

Glenn Silloway comments
GPAC Key Issues and Priorities
26 Sep 16

I cannot go into depth I would like; hope these help. There is a more complete response on Chapter 14 via the Historical Society of Morro Bay Board and others, below. I am including Chapters 8 forward since that's where we were when Scot asked us to submit written comments.

Chapter 8: Lower-cost Overnight Visitor Accommodations

8A says the "thresholds should be incorporated" in the zoning code. Please clarify: does this mean to designate areas where different cost accommodations would be permitted? If so, it would create an undesirable segregation. Perhaps you mean something else?

8B: The City should permit short-term rentals, but regulate them. Replace the current (temporary) numerical limit of 250 with a density provision (e.g., only one vac rental per block), and limit parking to one car per bedroom. ALL these rentals should be required to get a license, and pay TOT. The current requirement to post contact info about mgmt is routinely ignored.

Increasing low cost accommodations will be easiest via room rentals within existing housing, e.g., Airbnb, with secondary benefit to supplement a local income. These rooms, perhaps limited to 1 (maybe 2?) per house, with one car permitted per room, could be located more densely than whole house rentals. Require that they be in owner- or fulltime renter-occupied units. The presence of an owner helps control the negative potentials.

Mitigation in-lieu fees don't make much sense to me. It's a game that just gets rolled into total costs, with a little payout to the city, and even a development fund using these fees would probably be too small to have much impact. Requiring new construction to have a range of room types at different costs makes more sense.

Chapter 9: Downtown and Waterfront Connections

This is a big topic! We are talking about shaping human behavior, never easy, and doing it in two distinctly different parts of town. The current background strongly implies the two areas are used by 'residents and visitors alike' but they are not. The residents are more likely to use downtown businesses and services; obviously, visitors concentrate on the Embarcadero.

We need to be clear about the goals of improving the connections. Are we trying to encourage more tourists to walk downtown, increasing demand in that area? (Perhaps goals are discussed in the DWSP?) Coupled with proposed improvements to pedestrian walkways and places on the Embarcadero, we might see both more tourists and more tourists downtown as complimentary goals. Note: encouraging more tourists to go downtown will not be popular with ALL MB residents.

The key 'connection' is the almost pedestrian-free two blocks between Main and Market. The other 'connection' that links the bluff top and Embarcadero is undergoing a re-

design, but in fact the current aging Centennial stairs conduct a lot of traffic already. A re-design of the Centennial Park is nice, but not as important as the circulation issues.

So, before we jump to specific favorite projects, we need to get the circulation right, including both the Embarcadero and the streets linking downtown. **Somewhere in the area on the top of the bluff is the right place for a parking structure.** In this location it helps put people on the sidewalks near Old Town and also gives easy access to the Centennial gateway. Moving cars off the Embarcadero facilitates the focus on pedestrian and bike traffic, and frees up parking spaces in the south lot (next to Pacific) for more productive development.

With parking concentrated on the top of the bluff, there will be enough foot traffic there (I hope!) to support new retail or service businesses in the area between Main and Market. Especially if there is new entertainment or retail in the Main-Market zone, people are much more likely to end up walking downtown as well (no longer having to cross the no-man's area that exists now).

Here's a big-picture heresy: Create a big circular one-way flow, west on Harbor, east on Pacific, with the north to south loop along the Embarcadero, passing parking structures along the way (especially off Harbor). Shut traffic off Market between Harbor and Pacific entirely (and possibly for the one block east of Market/MB Blvd intersection if access issues can be resolved).

Neighborhood characteristics: strong support to item 9C. The downtown and Embarcadero can be thought of as two separate neighborhoods, however. The downtown is a classic California old-west town; the Embarcadero is a working harbor. The differences are important, correlated to function, and increase interest. Design guidelines for the two areas will be somewhat different to incorporate functional differences.

No more stinkin' branding! One last thing: the idea of "branding" either Morro Bay as a whole, or the Embarcadero as a tourist destination, is absolutely frightening. As an Internet marketing professional, I spent a lot of years working on branding in websites and campaigns: the last thing we need is too much uniformity stamped on too many things and hopelessly outdated in 10 years. Morro Bay as a whole and including the tourist areas, is an emergent brand based on the things we inherited and can only degrade: can you say "Rock"? The best things we can do are to make the city an enjoyable place at a human scale to complement the natural assets. And that's not branding.

Any standard "branding" exercise should be very restrained and limited to helpful signage, stationery, and logos. Perhaps this is all the consultants mean. I hope so. But good marketing is based on a deep understanding of what the "product" is, and grows out of that. It cannot be imposed from the top down. Given that the product is a city where over 10,000 people live, excluding tourists, the obvious danger is that the marketing is slanted toward attracting tourists. Not a good idea.

Chapter 10: Sea Level Rise Resilience

Thanks to city and MBI team for making this a matter of fact treatment of such a critical issue, unfortunately (and needlessly) a polarized one.

If I understand the baseline and these issues, the first step is to mandate a comprehensive plan that contains elements MBI has identified, and items 10A-H might be components of the plan. Obviously cannot do everything at once, so priorities among all these driven by the vulnerability assessment need to be set.

As portions of the existing revetments, bulkheads, etc., need replacement (friends at the Harbor tell me some of these are in very poor condition), they should be repaired with the sea level rise during projected life in mind.

The Background mentions the estuary as one of the natural resources that might be affected by sea level rise, but I'd like to strengthen that a bit, partly based on the baseline assessment review. Saltwater intrusion is going to get much worse quickly; If the sea level rises significantly—1 to 2 feet by 2050 you have estimated—the amount of seawater mixing in the estuary increases tremendously. At the same time, fresh water inflows may decrease due to prolonged droughts or just reduced rainfall. Combined, these factors change the chemistry of the Bay a great deal.

This comment does not mean that any other adaptive strategies need to change—the impact of sea level rise on the estuary itself probably cannot be mitigated—but it will mean a different ecosystem than we have now, with unknown impacts on tourism and recreation. Our most effective response to this is probably to adapt how we use the Bay for recreation, possibly for aquaculture. **Also, this reinforces other interests we have in working with NEP to clean up watersheds and runoff, which are things we can do.**

Finally, as 10C indicates, we need to coordinate especially with State Parks to mitigate sea level rise at the State Park facilities that support tourism, with the southern campground and Morro Strand area most vulnerable according to MBI projections.

Chapter 11: Commercial Fishing Industry and Measure D

By every measure we have, MB citizens cherish the commercial fishing industry, the working waterfront (Measure D area), and those great boats in the harbor.

Measure D regulates market activity. Therefore, disputes or conflicts that would be ironed out by private contracts inevitably have a public component. These conflicts prompt a desire to clarify “clearly incidental.”

Based on our discussion Thursday, Sept 28, I see three options:

1. Review and modify existing decision process: As pointed out at the GPAC meeting, the current process is (mostly) working. The fact that there are disputes is not surprising, but does not mean that changes to Measure D are needed. Revising the decision process to improve its legitimacy (if needed) could possibly streamline decisions, but the goal of eliminating conflicts will not be achieved (probably not under any scenario).

2. Edit the current language: Any modification to the existing language will require a new vote of the citizens. As we discussed, this is probably not risky in the sense that most MB citizens support the objective of Measure D. I think that this requirement applies whether we “clarify” certain language, or replace the whole thing. In a new vote scenario, we would rewrite the Measure to try to give better direction to decision-makers, but it is almost inevitable that some disputes would continue. It is basically impossible to write something that anticipates every situation that can arise in an open market.
3. Replace Measure D with General Plan/LCP goals and objectives, backed up by zoning. In the long haul, disputes would be adjudicated by the Planning Commission and City Council like any other zoning issues, and subject to the same legal remedies. **However, getting to the point where Measure D land uses are governed like any other land use would first require the repeal or modification of Measure D, so the citizen vote is still required.** Further, the lease hold reviews and deliberations that are at the source of disputes would still be processed through the Harbor (yes?), so a more complicated mechanism is required.

I think option 3 is a non-starter because it asks voters to “trust me, I’m from the government” in repealing Measure D with a future dispute resolution mechanism not yet in place. Perhaps the new ballot measure could be written so the zoning approach replaces Measure D (would need a high degree of specificity) without a gap, but I think the trust issue remains.

I think the intention in KIP is to take a revised Measure D to the voters as a modification and continuation of the existing Measure. I would love to help to write the Measure even though I am skeptical that we would totally succeed. A substantial improvement would have to be enough.

In my first draft of this I supported option 1: **That [re-writing Measure D] would be the wrong thing to do.** I understand people are more comfortable if there is a set of rules that dictate decisions, but rules that are effective in this way are inevitably byzantine and are the kind of regulations people hate.

A better approach is to ensure that a decision process is in place that gives parties ample opportunity to contest grievances but still ends with an authoritative outcome. For example, the Harbor Advisory Board should be (and is, I believe) composed of people who are knowledgeable about and, in some part, represent commercial fishing. A jury of peers, so to speak. Decisions by the Board are appealable to the City Council, whose decisions are final. (Actually, I think this is about what we have now, so maybe only tweaking it is needed. In any case this becomes a process design issue, not trying to anticipate potential disputes)

Perhaps, the General Plan should also confirm that the Measure D area will not expand—there are more reasons to expect declining or stable fishing than continued increases in landings like we’ve seen the past few years. Even so, I don’t think there’s much support to allow it to expand in footprint (internal growth is good!).

An exception to expansion would be for a boatyard with sufficient capacity to attract business from other ports. The boatyard would serve recreational boats as well as fishing boats, and may generate some economic activity we need.

The 1996 waterfront master plan had some good ideas that are lost due to events over the past 20 years, but one of them was to locate the boatyard north of the bend in the Embarcadero as it turns past the power plant out to the Rock. Maybe still a good location?

Finally, the WMP also suggested a connection to Atascadero Road over the creek—we now have one but it is not for vehicular traffic. Perhaps we could make an exception that commercial fishing vehicles that haul supplies in and fish out could use the bridge (it's built to hold fire trucks after all) during certain hours.

Chapter 12: Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA)

I strongly support the 12A ESHA update (due soon?) including the projection component. The climate change hazards discussed throughout the baseline will greatly affect ESHA boundaries and species. Knowing as well as possible about on-going impacts may help us preserve some of these sensitive areas, or at least to mitigate impacts.

Protecting sensitive habitat from encroachment is crucial, but the GP can also favor building requirements that limit runoff with rainwater harvesting, for example, or grey water reclamation (e.g., yard irrigation). Both of these approaches also help to address water shortages. I would favor policies that encourage these kinds of installations in renovations and retrofitting in our aging housing or commercial stock. This water reclamation and runoff prevention should be supported by reductions in fees, and meet accepted standards for effectiveness.

ESHA issues cannot be addressed with a focus “within the city” as referenced in 12B. I realize the full meaning of the language here recognizes this fact—such as encouraging a regional habitat conservation plan—but the ESHA/environmental issues in the GP/LCP should *a/ways* be addressed in a Planning Area context that includes the watershed, contiguous open space, and adjacent communities so that actions more closely match the distribution of species/habitats/etc.

In line with this, I would support a policy that makes it a priority for the city to work with property owners in potential wildlife corridors outside city boundaries to preserve significant amounts of land around, e.g., Morro Creek, that connects to undeveloped hillsides and valleys. The key element in these corridors is to link contiguous lands.

Within the city, wildlife corridors should be maintained under Highway 1 (along the creek) to try to reduce the roadkill carnage every biker (like me) sees almost every day. If there are other ways you creative planner types can think of to improve corridors across dangerous highways, you have my support!

The 1988 GP/LCP makes extensive reference to the effects of dredging. The baseline assessment mentions at one point using dredged materials to reinforce Morro Strand. But the earlier plan emphasizes that dredging might also have adverse impacts on estuarine habitat, primarily through turbidity, but possibly also in combination with other factors. I would like to reincorporate those policies in the new plan, with the direction that the city should work with ACE to minimize dredging south of Measure D, reduce turbidity, and dispose of materials where sea level rise can be best mitigated. I realize that ACE does measure turbidity during dredging and pauses if needed, but the general policy point should be reinforced in the GP.

Chapter 13: Transportation Metrics

I don't have much to say about a chapter on metrics without have a specific goal to evaluate (though the 2013 climate action plan does aim for lower greenhouse gases, in line with VMT). The VMT objective of reducing usage is worthwhile, but may not be much use in evaluating street performance (you're counting cars but measuring street capacity).

The metric alternatives give a nice dilemma: LOS measures a point of congestion, VMT measures total usage. Improve LOS and VMT may increase. Clearly, what's needed here is a policy objective in order to choose between the metrics, and I do not see one in the Chapter 13 – perhaps in the baseline?

Let's make reducing vehicular person/trips our goal. Then an upgraded Morro Bay Transit, or more generally ride sharing, shared circulating small cars (not the current vans) that can be called, and improved pedestrian and bicycle paths might help. (an idea with tongue in cheek: become a demo city for Lyft self-driving cars using the new electric Chevy Bolt; transportation on call for small fee) An established benefit of shared cars is improving mobility for aging and disabled people, which current services recognize, but will become more important as Morro Bay population ages.

This chapter does not address many issues of transportation usability, including priority issues noted in the baseline assessment (p 482). Janice Peters' letter about walkability in neighborhoods where the front set back is treated inconsistently by occupants so that walkers cannot remain out of the street deserves attention.

Chapter 14: Historic Resource Management

First, the Board of HSMB thanks the city and consultant for including this item in the priority issues. The preservation of historic places and spaces, and stories, is important in itself, but properly done can also help to boost MB culturally and economically.

The introduction includes a number of errors or misrepresentations, so we've re-written it long form. However, at least one person I talked with believes the short history lesson adds nothing to the Plan. Copied in below is a very different version of the "Background"

section. Some of the corrections in this version would also apply to—and are informed by—the Baseline Assessment. I do not know if/how much of this will survive into final documents. Obviously, you will accept or reject these suggestions as you see fit.

Native peoples settled in what is now Morro Bay 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, and numerous artifacts of their existence have been found here. They were pressed into service on the Mission farms in this area during Spanish and then Mexican control, roughly 1769 to 1848, when the tribes dwindled away.

The development of the town as it exists today began at the end of the Mission era in the mid-1800's. The town's European founder, Franklin Riley, discovered a parcel of land along the estuary that was not included in the large nearby Ranchos, and homesteaded it in 1864. With various partners, he worked to develop the land, including building a wharf for ocean-going trade to get goods to and from this remote location. In 1872, Riley platted modern Morro Bay with partner Carolan Mathers, laying out the Old Town area that exists today.

Morro Bay developed over the next decades, including as a tourist destination around the turn of the century. However, the difficulty of getting boats into the harbor hampered trade and fishing until the U.S. Navy constructed the breakwaters and Embarcadero during World War II. Rapid postwar growth in commercial fishing plus tourism boosted the town up through the 1980's. The now-mothballed power plant constructed by PG&E in the mid-1950's still dominates the built environment. The city incorporated in 1964, and by 2015 had a population of 10,640 and 5,400 jobs.

An Alternative Version of Background (by Victoria Berry):

In addition to complying with policy 4.02 of the Local Coastal Plan, the city's adoption of an historic resource management plan would also positively impact at least five (5) other Key Issues and Policies contained within this Plan Morro Bay. 1. Population Growth. The City is currently predominately "built-out," meaning most of its land is developed, so making use of developed areas and adaptively re-using historic resources will enhance and maintain the city's current developments. 2. Commercial Fishing Industry. As noted in chapter 4 above, residents have expressed a strong desire to "preserve Morro Bay's legacy" and an Historic Resource Management plan is ideally suited to protect historic resources both immediately offshore (i.e. shipwrecks, old fishing boats) and onshore (piers, docks, boat yards). 3. Economic Development. For decades, studies performed nationwide have consistently shown that preserving and/or designating a community's historic resources increase land values, tourism dollars, and job creation, among other economic indicators. Also, if the city were to pass an ordinance on historic resource management and become a Certified Local Government, it would be able to apply for federal and state grant monies, technical assistance and to provide owners of historic resources federal and state tax incentives. 4. Downtown & Waterfront Connections. As stated in the Background of this chapter, "residents have expressed a strong preference to protect the positive qualities of the downtown waterfront districts" and revitalizing these areas through local, state and federal partnership grants and technical know-how will provide that protection while creating a healthier economy. An historic resource management plan would also help direct pedestrian orientation between and within these core locations. 5. Neighborhood Compatibility. Maintaining the feel of a neighborhood and the predominate architecture

of homes within a neighborhood are some of the goals of federal and state historic preservation.

Other comments, based on HSMB Board review and other expert reviewers:

The lack of an historic resource management plan precludes putting eligible resources on the Fed and state registers. Steps toward this in A – G points below.

The existence of a lot of cultural artifacts in this area suggests the importance of native American activity, and also points to needing to recognize it in our cultural preservation planning. Lack of reference to this is surprising in light of the good discussion in the Baseline Assessment, Chapter 4.

Depending on how you define “Morro Bay”, historic resources do exist (**certainly within the Planning Area**). As you note in the Baseline Assessment, the Rock itself was declared a California Historical Landmark in 1968. The State Campground on the southern border of the City includes significant, recognized CCC work. The power plant was an acclaimed modernist architectural achievement when it was built, and pioneered the use of aluminum siding, an innovative cooling system, and progressive design—this controversial building would be a slam dunk for the National Register.

Policy steps revisions (suggested by James Papp, historian and member of the SLO Cultural Heritage Commission):

- A. Form a cultural heritage commission
- B. Create preservation/adaptive reuse/design regulations and guidelines
- C. Create a local register
- D. Apply for CLG status
- E. Develop historic context statement
- F. Develop historic resources survey
- G. Participate in Mills Act

The Historical Society of Morro Bay is currently working on an inventory of significant buildings in the city, but this does not and should not deter from implementing these policy steps as outlined.

The HSMB is also working on the ‘Hidden History Project’ which involves researching numerous topics in Morro Bay history to create short histories for web publication and the creation of interpretive panels summarizing each topic. The panels will be located at points of historical interest, mostly in or near Old Town and Embarcadero sites. They will create an educational and interesting walking tour, and direct people to the website for more information. **A similar idea has surfaced in the Downtown/Waterfront planning process.**

Finally, “design guidelines” for some parts of Morro Bay, especially downtown and the Embarcadero, should incorporate historic styles, elements and design language wherever possible. Morro Bay is not a quaint New England seaport; it is a quaint WESTERN seaport with a rugged, pro-development past and a more restrained but still western, future.

The Historical Society has a large archive of photos over the past 150 years of growth in the city that can help with these design issues. Design guidelines for the Old Town and Embarcadero areas should be different (in styles at least, due to function differences) but incorporating our history circa 1870 to 1920 adds authenticity and charm to the developments in the areas.

15. Parking

At a recent joint Council-Planning Commission-Harbor Advisory meeting, one panelist (from the PC I believe) referred to autos as “the enemy.” I think this is a helpful way to look at this issue—cars are a necessary evil, so we should accommodate them as efficiently as possible without designing the whole built environment around them. Parking is storage of the auto beasts so humans can enjoy interacting with the values of Morro Bay directly, almost all of which are dependent on being outdoors or adjacent to outdoors.

Cars and people compete for space in our current arrangements. Our goal should be to get the cars to a limited number of locations where they can be stored out of sight while their users can walk to nearby places of interest. As I mentioned above in my comments on the DWSP, I think the circulation element is the key to helping us redefine our built environment to make it more attractive, more fun and more efficient.

To reiterate, for starters I would build a fixed parking structure to replace a substantial number of the spots on the Embarcadero (most if not all). Locating this structure

Paid surface parking would have to be widespread. Otherwise its main impact would be to create zones where no one parks because it's not free. Thus, you might have to meter the entire Embarcadero in order to get the same distribution of parked cars we now have. If a parking structure were built that eliminates a lot of Embarcadero parking, it would be reasonable to allow the first X hours free, with a nominal charge after that (\$1 per hour?).

Concentrating parking like this frees up scarce land for higher uses.

16. Viewsheds and Viewpoints

The Chevron presentation tempting MB with hillsides above Panorama as annexation bait should be ignored (I'm sure they will be). These areas should be designated as scenic viewsheds to help forestall development on the (potentially unstable) slopes above Laurel, Panorama, Blanca and Tuscan. Since annexation or SOI inclusion may obligate the city to provide services in these areas in the future, we are better off limiting development there by other means.

Similarly, the top of Cerrito Peak is highly visible from both north and south, and should be retained as a scenic asset. The city should adopt a policy that forbids development above the two large stucco houses already on the eastern slope of the peak, and limit future development to areas where structures already exist.

Sean Green's plea to keep the Embarcadero smaller and lower is valid. If we could replace cars with people and new construction on the east side of the roadway, we could more easily sustain the lower height development. (does anybody know the owner of the Blue Sail Inn, who apparently hates the City? That lot of his is an eyesore that begs for development, at least a garden as suggested in the DWSP)

Any design guidelines the city adopts will probably include the idea of "compatibility", and this should include height, mass and style restrictions (just as the current neighborhood compatibility guidelines do). View corridors as suggested in the baseline assessment (and by Sean Green!) are a good idea: "view" may not have economic value according to court decisions, but it does in real life.

The dilemma is that Morro Bay grew up as a small working town with small working family housing. All these small buildings! Today, the land value has soared and new construction tends to want to fill expensive land with lots more square feet. As Scot or someone pointed out during Sean Green's presentation, there is pressure to build UP on lots and on the Embarcadero for this reason.

These concepts should be incorporated in zoning to give them force of law, and require variances for exceptions. My concern about "guidelines" has always been whether they are enforceable without resorting to case-by-case legal action. The recent result denying an out of scale house at the top of Ridgeway has mollified me a bit, but views can be damaged by far smaller variances than that.