



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

TO: City Council

DATE: April 27, 2026

DEPARTMENT: Community Development

PREPARED BY: Marie Jones Consulting

PRESENTER: Marie Jones

AGENDA TITLE: Receive Report and Provide Direction Regarding Various Options to Improve Community Awareness of Large Pending Development Projects in Fort Bragg

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive report and provide direction regarding various options to improve community awareness of large pending development projects in Fort Bragg, including:

1. Require a project sign on sites proposed for new larger development projects in both the coastal and inland zones; and or
 2. Revise the design review process to require story polls for new larger development projects throughout the city (coastal and inland zone); and/or
 3. Revise Coastal General Plan Map CD-1 to include more areas within the coastal zone where a visual resources study is required as part of the Coastal Development Permit process.
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BACKGROUND

In 2024 and 2025, the City Council and Planning Commission held a total of five public hearings to consider approval of an 83-unit multifamily project with 1,000 sf of retail space and 2,450 sf of visitor serving accommodations at 1151 south main street. The project was appealed twice to the Coastal Commission by neighbors and Paul Clark. As a result of the appeal, Coastal Commission staff recommended minor modifications to the proposed project to include four small visitor-serving uses and a public access route through the site. The project was subsequently modified to include additional visitor serving uses and the public access route through the site. Subsequently the Planning Commission recommended approval and City Council approved the project again. On the second appeal by the neighbors, the Coastal Commission denied the appeal and affirmed the approvals of all permits for the project. This project is currently under CEQA litigation and a Judgment by the court is anticipated for May, 2026.

As a result of this project, some community members have requested that the City change its zoning code to include more methods to increase community awareness of a proposed

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8B

development project prior to the public hearing.

As background, currently both zoning codes require the following notice process for projects that are scheduled for a public hearing for any of the following permits: Coastal Development Permit, Use Permit, Design Review Permit, Variance, Rezoning, and/or Subdivision.

1. The applicant must post an on-site 8X11 Notice of Pending Permit when an application is first submitted to the City. This notice happens at the very beginning application stage for a project.
2. At least ten days before the public hearing the following notices are distributed:
 - a. Public Hearing Notice is mailed to all property owners within 300 feet and all residents within 100 feet of a proposed project.
 - b. A Public Hearing Notice is posted on site, on the City's website, and at the Notice Kiosk by City Hall.
 - c. A Public Hearing Notice is published in the paper.
 - d. A Notice of the Public Hearing is emailed to all individuals who have requested such notification as well as to all people who have signed up for the "notify me" option on the City's website.

ANALYSIS

The Community Development Committee discussed this item at its March 2, 2026 and its April 15, 2026 CDC meetings. During the CDC meetings, the Community Development Committee recommended the following approach:

1. **Ministerial Projects.** The City should not require a project sign or story poles for any project which is ministerial (permitted by right and requiring only a building permit) regardless of its size, as there is no public hearing ministerial projects and the City has no ability to deny them so long as they comply with the zoning ordinance.
2. **Project Sign or Banner.** For any new or remodel commercial or multifamily project of more than 24 feet in height or a building of more than 5,000 sf of floor area, the City should require the placement of a 3' by 4' project sign or banner within two weeks of application submittal, as follows:
 - a. The project sign/banner shall include the project name, project description, project elevation (front view), project zoning, whether the project is in the Coastal Zone or the Inland Zone, requested permits (Use Permit, Design Review, Variance, etc.), and CEQA status (exempt, MND, EIR). The applicant shall be required to install this sign within two weeks of the application submittal after the City confirms the accuracy of the required sign components. Occasionally the applicant may be required to update/change the project for it to comply with the City's zoning ordinance. The sign shall also include the caveat "this project is currently under review by the City of Fort Bragg and components of this project description may change during that review process. For up-to-date plans please see the City's website."

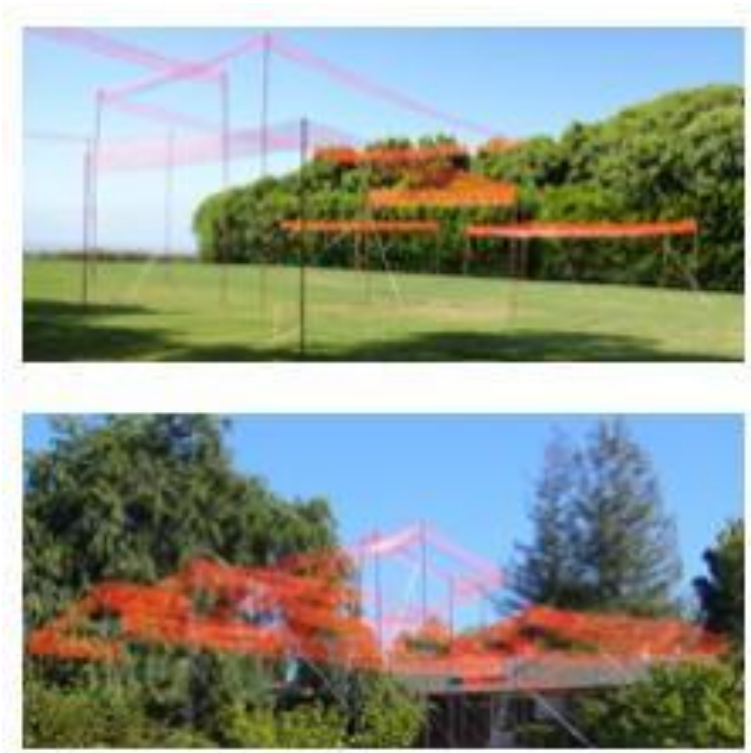
- b. The project sign/banner shall be posted on an existing structure or temporary posts that do not require on-site digging, such that the top of the project sign is posted at 6' feet.
- c. The project sign/banner shall be visible and adjacent to the sidewalk or road.
- d. The project sign/banner shall be sighted so that it does not block traffic sightlines (e.g. not within 20 feet of a driveway, road or street intersection) or otherwise result in any dangerous or unsafe condition.



Examples of development signs from other communities.

3. **Project description on the City's website.** The applicant shall provide a PDF 11X17 of the project sign to the City for posting on the City's website. Any updates to the project description shall also be posted on the City's website.
4. **Story Poles.** Currently, story poles are only required in Fort Bragg for a visual resource analysis under the Coastal Act. They are not required in the inland portion of the City or in the Coastal Zone where visual resources are not a concern (as defined by the City's General Plan). Story poles are required to create an accurate visual representation of the project for the Visual Analysis of the project. The cost of constructing story poles is nominal and would typically not be more than \$2,000 depending on the size and complexity of the buildings. The Community Development Committee was split on whether or not story poles should be required in all instances. The CDC agreed that story poles should be required for any commercial project of more than 24 feet in height or a building of more than 5,000 sf in both the inland and coastal zone. Story poles would be required as part of the Design Review process and noticing process for these large commercial projects. The CDC decided not to require story poles for multifamily projects, because they are of limited value for the design review process for multifamily projects as subjective opinions such as that a project is "too tall" or "too large" are not permissible under State law for Design Review of multifamily projects. Story pole requirements should include the following:
 - a. Story poles shall illustrate the corners of each proposed structure.
 - b. Story poles shall illustrate the roof line of each proposed structure.

- c. Story poles should not require digging or permanent placement of posts, due to conflicts with the Coastal Act.
- d. Story poles should be placed a safe distance from power lines, other utilities and hazards (driveways, existing trees, etc.). If such placement is not feasible than story poles should not be required for the areas of the site with safety concerns, as story poles would not be attached to the ground and could be knocked over in high winds.
- e. Story poles are not required, where they are infeasible. For example, if an existing building which is slated for demolition prohibits the installation of story poles.
- f. Story poles shall be placed four weeks before after the application submittal and removed immediately after the public hearing.
- g. Story poles would be part of Design Review; such a change would be easier to implement in both the Inland and Coastal Zone.



Visual Resource Analysis. Finally, CDC recommended that the City Council should not expand the areas that require a Visual Resource analysis as part of the Coastal Development Permit Process. This process is described below.

Visual resources are one of 5 coastal resources which are protected by the Coastal Act, other resources include: archaeological and cultural resources, biological and wetland resources, coastal dependent uses and public access.

An expansion of the area for which a visual resource analysis is required would make the development of some areas more difficult and in some cases reduce development potential of some parcels. If the City Council decides to amend Map CD-1, the City would need to prepare a comprehensive visual resource study or the added parcels as part of an LCP amendment to the Coastal Commission. The visual resource analysis would provide the legal basis to make changes to Map CD-1 and thereby eliminate some property rights that currently exist. The City will need to secure the services of an architectural or planning firm to complete a comprehensive visual analysis.

Currently the Coastal General Plan includes the following key visual analysis policy:

Policy CD-1.3: Visual Analysis Required. A Visual Analysis shall be required for all development located in areas designated "Potential Scenic Views Toward the Ocean or the Noyo River" on Map CD-1 except development listed below.

Map CD-1 of the Coastal General Plan is the key determinant of whether or not a visual analysis is required by the Coastal General Plan. If a parcel is identified in Map CD-1 as having "potential scenic views to the ocean" a visual analysis is required.

Additionally, under the CDP application requirements (17.71.045 D) of the CLUDC, Visual Analysis are only required if a parcel is designated as potentially scenic in Map CD-1 as follows:

9. Visual Analysis. For applications for development located in areas designated "Potential Scenic Views Toward the Ocean or the Noyo River" on Map CD-1 of the Coastal General Plan (except development listed in subsection (B) of Policy CD-1.3 of the Coastal General Plan), a visual analysis as required by Chapter 17.50.070 of this Development Code.

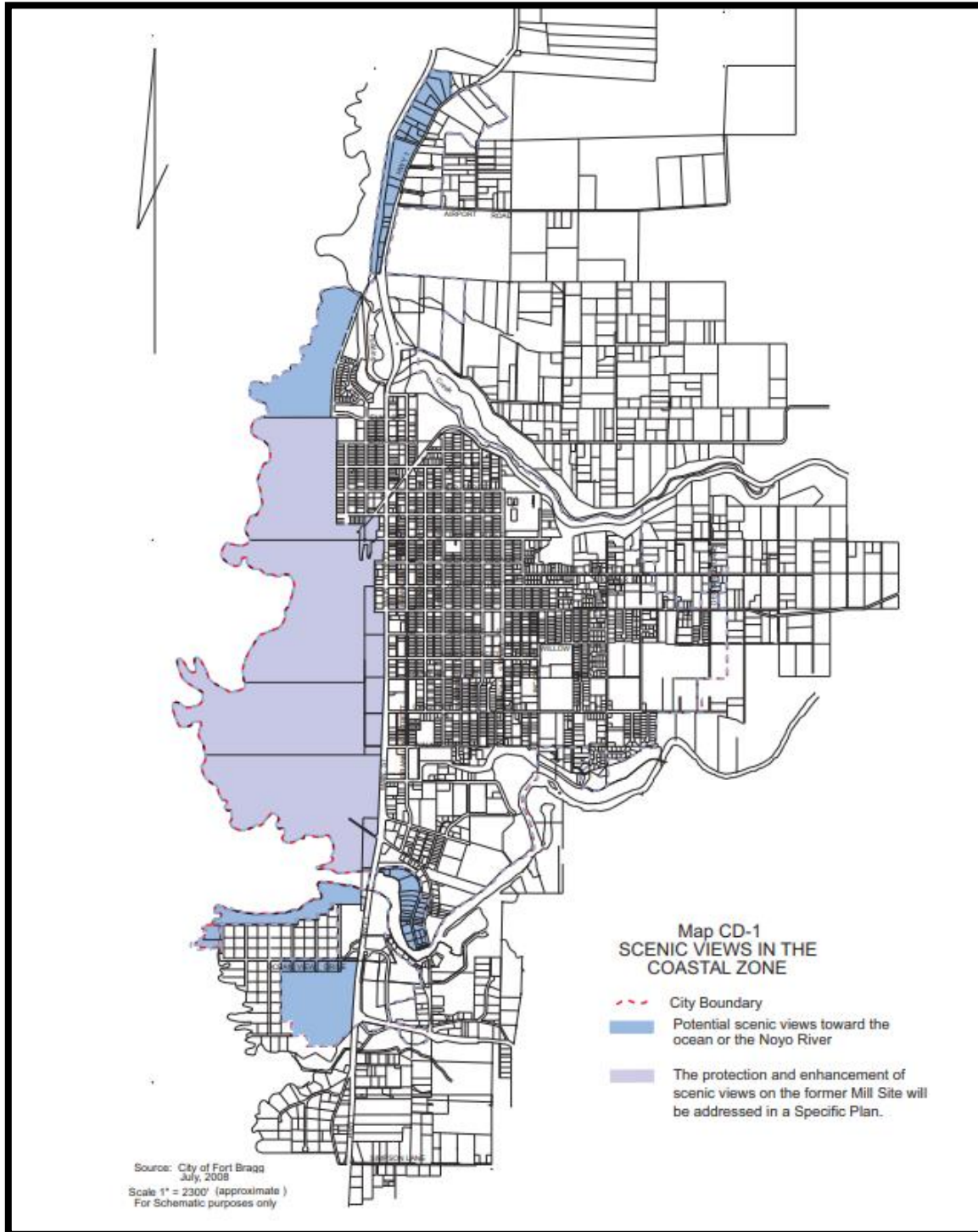
As illustrated in Map CD-1 below, Visual Resource Analysis and story poles are required for development on parcels:

- On the Noyo River flats (although weirdly most of the indicated parcels are not within City limits),
- South of Ocean Drive, west of highway 1, and
- North of Pudding Creek, west of highway 1.

The following locations are not included on Map CD-1:

- Parcels located east of Highway 1 and between the Noyo River and highway 20,
- Parcels located to the west of Highway 1, south of the Noyo River Bridge and north of Ocean Drive, and
- All parcels west of highway 1 between Glass Beach Drive and Pudding Creek.

Therefore, If City Council decides to provide direction to expand the number of parcels which require a visual resource analysis, adding some of the above locations to Map CD-1 would be one place to start.



The following visual resource policies apply to development north of Pudding Creek.

Policy CD-1.12 Maintain Unobstructed Views of the Ocean: Require new development north of Pudding Creek to leave unblocked views to the ocean from Highway One.

Policy CD-1.13: Retain Views North of Pudding Creek. New development north of Pudding Creek and west of Main Street on parcels with total frontage of more than 135 feet, on either the Haul Road or Main Street as determined by the Planning Commission, shall be required to leave a minimum of 30 percent of the project's total parcel frontage free of view-blocking development. The area free of view-blocking development shall not include narrow passageways between buildings on the site and shall be concentrated.

Policy CD-1.14 All new development (including decks and balconies) north of Pudding Creek shall be set back at least 30 feet from the edge of the Old Haul Road and shall be consistent with all other applicable LCP setback requirements.

It is noteworthy that City Council and the Coastal Commission did not apply this level of visual resource protection to other areas of the Coastal Zone. The City Council could decide to add specific policies to protect visual resources on the Mill Site and south of the Noyo River.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

An LCP amendment is exempt from CEQA per State law. Any amendments to the City's Inland General Plan or Inland zoning code would require a CEQA determination.

STRATEGIC PLAN/COUNCIL PRIORITIES/GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

Not applicable.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The CDC discussed this item at meetings on March 2, 2026 and April 15, 2026.

ALTERNATIVES:

Provide further direction.

Take no action.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

NOTIFICATION:

"Notify Me" City Council Agenda