Contesting the Coast

A fictional coastal project and related stakeholder positions are described below. You will elaborate on your position in your presentation.

A New Hotel is Proposed in Small Coastal Town, CA:

A historic but dilapidated home on a coastal property has been sold to a new owner who would like to turn it into a small, luxury hotel and restaurant. The building had been home to a couple who allowed the public to pass along the edge of their property to reach a path to the beach behind the house. The new owners propose renovations that would not increase the footprint of the building but would include a new parking lot in front of the property and a fence around the perimeter. They plan to build a stairway to replace the dirt path leading to the beach. Their proposal includes an open gate during daylight hours, but at sunset would restrict access to the beach to hotel guests only. The owners propose replacing the current lawns with local native plants. The new parking lot would be equipped with solar-powered charging stations for electric vehicles and permeable pavement to allow rainwater to infiltrate into the soil rather than run off into the gutter. The hotel plans to hire twenty full-time employees from the local community. They are seeking a Coastal Development Permit from the California Coastal Commission.

**Permit applicants (owners):** The proposed project will bring needed jobs and tax dollars into the community. It will result in a structure and landscaping that will beautify the area. It will use environmentally friendly techniques and construction. The owners assert that the new limits on coastal access are needed for the hotel managers to properly secure the property after dark and for the hotel guests to feel safe. It is more than fair to allow public access during daylight hours.

**Mayor of the city:** The mayor is in support of this project, with the belief that the jobs and tourism it will bring to the community will help the economy. The renovation will also help improve the appearance of a prominent building in town, which had been ill-maintained for years.

**Chamber of commerce:** The business community is in favor of this project for the same reasons as the mayor. The hope is that a luxury hotel and restaurant will attract good publicity to the community and start a wave of new, upscale development which would in turn help raise existing property values.

**Local worker:** This local citizen is excited about new jobs in this small community, after having recently lost a service job. A few restaurants in town have closed over the last year and the new project presents needed employment opportunities.

**Native plant enthusiast:** The project will replace lawn with plants native to this coastal area. This change would benefit a local endangered butterfly species that depends on a particular native plant as a food source. The new landscaping could also serve as an example to the community of how they could convert their yards to environmentally-friendly, attractive, drought-tolerant plants.

**A local religious community:** This group regularly holds bonfires on the beach below the property as a communal and spiritual ritual. For years they have passed through this property with no objection from the owners. On a monthly basis they head down to the beach in the late afternoon and return after dark, so would be negatively impacted by the proposed gate-closure.

**Local historical society:** This building was constructed in 1895 and is considered by many to be a local treasure. The historical society argues that the home not be altered, but should be kept as close to its original state as possible and be opened to the public as a museum, with the existing beach access remaining unchanged.

**Youth group:** A local youth group wants the property turned into a hostel rather than a luxury hotel. They express that there are few coastal lodging options for middle and low-income visitors, and this home could serve that role in their community. They would like a place to host gatherings with groups from around the state where visitors from all backgrounds could experience the beauty of the coast.

**Surfers:** Local surfers love the waves below the proposed project and often make their way down to the beach before sunrise for the best waves and quality time before the work day begins. If the project is approved as described, their dawn patrols would be threatened by a locked gate.

**Neighbors:** A group of neighbors are opposing the project due to concerns about increased traffic and a fear of changing neighborhood character. They dislike the idea of a parking lot being constructed on their previously residential street. They worry that the new fence will obstruct the views of the ocean that they currently enjoy.