

CITY OF SANTA CRUZ
Notice of Exemption

To: ☒ Clerk of the Board
County of Santa Cruz
Governmental Center
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

☒ Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: City of Santa Cruz, Public Works Dept., 809 Center Street, Room 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Project Title: West Cliff Drive Emergency Storm Damage Project

Project Address: 920, 932, and 1016 West Cliff Drive **Assessor's Parcel No.:** project is within the public right-of-way

Project Location: City of Santa Cruz

County of: Santa Cruz

Project Description:

Starting December 28, 2022, through January 2023, high wave events damaged several sections of coastline along West Cliff Drive, including along the public right-of-way across from 1016 West Cliff Drive. An estimated four to five thousand tons of riprap were dislodged into the surf zone and exposed the bluff slope beneath the road at 920, 932, and 1016 West Cliff Drive locations. Following this, more wave action and storm runoff further eroded the bluff, which resulted in damage and losses of WCD and the adjacent recreational multiuse pathway. This period was subsequently declared a California state disaster (DR-4683-CA) across Santa Cruz County by California Governor Gavin Newsom.

The 1016 West Cliff Drive site is located on West Cliff Drive between David Way and Woodrow Avenue. The other two sites, 920 and 932 West Cliff Drive are located east of Columbia Street. The City constructed gravity retaining walls at these three locations and filled a sea cave at 1016 West Cliff Drive as necessary to support construction. The City removed existing rock slope protection at 1016 West Cliff Drive, and repaired the adjacent multi-use pathways and roadways. The new wall facades are textured and colored to match surrounding bedrock formations. Additional information about the development at these sites is provided below.

920 West Cliff Drive

- 66-foot-long by 13-foot-wide (tapering to 1.5 feet at the top) gravity-retaining wall. The wall is 18 feet high, with an additional 4-foot-deep and 3-foot-wide keyway carved into the bluff below the toe of the wall along its flanks to prevent the wall from becoming outflanked by bluff erosion. The face of the wall was surfaced with textured concrete formwork, and the concrete was colored to mimic the natural bluff face adjacent to this wall.
- Existing rock slope protection (RSP) was replaced on both sides of the wall to prevent the wall from being outflanked by future coastal erosion.
- The public pathway and roadway were resurfaced and restored atop the armoring, and fencing was installed at the wall's seaward edge.

- New curb and gutter were installed.

932 West Cliff Drive

- 130-feet-long by 14-feet-wide (tapering to 1.5 feet at the top) gravity-retaining wall. The wall is 18 feet high, with an additional 4-feet-deep and 3-feet-wide keyway carved into the bluff below the toe of the wall along its flanks to prevent the wall from becoming outflanked by bluff erosion. The face of the wall was surfaced with textured concrete formwork, and the concrete was colored to mimic the natural bluff face adjacent to this wall.
- Existing RSP was replaced on both sides of the wall to prevent the wall from being outflanked by future coastal erosion.
- The public pathway and roadway were resurfaced and restored atop the armoring, and fencing was installed at the wall's seaward edge.
- New curb and gutter were installed.

1016 West Cliff Drive

- 110-feet-long by 10-feet-wide (base width) spread footing gravity-retaining wall. The wall is 12.5 feet high, with an additional 2-feet-deep and 1.5-feet-wide keyway carved into slurry cement backfill below the heel of the cantilever wall to secure it in place. The face of the wall was surfaced with textured concrete formwork, and the concrete was colored to mimic the natural bluff face adjacent to this wall.
- Existing RSP above the bluff was removed from this area since the wall was joined to the new 1030 West Cliff Drive wall upcoast and the newly replaced Bethany Culvert downcoast to prevent the new wall from being outflanked by future coastal erosion.
- The public pathway and roadway were resurfaced and restored atop the armoring, and fencing was installed at the wall's seaward edge.
- New curb (and gutter) installed.

The project includes best management practices (BMPs) to prevent erosion, sedimentation, and the discharge of pollutants during construction, protecting marine resources. For example, silt fences and catch basin protections were used for the duration of construction, and straw bales, pumps, curtain enclosures, and other containment/soaking devices were used in case of spillage. Additionally, to the extent feasible, construction took weather into account by scheduling excavation and concrete pours outside of forecasted rain events, high surf, high tide, and storms, and covering soil stockpiles and safely positioning equipment and materials at the end of each shift. The suite of BMPs ensured that no debris, soil, silts, sand, rubbish, cement or concrete or washing thereof, oil or petroleum products or other earthen material from any construction or associated activity were allowed onto the beach below or adjacent marine environment. Therefore, the project conforms to the applicable marine resources policies of the Coastal Act.

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: City of Santa Cruz Public Works Department

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: City of Santa Cruz

Exempt Status: (check one)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ☐ | Ministerial Project (Section 21080(b)(1); 15268). |
| ☐ | Categorically Exempt (Section 15301, 15303). |
| ☒ | Declared Emergency (Section 21080(b)(3); 15269(a)). |

- ☒ Emergency Project (Section 21080(b)(4); 15269(a) & (b)).
- ☐ Statutory Exemption (Code/Section _____).
- ☐ The project clearly will not have a significant effect on the environment (15061(b)(3)).

Reasons why project is exempt: CEQA provides "statutory exemptions" that are applicable to certain projects and activities, as granted by the Legislature. CEQA Statute Section 21080(b)(3) and (4) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15269 (a) and (b) allows exemption from CEQA for emergency projects under certain conditions.

920, 932, and 1016 West Cliff Drive failed during the January 2023 storms that were declared a disaster (DR-4683-CA) across Santa Cruz County. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(a), this project provides for the reconstruction of 920, 932, and 1016 West Cliff Drive, which was damaged as a result of a disaster in a disaster-stricken area in which a state of emergency had been proclaimed by the Governor. Thus, the project results in replacement of public facilities that were damaged beyond repair as a result of the declared state of emergency. Additionally, given that West Cliff Drive has been closed due to safety concerns associated with the failure of 920, 932, and 1016 West Cliff Drive, this important coastal public road is in danger of further erosion and storm damage.

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(b), this project provides for emergency repairs to publicly owned facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety or welfare. Since January 2023, the project site, which includes West Cliff Drive, has been closed to all vehicle traffic for public safety. This has necessitated a longer detour through the surrounding neighborhoods, including for emergency vehicles. Action was needed to reopen this stretch of West Cliff Drive to all modes of transportation, including emergency vehicles, to provide for facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety or welfare of the community.

Therefore, the City is able to document that the project qualifies for the Statutory Exemption found at CEQA Statute Section 21080(b)(3) and (4) and CEQA Guidelines 15269(a) and (b), which allows emergency projects under certain conditions.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Kevin Crossley _____

Phone: (831) 420-5164

Department: Public Works

Address: 809 Center Street, Room 201
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Signature: Hilary Papendian

Date: 10/22/2026

Title: Senior Resilience Planner

- ☒ Signed by Lead Agency
☐ Signed by Applicant

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a notice of exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Date Received for filing at County Clerk: _____

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____