

Survey shows Rio residents cool to change

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The results of an opinion survey of Rio del Mar residents are trickling in, and early tabulation shows a strong sentiment to keep things pretty much as they are in the hilly seaside neighborhood.

Ray Garcia, who is tabulating the survey, told its sponsors, members of the Rio del Mar Improvement Association, yesterday that he had counted 211 of the 414 survey forms that had been returned. Some 3,700 were mailed out to area residents, he said.

"This will be very meaningful when we are dealing with Mrs. Levy and the planning department," Garcia told the association's board of directors at its monthly meeting at the Aptos Library.

The survey asked residents a series of questions about housing and commercial development, traffic control, sidewalks and bike lanes, land use and growth.

Respondents were heavily in favor of controlling residential growth, Garcia said, with 177 voting yes and 28 voting no. They also favored design review about three to one.

The idea of more commercial development at the Deer Park shopping center was met with strong disapproval, Garcia said, although the vote was too close to call on the notion of retail development in Seascape.

The golf lodge complex proposed by the Aptos Seascape Corporation is finding strong disfavor, he said, with 168 no to 31 yes votes. Seascape has presented plans for a motor inn near its golf course.

Automobile, bicycle and pedestrian traffic was also addressed in the survey.

"They feel there is a need for footpaths and pullouts for buses," Garcia told the board. He said there was support for the idea of footpaths along Rio del Mar Boulevard and Clubhouse Drive and a bicycle lane along Rio del Mar Boulevard. "But they don't want them anywhere else," he said.

Garcia said respondents were also opposed to concrete sidewalks, with asphalt seeming less offensive.

The vote was too close to call on the subject of parking for a beach bus shuttle, Garcia said, but support was strong for some kind of traffic control, such as four-way stop signs at Clubhouse Drive and Sumner Street and perhaps more stop signs along Rio del Mar Boulevard. Limiting overnight parking is finding support, he said, but widening any roads was clearly being rejected.

Although there is support for some footpaths, road improvement and bike lanes, when it comes to paying for them, Garcia said, the people responding to the survey were unenthusiastic. Paying for building footpaths, upgrading county roads, widening roads or landscaping has little support, he said.

On the subject of land use, a proposal to build housing for the elderly on the 63-acre Polo Grounds has strong support, Garcia said, with 113 saying they are in favor of that use and 20 opposed. Using that land for a regional park, which is what the county has in mind, got 33 votes in favor and 41 against it so far.

Garcia also said that 150 of the 211 he had counted said that further growth in Seascape should be prevented.

Comments on the survey from respondents have been mostly positive, Garcia said, with one person sending 14 typewritten pages of commentary. Another said that the Rio del Mar Improvement Association directors were "elitists" who ought to "go fishing" rather than have meetings, Garcia said.

Completed results of the survey will be distributed and discussed at the combined annual meeting of the Rio del Mar and Seacliff improvement associations Oct. 19.

These preliminary tabulations, Garcia said, are "pretty much indicative of what the total survey will say."

In other business yesterday, the Rio board discussed plans for its annual meeting. Board president George Truckell said Assemblyman Sam Farr would be unable to attend but would send his aide, Fred Keeley, who will talk about area beaches which are under state jurisdiction. County Supervisor Robley Levy also won't attend, Truckell said, and the suggestion was made to invite Ben Angove, director of the county parks department, in her stead.

Truckell also announced that a study session on county parks was scheduled for Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. with the county Planning Commission at the government center in Santa Cruz.