

## Road Work Ahead

### East Cliff Drive Project Scheduled to Begin in September

*Traffic Patterns*  
by Marlene Michelson

**T**hey're about to start bridging the gaps on East Cliff Drive in the county's Pleasure Point district.

The county is planning to use "belt and suspenders" construction to stabilize the cliffs and road after years of erosion have abraded the bluffs. After the work is complete, the road will no longer sit on grade, but instead be supported by an independent structure much like a bridge.

Until that's done, however, you won't be able to drive on East Cliff in the Larch Lane area, although surfers will still be able to get to the beach.

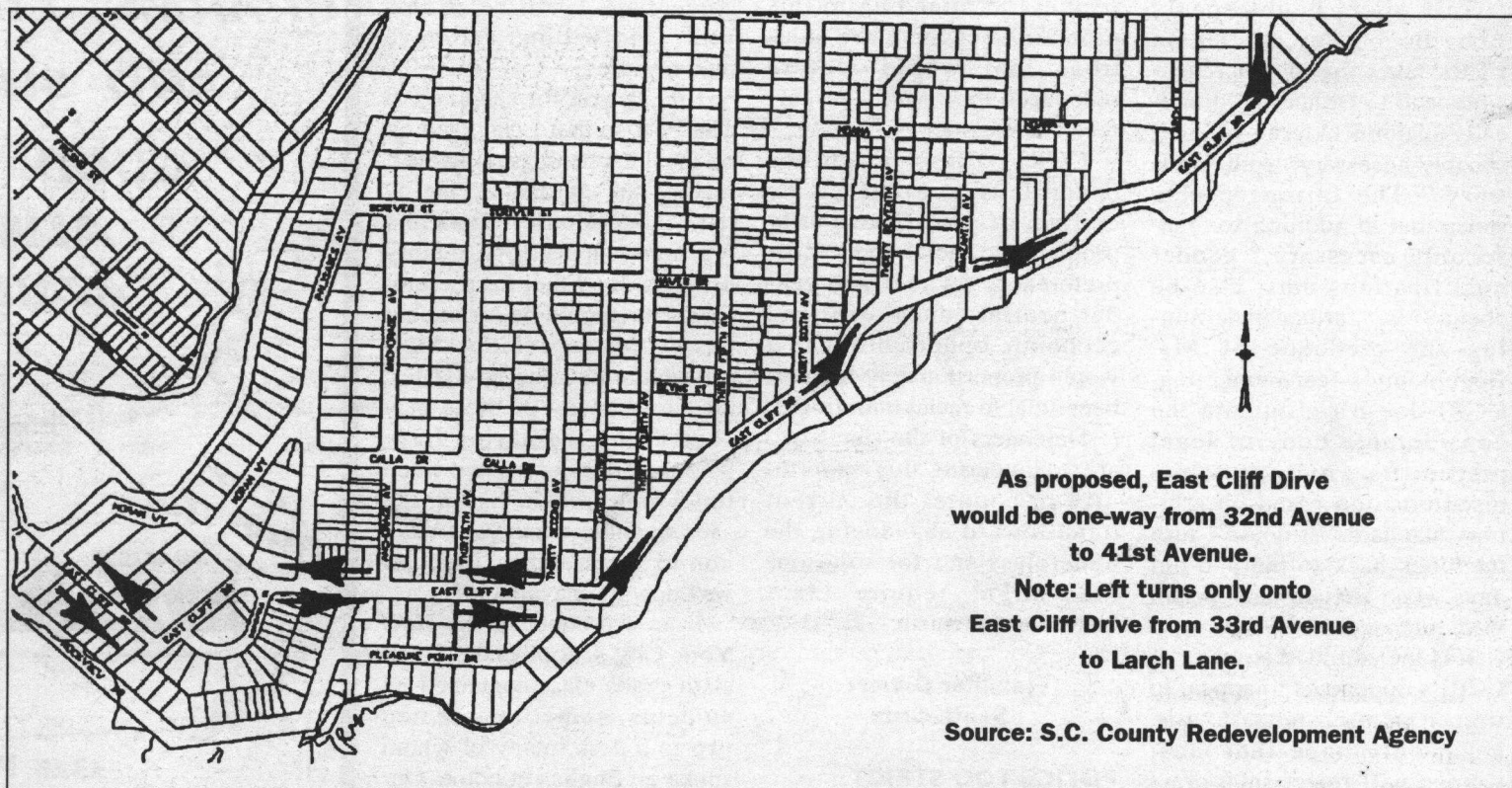
Work to stabilize the cliff and road there is due to begin in September, if all goes according to plan. It should take 100 days, according to John Presleigh, senior civil engineer for the Santa Cruz County Public Works Department. Included in his work, Presleigh said he was presently completing a traffic management plan that will probably divert traffic along Portola Drive.

Larch Lane cliff stabilization is the beginning phase of the redevelopment work scheduled to be completed along East Cliff Drive between 32nd and 41st avenues. As presently planned, the cliffs between 33rd and 38th avenues will be stabilized and a pedestrian/bike path will be improved. Also under consideration are how, or whether, to improve the county's recently-acquired small parking lot at 41st Avenue and East Cliff Drive.

It was in December of 1994 that the road was made one way to reduce the load on the cliff, Presleigh said, and to stop endangering the lives of surfers, bicyclists, residents and visitors who wanted to safely walk on, and across, the heavily used two-way street.

Then came the storms of January and March of '95 that further eroded the cliffs. Presleigh recalled that Santa Cruz got 40-plus inches of rain that year.

The county retained Moffatt & Nichols, San Francisco engi-



neers, to design some way to rebuild the East Cliff roadway. They decided to use the "belt and suspenders" road construction style.

It will basically be a bridge structure, the surface of which will be held up by steel support beams that will be implanted into the dirt below. A seawall of concrete and steel will connect on the bridge platform. The seawall will be three-feet thick, textured and colored to match the existing cliff walls. The color will be shot on right against the cliffs.

Presleigh, who has been known to surf at Pleasure Point, said the county received a petition of 100 to 200 signatures asking administrators not to take away the beach.

"This design doesn't encroach on the beach area," he added.

The road will probably never again hold two-way traffic between 32nd and 41st avenues because the weight of cars has contributed to the destruction of the cliffs, Presleigh said. There will be one travel lane, going south as

it does now, for cars. There will also be a 12 to 16-foot wide asphalt lane for bicycles and pedestrians. Presleigh said East Cliff will look like West Cliff Drive with a nice pedestrian walkway when it is completed. And area residents seem happy with the one-way traffic flow that has made East Cliff Drive more accessible for pedestrians.

The county has asked for bids for the Larch Lane part of the project and Presleigh said there's been a lot of interest

shown by contractors. The bids will be opened on August 6, according to Chris Hirsch, a project coordinator with the county's Redevelopment Agency. She said the contract will be awarded on August 20 and work should begin in September.

Presleigh is involved now in getting grants to pay for the various segments of the project. The Larch Lane/East Cliff seawall project, which he figures will run into millions of dollars,

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by Marlene Michelson

**A**lthough Jim Marshall said he appreciates the work that will be done in front of his house on East Cliff Drive, he seems to think it's too little, too late.

Marshall is president of the East Cliff Drive Property Owners Association, which includes property owners from the Santa Cruz Harbor to Capitola. The association was formed in the late 1960s, after the harbor jetty was installed. It was then that the beaches started to lose their sand, he said, thereby causing erosion along the cliffs to accelerate. Now, between 32nd and 38th avenues, there's basically no beach at all, in his opinion.

A Pleasure Point resident since 1979, Marshall said that the dredging of the harbor now replaces the sand.

"We're not in an adversarial role with the small craft harbor. They were very

### One East Cliff Homeowner Believes County Work Too Little, Too Late

timely in their dredging this year," he said.

It's simply that his organization would like to put money toward restoring the natural groins that protect the cliffs and make the beaches larger, he added.

A groin, according to the dictionary, is a strong, low seawall built at a right angle to the coast to reduce shoreline erosion, especially of a beach. The natural groins

that Marshall talks about are small jetties that encourage sand retention.

"Along the contour of the waterfront there are small protrusions, rock groins, like small jetties," Marshall explained. "They're there to retain the sand. After the harbor was built, so much sand was being retained there, that a huge proportion that normally would come down, didn't. The natural groins receded."

Marshall said that more emphasis needs to be placed on restoring the natural groins so the sand, as it comes down the coast, is retained. That way, the cliffs won't erode.

Overall, Marshall and his group are for restoring natural groins to enhance the natural trapping of sand and to reduce the wave impact, all of which would make for larger beaches.

"This notion of restoring natural groins is gaining some ground," he said. □



## PLEASURE POINT

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will be paid for through federal disaster relief monies and local redevelopment, public works and sanitation district funding.

In Pleasure Point, residents of the area have been involved in dealing with the problems. A task force that included Jim Marshall, president of the East Cliff Drive Property Owners Association, and 13 or 14 other residents of the area between 30th and 41st avenues, was put together, according to Hirsch of Redevelopment. They met with Public Works and Redevelopment representatives over their concerns about the one-way road, Hirsch said.

They felt the two-way traffic on East Cliff had not been safe for walkers and bikers and were concerned about getting the cars away from the unsafe cliff's edge, she added.

Marshall said his organization supports the Larch Lane project and anything to preserve the access for pedestrians, bicyclists and surfers. He's concerned about the cost and firmly believes the alternative of restoring of the natural groins is the way to go. (See accompanying story).

Marshall said he believes making East Cliff Drive one way is a wonderful plan and has been a popular solution to the traffic dangers of a two-way roadway.

Attorney Emily Maloney, who lives on 34th Avenue, attended some of those meetings, which she described as drawing a lot of residents and a lot of debate. The main concern was the way traffic was rerouted when streets became one way, she said.

Traffic became heavier on 30th and 38th, she added, and speed bumps were put in.

"People have become used to it now," she said.

She has had to change the way she pulls into traffic and said it's pretty hard to make a left turn onto Portola Drive. She's not sure how it will all work when the Pleasure Point Commercial Area Plan, another redevelopment project in the business district, is completed.

Noting that Pleasure Point is one of the heavier surfed areas around, she said that parking is a major problem in the neighborhood, even without the tourists.

She doesn't blame it on the surfers, but rather on the residents in single family homes who have two trucks and three cars (or the like) per house. □