



LIGHTHOUSE POINT, THE NORTHERNMOST HEADLAND OF MONTEREY BAY AS IT NOW LOOKS

Lighthouse Point is the place where Santa Cruz juts into the Pacific in a bold open promontory. It is the northernmost headland of Monterey Bay. Like the San Francisco head of the Golden Gate and some points on the Monterey peninsula, it is one of the few open headlands in any California urban area.

It is also a symbol of the dilemmas that face Californians along the state's thousand miles of coastline, where the demand for development runs head on into the need for preservation.

It would be a cruel delusion to assume that the passage of Proposition 20 last November — the Save-the-Coast initiative — will save the coast. The measure created the California Coastal Zone Commission and six regional commissions to make a plan for the coast and present it to the 1976 Legislature — and meantime to prohibit construction that would wipe out much of the remaining natural coastline while the plan is being made. But both local governments and the commissions will face agonizing perplexities and conflicts in trying to do their job. The real battles for the California coast are only beginning.

## This Land

### Superb View

For generations, Santa Cruz residents and Bay Area visitors have gone to Lighthouse Point to enjoy the superb view down Monterey bay, to fish, to bird watch, to beachcomb and in recent years to gaze at surfers in the prime wave-riding channel known as Steamer Lane. But the headland was privately owned, and five years ago the city and the county of Santa Cruz signed a joint-powers agreement to develop a convention and commercial center on the 37-acre open point.

The Chamber of Commerce and business interests were enthusiastic. A convention center on such a spectacular location would attract millions of dollars worth of new business. Santa Cruz residents who would have preferred to keep the point open saw no way of doing so and felt that semi-public use as a convention center would be better than a wall of apartments or condominiums barring the public.

Negotiations were carried on with a series of potential developers, and a major hotel chain liked the idea of locating there. But meantime the whole atmosphere began to change.

The last five years opened America's Era of the Environment — a major historic turning point. In Santa Cruz the burgeoning University of California campus brought a new environment-

# The Battle of Lighthouse Pt.

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By Harold Cilliam

conscious population to the area. Environmental-oriented candidates began to win both city and county elections. Last April 3 the three new members elected to the city council had all campaigned on environmental platforms and against the convention center. One of them was Bert Muhly, former crusading planning director and now vice mayor. He hopes to get Federal or State help to buy the point for park purposes.

A Save-Lighthouse-Point association, headed by Steve and Millie Carlson, went to work, conducted a petition campaign and collected several thousand signatures. Hundreds of people protested the convention center in hearings before the City Planning Commission.

Last month the Planning Commission voted against the latest convention proposal by 5-2. The reasoning seemed to be that the convention cen-

## 'The real battles for the California Coast are only beginning ...'

ter could go elsewhere in the city but that the open headland was unique and should remain that way. The vote was a recommendation to the City Council, which meets next Tuesday in what is expected to be a noisy showdown.

The pro-development forces are still in there fighting, and the results are unpredictable. It is true that the site is an attractive location for a convention and commercial center. It is also true that Yosemite valley would be an excellent site for a reservoir.

The prime issue: What is the best use of the land? Parks and open space, particularly along the coastline and particularly in urban areas, are rising rapidly in usage, value and public esteem. But parks cost money. And the developers and their allies are not about to surrender.

The future of Lighthouse Point, like that of

many another critical area along the California coast, is related to another central issue: To what degree can governmental agencies tell an owner what he can and cannot do with his land?

If the Santa Cruz City Council gives the developers the green light, they still have to get a permit from the regional coast commission, with possible appeal to the State commission. There is no doubt that the coastal commissions have legal power to veto construction on the coast until 1976, while the coastal plan is being prepared. But what happens after that?

A property owner cannot be denied all rights to use his land. Governmental agencies by zoning can restrict what he can do, but they cannot restrict it down to zero.

### Some Construction

The most obvious remedy would be for the state to buy such lands for parks, but the state can't buy the whole coast, or even a major share of it, for that purpose. In some cases, such as the coastal shelf north of Santa Cruz now covered with artichoke and Brussel sprout fields, the land might be zoned permanently for agriculture and the taxes adjusted to make it possible for the growers to stay in business.

But on lands not suitable for farms nor purchasable for parks some construction will doubtless have to be permitted, even though it blocks views of the ocean from Highway 1. Perhaps strict design standards can be imposed to prevent a wall of buildings. Why not houses built at least partly underground to keep a low profile?

Another possibility would be for the state to buy open coastal land and lease it back for controlled use. A notable example of this technique has been used by the Canadian capital of Ottawa, where the government owns a broad greenbelt around the city and leases much of it out for farming.

These are simply speculations, but we may hope these and other possibilities are studied in the preparation of the plan. The implications of the plan will extend far beyond the coast. Just as the San Francisco Bay Plan served as a pilot project for what might be done on the coast, so the coastal plan — whatever it turns out to be — will show what might be done on a statewide basis.

There will be ample opportunity for public participation in the preparation of the plan. So the awesome responsibility for the future of the California coast does not belong to the planners alone but to all Californians. For the sake of our descendants, may we perform it well.