

‘Innovation center’ proposed for NPS

By CHRIS COUNTS

TO BE better prepared for the myriad threats it will face in the future, the U.S. Navy is exploring the possibility of building a 289,916-square-foot Naval Innovation Center at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey — and is seeking public comments about the plan by March 25.

The center will be the first of its kind and will support efforts by “industry partners, faculty, staff and graduate students to find technological solutions to the challenges the Navy anticipates in the near and distant future.

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro noted that the school is located “right in the heart of our nation’s leading technology corridor” and “close to Silicon Valley.” As a result, its laboratories will enable researchers to “curate, ideate, prototype, experiment and transition cutting-edge processes and technologies.”

“This will serve as a premier military education facility tailored to innovation and experimentation, serving as a technology resource for Navy and Marine Corps war-fighting development commands — as well as a go-to partner of the defense industrial base, the technology sector and academia,” Del Toro said.

Three stories

Shaped like a giant “C” and featuring a strikingly modern look, the center would be three stories — about 62 feet — with a footprint of 96,000 square feet.

The building’s precise location hasn’t been determined. Six sites have been narrowed down to two top choices, with the leading candidate being what is called the Boiler Plant site. It’s located close to Del Monte and Sloat avenues at the southwest corner of the NPS complex.

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PHOTO/U.S. NAVY

Shaped like a giant “C,” the proposed Naval Innovation Center would be located near Del Monte and Sloat in Monterey.

Caltrans works on three Big Sur slides at once

■ Highway 1 closed more than a year

By CHRIS COUNTS

CREWS CONTINUE to work seven days a week to reopen Highway 1 in Big Sur, where, according to Caltrans, “three major slide locations” are preventing travel between Carmel and Cambria.

For now, slightly more than 12 miles of the scenic route is closed, but motorists traveling south from Monterey can access Big Sur businesses as far south as Esalen Institute. “The vast majority of Highway 1 remains open for travelers,” Caltrans reported this week.

The highway from Big Sur to Cambria in San Luis Obispo County has been closed since Jan. 4, 2023.

The northernmost challenge facing the state roads agency is the Dolan Point Slide, which is about 3 miles south of Esalen.

No access from 3 miles south of Esalen to the county line

Far-reaching housing plan on verge of being OK’d

■ Affordable units on Sunset parking?

By MARY SCHLEY

THE HOUSING plan that could drastically change the look and feel of Carmel-by-the-Sea raised a new alarm last week when language was added that appeared to commit the city to offloading its public lands for low-income housing.

The housing element, a state-required plan that outlines how the city will accommodate 349 new residences by the end of 2031, was subsequently tweaked by the Carmel City Council last week, is undergoing environmental review, and should receive further feedback from officials at the California Department of Housing and Community Development before the end of the month, principal planner Marnie Waffle said at the March 5 meeting.

‘Warehousing people’

The 476-page document has been in development for more than a year and was supposed to be approved by the council and certified by the state by Dec. 15, 2023, though a 120-day grace period pushed the deadline out to April 15. The city submitted its first draft last August, and it has undergone several rounds of revisions, with the state demanding “more robust follow-up actions on various programs,” as well as the addition of a half-dozen new ones.

The change that provoked the loudest outcry was the addition of target dates for leasing city-owned parking lots on

the north and south sides of Sunset Center and the Vista Lobos property on Torres between Third and Fourth. The document indicates 149 units could be built across the three sites, with 124 of them affordable and 25 designed for those with moderate incomes.

While those properties have been on the list of developable sites since last May, the target dates — including seeking development proposals by this fall, signing an agreement with a developer by fall 2025 and giving final approval in 2026 — rang alarm bells for many.

“The specifics have dramatically increased without

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AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY/MIKE BUFFO, HOUSE OF 8 MEDIA

The state-mandated housing plan identifies the north and south parking lots at Sunset Center as potential sites for affordable housing developments.

C.V. flood project to get \$3M from U.S. taxpayers

By CHRIS COUNTS

FLOOD CONTROL efforts at the mouth of Carmel Valley received a big boost Thursday when Congressman Jimmy Panetta announced that he has secured \$3 million in federal taxpayer funding for the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project — which is also known as the Carmel River FREE project.

“Finding the balance is necessary when it comes to safeguarding our community from flooding and protecting our natural environment,” Panetta said. “Through innovative projects and partnerships like Carmel River FREE, I’m ensuring the federal government is investing in local infrastructure initiatives that will not only better protect us against extreme weather events, but also enhance the natural beauty of our home. I was proud to fight for federal support for this project and look forward to continuing to work alongside local community leaders to ensure California’s

19th Congressional District remains a leader in sustainable infrastructure and conservation.”

One step closer

Rachel Saunders of the Big Sur Land Trust told The Pine Cone that the money from the feds brings the project a step closer to reality.

“The project cost is currently \$52 million,” Saunders

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SoCal businessman sues, claims he was victim

By MARY SCHLEY

THE SOUTHERN California real estate developer accused of beating up a downtown Carmel restaurant owner after taking his scooter on a joyride has countersued his accuser in Monterey County Superior Court, alleging that he, in fact, was the victim in the September 2022 altercation.

The defendant, Michael Tutelian, also late last year asked the court to set aside the criminal case against him for mental health reasons — a motion to which the restaurant owner, Giuseppe Panzuto, objected, and which Tutelian dropped in court Tuesday.

Tutelian, who was celebrating his 38th birthday at the time of the incident, was the only suspect police identified after an allegedly unprovoked attack on Panzuto and one of this employees, Jose Garcia, near the intersection of Monte Verde and Ocean the night of Sept. 1, 2022. Tutelian had allegedly taken Panzuto’s scooter,



Michael Tutelian

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