development shall be sited so as to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas. Wherever possible, site selection for new development is to emphasize locations not visible from all major public viewing areas, including state waters corridors. In particular, new development should utilize slope created "pockets" to shield development and minimize visual intrusion.

To effectively resolve takings concerns where it is not feasible to comply with the scenic resource protection policies and standards, incorporate additional standards and review procedures within the LCP (as outlined in Recommendation 4.10 of this report) that will maximize protection of coastal resources and conform to Coastal Act Section 30010. Alternatives such as Transfer of Development Rights should also be considered.

~~Amend~~ Ordinance 23.04.021 (c)(6) could be modified as follows:

New land divisions where the only feasible building site would be on a slope or ridgetop where a building would be silhouetted against the skyline as viewed from any public viewing area, including state lands a public road shall be prohibited.

Recommendation 8.2: Create a Scenic SRA Combining Designation

All highly scenic areas in the Coastal Zone should be mapped and designated as Sensitive Coastal Resource Areas. Creation of a coastal visual SRA could incorporate and expand upon ~~these elements. At the same time, it also should be noted that the County has made improvements to inland standards that require SRA designations to address scenic and visual resources inland of the Coastal Zone. Permit requirements include~~ assessing visibility of the project, requiring a site visit as part of the application process and other standards on ridgetop development, slopes, rock outcroppings, building feature and landscaping.

Minor changes are recommended to Recommendation 8.3 to encourage improved condition compliance of visual impact mitigation.

Preliminary Recommendation 8.3: Strengthen Enforcement Program and Condition Compliance Monitoring

~~In order to ensure that conditions that are required to achieve LCP consistency with visual resource protection policies are implemented, the County should increase monitoring and condition compliance efforts. The Planning Department should Develop a project tracking system to facilitate assure that all approvals that include specific mitigation measures get assigned to a staff person responsible for their monitoring and enforcement of mitigation measures, and coordinating with other affected departments, as funding allows. Enhanced coordination between the Commission and the County on condition compliance and enforcement issues would also improve implementation of the LCP and the Commission's on-going permitting responsibilities.~~

Scenic Byway Designation

Recommendation 8.5 in the *Preliminary Report* suggested pursuing National Scenic Byway Designation for Highway One in the North Coast and Estero Planning Areas. The Commission encourages this because such designation would afford access to substantial federal financial and planning assistance for protecting the scenic resources of Highway One.

The National Scenic Byways Program, enacted in 1991 as a provision of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA), provides dedicated funding for preserving, protecting and enhancing scenic and related resources along qualifying scenic highways. Designation requires that the highway's virtues must be of regional or national significance. The segment of Highway One along the County's North Coast and through the Morros corridor, already designated as a State Scenic Highway, clearly qualifies.

Every designated highway accepted into the National Scenic Byway System is required to have a management plan. In Monterey County such a plan, known as the Coast Highway Management Plan (CHMP), is already being developed for the Big Sur Coast. A Management Plan can supplement the existing Local Coastal Program and provides for implementation of various desirable measures that could not otherwise be achieved in the land use regulatory process. Implementation of a Management Plan would require an extensive collaborative effort, but

would provide many recommendations and development standards especially applicable to Caltrans.

San Luis Obispo County would need to develop its own distinct management plan under a Scenic Byway Designation with management strategies specific to the County. The program therefore presents an opportunity for ensuring many kinds of protections. These could include such things as:

- Recognition of Highway One's primary role as a recreational access corridor, not only for reaching campgrounds, trailheads, restaurants and inns from other parts of the State, but also for the recreational experience of motoring, bicycling or hiking along this scenic highlight of California's coast. In some constrained places, the margins of the highway right-of-way may be needed to span the "missing links" in the California Coastal Trail. And, where no reasonable off-highway alternative can be found, new bridges and other structures will need to provide for safe pedestrian and bicycle passage
- Protecting the coast's world-class scenic resources through measures such as identifying threats to scenic qualities, purchase of scenic easements, undergrounding of overhead utility lines, insuring that the principles of Context Sensitive Design are applied in all new highway projects, developing new types of bridge rails with better see-through characteristics, eliminating unnecessary signage, and modification of Caltrans' customary maintenance practices.
- Preserving environmentally sensitive habitats by improving highway stability in the vicinity of particularly sensitive portions of the marine environment, avoiding reliance on shoreline armoring, removing barriers to steelhead migration, replacing riparian fills with bridges, curbing the spread of invasive exotic plant species, directing maintenance activities away from sensitive terrestrial habitats, and applying water quality Best Management Practices.
- Creating a public information system that integrates Caltrans highway and wildlife (especially elephant seal) advisories, State Park recreation opportunities, the BLM Piedras Blancas lighthouse restoration and reuse project, and National Forest and National Marine Sanctuary interpretive programs to significantly enhance the visitor's appreciation for these coastal resources.
- Creating improved vista points and interpretive displays at key locations with wildlife, scenic, historic or cultural attractions.
- Minimizing closures, and improving safety and reliability through measures such as appropriate landslide management, realignment away from shoreline erosion hazards, implementing more efficient interagency communication, and minimizing "down time" after a closure event by pre-planning for the recovery process.
- Identifying appropriate sites, techniques and priorities for disposal of landslide debris, including beach replenishment, reuse of suitable materials, and terrestrial disposal.

The Commission finds that this program designation for Highway One in San Luis Obispo County, as suggested by modified recommendation 8.5, could help to ensure ongoing protection

of scenic resources throughout the entire Central Coast region consistent with Section 30251 of the Coastal Act. Only minor text changes are suggested to Recommendations 8.3 and 8.4. These recommended actions would incorporate a variety of other implementing actions into the LCP as part of an updated comprehensive scenic resource protection policy.

Recommendation 8.5: Pursue National Scenic Byway Designation for Highway One in the Estero and North Coast Planning Areas. Consider including Highway One north of Cayucos and the scenic Morro corridor (already designated by the County as a State Scenic Highway) ~~should also be evaluated for enhanced viewshed protection for inclusion in the National Scenic Byways program. Appropriate portions of the corridor, particularly north of Cayucos, should be designated as a critical viewshed. This will allow implementation funding to be sought under the~~ and ~~implementation funding sought under the~~ Federal Highway Administration's scenic byway grants program.

The Commission notes that twenty-five million dollars per year in competitive grants are available nationwide each year through this program in addition to seed money for start-up. Additional funding is also available through ISTEA. Local or State (or non-profit or corporate) match may be required for the specifically earmarked Byway competitive grant funds. Byway grants may be used to purchase land or development rights (e.g., a critical viewshed parcel at historic Notley's Landing in Big Sur is currently being purchased with such funds, with the Coastal Conservancy providing the match).

B. Preserving Community Character

In addition to Section 30251 to protect scenic and visual resources of the coastal zone, the Coastal Act Sections 30253 and 30116 protect the community character of unique coastal towns. Permitted development is to be sited and designed to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding area and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

1) Summary of Preliminary Periodic Review Findings (Exhibit A, pp. 321-328)

The *Preliminary Report* noted that, in the urban areas of the county's coastal zone, the County has made considerable progress in protecting community character. The LCP contains a number of programs that are intended to support community objectives in implementing the LCP. These are non-regulatory, voluntary actions undertaken by the community, the County and other public agencies to address local concerns about maintaining community character. Some also address implementing LCP and Coastal Act policies to restore visually degraded areas where feasible, and/or to add to the overall attractiveness of special communities as required by LCP Policy 6. The County has made significant progress in implementing many of these programs, including the Oceano Urban Area Program, the Avila Specific Plan, the Cambria Forest Management Plan and the Overhead Utility Undergrounding Project. The *Preliminary Report* recommended continued support for these projects, specifically noting the importance to pursue continued implementation of the Utility Undergrounding Project (PR 8.10).

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The *Preliminary Report* also notes the efforts of the County to implement Design Plans as a means of carrying out policies to protect community character. The *Preliminary Report* concluded that while design plans provide greater specificity in planning and building standards, the design plans do not address specific enforceable issues and are often more open to interpretation than are specific plans.

Designations of small-scale neighborhoods or special communities are implementation actions used by the County to protect community character. The County, with a community-wide effort adopted Small Scale Neighborhood Design Standards in 1995 and modified the Small-Scale Neighborhood designations in two areas of Cayucos (Pacific Avenue and Studio Drive Neighborhoods). The LCP Amendment resulting from this effort was certified by the Commission and removed the Sensitive Resource Area (SRA) Combining Designation from this area, replacing it with Small Scale Design Neighborhood Standards.

The *Preliminary Report* concluded that the effort to further define and describe area plan standards through the pursuit of design plans is commendable, but that the implementation resulted in less permit and appeal review of new development proposals. The *Preliminary Report* recommended in PR 8.7 that the SRA Combining Designation be restored. The *Preliminary Report* also noted that Specific Plans that address zoning changes and specific uses may result in fewer appeals and streamlined development approvals and recommended in PR 8.8 that Specific Plans rather than Design Plans be pursued to ensure protection of community character. The *Preliminary Report* concluded that further evaluation of the effects of the Small-Scale Neighborhood Design designation for its ability to protect community character consistent with the Coastal Act should be undertaken.

The *Preliminary Report* also noted that another LCP implementation effort, the TDC Program in the Lodge Hill area of Cambria, was effective in preserving environmentally sensitive habitat area and reducing the number of buildable parcels in Lodge Hill. However, implementation of the program may be having adverse affects on community character within the receiver areas. The *Preliminary Report* recommended that the County should monitor the results of the program's implementation and pursue an evaluation of the effect on the neighborhood community character (PR 8.9).

And, as an important implementation tool to ensure protection of community character consistent with the Coastal Act, the *Preliminary Report* recommended that the County consider designating the community of Harmony as a Special Community of Historic Importance. Such a designation could trigger a heightened review of the type, intensity, and character of new development, to preserve the unique character of the town.

2) Comments Raised

San Luis Obispo County Response (Exhibit C)

The County disagrees with Recommendation 8.7 to restore an Small Scale Neighborhood SRA designation for Cayucos, noting that the Community Advisory Council prefers the tiered

standards and measures to streamline the permitting process which were developed as part of the process. Broad community support is critical to the successful implementation of design and community character controls.

The County disagreed with Recommendation 8.8 to complete Specific Plans rather than Design Plans because the Design Plans are intended to address the appearance of the community as an essential part of community character. The County notes that design plans implement the Small-Scale Neighborhood designations because they are adopted as LCP amendments with standards that have the status of planning area standards and should include implementation programs and schedules. In response to Recommendations 8.9 and 8.10 the County agreed to review the effects of the current TDC program on community character and to support other scenic programs such as the utility undergrounding. The County proposed modification to Recommendation 8.11 to consider Harmony's location as a commercial development rather than a community and to consider, as part of the Area Plan update, proposals to increase the size of Harmony and possible designation with an Historic Combining Designation through the zoning ordinance.

Public Comments (Exhibit D)

The Cayucos Citizens Advisory Council indicated opposition to Recommendation 8.7, commenting that the Small Scale Neighborhood SRA should not be restored to Cayucos. It noted that the benefits of allowing plot plan permits for small projects outweigh those of allowing appeals beyond the Board of Supervisors. It recommended that any projects requesting variances within the Small Scale Neighborhood should be appealable to the Commission.

3) Analysis

Upon further review, the Commission agrees with the County that Recommendation 8.7 is not needed to assure enforceability of implementation of the LCP in conformity with the Coastal Act and recommends deletion. The Commission finds that, because Small-Scale Design Neighborhood classifications are adopted through LCP amendments with standards that have the status of planning area standards and include implementation programs and schedules, that protection of community character is assured even though the developments are not appealable to the Commission. And, absent broad community support for a Small Scale Neighborhood SRA rezoning, the Design Plans offer an effective means to implement measures to protect community character consistent with the policies of the Coastal Act. However, granting of variances to design standards can undermine the implementation of standards. As further discussed in the Implementation Procedures section of this report, procedures for granting variances should be strengthened, in part to minimize actions which would adversely impact community character.

The Commission finds that, as noted in the *Preliminary Report* page 326, Specific Plans can be preferable to Design Plans. While Design Plans address primarily the appearance of communities, and not the kinds of uses, Specific Plans can be more comprehensive. They can address not only land uses and infrastructure planning but can also incorporate detailed and

enforceable design guidelines. Recommendation 8.8 would encourage Specific Plans as a preferable implementation mechanism to protect community character. Recommendations 8.9 and 8.10 would provide additional implementation mechanisms to ensure protection of community character in the implementation of the LCP. No changes are proposed to Recommendation 8.10.

As discussed in the *Preliminary Report*, Preliminary Recommendation 8.11 suggested that, because of its unique value and special character, the County should evaluate designating the town of Harmony as a “special community” and thus, by definition, a Sensitive Resource Area. The County suggests adequate protection of community character would be afforded by placing a Historic Combining Designation zoning on the area. This designation in the CZLUO 23.07.100 is applied to “recognize the importance of archaeological and historic sites, structures and areas important to local, state, or national history.” The Combining Designation may provide a mechanism to protect the community character of Harmony but it also may not afford the same level of scrutiny of new development projects as special community designation. The *Preliminary Report* Recommendation 8.11 suggested evaluating possible special community designation. Such evaluation is appropriate and could compare implementation techniques to determine which method offers the strongest protection of the character of the town consistent with Coastal Act Section 30253.

The Commission finds that Recommendations 8.7 through 8.11 as modified in this report will ensure that the LCP is implemented consistent with the scenic and visual resource policies 30253 and 30251 of the Coastal Act.

Recommendation 8.7: ~~Restore Small Scale Neighborhood SRA Designation to Cayucos.~~

Recommendation 8.11: Evaluate ~~Designation~~ of implementation techniques to protect the community character of Harmony including designation as a Special Community of Historic Importance or by applying the Historic Combining Designation.

Other minor text changes are made to clarify other recommendations:

Recommendation 8.4: Create a Funding Mechanism For An Open Space District

~~Because the most effective way to preserve visual resources is to purchase open space for public use, The County should consider creating a permanent source of funding for open space acquisitions. A 1/2 cent sales tax, bond initiative or creation of a county-wide or coastal zone open space district could provide millions of dollars annually for the purchase of property and retirement of development rights. The County should also strategically pursue grants and other outside funding supplies to augment such a funding mechanism.~~

Recommendation 8.8: Complete Specific Plans, Rather Than Design Plans

~~The effort to further define and describe area plan standards—through the pursuit of design plans is commendable. However, design plans may not go far enough to address the problematic issues in coastal communities. Although specific plans, because they deal with zoning changes and specific uses, may be more controversial and time consuming to develop, ultimately they may result in fewer appeals and streamlined development approvals.~~

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Preliminary Recommendation 8.9: Monitor and Evaluate Current TDC Program

~~Although the TDC program was originally intended to reduce build-out and preserve forest resources, to assess the effect of the current TDC program implementation on its effect on community character and its overall performance in reducing buildout and preserving forest resources, should be thoroughly assessed through enhanced evaluation and monitoring of the program's impact on neighborhoods.~~

Recommendation 8.10: Support Continued Undergrounding of Overhead Utilities

The County Undergrounding Committee should continue to receive strong support for their work, and the Coastal Commission should work with the PUC to ensure that this important program is retained. The committee should consider including the overhead utilities across and along Highway One through the Hearst Ranch on the next priority list submitted to the Board of Supervisors.

4) Conclusion

The *Preliminary Report* found that the San Luis Obispo County LCP has not been effectively implemented in conformance with Coastal Act Sections 30251 and 30253 requirements to protect scenic and visual resources of the coastal zone. (Exhibit A, findings incorporated herein by reference). After further evaluation and consideration of public comments, the Commission adopts Recommendations 8.1- 8.11 as modified as appropriate corrective actions for submission to the County pursuant to Coastal Act section 30519.5.