

EAST CLIFF DRIVE

Twin Lakes project to take back public land

Makeover includes reclaiming
public right-of-way in front
of beachfront homes

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LIVE OAK — A small revolution in local land-use policy is set to occur on a strip of beachfront properties near Twin Lakes State Beach.

The state Coastal Commission could soon review a long-sought makeover of a ramshackle beachfront near the entrance to the harbor, part of an area that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. What makes the project unusual is that in widening East Cliff Drive, the county is taking back land that has long appeared to belong to the million-dollar homes there gazing out upon the sea.

"I think we've worked through all of the issues," Supervisor Neal Coonerty said. "We've gone house to house. I think everyone now is, maybe not happy, but satisfied that they've been treated in a fair way."

The project has been on the drawing board since at least the 1990s, and the end of redevelopment has helped push it forward. That has given local homeowners time to come to grips with the fact that as part of the county's makeover, their properties are going to take a haircut.

"Not having lived here, I just never got into it very deeply," said Jim Sorensen, a retiree whose family owns two properties abutting East Cliff

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LAND

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Drive, one of which serves as a weekend getaway. "I always knew pretty well where our property line was."

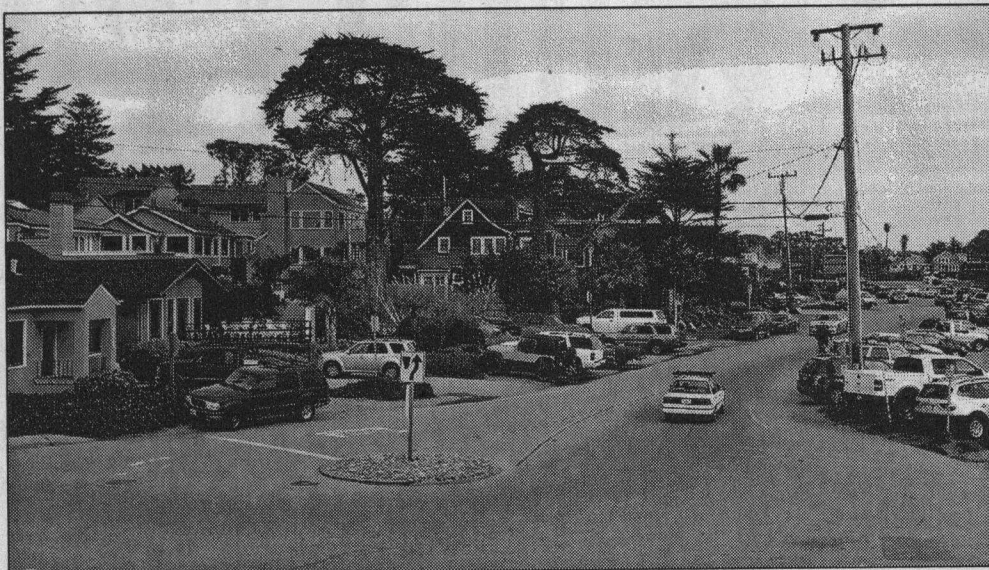
Running along East Cliff between Fifth and Seventh avenues, the \$4.5 million Twin Lakes project will add parking and bike and pedestrian paths, and remake a haphazard intersection of city and sand.

That's been an ongoing theme throughout Live Oak in recent years, as the county armored much of the Pleasure Point bluffs and is recasting East Cliff Drive between 32nd and 41st avenues.

But the Twin Lakes project raises another issue as well — homes spilling into public right-of-way is common throughout the area.

"For years, we have been concerned about the public right-of-way out there and how it's been used for private development," said Susan Craig, a Coastal Commission planner based in Santa Cruz.

Years ago, a county study noted that the average right-of-way through Live Oak was 49 feet. However, the actual average width of roads and sidewalks was 34 feet, mean-



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When the county finally does a makeover of the Twin Lakes beachfront, they will be reclaiming the front yards of many of the East Cliff Drive homes between Fifth and Seventh avenues.

ing each residence impinges, on average, upon 7.5 feet of public byways.

With a standing policy of increasing public access to the coast, the Coastal Commission has long had its eye on the problem. If approved, the Twin Lakes project would represent a high-profile affirmation of that policy.

The encroachments have had a profound impact on the character of the neighborhood. With the streets narrowed, parking is at a premium and some neigh-

bors even post unofficial "No Parking" signs — something the Coastal Commission also frowns upon. The scarcity also led to a permit parking program during summer months.

Twin Lakes near the harbor is a particularly egregious example of that encroachment, and in some places dozens of feet of public property will be reclaimed. A century ago, a trolley ran through the area, and due to that the public thoroughfare is much wider there than in other parts of the

neighborhood.

Consequently, the property line can run very close to homes that appear to have deep yards. Betsey Lynberg, the county's assistant director of public works, said neighbors now understand the line dividing their land and the public's.

"They don't necessarily like where it is, but they know where it is," Lynberg said.

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