

# Bolinas Community Utility District Resident Permit Parking Plan Committee

## Report on Outcomes

August 2025

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**Target Area and Purpose**     *When you arrive in Bolinas, you enter a downtown with only two streets. After a few blocks they run into the Pacific Ocean, where they meet the sand and stop. Visitors bound for the beach drive through the heart of town, past the front yards, doorsteps and bedroom windows of residents who feel the daily surge of traffic most acutely. Nighttime parking restrictions in this area help ease these pressures, keep daytime access open, and protect the quiet, small-town character of Bolinas.*

## Background

In November 2019, the Bolinas Community Utility District (BCPUD) Board of Directors appointed a volunteer committee to explore the feasibility of a permit parking program for the residential section of downtown Bolinas.

After more than five years of discussion among community members and staff from several Marin County departments — including Public Works (DPW), Community Development (CDA), and the Marin County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) — with coordination by Supervisor Dennis Rodoni, we are now at the implementation stage of this program.

The committee's goal was to develop a parking plan more effective than Measure X, adopted by town vote in 2018 after six years of effort by community members. Measure X fell short of its goal to manage the high volume of visitors on downtown streets, prompting the search for a new strategy to meet the original intent of Measure X.

Over the years, with COVID in the background, seven Bolinas residents worked with the community and county agencies to create a program that addressed the need for management of street use by visitors. Efforts were shaped by Coastal Commission requirements for beach access and by the Sheriff's legal restrictions on enforcement. The legal restrictions were primarily as a result of a ruling by the Ninth Circuit of Appeals that limited actions the Sheriff could take to restrict overnight camping. Although the ruling was to protect the unhoused, it equally applied to anyone who wanted to vacation in their vehicle in Bolinas. A recent Supreme Court ruling has removed this restriction. The 72-hour requirement to move vehicles 500 feet passed by the county in April has given the deputies the ability to move people on. Usually initiated by complaint, it applies equally to all visitors and residents, while some of the unhoused receive special consideration because of personal issues.

Four current committee members were part of the Bolinas Community Coastal Alliance (BCCA) — an informal group of several dozen residents formed in 2018 to address the impact of traffic and parking problems experienced by downtown Bolinas residents. BCCA maintained an active mailing list of about 100 people and was able to gather letters of support when needed.

In the group's research with Marin County staff, we found that a permit parking program was likely to be acceptable to both the County and the Coastal Commission. Based on that information, we requested that BCPUD form this committee to study the option. This new committee reviewed permit programs in other California communities (primarily day-use programs) and identified additional street improvements that could be addressed through this process. We also documented what was beyond our capacity to accomplish.

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## What We Ended Up With

### Brighton Avenue

- A parking restriction from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. applies to the residential section of Brighton Avenue (30 addresses on one side of the street). A permit exempts your vehicle.
- No permit restrictions apply to the opposite (park) side, but the nighttime restriction on vehicles longer than 22 feet remains in place.
- The Sheriff's Office agreed to modify some requirements for Bolinas, but guest permits are not allowed, and each property is limited to two permits, with some exceptions.
- Given the strict requirements laid out by the county and the need to get feedback from residents, in May 2022, all households on the odd-numbered side (and one even-numbered residence) on Brighton Ave were contacted. Of 28 contacted, 21 responded, with 95% in favor.

### Wharf Road

- Eighteen households south of the Museum (toward the beach) are eligible for permits under the same nighttime restriction.
- The inland side near the beach is excluded from permit restrictions but has a 24-hour parking restriction for vehicles over 22 feet. Long vehicles are a safety hazard on narrow downtown streets, especially where pedestrians must walk in the roadway to reach the beach.

### Commercial Area of Downtown

- Unlike Measure X, which applied to all downtown streets, the new ordinances are targeted and specific. Permit restrictions apply only to certain residential sections leading to the beach.
- Measure X signage was removed.
- There are no vehicle length or overnight restrictions in the commercial section of Wharf Road (Museum to Brighton Avenue intersection) where businesses and multi-family housing are located.

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## Additional Achievements During the Committee's Tenure

- Created green short-term parking zones at the Market on Wharf Road and at the Post Office on Brighton Avenue.
- Installed a stop sign at Park and Brighton Avenue

- In April 2024, the County adopted an ordinance requiring vehicles in unincorporated areas to be moved at least 500 feet every 72 hours.
- DPW painted a bump-out on Brighton, in lieu of Stop Sign, as speed deterrent
- DPW walk-thru with suggested “Better locations of length restrictions / turn around

These steps have improved parking turnover, access, and public safety.

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## **Implementation**

Vehicle length ordinances required only new signage (two versions in different areas of downtown).

The permit program was more complex. BCPUD agreed to issue permits, which made the program possible. Staff developed processes and documents that met both MCSO and ordinance requirements while being clear to the community.

In May 2025, permits began to be issued. As of this date, 91 permits have been issued - the maximum allowed by the county. Special thanks to Belle Wood for guiding the process.

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## **Future Committee Role**

We recommend keeping the committee active for the next year to address four issues:

1. Signage – Particularly on Wharf Road, where ordinance signs must be installed after seawall repairs. DPW placed some signs far apart; effectiveness should be reviewed.
2. Enforcement – MCSO has begun enforcing the program, but we await details on frequency. Realistically, most enforcement occurs through complaints to the non-emergency number.
3. Permit Issuance – Ordinance language allows limited flexibility beyond the standard permit cap. The committee can assist if issues arise.
4. Traffic Resolutions – DPW can now modify parking and traffic rules through a Traffic Resolution rather than a new ordinance. Might be useful for extending vehicle length restrictions or hours for safety.

## **Beyond the Committee’s Current Mission**

During our work, we explored:

- Adding a stop sign at the entrance to town
- Striping Brighton Avenue, modifying diagonal parking and providing a center line for reference

- Providing pedestrian safety signage
- Hiring a seasonal Community Services Officer.
- Establishing a remote parking site with a shuttle (discussed but not advanced; still worth exploring for high-volume days)

The new ordinances have freed up some parking spaces during the day, formerly occupied by long-term parked cars, but vehicle volume especially on the weekends and holidays still far exceeds availability. Coastal Commission access requirements limit in-town day-use restrictions but encourage additional parking sites.

Other ongoing needs:

- Parking solutions for local workers and unhoused folks living in vehicles
- More Health & Human Services visits. Ask HHs to provide a “discreet” contact list.
- Speed humps or strips, designated pedestrian walkways, and general street maintenance
- Better visitor services and trash management, especially near beach entrances
- Clean-up along Brighton Avenue green space where parked vehicles leave debris and find a solution for the proliferation of storage vehicles on that street. Street cleaning 2 x a year by local waste hauler.

## Closing

As a county and regional recreation destination, downtown Bolinas feels the full impact of heavy visitor use but receives insufficient county support for maintaining its streets and public spaces. Being unincorporated, we have no direct way to provide this care ourselves. In its advisory role to the county for community matters, BCPUD is our voice, and in this role, its advocacy is essential to securing the resources our community needs. We urge BCPUD to remain steadfast in this role and to continue to press for the county’s active support of Bolinas when the need arises. We are deeply grateful to the BCPUD staff and Board of Directors for their support of the permit program—their willingness to take on the responsibility of issuing permits made this program possible.

Many improvements can be accomplished when neighbors organize. The speed humps on Wharf Road happened this way, and Brighton Avenue residents could follow suit. By working with DPW, there are many ways to slow traffic and improve safety. We hope residents will come together, as BCCA did in 2018 and as this committee and prior committees have done, to bring these issues forward — with BCPUD’s support for community-led initiatives.

For more information about these ordinances and their BCPUD history, please check [www.bcpud.org](http://www.bcpud.org). To see the historical link to these efforts [www.bolinasalliance.org](http://www.bolinasalliance.org) Submitted by the current members of the committee: Bruce Bowser, Chairman, Sherry Hirsch, Secretary, members Al Minvielle and Charles McParland

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