



2 R R- Mid County Aptos general plan: *2.1.73* open space, flowers

"We want to sense a difference as we enter the Aptos area; that there is green space, flowers and trees that can make a real difference in the quality of our living.

"A place where living can be done in such a way that one can feel warm and comfortable and in scale as a human being, where daily life consists of being reminded of the character of the land.

"We want a community of balance and variety; a balance between residential and commercial, between buildings and open space, between automobiles

and pedestrians and between the natural and the man-made ...

"We must remember that the traditional norms that we see in other places do not apply — that seas of asphalt and monumentally-scaled buildings are not in harmony with this concept. Man's creations should complement the natural environment, maintain the aesthetic beauty of this area and protect this inheritance for future generations."

These words are from the statement of philosophical goals for the Aptos area in the report of the Aptos Area General Plan Review Committee.

They set the tone for the 35-page report prepared by the committee over a two-year period, in many meetings, often marked by vigorous controversy.

The committee's charge was to revise the Aptos Area General Plan as adopted in 1967. In a brief forward, the committee said it did not try to repeat what is in the existing plan, but to emphasize points overlooked for some reason, to eliminate some recommendations with which the committee did not agree, and "to add new considerations."

The long effort is now coming to an end. The committee's final report has been turned over to the county planning department staff for its reaction. Another meeting of the committee has been set for 7:30 p.m. Feb. 12 at the Cabrillo College board room to let the committee members react to the staff reactions.

The committee report and the staff response will be transmitted to the county planning commission, Senior Planner Edward Y. Brown said.

"We are now in the project of breaking down what they're

saying into categories," he explained. "We're classifying it as general plan modification, or policy, or zoning. We're trying to figure how to implement it, or whether it is something outside the committee's jurisdiction — such as the overflight of supersonic aircraft."

(The committee recommends banning all commercial SST flights at supersonic speeds over Santa Cruz County.)

The end result of the entire process is expected to be the adoption of the recommendations, with possible modifications.

This in turn will result in amendments to the Aptos General Plan, or a modification of the plan.

Final adoption of amendments to the plan will be by the county board of supervisors.

It's possible the commission

and board could reject the committee's report — but not likely, Brown said.

"I think it will be modified, and changed some in the process to reflect new ideas and concerns," he said.

"While I think the committee hearings were pretty successful, they weren't what you'd call really well-attended. It's hard to get the public out unless people know their own property is to be effected.

"Unfortunately, some people wait until something such as this report is before the planning commission or the board of supervisors to register complaints.

"I hope we don't have a total reanalysis of all the work we've done so far."

He commented that it had been a "fun thing" to see the com-

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mittee in operation.

The Aptos General Plan for 1990 as adopted in 1967 called for a constant program of reevaluation. The Aptos General Plan Review Committee's work carried out that intent.

"A general plan must be a living document to be worth anything," Brown said. "All too often we forget the reevaluation part of it."

The Aptos General Plan Review Committee's report is broken down into policy statements on 11 different areas of concern, including: residential, commercial, industrial, schools, parks, recreation and open space, trafficways and transportation, signs, tree preservation, environmental, Aptos Village, and effectuation.

The residential policy statement reflects the overall philosophical goal of preserving the quality of life in Aptos.

"The availability of land for development in the community should not be geared to accommodate all those who wish to come here," the statement declares. "Rather, land should be made available for development in a manner reflecting community objectives."

Appropriate zoning and other devices should be used to assure the desired densities and development patterns, it is suggested.

Some of the specific recommendations for the residential policy are:

—Rural areas should have an average parcel size of two and a half acres per dwelling unit. Planned unit developments should have a density no higher than recommended by the general plan.

—No additional land divisions should be permitted without adequate water, access without excessive grading, and a building site on a stable slope of less than 30 per cent not located within an earthquake fault zone.

—Subdivision developers should be responsible for providing an adequate water supply, sewage disposal and fire protection.

—All new urban developments should be contiguous to existing developments unless separated by functional open space. Agricultural lands shall be preserved as open space within the urban development pattern.

—Privacy of existing homes should be assured in plans for new residential units. Rights of

residents to view and sunlight should be protected.

The commercial policy statement urges that commercial development in the Aptos area should reflect a desire to remain essentially a residential community. Zoning should provide for retail and service commercial uses that are needed on a day-to-day basis, not for meeting regional shopping needs, it is suggested.

The industrial policy statement suggests that some places of employment should be available for Aptos residents in order to maintain a balanced community. But the committee wanted it limited to uses appropriate under the research and development district or in areas set aside for office use.

The committee would like to see the surrounding areas now in agriculture kept in that use.

"With proper land management procedures," it declares, "...Pleasant Day, Bear, Long and Deer Valleys can continue to the valuable productive agricultural areas. Therefore the majority of the land in those valleys should remain in agricultural use and any building should be relegated to the boundaries around them."

The committee suggests that to keep these areas permanently in agriculture, the land should either be bought by the county and leased back to the farmers, or the development rights should be purchased from the farmers.

Multi-purpose use of schools is urged. It is proposed that all subdivisions of 10 units or more should contribute land to the school district on the basis of .018 acres of land per dwelling unit, or the equivalent in cash.

In the open space policy statement, the committee proposes that the Aptos Creek wetland and Aptos Creek riparian corridors are the most critical areas for immediate protection.

It is suggested that all land designated by developers for open space should have a permanent, non-revocable dedication of that land to the public or to the county so that nothing can ever be built on it.

Neighborhood parks should be combined with schools, said the committee, and should be within a reasonable walking distance for mothers with pre-school children.

The Porter-Senson property in Seacliff is seen as an ideal site for a community educational park

something like Asilomar in Pacific Grove.

A need is seen to provide some trailways exclusively for one type of use because of conflicts between motorcycles and other users, or between horses and motorized traffic.

"One of the most scenic natural routes is along the coastal cliffs," it is noted. "This route, in combination with loop trails which might follow up the coastal arroyos or ridge lines and connecting with beaches at intervals along the coast, would provide a variety of interest for hikers and horse riders and an alternative for roadside travel."

Walking paths throughout the planning area are endorsed. They should be separated from any automobile traffic, said the committee.

"Some that are particularly needed at this time are between Aptos Village and the Rancho del Mar Shopping center, along Spreckels Drive and Treasure Island Drive and generally in the vicinity of schools," it is suggested.

Another suggestion is a trail from Forest of Nicene Marks State Park along Aptos Creek to Monterey Bay.

So that the public can use land adjacent to waterways and the ocean, it is proposed that no building shall be closer than 100 feet to any waterway, no building shall be permitted on the face of bluffs, and coastal bluff-top development shall have a setback equal to cliff height.

A comprehensive system of in-county public transportation is urged. Other proposals include freeway screening, Soquel Drive landscaping, landscaped parkways for all major four-lane highways, and a system of pedestrianways and bicycle paths separated from the road system.

Signs were quite important to the committee. It felt that the "rustic quality" of Aptos could best be achieved by signs using natural wood materials or other materials which have the same effect.

It was suggested that lettering in the Village area might carry out the 1890s theme, while in other areas of Aptos a ranch-modern theme would be appropriate.

One of the most thoroughly discussed portions of the report was the tree preservation policy statement. As finally approved it endorses the proposed county ordinance on tree preservation with these exceptions:

—No hardwood tree over 18 inches in circumference measured 24 inches above ground level can be removed without approval.

—No softwood tree over 30 inches in circumference measured 24 inches above ground level shall be removed without approval.

Certain areas are suggested in which these limitations shall apply. They include areas near the coast, rivers and year-round streams, in front-yard setback areas, or any place else designated by the board of supervisors.

Aptos Village, says the com-

mittee report, should be the focal point of the community, and its "rustic village atmosphere" should be preserved and enhanced.

The amenities suggested for the village in the 1967 general plan, including an amphitheater and playfield, are highly recommended. An attached map proposes one possibility for a generous mall area, with the twice-daily train "treated as a delightful anachronism."

The committee had some specific suggestions as to how all this should be put into effect. One was to continue the committee as a "sounding board" to review and comment on proposed development in the Aptos area before it reaches public hearing stage.

Also proposed is an architectural and site review commission, something like that proposed for the city of Santa Cruz.

For acquiring parks, trails and open space, the committee suggests the county give con-

sideration to establishing a land bank.

"For example," it is suggested, "property that is about to be developed for a potentially detrimental use might be acquired by the county, held in a land bank and therefore in open space until such time as demonstrably advantageous use for the public materializes."

It is noted that the land bank procedure has been used quite successfully in several European countries.

A bond issue is proposed to purchase lands needed for permanent open space.

The county's open space easement program is praised as a way to provide public recreational opportunities without public land purchase. In exchange for a reduction in property taxes, the landowner agrees to keep his land in open space.

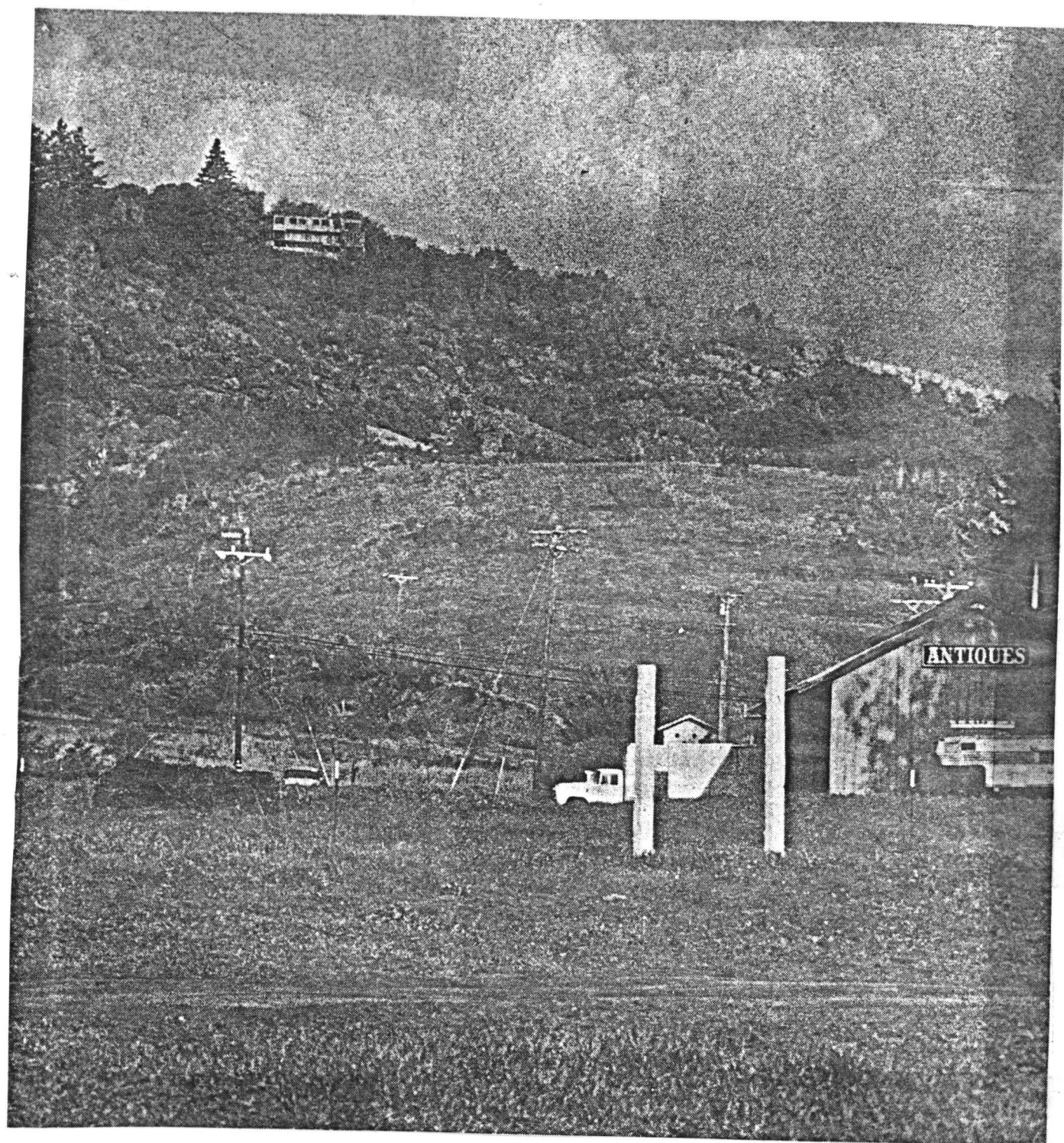
Finally, the committee takes a dim view of one of the planning department's favorite devices — the use of U-BS zoning. By means

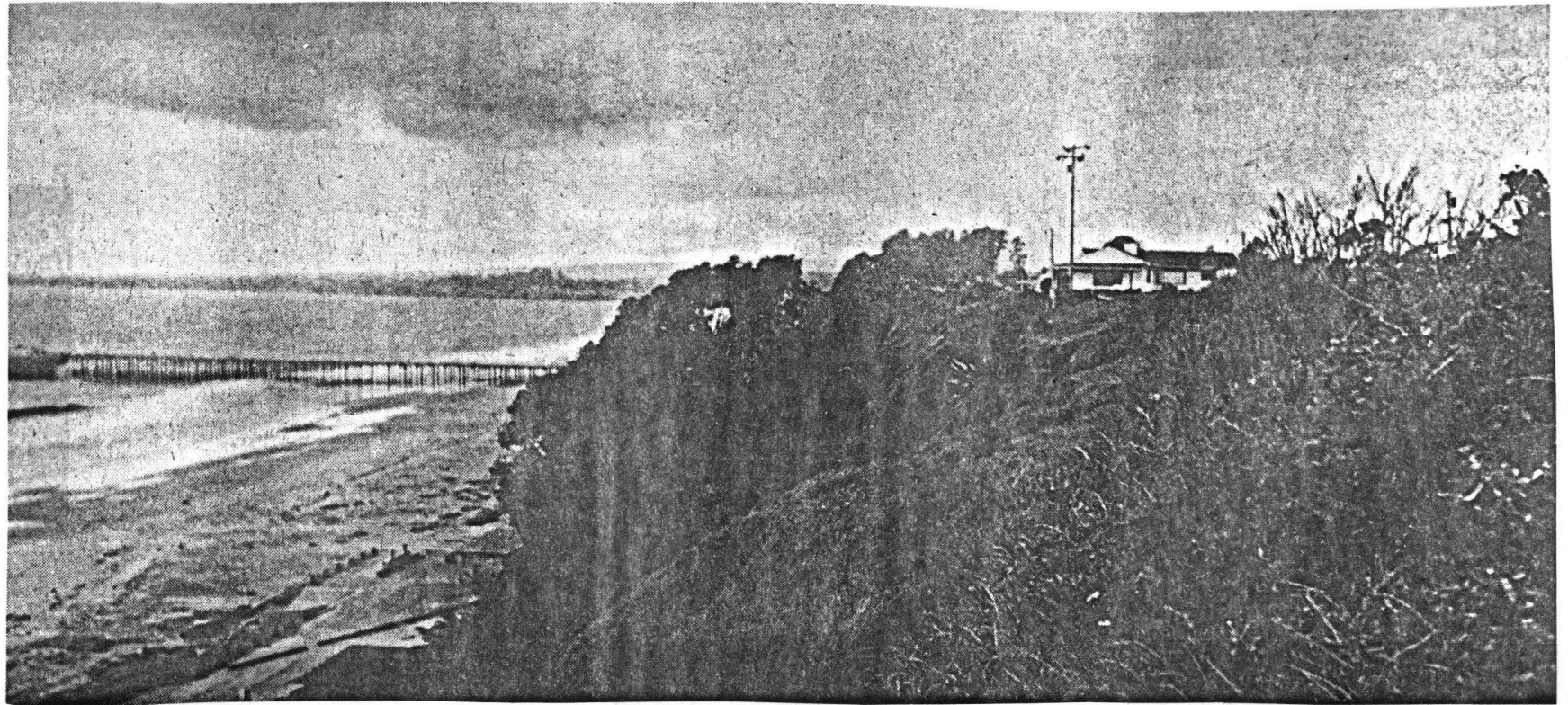
of this zoning, the land is placed in an "unclassified" category with a certain building site minimum, usually rather large. This permits the planning commission and supervisors to review proposed uses and place controls on them.

"To many people," the committee notes, "it seems to leave the field wide open to whatever the political philosophy of the day might be as reflected in the decisions of the board of supervisors and their appointees, the planning commission ... Zoning should go with the land and not with political whim."

The committee was headed by James Ellmore of Aptos, a La Selva Beach architect.

Members he has credited with participating in formation of the policy statements are: Bob Harry, Dr. John King, John Fitzgerald, James Fenton, the late Mrs. Earl Webster, O'Brien Riordan, Molly Gorch, Mrs. Harrison Smith, Dan Neilson, Robert Marani, William Potter, Paul Moser, and Jeanne Dawson, who acted as secretary.





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