



## **Coast Range Chronicles 20: “Angry Town”**

by

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There’s a town along the California coast where everyone’s really angry. It’s one of the most beautiful places you’ll ever find: nice downtown, clean air, open space, great beaches and surf. You’d think the ionized salt air would calm people down a bit.

But everyone’s angry. It’s all about land use.

Developers conduct dubious studies claiming massive new subdivisions in outlying open space won’t impact native habitat, endangered species, and the already overburdened infrastructure. Busybodies snoop around for environmental code violations on tiny infill projects—one house on a weedy vacant lot surrounded by development—not because the land is ecologically important, but because a new house would block their ocean view. Well-intentioned but vaguely clueless bureaucrats wrestle with cryptic statutes and irate citizens. Busybodies hate the developers, developers hate the busybodies, and everyone hates the Planning Department.

Okay, as the biological consultant trapped in the middle of it all, I guess I'm a little angry too.

The town is worth preserving. It's worth fighting for. But not this way.

What's lacking is a coherent long term vision. What's lacking is recognition that scientific answers don't satisfy political questions. What's lacking is common sense.

It's an angry town.