

Date: August 6, 2026

To: Evan Ditmars, Project Planner
Santa Cruz County Community Development & Infrastructure Department
701 Ocean Street, 4th Floor
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Email: Evan.Ditmars@santacruzcountyca.gov

Subject: Written Objection and Response to Application #251501 – 625 Beach Drive, Aptos

Dear Mr. Ditmars,

We are the owners of 626 Beach Drive, the property immediately adjacent to the proposed development at 625 Beach Drive (Application #251501, APN 043-152-54). We respectfully request that this letter be included in the public record and correspondence for the upcoming Zoning Administrator hearing.

Support for Responsible Development

At the outset, we want to make clear that we are not opposed to the development of the property at 625 Beach Drive or to the construction of a new home. We strongly believe that property owners have the right to develop their own property within the recognized limits of the law and established local guidelines. Nonetheless, we have concerns about the numerous requested variances that impact our property and the property of others as expressed in other letters submitted related to this proposal. We submit the following comments and appreciate the opportunity to express our concerns.

1. Impact of the Proposed Structure on 626 Beach Drive

As the immediately adjacent property, our home at 626 Beach Drive will bear the most direct and significant impact of this proposed development. The Staff Report to the Zoning Administrator (App # 251501) acknowledges that the southeast elevation of the proposed structure - the wall directly facing our property - extends vertically approximately 22 feet from grade and spans nearly the entire width of the building area - approximately 75 feet in total. The Staff Report further acknowledges that this elevation "does not include wall plane variation, roofline variation, building modulation, or façade articulation" that could help reduce impacts on existing adjacent development.

While we understand that the RB zone district permits development at the property line, the Staff Report itself correctly notes that the ability to develop with a zero-lot-line condition does not mandate such a design. As we understand it, the portions of the structure that exceed the 17-foot district height limit and require a variance are entirely subject to discretionary review, including review for neighborhood compatibility.

We respectfully submit that an unbroken 75-foot-long wall rising 22 feet on the property line of our shared property line would significantly impair our property rights and degrade the light, air, open space, and privacy available to our property. For example, it would appear that the proposed development could not be built and maintenance could not be done on the side of the property facing our home without accessing our property.

We request that the Zoning Administrator consider alternatives, including that the applicant be required to incorporate modest setbacks from the shared property line, wall plane articulation, stepped-back upper levels, height in line with regulations, or other design measures on the proposed construction facing 626 Beach Drive to mitigate these impacts.

2. Height Variance and Impact Relative to 626 Beach Drive

The RB zone district prescribes a maximum building height of 17 feet for beach-side homes along Beach Drive. We understand that the proposed structure would reach approximately 22 to 22.5 feet, requiring a height variance of approximately 5 feet. Our home at 626 Beach Drive is a one-story structure, as are most of the homes on the ocean side of Beach Drive.

The proposed development would therefore significantly exceed the height of our home, creating an imposing and disproportionate wall immediately adjacent to our property. The Staff Report concedes that an alternative project design could likely reduce the overall height of the structure but argues that such a reduction "could compromise project design." We respectfully submit that the project could be re-designed in a way that conforms to the regulations and does not negatively impact our property to the degree the current design does. The Staff Report notes that the proposed project includes non-essential height features - including 12-foot ceilings and a rooftop deck - that exceed what applicable regulations actually require.

We request that the Zoning Administrator consider alternatives, including that the applicant be required to demonstrate that the requested height variance is limited to the minimum relief necessary to comply with existing regulations rather than reflecting personally preferred design choices that could be modified to reduce the impact on adjacent properties.

3. Cumulative Impact of Five Variances

We agree with, and join in, the concerns expressed by other neighbors that the proposal requires five separate variances from fundamental development standards governing height, number of stories, garage/carport setback, floor area ratio, and lot coverage.

We respectfully request that the cumulative impact of all five requested variances be considered, rather than evaluating each deviation independently. A proposal requiring five significant variances to achieve its intended size and configuration warrants adequate scrutiny, and the applicant should be required to demonstrate through

substantial evidence not only that each variance independently satisfies the required findings, but how the cumulative effect of the requested variances, when taken as a whole, would be in keeping with regulatory and neighborhood standards.

4. Design Review Deficiencies

The Staff Report acknowledges that the southeast elevation - the wall directly facing our property - does not achieve the same level of design compliance as the remainder of the structure. Despite acknowledging these deficiencies, the report concludes that the "overall" project satisfies the Design Review Ordinance. As the property most directly affected by these acknowledged design shortcomings, we respectfully request that the Zoning Administrator consider the unique impact of this variance on our property and consider requiring the applicant to address these deficiencies before any approval is granted.

Request

For the reasons outlined above, we respectfully request that the proposal be denied or delayed unless and until the applicant demonstrates, through substantial evidence in the administrative record, how the concerns raised above can be reasonably mitigated.

If the County determines that development of the property is appropriate, we respectfully request that Zoning Administrator consider requiring the applicant to redesign the project to reduce its height, mass, and bulk - and in particular to address the disproportionate impact on our immediately adjacent property at 626 Beach Drive - so that it more closely complies with the County's development standards and requires fewer variances.

Thank you for your consideration and for including our concerns in the public record.

Respectfully,

Owners of 626 Beach Drive