

CITY OF MORRO BAY

GENERAL PLAN

1988



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## I. INTRODUCTION

It has been over 440 years since Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portugese navigator, sailed into the bay he named "Los Esteros" to anchor near the rock he named "El Moro" to supply his ship with wood and fresh water. In that year, 1542, Cabrillo was credited with discovering the land of Upper California, including the area now known as Estero Bay and Morro Bay. However, not much transpired in Morro Bay until after the area was explored by governor Portola in 1769. The Town of Morro was not founded until the mid 19th century at which time the Embarcadero had already established itself as a prominent location for trade in country produce by schooners to and from San Francisco. By 1870, the population of Morro Bay was about 200. Today, Morro Bay has a population of almost 10,000. Morro Bay no longer is a trading center but instead has evolved into a tourist destination and retirement community. Growth has brought with it the advantages of diversity. As Morro Bay has grown, more varieties of businesses, services and entertainment have become available.

Growth has also created the need for comprehensive planning. The questions of how to maintain and improve the quality of life while accommodating increasing numbers of residents and visitors are best answered if the City has good planning. There should be planning for the appropriate arrangement of land uses; for an efficient and safe circulation system; for the protection of the tourist and fishing industries; for the provision of adequate housing; for the protection of the critical habitat areas; for the provision of adequate public facilities; for the safety of residents and visitors; as well as for all of the other aspects of life in Morro Bay. This General Plan serves as the foundation for the planning of Morro Bay's future. It is the basis for the preparation of measures and the initiation of actions which guide the proper development of the City.

### **A. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE**

1. General Plan: State law requires that each city prepare and adopt a comprehensive, long-term General Plan for the physical development of the city. The Plan must also include any area outside of the community which in the City's judgment, bears a relation to its planning. The General Plan must be internally consistent and it must contain implementation measures to ensure its compliance.

There are currently seven mandated elements which must by state law, be included in the General Plan: Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. The State also permits jurisdictions to adopt other elements including: Recreation, Public Services, Scenic Highways and Historical Preservation.

2. Local Coastal Program: All Cities and Counties within the Coastal Zone of California must have a Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (LUP) in addition to the General Plan. The California Coastal Act of 1976 required that each local jurisdiction prepare and adopt a LUP to govern future development along the coast. Unlike the General Plan, which is essentially a city document, the LCP was adopted by both the City and the State Coastal Commission and cannot be amended without the Coastal Commission's approval. (See Figures GP-1 and GP-2)

The Coastal Land Use Plan contains the following coastal concerns:

Land Use	Public Works & Planning New Development
Archaeology	Energy/Industrial Development
Agriculture	Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas
Visual Resources	Commercial & Recreational Boating Hazards
Visitor-Serving Facilities	Diking/Dredging/Filling & Shoreline Protection
	Shoreline Access & Recreation

3. Coordinating the General Plan and Coastal Land Use Plan:

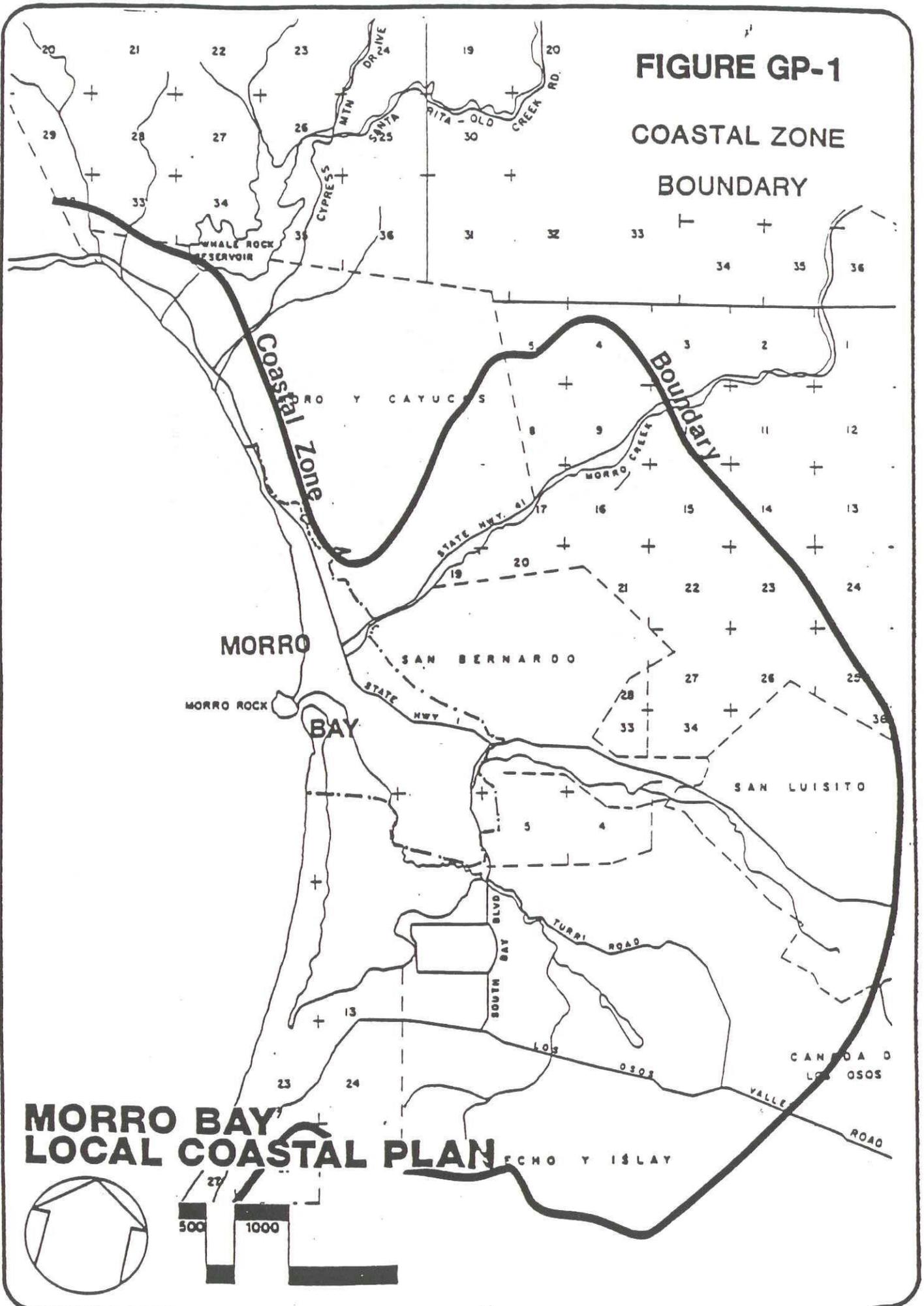
Originally the City's General Plan was comprised of ten separate and distinct documents:

Land Use Element	Seismic Safety Element
Open Space and Conservation Element	Noise Element
Housing Element	Scenic Highway Element
Circulation Element	Parks and Recreation Element
Safety Element	Local Coastal Plan

These documents were all prepared at different times in a variety of formats. Often requirements for one document were inconsistent with the requirements of another document. The State enabling legislation allows the two plans (the GP and LUP) to be integrated into one document. An editing process was begun in 1985 to combine and summarize these ten plans into one working document, eliminating inconsistencies and outdated material.

Volume I of the General Plan includes all of the policies and programs contained in the LUP as well as pertinent and current policies from the ten original General Plan elements.

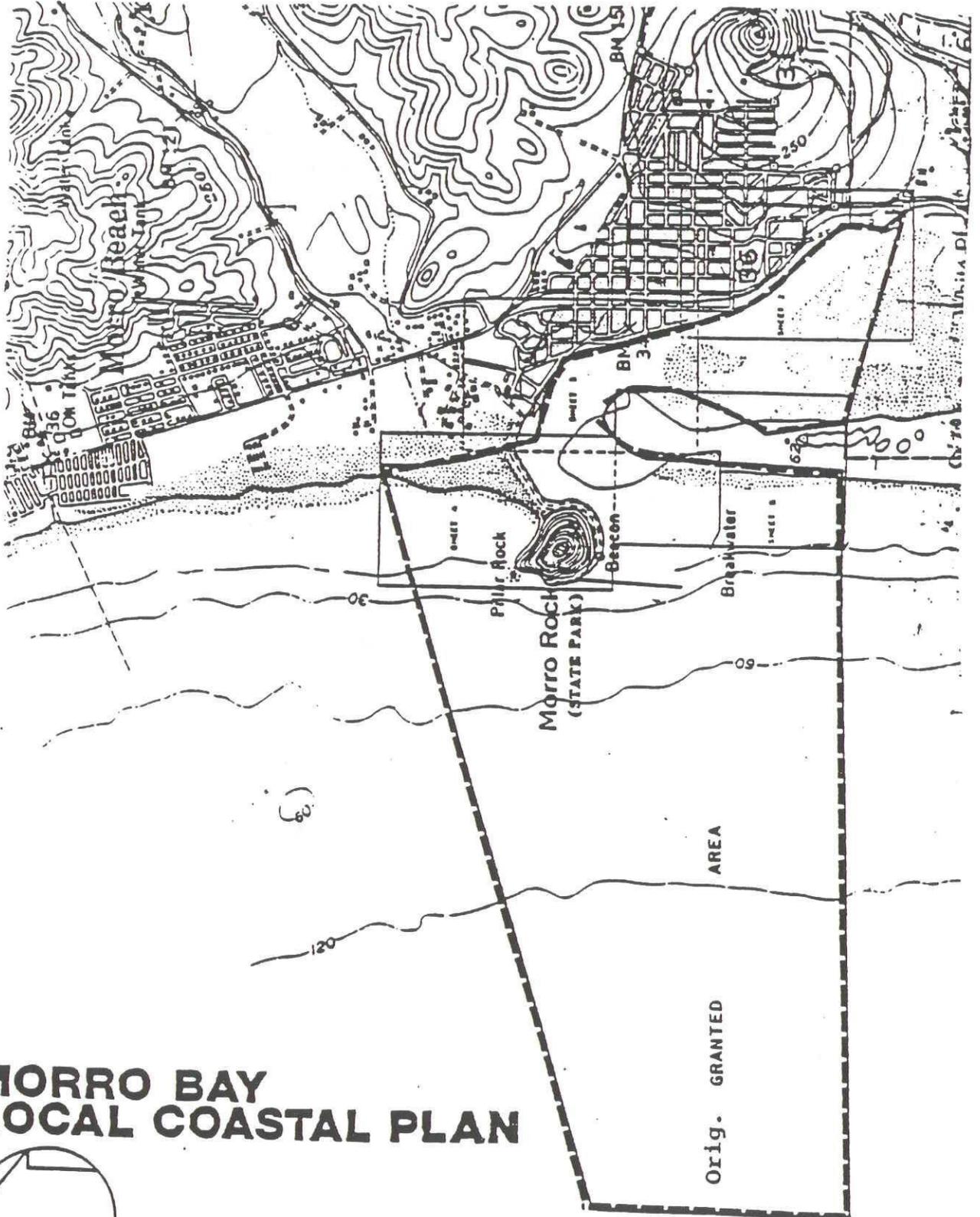
**FIGURE GP-1**  
**COASTAL ZONE**  
**BOUNDARY**



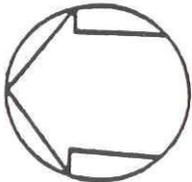
**MORRO BAY**  
**LOCAL COASTAL PLAN**

# FIGURE GP-2

## TIDELANDS BOUNDARIES



# MORRO BAY LOCAL COASTAL PLAN



Where there were inconsistencies between the original General Plan and the LCP, the policy contained in the LUP prevailed. Conflicting and outdated material from the General Plan elements was either amended or eliminated.

Volume II of the General Plan consists of the entire Local Coastal Program in its certified form. If any inadvertent discrepancies in the General Plan Volume I are discovered, the corresponding LCP language of Volume II will automatically prevail in intent and meaning.

The Morro Bay Land Use Plan Map, dated August 1985, and as subsequently Amended, is the only land use map in effect in the City. On its adoption in 1985 it automatically superceded the earlier Owen Minard Land Use Plan and serves today as the combined General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan Map.

In the future, changes in the General Plan and Local Coastal Program will undoubtedly be necessary. Each such change must be consistent with the state requirements for amending the Local Coastal Program and the General Plan.

## **B. ORGANIZATION**

Volume I contains eight sections which include an introduction and seven General Plan elements. Each General Plan element is divided into three parts:

- A. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE
- B. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ISSUES
- C. OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The policies and programs are intended to provide solutions to the problems and issues described in each section. Some statements which were previously labeled "policies" are herein referred to as "programs", to more accurately reflect their purpose.

Volume I is organized as follows:

- I. Introduction
- II. Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Elements

This section contains the land use plan, including designation of various land use categories: Residential, Commercial and Industrial as well as Visitor Serving, Agriculture, Environmentally Sensitive, Open Space, Harbor, Mixed Use and special Overlay Land Use categories. In addition, concerns regarding the quality of life, the quality of

development, public facilities, archaeological resources and conservation of natural resources are addressed.

III. Circulation Element

This section contains provisions for the development of streets, parking facilities, public transit, bikeways, pedestrian facilities, harbor circulation and major pipeline and utilities network.

IV. Scenic Highway Element and Visual Resources

The scenic qualities of Morro Bay are of major importance in maintaining the tourist industry of the City. This section contains policies and programs for the protection and enhancement of the City's scenic resources.

V. Noise Element

This section identifies major noise sources and describes protective measures to mitigate effects from these noise sources.

VI. Safety Element

The former Safety and Seismic Safety Elements were combined into this single General Plan element. This section contains provisions for protection against hazards such as earthquake, landslide, radiation, fire and flooding.

VII. Housing Element

This section was recently adopted by the City. It contains measures to provide housing for all segments of the population with particular emphasis on the Fair Share Plan and the provision of affordable housing.

VIII. Access and Recreation Element

Access and recreational opportunities are important to both residents and tourists. This section contains provisions for the development of the trail and park system.

## C. DESCRIPTION OF PLANNING AREA

1. City Limits: The City of Morro Bay generally lies on the narrow coastal shelf between the ocean and the coastal hills. It is within the north coastal area of San Luis Obispo County and is about 12 miles from the city of San Luis Obispo.

The existing City Limits extend to the oil terminal at the north end of Morro Bay to Morro Bay State Park at the south. With the exception of a mobile home park along Highway 41, most existing urban development in the area is located within the City Limits.

2. Coastal Zone: Almost the entire community of Morro Bay lies within the Coastal Zone. As can be seen on Figure GP-1, only a small area in the north foothills is outside of the Coastal Zone. The Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (LUP) applies to all but this small area.

3. Sphere of Influence, Sphere of Service & Urban Reserve Boundaries: The City and the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) have each adopted boundaries for development of the City. The City's (and Coastal Commission's) boundary for Urban Reserve and Urban Service coincide with the present City limits with the exception of two undeveloped areas referred to as the "Cabrillo" property and the "Williams" property each of which is located along the east boundary of the City. Growth and development is only allowed within the Urban Reserve and Urban Service boundary (also referred to as the "urban-rural" boundary).

LAFCo adopted a Sphere of Influence boundary which encompasses much of the drainage area east of Morro Bay. The LAFCo study would permit extensions of development into areas which would be prohibited for development under the City's General Plan and Local Coastal Plan.

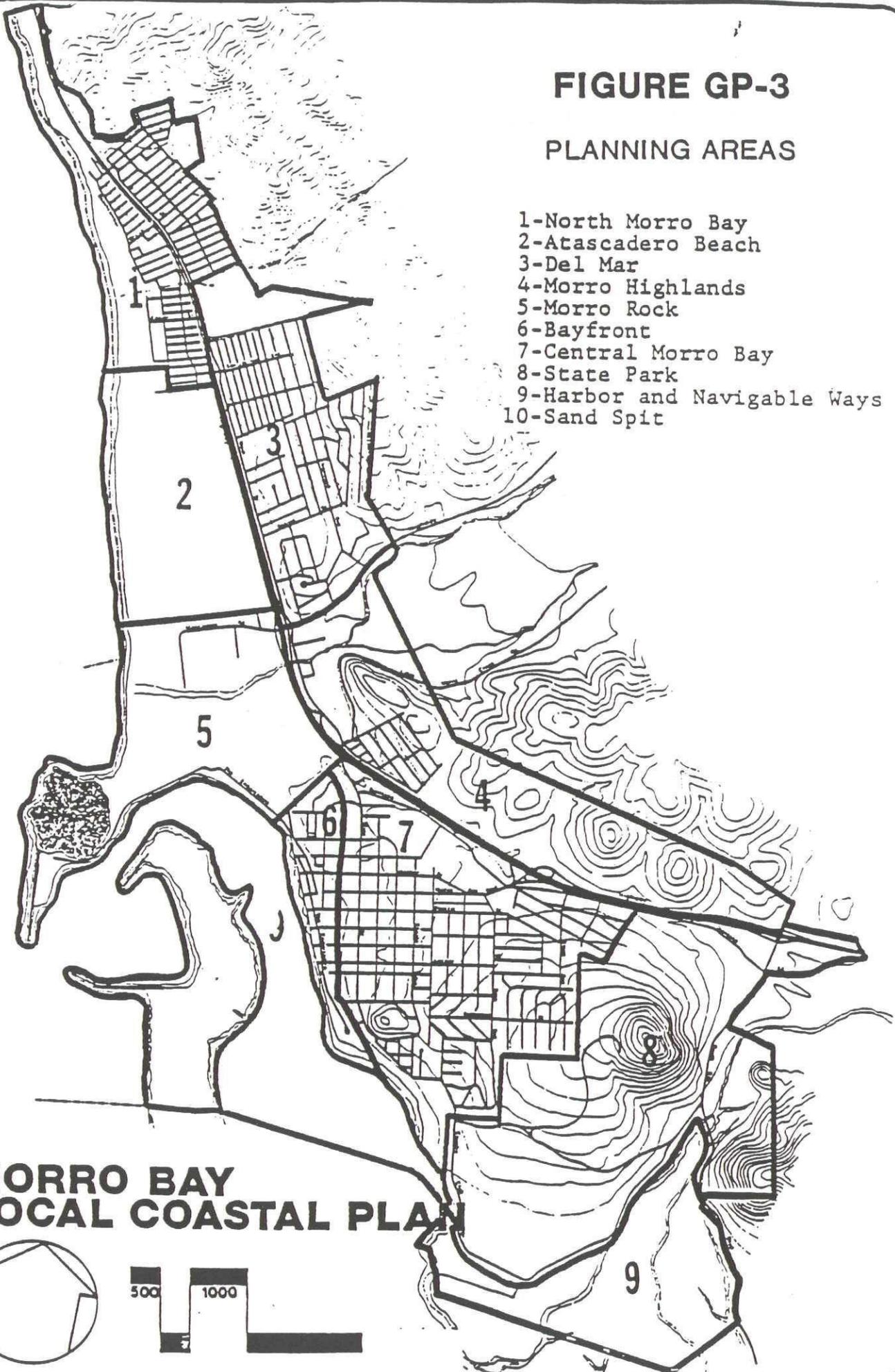
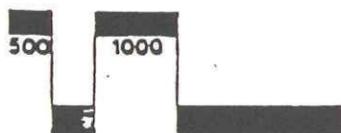
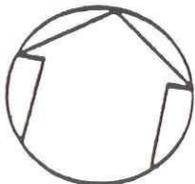
4. Planning Area: The City has been divided into ten planning areas. These planning area designations are used throughout the Land Use Plan and appear in several locations in Volume I of the General Plan. Figure GP-3 shows the locations of the planning areas. The existing characteristics of each planning area are described in the following discussions. Included also is a summary of potential development and the major coastal issues by planning area. Table GP-1 shows issues by planning area.

# FIGURE GP-3

## PLANNING AREAS

- 1-North Morro Bay
- 2-Atascadero Beach
- 3-Del Mar
- 4-Morro Highlands
- 5-Morro Rock
- 6-Bayfront
- 7-Central Morro Bay
- 8-State Park
- 9-Harbor and Navigable Ways
- 10-Sand Spit

### MORRO BAY LOCAL COASTAL PLAN



MATRIX OF COASTAL ISSUES  
BY PLANNING AREA\*

MAJOR COASTAL ISSUES	AREA 1 North Morro Bay	AREA 2 Atascadero Beach	AREA 3 Del Mar	AREA 4 Morro Highlands	AREA 5 Morro Rock	AREA 6 Bayfront	AREA 7 Central Morro Bay	AREA 8 Morro Bay State Park	AREA 9 Harbor Navigable Ways	AREA 10 Morro Bay Sand Spit
Access & Recreation	X	X			X	X		X	X	X
Visitor Serving Facilities			X			X				
Archaeology	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Energy	X		X		X	X			X	
Commercial Fishing					X	X		X	X	
Agriculture				X						
Environmentally Sensitive Habitat		X							X	
Hazards	X	X	X	X						
Dredging, Dredging & Filling	X	X			X	X		X	X	X
Visual and/or Neighborhood Character	X	X	X	X		X	X			
Public Works & New Development	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

Refer to Appendix B for description of coastal issues as they relate to Morro Bay. Refer also to the coastal issues discussions by area in the appropriate issues chapters.

a. Area 1 - North Morro Bay

This area is bisected by State Highway One and comprises the northernmost portion of the community. Island and Azure Streets are the southern boundaries, and the City limits are the northern, eastern, and western boundaries.

1. Existing Land Use: The area includes the Atascadero State Beach, the Chevron Marine Terminal, the Navy Fuel Storage Facility, single family and multifamily residential development and some strip commercial uses along Main Street. The majority of the area is developed in residential uses.

2. Potential Development: The majority of the existing residential areas are developed; vacant lands adjacent to Del Mar Park would allow considerable residential development. There is commercial infill potential in the strip commercial areas. Future changes in type of energy-industrial use is possible in the existing industrial use areas.

3. Major Coastal Issues: The major issues facing this area include potential hazards, visual concerns, energy considerations, locating new development, provision of coastal access, housing rehabilitation and neighborhood character considerations. Refer to the area discussions in the appropriate issues chapters. (LCP)

b. Area 2 - Atascadero Beach

This area consists of two large parcels bordered on the east by State Highway One, on the south by the Morro Bay High School, on the west by the Pacific Ocean and on the north by a westerly projection of the Sienna Street alignment.

1. Existing Land Use: The area is vacant. A portion of the vacant property is covered with sand dunes.

2. Potential Development: Development proposals have included planned residential development and motel development. No development plans have been approved by the City. The State of California recently acquired the area known as the Cloisters for Parks and Recreation purposes.

3. Major Coastal Issues: The major coastal issues within this area include: access and recreational use, hazards, (flooding and drainage), visual impacts, locating and planning new development and protection of sensitive dune habitats. Refer to the area discussions in the appropriate issues chapters. (LCP)

c. Area 3 - Del Mar

This area is located east of State Highway One, north of State Highway 41, south of Island Street and west of the City limits.

1. Existing Land Use: Existing land uses include commercial strip development along Main Street which serve both community and visitor needs, motels and multifamily and single family residential uses, and Del Mar Park. There are conflicts existing between the General Plan and zoning ordinances which require resolution.

2. Potential Development: The commercial and residential areas have considerable vacant infill parcels.

3. Major Coastal Issues: The major issues facing this area include visual and hazard concerns, housing rehabilitation, locating and planning new development, and community character considerations. Refer to the area discussions in the appropriate issues chapters. (LCP)

d. Area 4 - Morro Highlands

The Morro Highlands planning area is bounded on the north by State Highway 41, on the west by State Highway One, and on the east and south by the City limits.

1. Existing Land Use: Land uses vary from manufacturing, neighborhood and visitor-serving commercial, mobile home development and some single family development. Approximately two thirds of this area is vacant and is used for marginal cattle grazing.

2. Potential Development: Approximately 200 acres are vacant and available for development. Much of Morro Bay's future growth may occur within this area. It is desirable to designate a nominal amount (approximately 30 acres) of District Commercial use in this area near the freeway interchange. Prior to approval of any use of this land use designation the City shall require a detailed market analysis to demonstrate the need for such use.

3. Major Coastal Issues: Major coastal issues to be addressed in this area include agricultural land uses, locating and planning new development, visual and hazard (hillside protection) concerns. Refer to the area discussion in the appropriate issues chapters. (LCP)

e. Area 5 - Morro Rock

This area is located west of State Highway One and south of the Atascadero Beach Planning Area, and includes the PG&E Morro Bay Power Plant property line as the southernmost boundary.

1. Existing Land Use: The land uses include the Morro Rock and beach areas in recreation and wildlife preservation uses, the power plant, two City park areas, the high school, the City wastewater treatment plant, some visitor-serving commercial uses and a recreational vehicle park.

2. Potential Development: Potential development in this area is varied and could include increased commercial fishing uses, increased energy development-related uses, increases or changes in recreational uses, and some potential for increase in commercial visitor-serving uses. Extension of State Highway 41 - Embarcadero Road is possible.

3. Major Coastal Issues: Major coastal issues within this area include expansion of the commercial fishing industry, power plant expansion and energy-related development and shoreline access. Refer to the appropriate issues chapters. (LCP)

g. Area 6 - Bayfront

This area is bounded generally on the north by the PG&E Morro Bay Power Plant property, on the east by Morro Avenue and the Tidelands Park eastern boundary, on the south by Morro Bay State Park and on the west by the bay.

1. Existing Land Use: The majority of this area is used for harbor-related, commercial fishing, and tourist commercial uses. There is some residential development in this area.

2. Potential Development: Most of this area is developed. Potential development includes increase in efficiency of the commercial areas along the Embarcadero, including additional visitor-serving commercial uses, increase in public access opportunities, and increase in commercial fishing uses. The Tidelands Park is planned for improvement.

3. Major Coastal Issues: The major coastal issues within the Bayfront Planning Area include commercial fishing, visual resources, recreation (boating) and access. Refer to the area discussions in the appropriate issues chapters. (LCP)

h. Area 7 - Central Morro Bay

This area is bounded on the north by Scott Avenue and the PG&E property, on the east by State Highway One, on the south by the Morro Bay State Park, and on the west by Morro Avenue.

1. Existing Land Use: This area includes residential and commercial uses. Some visitor-serving uses are located in this area, particularly along Morro Bay boulevard and Main Street north of Morro Bay Boulevard, and in the area adjacent to the Embarcadero.

2. Potential Development: Most of the residential areas are fully developed. There is potential for expansion of commercial services.

3. Major Coastal Issues: The major coastal issues are limited to housing rehabilitation, visual and community character concerns. Refer to area discussions in the appropriate issues chapters. (LCP)

i. Area 8 - Morro Bay State Park

This planning area incorporates the Back Bay of Morro Bay and Morro Bay State Park. The boundaries are the existing line of residential development to the north, State Highway One to the northeast, and the bay to the west and south.

1. Existing Land Use: Morro Bay State Park and Black Mountain comprise the majority of this area. Along Quintana Road and South Bay Boulevard north of Country Club Drive are a trailer park, some single family residences and visitor-serving commercial uses.

2. Potential Development: There is a possibility for limited commercial fishing, recreational boating or visitor-serving uses adjacent to the tidelands area.

3. Major Coastal Issues: The major coastal issues in this planning area are protection of commercial fishing and coastal access and recreation. (LCP)

j. Area 9 - Harbor and Navigable Ways

This planning area incorporates the area within the city limits covered by bay water, wetlands areas and tidelands.

1. Existing Land Use: The harbor is being utilized for a variety of harbor dependent uses which include dockage, moorage, governmental, commercial and recreational navigation, swimming, commercial and recreational fishing, mariculture and other similar uses. The harbor serves as a safe moorage during inclement weather.

2. Potential Development: It is anticipated that existing uses will be expanded. It is possible that the harbor could be utilized for some coastal-dependent energy uses in the future.

3. Major Coastal Issues: The major coastal issues in this planning area are commercial fishing, energy, access and recreation, diking, dredging and filling, environmentally sensitive habitat protection and locating and planning new development. (LCP)

j. Area 10 - Morro Bay Sand Spit

The Morro Bay sand spit planning area is that area of the sand spit extending north from Montana de Oro State Park to its northerly terminus.

1. Existing Land Use: The existing land use is open space and recreation. No structures exist on the sand spit.

2. Potential Development: Based on governmental and private ownership decisions, there is the potential for development, but environmental and policy constraints may limit the potential for development.

3. Major Coastal Issues: The major coastal issues are the protection of environmentally sensitive habitat, visual and scenic value, access and recreation, and locating and planning new development. (LCP)