DRAFT For Discussion PCPB

Peninsula Community Planning Board
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Date: September 4, 2025

To: Councilmember Dr. Jennifer Campbell and Councilmembers

Subject: Save Sunset Cliffs- PCPB opposes the conversion of Sunset Cliffs Blvd. to One-lane and the continued proposed erosion of Sunset Cliffs.

The Peninsula Community Planning Board (PCPB) supports the City of San Diego's proactive efforts to address climate change and the potential impacts of sea-level rise. We recognize the Coastal Resilience Master Plan efforts to protect upland infrastructure from sea level rise. The Planning Department is recommending that three projects located at Ocean Beach, Mission Beach, and Sunset Cliffs, move forward for design consideration and incorporation into the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

However, the PCPB strongly opposes the Sunset Cliffs proposed Nature Based Solution or bluff retreat that proposes to reconfigure Sunset Cliffs Boulevard from a two-lane, north-south major collector road to a single southbound lane. Redirecting traffic through local residential streets (Cordova Street and Cornish Drive|), is not a viable solution for the community and could lead to increased traffic safety risks and disruption to our neighborhood.

Despite multiple requests for a community stakeholder meeting and engagement with the Point Loma community, our requests have been ignored or denied. The proposed Nature Based Solution will not provide the physical protection necessary to address the ongoing erosion. The gradual erosion of the cliffs will continue to damage public infrastructure, compromise access to recreational areas, and pose significant public safety concerns.

While the Coastal Resilience Master Plan emphasizes Nature Based Solutions, Sunset Cliffs' outer reefs provide a natural barrier that already serves as the first line of defense against strong waves and erosion. The PCPB advocates for a balanced approach—combining nature-based solutions with traditional coastal engineering methods. This balanced approach could complement the shoreline protection infrastructure built in the 1970s and 1980s, which has effectively stabilized the Cliff shoreline for over 50 years.

We respectfully request that the City initiate a new CIP project that integrates both nature-based solutions and engineered infrastructure to protect public rights-of-way, prevent cliff erosion, and preserve the two-lane configuration of Sunset Cliffs Boulevard. A comprehensive review of alternatives, with meaningful community engagement, can result in a project that both protects the community and enhances recreational opportunities along Sunset Cliffs Linear Park.

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Background

In 1973, a collaborative effort with the Army Corps of Engineers successfully completed shoreline and cliff protection that included rock revetment south of Osprey Street. This project stabilized the cliffs and effectively mitigated shoreline erosion. Over the past 50 years, however, stormwater runoff along with damaged stormwater facilities has contributed to gradual erosion of the upper bluffs. Wave splash and wave run-up have also contributed to cliff erosion.

To the north of Osprey Street, concrete splash walls, contouring the natural terrain, were used to protect the upper cliff from wave splash, wind, and rain erosion. In areas where the cliff was eroding due to undermining of lower soils, economically feasible reinforced earth walls with textured panels were installed with strong community support. This type of an approach for the area South of Osprey Street will protect Sunset Cliffs and avoid the need for a single lane conversion of Sunset Cliffs Blvd.

A Balanced Approach

The PCPB believes that the integration of traditional coastal engineering solutions—such as splash walls and reinforced earth walls as installed north of Osprey Street—can create a long-term, sustainable solution that stabilizes the cliffs, protects public access, and enhances recreational opportunities. While several coastal cities, including Oceanside, are investing in artificial reefs to protect their shorelines, Sunset Cliffs from Pescadero Street to south of Ladera Street benefits from a natural reef system that already protects the area from strong waves and storm surges.

We propose that a balanced combination of nature-based and engineered solutions, which complement and build upon the successful protections installed in the 1970s, would be the most cost-effective and aesthetically pleasing way to stabilize the Sunset Cliffs shoreline for the long term.

Protect Sunset Cliffs

The Programmatic EIR ranks the vulnerability of sea level rise for the six studied projects extending from La Jolla to Sunset Cliffs. Sunset Cliffs ranks the lowest in terms of Sea Level Rise vulnerability (see Attachment). As acknowledged in the City's own Study, Sea Level Rise is expected to have minimal impact on erosion along Sunset Cliffs. Despite this, the City's recommendation to do nothing and let the cliffs retreat will lead to continued erosion of Sunset Cliffs, negatively affecting public infrastructure and public access. The study itself confirms, the Sunset Cliffs project is not well-suited for Nature Based Solutions as a means to protect Sunset Cliffs.

Lack of Local Stakeholder Input and Transparency

The proposed natural-based improvement project will impact the community from Adiar Street to Ladera Street, and includes plans to reconfigure Sunset Cliffs Blvd. and existing parking. The reconfiguration, will reduce Sunset Cliffs Blvd. from a two lane north-south collector to one southbound lane, and redirect traffic onto local neighborhood streets. including Cordova Street and Cornish Drive.

Despite our repeated requests as "Key Stakeholders" to engage in a presentation with the Planning Department, our requests have either been ignored or denied. The community is deeply concerned about the lack of transparency and the potential for significant negative impacts without proper local engagement and input.

Recommendation

The PCPB strongly opposes the proposed Nature Based Solution and urges the City to work with the community to identify a balanced approach that integrates both natural and traditional coastal engineered infrastructure. We ask that the City initiate a new CIP project that preserves the two-lane configuration of Sunset Cliffs Boulevard, protects public access, and ensures the long-term stability of the cliffs.

We believe that with a comprehensive review of alternatives and meaningful community engagement, we can develop a project that not only addresses the on-going erosion of Sunset Cliffs, but also serves the interests of the general public, visitors, and Point Loma community.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We look forward to a productive dialogue and collaboration on this important issue.

This letter was by the Peninsula Community Board by a X-X vote.

PCPB Chair

Eric Law

Attachment: Sea-Level Rise vulnerability Ranking

Table 3-2. Multi-Criteria Analysis of Potential Pilot Project Sites – Coastal Resilience Master Plan Phase 1: Prioritizing Nature-Based Solutions Pilot Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Report, November 2024

Site	COC	City Ownership	Ease of Implementation	MHPA	SLR Vulnerability and Need	NBS Feasibility	Total
Ocean Beach – Dog Beach	5	5	4	5	5	4	28
Ocean Beach – Pier	5	5	5	3	4	5	27
Mission Beach	3.5	5	4	3	4	5	24.5
Pacific Beach – Tourmaline Surf Park	2	5	5	3	4	5	24
La Jolla Shores	0	5	4	3	5	4	21
Sunset Cliffs	0	5	3	3	2	4	17