

IV. VISITOR-SERVING FACILITIES

A. INTRODUCTION

Visitor-serving commercial establishments within the coastal zone, in conjunction with the attractive shoreline, provide numerous opportunities for public recreation and access. These opportunities for public recreation and access. These opportunities for use and enjoyment of the coastal area should be enhanced through adequate provision for visitor-serving facilities.

Visitor-serving development includes hotels, motels, campgrounds, restaurants and recreational vehicle parks along with commercial/recreational developments such as shopping and amusement areas which provide services for visitor tourists. These visitor facilities, together with public parks and beaches provide major opportunities for public access and recreation in the coastal area.

B. COASTAL ACT POLICIES

In order to insure that opportunities for all persons are provided for recreational use and enjoyment within the Coastal Zone, the Coastal Act of 1976 mandates comprehensive policies regarding visitor-serving uses. The major policies are as follows:

PRC Section 30212.5 Wherever appropriate and feasible, public facilities, including parking areas or facilities, shall be distributed throughout an area so as to mitigate against the impacts, social and otherwise, of overcrowding or overuse by the public of any single area.

PRC Section 30213 Lower-cost visitor and recreational facilities shall be protected, encouraged, and, where feasible, provided. Developments providing public recreational opportunities are preferred. Neither the commission nor any regional commission shall either (1) require that overnight room rentals be fixed at an amount certain for any privately owned and operated hotel, motel, or other similar visitor-serving facility located on either public or private lands; or (2) establish or approve any method for the identification of low or moderate income persons for the purpose of determining eligibility for overnight room rentals in any such facilities.

PRC Section 30220 Coastal areas suited for water-oriented recreational activities that cannot readily be provided at inland water areas shall be protected for such uses.

PRC Section 30221 Oceanfront land suitable for recreational use shall be protected for recreational use and development unless present and foreseeable future demand for public or commercial recreational activities that could be

accommodated on the property is already adequately provided for in the area.

PRC Section 30222 The use of private lands suitable for visitor-serving commercial recreational facilities designed to enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation shall have priority over private residential, general industrial, or general commercial development, but not over agriculture or coastal-dependent industry.

PRC Section 30223 Upland areas necessary to support coastal recreational uses shall be reserved for such uses, where feasible.

PRC Section 30250(c) Visitor-serving facilities that cannot feasibly be located in existing developed areas shall be located in existing isolated developments or at selected points of attraction for visitors.

C. VISITOR-SERVING RESOURCES, ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The majority of the visitor-serving facilities are located along State Highway One, Morro Bay Boulevard, and between Harbor Street and Pacific Street along the Embarcadero and above the bluff line. The City's major industry is tourism, and as a result, emphasis is placed on the provision of those services required by tourists of all income categories. This is evidenced by the provision of campgrounds, RV parks, low cost hotels and resort motels, a variety of gift shops, take-out and sit down resort restaurants.

The following description summarizes the visitor-serving facilities in the City. Support information is contained in Appendix D.

1. Overnight Accommodations

Morro Bay offers a wide range of accommodations, most of which are affordable to families of low and moderate incomes. The City in 1980 had 33 motels containing about 750 rooms. Overnight rates ranged from \$16.00 to \$45.00 (in 1980 dollars) a night, double occupancy. In addition, there were seven travel trailer (RV) parks containing about 350 overnight spaces. Full hood-ups and services were available at all of the travel trailer parks. Overnight rates ranged from \$6.50 to 8.00 (in 1980 dollars) per hook-up.

Both the Atascadero Beach State Park and Morro Bay State Park have overnight campgrounds; in 1980, Morro Bay State Park had 135 campsites. Overnight rates were \$4.00 to \$5.00 per site (in 1980 dollars) for eight persons.

The total of 1,191 overnight accommodations in 1980 could facilitate approximately 4,240 persons (112 persons in campgrounds, 1850 persons in motels and 1,280 in RV parks)

During the busy three-day weekends and summer months Morro Bay has a shortage of accommodations; however, during the winter months occupancy rates are low. The capability of providing additional accommodations, realizing the slow winter months and resulting economic hardships on the part of motel/RV park owners, is an identifiable problem.

Overflow RV and camping accommodations for peak visitor periods is one practical solution currently under investigation by the City. Motels will be constructed as economic conditions allow as long as sufficient space exists.

2. Restaurants

In 1980 the City contained 24 restaurants, which offer a wide variety of different types of foods at various costs. These restaurants collectively could accommodate approximately 1,795 persons at one time. Many of the restaurants are located along the Embarcadero, which provides a scenic view of the bay, coastline and Morro Rock.

D. OTHER VISITOR-SERVING FACILITIES

The category of visitor-serving facilities is broad and contains land uses which are oriented to the services of visitors. These uses are distributed throughout the City but are particularly clustered at the State Highway One, State Highway 41 intersection and the Bayfront-Central Morro Bay Planning Areas near the harbor. Services in 1980 included service stations (there are 24), gift shops (about 16), grocery and convenience stores (about 14), liquor stores (about 4), and a range of services including ice cream parlors, a theater, bait and tackle shops, hardware stores, clothing stores and many other services which could serve both the visitor and the resident.

E. EXISTING RECREATIONAL AREAS

There are four major areas in Morro Bay which provide recreational and beach access opportunities for visitors and residents. Most of the recreational activities the City offers are free, including the use of the beaches, harborfront, and by, for a variety of active (e.g. fishing) and passive (e.g. bird watching) recreational pursuits. The following are descriptions of each facility, plus the recreational and visitor-serving opportunities per facility. The four areas are:

- (1) The Embarcadero/Morro Rock
- (2) Morro Bay State Park
- (3) Atascadero State Beach
- (4) Montana de Oro State Beach

1. The Embarcadero/Morro Rock

The "Embarcadero" area of the City of Morro Bay is the hub of activity for visitors by providing a variety of recreational opportunities, coastal access areas and numerous visitor services. Within the span of waterfront development, visitors may experience interesting small retail store complexes, a variety of restaurants, commercial boating and fishing. Visitors can also stroll along pedestrian walkways which provide in active recreation such as window shopping, conversing and sightseeing. The entire "Embarcadero" area provides visitors and residents direct exposure to the bay, Morro Rock and a working fishing harbor.

Morro Rock is a major landmark and provides a visual focus for the entire area. By providing access for autos, pedestrians and bicycles through a land causeway, visitors as well as

residents can enjoy picnicking and other passive activities and view of the ocean, or a panorama of the bay and coastline.

2. Morro Bay State Park

Morro Bay State Park is the largest park facility within the Coastal Zone. The park encompasses approximately 2,102 acres with 39,515 linear feet of bay frontage. Within the park, there are 135 overnight campsites which could accommodate approximately 550-600 overnight guests. Also within the park are 50 picnic or day-use-only sites, as well as approximately 2 miles of nature trails for hiking and walking. Morro Bay State Park, sited in a beautiful wooded setting, provides a variety of visitor recreational opportunities, such as:

- A. 18-hole golf course
- B. State Museum of Natural History
- C. Salt Marsh - Wildlife refuge area
- D. Black Mountain natural area
- E. Campgrounds
- F. Boating facilities

Between 1976 and 1977, the Park had over 1.8 million visitors, an increase of about 350,000 people since the 1971 and 1972 visitor period. The State Department of Parks and Recreation anticipates a steady increase in use, principally because of its location halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. According to the Department, the peak period of visitor use is May through September. During this major peak period, campsites and day use facilities are usually at capacity.

3. Atascadero State Beach

Atascadero State Beach, located in the northern sector of the City of Morro Bay, has approximately 75 acres of public beach area. With its 104 campsites, Atascadero State Beach provides a major visitor-serving and recreational location. The park accessible via the intersection of Yerba Buena Street and Highway One. Along the, 950 feet of ocean frontage, visitors may enjoy camping, surfing, fishing, beach activities, picnicking, walking and jogging.

The number of visitors during the 1976 and 1977 season was about 222,000, an increase since the 1979 and 1971 season of about 100,000 visitors. It is reasonable to assume that this facility receives overflow from Morro Bay State Park during busy weekends. Visitor use has declined since 1976; its peak use was 529,438 in 1973. Assuming that the facilities will remain in their current state and condition, visitor count will probably remain the same or drop slightly to 200,000 in the future. According to the State, the peak period of use is June through September, with July being the peak month.

4. Montana de Oro State Park

A small portion of Montana de Oro State Park is within the City limits, and comprises the southernmost boundary of the City along the sandspit. No facilities are provide; the park's facilities are located in the park proper, about seven miles south. Use of the sandspit is limited to clamming and passive recreational uses. The sandspit is an important part of the scenic viewshed enjoyment of visitors, and its open space qualities are preserved as a result.

F. RESOURCES BY PLANNING AREA

The visitor-serving resources are identified specifically in the North Morro Bay planning area, the Bayfront planning area, the Del mar planning area and the Morro Bay State Park planning area. The visitor services within the planning areas have been given in the previous discussion. The development potential is given as follows for these specific planning areas.

1. Planning Area 1 - North Morro Bay and
Planning Area 8 - Morro Bay State Park

The state parks in these two planning areas are a very important part of the visitor's attraction to Morro Bay, and they should be improved and expanded consistent with the preservation of the habitat and scenic characteristics of the City. The following improvements and expansions are recommended.

1. Additional camping spaces at Morro Bay State Park
2. Facilities improvement at Atascadero State Beach
3. Provision of overflow RV Spaces at both State Park facilities
4. Acquisition of the privately-owned parcels on the sand spit and adjacent to Montana de Oro State Park in order to ensure its open space preservation use (see Policy 1.44 in Shoreline Access and Recreation, Chapter 111).

2. Planning Area 1 - North Morro Bay and
Planning Area 2 - Del Mar

The north Main Street area is a commercial strip extending 1.5 miles from Atascadero Road (Highway 41) to Zanzibar Street, near the northern boundary of the City. This area, encompassing approximately 50 acres, includes 20 parcels of undeveloped land. These parcels comprise approximately 14 acres and range in size from 1/10 acre to 10 acres.

Although this area has potential for visitor-serving development, it does have some major problems. Overall single lot sizes are small with shallow depth. Approximately 80 percent are 1/4 acre or less. Another major problem is limited access. The freeway (Highway One), which handles most traffic through this area, has caused the commercial area to be somewhat isolated from most visitor traffic flow. Additionally, many of the existing commercial sites in this area are old and in need of maintenance. Therefore, visitor-serving commercial uses in this area should be clustered at the State Highway One-State Highway 41 intersection and should serve those travelers passing through the City.

The intersection west of State Highway One and State Highway 41 also offers the potential for increased visitor-serving uses. This area contains vacant acreage which could be developed into visitor services, particularly motels. When Embarcadero Road is connected to State Highway 41 this will become a secondary entrance to the City. Visitor services currently exist in this area.

3. Planning Area 6 - Bayfront

In terms of potential development and expansion of visitor-serving facilities, the City encourages the bluff area, bordered by Front Street and Main Street, which extends to both Olive and Surf Streets. This area, currently providing zones for motel/hotel uses, visitor-serving commercial uses, eating and drinking establishments as well as recreational vehicle parks, encompasses an area of approximately 80 acres, with approximately nine acres currently undeveloped. These nine acres are composed of thirteen parcels ranging in size from 3.4 acres to 1/5 acre. Development of visitor-serving commercial facilities in the bluff district is encouraged because this area provides an important link between the downtown and Embarcadero.

G. VISITOR-SERVING POLICIES

1. General Policies

Although the City has visitor-serving commercial facilities for all income groups and a variety of recreational opportunities, it is necessary to ensure that adequate facilities are provided to meet future needs. The following general policies apply to maintenance of adequate visitor facilities which have no adverse effect on community scale, preservation of the environment or public services. See Chapter III for specific area recreation policies.

- Policy 2.01. Lower-cost visitor and recreation facilities for persons and families of low or moderate income shall be protected, encouraged, and where feasible, provided. Developments providing public recreational opportunities are preferred.
- Policy 2.02. Subject to the appropriate land use designation set forth herein, the use of private lands suitable for visitor-serving commercial recreational facilities designed to enhance public opportunities for coastal recreation shall have priority over private residential, general industrial, or general commercial development, but not over agriculture or coastal-dependent industry.
- Policy 2.03. Consistent with LUP Policy 7.06A, the Embarcadero between Beach Street on the north, Main Street on the east, Olive Street on the south and the waterfront area on the west, shall be considered a mixed commercial fishing and visitor-serving recreational use area. With regard to the siting of new developments, priority shall be given for coastal-dependent uses located on the west side of the Embarcadero.
- Policy 2.04. The City will continue to encourage, protect, and maintain a variety of recreational activities, such as art shows, parades, group events, etc., in appropriate locations of the City.
- Policy 2.05. Future demands of the tourist industry shall be provided for when considering new development in Mixed Use Areas A and C and in the Embarcadero. In addition, the siting of new developments shall be consistent with the Coastal Act, specifically including Coastal Act Sections 30222 and 30225.

- Policy 2.06. The removal or conversion of lower-cost visitor-serving uses and facilities shall be prohibited unless the use will be replaced by a facility offering comparable visitor-serving opportunities. Demolition of lower-cost visitor-serving facilities shall be prohibited unless the City finds that the facility is structurally unsound and the cost of rehabilitation would make the existing use uneconomical, as defined in Phase III of the Local Coastal Program.
- Policy 2.07. New hotel/motel developments within the coastal zone shall, where feasible, provide a range of rooms and room prices in order to serve all income ranges. Similarly, lower cost restaurants, or restaurants which provide a wide range of prices are encouraged. Consistent with Coastal Act Section 30213, the City shall in no event (1) require that overnight room rental be fixed at an amount certain for any privately owned and operated hotel, motel, or other similar visitor-serving facility located on either public or private land; or (2) establish or approve any method for the identification of low or moderate income persons for the purpose of determining eligibility for overnight room rentals in any such facilities.
- Policy 2.08. In reviewing visitor-serving development in the Embarcadero as defined in Policy 2.03, the City shall find that provision of off-street parking is sufficient to serve the development's peak demands as defined in Phase III of the Local Coastal Program. Parking demands shall be satisfied by the provision of off-street facilities on the development site or within 300 feet. Once a parking management program for the Embarcadero has been developed which provides off-street parking resources, and such a program is implemented, applications for development shall be allowed to satisfy their peak parking demands through participation in the program. If the program includes an in-lieu fee system, the applicant shall provide the City an in-lieu fee of an amount equal to the purchase of land and construction of the number of spaces needed to serve the development's peak needs. The City shall use the fees to provide for parking support in the Embarcadero.