



Planning and Development Department
Long Range Planning Division
Transmittal Memorandum

DATE: August 26, 2010

TO: GavPAC Members

FROM: David Lackie, Supervising Planner
Brian Tetley, Planner

CC: Supervisor Doreen Farr, 3rd Supervisorial District
Vicki Parker, Deputy Director, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: GavPAC Meeting No. 17

The items listed below have been included as part of the meeting materials for GavPAC Meeting No. 17, to be held Wednesday September 1 & 15, 2010, 6:30 p.m. at the Vista de Las Cruces School auditorium:

- 1. Meeting Agenda:** Please see the attached agenda for the September 1 & 15, 2010 GavPAC meeting (Attachment 1). For details, please see discussion of agenda items below.
- 2. Draft Meeting Minutes:** Staff has provided draft meeting minutes from the August 9, 2010 GavPAC meeting for review and approval (Attachment 2).
- 3. Visual Resources Planning Deliberations:** Staff has attached the Visual Resources Working Paper as reference for the deliberations on visual resources issues (Attachment 3).
- 4. Long Term GavPAC Meeting Schedule:** The revised GavPAC long term meeting schedule (Attachment 4) is attached for your review.

In addition to this packet, please bring the GavPAC documents binder with you to the meeting.

All GavPAC materials are also available for download from the following webpage:

<http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/gaviota/gaviota.php>

Visual Resource Planning Deliberations (Agenda Item Nos. 5-8)

This meeting represents the beginning of the deliberative phase of the land use planning process for the Gaviota Coast. The deliberative phase builds upon the recent GavPAC work to identify core planning issues, and will provide an opportunity to discuss these issues in greater detail, and explore different planning options and approaches. Keep in mind that the goal in the deliberative stage is not to fully write or vet policy or ordinance language, but to develop consensus or at least refinement of GavPAC policy preferences which can be used by staff to craft draft policy statements and implementing tools. The review and revision to draft policy or ordinance language will occur later in the process after all of the deliberative meetings and a period of time for staff to develop the language. Some issue areas, like visual resources, may require more detailed analysis or contain a large work product (e.g., design guidelines) that could benefit from assistance by a subcommittee. This possibility will be considered by the committee and could result in the nomination of a subcommittee prior to moving onto the next issue area.

The first series of meetings will focus on visual resource issues with an emphasis on the County's existing policy framework and the unique challenge of applying these county-wide policies to the Gaviota Coast Plan Area. To help in this regard, the Chair of the Central County Board of Architectural Review, Ms. Bethany Clough, and Senior Planner, Mr. Allen Bell will be available at the meeting to share their substantial experience in applying existing visual resources policy to real-world projects. This process will hopefully result in a more refined list of planning issue priorities that are important to the committee and are within the reach of local land use policy.

Once priorities have been expressed, staff can help initiate the discussion on appropriate planning tools for consideration by the committee. These planning tools can run the gamut from ordinances, policy language refinements or clarifications, the application of planning overlays, new or existing, design guidelines, etc. In addition, staff's research into the approaches taken by other jurisdictions in addressing similar planning issues may be helpful.

In preparation for the upcoming meeting, please read the attached Working Paper regarding visual resources. This will provide some context for the deliberations to come. Also, please read and consider the following policy inquiries, which are meant to stimulate a discussion on some of the key visual resources policy considerations on the Gaviota Coast:

1. Visual Resource Policy 2 and Hillside and Watershed Protection Policy 1 and 2 (policies are mirrored in Coastal Land Use Plan Policy 4-3, and Policy 3-13, 3-14) are strong county-wide visual resource policies requiring...*"the height, scale, and design of structures shall be compatible with the character of the surrounding natural environment..."; "shall be subordinate in appearance to natural landforms; shall be designed to follow the natural contours of the landscape"*, and that *"...development shall minimize cut and fill...and grading site preparation kept to an absolute minimum"*.

Many site-specific factors and regional visual characteristics are taken into consideration when evaluating projects for consistency with these county-wide policies. Recent single-family development projects on the Gaviota Coast have raised thoughtful questions on how best to minimize visual resource impacts, both from physical site development and structural size and design. This case-by-case review has also helped to form emerging policy preferences on how these policies can be applied on the Gaviota Coast. Key policy questions which have been raised include:

- How should subordinate in appearance to natural landforms be defined?
- What features can a project incorporate to achieve a subordinate presence in the rural area?
- Is additional grading acceptable to minimize or eliminate visual impacts from public viewsheds even though it may alter natural landforms?
- What are appropriate forms of structural screening (e.g. landscaping, earth modification)?
- Is additional grading acceptable for dwellings? What about accessory structures and uses?
- Are additional limitations necessary in "critical public viewsheds"?

These are just a few of the emerging issues the GavPAC may wish to discuss with respect to visual resource policies applicable to development on the Gaviota Coast.

2. Some other jurisdictions (e.g. Monterey County) have structured their ordinance in a development site design hierarchy. This hierarchical structure emphasizes optimal site selection in limiting site disturbance as well as visibility. This is followed by other methods and treatments to limit visibility such as grading, landscaping, materials, color, etc. The county's Design Review process as administered through the CBAR mirrors this approach. However, this process has not been procedurally formalized in ordinance or other documentation. Consider whether this site design approach, if desired, should not be adopted as clarifying ordinance language or, alternatively, in a future design guidelines document.
3. Some terms in the policy language are not defined (e.g. subordinate) and are therefore subject to interpretation. Perhaps additional clarity can be provided by rewording and/or defining terms or including numerical standards to add certainty and consistency to the planning process. If so, would this best be implemented within the policy/ordinance language itself, or through an interpretive document, such as design guidelines or standards?
4. Other areas of the county have adopted design guidelines that are intended to guide development to achieve the level of site, architectural, and landscape design expected by the community. Consider whether a similar document could provide valuable guidance to landowners, the CBAR, and Review Authorities when considering development proposals for the Gaviota Coast.
5. Overlays that regulate the visual aspects of development are utilized in the county. On the Gaviota Coast, the View Corridor overlay exists in areas of the Coastal Zone where ocean views could be impeded from Highway 101. In other areas of the county, the D- Design Control Overlay is utilized to require Design Review for development in areas considered visually sensitive. Consider whether additional overlays may be warranted on the Gaviota Coast, especially for the inland areas within "highly scenic" public viewsheds.
6. Consider incentive options for the siting and/or limitation of development within the public viewshed. Potential limitations could include limiting the scope (square footage) or height of development (square footage) within the public viewshed. Incentives may include fewer restrictions for areas outside of the public viewshed, or consider additional permitted uses (i.e., residential second unit) if structures located out of public viewshed.

Attachments:

1. September 1 & 15, 2010 Meeting Agenda
2. August 9, 2010 Meeting Minutes
3. Working Paper No. 1: Visual Resources
4. Long-Term Meeting Schedule