

Alternatives Analysis
City of Newport Beach Sunset Ridge Park Project
December 14, 2011

Alternatives Analysis for Vehicular Access:

This report supplements the project's certified EIR's Alternatives Analysis. Pursuant to the request of CCC Staff during the processing of CDP 5-10-168, the City commissioned a private civil engineering firm to prepare conceptual grading plans and exhibits to graphically illustrate the implications of an access road directly onto Park property from Superior Avenue. In addition, the City consulted with its City Traffic Engineer in confirming the infeasibility of an access road directly onto Park property from West Coast Highway.

- 1. Access Directly from Superior Avenue is Unsafe and Contravenes Coastal Act Policies for Minimizing Landform Alteration.*

Several factors were considered in ascertaining potential points of entrance and exit from Superior Avenue. These factors included: maintaining the existing Caltrans scenic easement which covers much of the southern half of the property, maximizing the lines of sight and deceleration distance, maximizing safe access and exiting movements to the extent possible, reviewing vehicle weaving and merging movements, preserving as much of the Park features as possible, maximizing safe stacking room on-site (i.e. minimizing stacking on Superior Ave.), ensuring access supports emergency and Fire Department vehicles, maintaining/accommodating pedestrian and bicycle sidewalk travel along southbound Superior Ave. and minimizing grading to the extent possible. These considerations resulted in two iterations as enclosed and labeled **Alternatives 1 and 2**.



Looking southbound on Superior Ave (northeast corner of City property where it meets the Newport Crest community on right side of photo)
[Source: City of Newport Beach, 2010]



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Alternative 1 provides a deceleration distance of 208 ft.; however, the distance required to safely stop a vehicle for entrance into the Park which is traveling at the average speed of 46 mph downhill along Superior Avenue is 480 ft. pursuant to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 2004 Edition. This is a deficiency of 272 ft. Moreover, the actual dedicated deceleration lane provided in this option is only 120 feet creating an unsafe scenario as southbound drivers are often traveling downhill much faster than the average 46 mph.

This exhibit also illustrates an unsafe stopping sight distance for southbound Superior Avenue drivers. As this Park will support youth athletic activities, although maximum on-site stacking/queuing room was provided, it is conceivable that on occasion there may be some stacking that spills onto Superior Avenue, especially near the starting time of athletic games or where pedestrians are crossing over the on-site access road (as the Superior Ave southbound sidewalk route has to be diverted onto the Park property). Thus, a distance of 450 ft. is required for a southbound driver to safely stop upon seeing an obstruction (i.e. stopped or slowed vehicle) in the road. The maximum feasible stopping distance provided is 220 ft. which is a deficiency of 230 ft. Fatalities have already occurred along this stretch of Superior Avenue over the years. Creating an unnecessary unsafe condition by placing points of ingress and egress off of Superior Avenue is inadvisable.

Providing an access point along this segment of Superior will also cause safety issues and potential accidents resulting from drivers exiting the park and attempting to make unsafe lane changes as they merge and weave into and across southbound travel lanes as they try to make left or U-turns at the West Coast Highway signal.

Alternative 2 provides a deceleration distance of 208 ft. as well, which is of course severely deficient from the 480 ft. required; however, unlike **Alternative 1**, there is virtually no dedicated deceleration space off of Superior Avenue resulting in even greater unsafe conditions for drivers entering the Park entrance point here and for drivers traveling southbound on Superior Avenue behind them. The stopping sight distance provided is also 220 ft. and therefore similarly substantially deficient in providing the required safe line of sight distance (450 ft.) for adequate stopping for road obstructions.

The primary differences between these two Exhibits pertain to the grading volume, on-site stacking lane configuration and pedestrian sidewalk impacts.

Both scenarios involve significantly more grading than the currently pending Park project proposes. **Alternative 1** would require 36,436 cy of additional export which results in 4,555 more off-site hauling truck trips (at a cost of \$910,900 to taxpayers). **Alternative 2**, which incorporates more linear initial stretch of the road to better accommodate potential stacking, would require 34,711 cy of additional export which results in 4,339 truck trips (at a cost of \$867,775). Both scenarios would also eliminate the currently proposed landscaped privacy berm designed to replace the existing block wall while reducing dirt export from the site (thereby reducing truck trips and costs) and to create a physical buffer for the residents in the community to the North per their previously stated wishes.

In addition, both scenarios will impact pedestrian sidewalk travel along Superior Avenue. Due to the already dangerous situation presented by drivers quickly having to turn into the Park access road off of Superior (due to the aforementioned inadequate/deficient lines of sight for decelerating/stopping), it is ill advised to have pedestrians traveling southbound on Superior Ave cross these points of entrance and exit. As a result, the Superior Avenue sidewalk will “detour” by entering the Park property and following the initial stretch of the access road with proposed crossways to then connect back to the sidewalk on Superior south of the Park exit lane. **Alternative 1** provides a shorter detour for pedestrians and **Alternative 2** provides for a longer detour onto the Park site.

Both scenarios have contemplated minimizing potential stacking onto Superior Avenue by cars entering the Park site. **Alternative 2** provides for a more linear initial stretch of road to maximize on-site stacking; however, as previously noted, the sacrifice associated with this element makes is a much shorter dedicated deceleration lane and a longer pedestrian sidewalk detour onto the Park property.

Not only is entrance to the Park off of Superior unsafe, so is exiting onto Superior. Due to the fast speeds drivers are traveling on downhill, **curved** Superior Avenue, drivers exiting the Park have to quickly accelerate to merge with oncoming speeding (46 mph average) southbound traffic.

Both scenarios will cause safety issues and potential accidents resulting from drivers attempting to make unsafe lane changes as they merge and weave into and across southbound travel lanes as they try to make left or U-turns at the West Coast Highway signal.

Providing park access off of Superior Avenue will result in the loss of 2 acres of public park space due to the fact that an access road engineered to minimize the aforementioned safety hazards and the aforementioned landform alteration necessarily results in a significant reduction in the amount of useable land for the proposed public park. Most notably, the public viewing/overlook area and Memorial Garden would be eliminated as would much of the pedestrian walking paths.

In approving the Park LUPA for the property in 2006, the CCC noted in its staff report the importance of this property in providing outstanding blue water viewing points for the public:

*“The site is located on an inland lot approximately ¼ mile from coastal waters. The property is made up of two elevated plateaus that offer blue water views above the intervening development across Pacific Coast Highway. As such, **this is a prime site for increased public recreational and viewing opportunities.** (Emphasis added)”*

“The majority of the site sits at a substantially higher elevation than the frontage road to the south (Coast Highway). The site offers sweeping views of the ocean and bay. The site is designated as a ‘public view point’ in the certified LUP.”

“The proposed land use change will ensure the preservation of the site...for some form of public viewing toward the coast.”

To require the loss of this prime elevated portion of the subject property for unique public viewing areas to accommodate an unnecessary and unsafe access road off of Superior

not only contradicts the CCC's aforementioned LUPA findings, but also contravenes Coastal Act Section 30251.

2. Access Directly from West Coast Highway

Caltrans Scenic Easement

Per the Director's Deed No. DD 040766-01-01 (attached) recorded on December 5, 2006 as Instrument No. 2006000813583 in the Official Records of Orange County, California conveying the 15.05 acres of State property to the City, the State specifically prohibited any rights of access to and from Pacific Coast Highway along the parcel frontage.

"There shall be no abutter's rights of access appurtenant to the above-described real property in and to the adjacent state highway over and across those portions of the northeasterly line of "new" Pacific Coast Highway ..." (Emphasis added)

Per the same Director's Deed (DD 040766-01-01), the State also expressly reserved an easement for "scenic view and open space purposes" on that portion of the property which abuts the entire PCH; this easement specifically precludes any structures, pavement or parking.

"Grantees use of said easement area shall be limited to those "permitted" uses under grantee's zoning designation Open Space – Active as defined under title 20 of grantee's zoning code as it existed on October 12, 2006. Additionally the grantee is prohibited from placing permanent structures or pavement within the easement area, and no parking or motorized vehicles shall be permitted within the easement area".

The State owns and retains jurisdiction over this portion of PCH and would need to review and approve any access to PCH. Even assuming that the afore-mentioned deed restriction could be purchased from the State, the State would likely deny any such request as it is the State's common preference for park access to be as far from the Superior signal as possible.

Infeasibility Due to Traffic, Circulation, and Design Constraints

Please find enclosed an alternative access plan (**Alternative 3**) for a driveway directly onto the City property from West Coast Highway which illustrates the inadequate and deficient lines of sight for deceleration and stopping for safe entrance into the City Park property. Please also find correspondence from the City of Newport Beach's Traffic Engineer Antony Brine in response to Banning Ranch Conservancy's (BRC's) assertions that safe access is feasible directly onto the City property from WCH.

As noted in Mr. Brine's statement, in the past two years alone, there have been a total of 24 vehicular accidents for westbound WCH traffic in the subject frontage area. This is of course without the addition of a Park access road in this already complicated segment of WCH. As Mr. Brine cautions:

"Deceleration into [BRC's] proposed driveway location would occur within an area that includes a lane drop, bicycle lane, and bus stop all simultaneously existing in the same short segment [i.e. 265 ft.] of westbound Coast Highway. Deceleration for westbound Coast Highway would need to begin prior to the Superior Avenue intersection. Because of the angle of the roadway, the advance visibility of the driveway for westbound traffic prior to the Superior Ave intersection is limited."

Construction of an access point along the park property frontage on WCH will result in a right turn-in and right- turn out access only. This design is anticipated to result in all park vehicular traffic having to conduct at least one u-turn movement on West Coast Highway when traveling to or from the park. Pursuant to State law, U-turns are not allowed at the intersection of West Coast Highway and Superior in the eastbound direction; therefore all park vehicular traffic will have to travel between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ miles further to next signalized intersection to complete a lawful U-turn as illustrated in the attached exhibit. Not only is this an inconvenience for Park users, this can create hazardous stacking conditions on Superior Avenue and West Coast Highway since the left turn lanes at these lawful U-turn points were not designed to accommodate more than several waiting vehicles.