



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

Supervisor Laura Capps' 8 Point Isla Vista Bluff Safety Plan

Our county experienced a devastating loss over Labor Day weekend with the passing of Benjamin 'Benny' Schurmer in Isla Vista, age 19. Benny was a beloved member of the Ojai community, a thriving Santa Barbara City College Student, and a talented and loving young man with a bright future ahead of him. Tragically, he is one of 13 young people whose lives have been cut short by an accident involving the bluffs along Isla Vista.

The Office of Supervisor Capps is one hundred percent committed to doing what is possible to prevent another fatal fall. This plan is a culmination of the ideas from the following stakeholders:

- Isla Vista Community Services District (IVCSD)
- Families who have lost their children in accidents along the bluffs
- The Associated Students of UCSB
- Isla Vista property owners
- Law enforcement
- UCSB and SBCC
- Concerned citizens who have provided constructive ideas - including the 11,000 who have signed this petition: [Petition · Protect Young Lives in Isla Vista: Enhance Safety Measures at Dangerous Cliffsites · Change.org](#)

We are all dedicated to achieving a safer Isla Vista.

1. Fencing:

Stakeholders have conveyed that higher fencing is the top priority to prevent cliff falls. There are approximately 70 privately owned buildings on the coastal side of Del Playa and multiple County and Isla Vista Parks and Recreation parks. We will work closely with Planning and Development and Coastal Commission staff to expedite any necessary permitting.

We will work with the Isla Vista Community and the Board of Supervisor to:

- Height Requirement: Amend Santa Barbara County Code and Building Regulations to raise the mandatory height for railings and fencing along the bluffs in Isla Vista. Currently the minimum mandatory height is 4 feet. After hearing from the community, Supervisor Capps is suggesting a six feet minimum.
- County land + Private: The height change would apply to both county land and private property.

- Anti-climbing: Currently existing county fences are made with 'anti-climbing' material. We will inspect our fences to fortify these materials.
- Private property owners: To streamline this process for private property owners, we'll be providing incentives to make these changes as easy as possible to come into compliance.
- Supervisor Capps will bring these proposed regulatory changes to the Board of Supervisors for their consideration on November 7th.

2. Lighting

These fatal cliff falls occur at night. In the past, lighting has been objected to by neighbors who want to protect their coastal views. We believe there are innovative ways such as motion sensor lighting to protect coastal views while also potentially improving public safety.

- We are working with county staff to install innovative lighting along our fences. As a pilot, solar lights were installed on some signs already.
- We will work with property owners to incentivize this as well.

3. Warning Signs

Currently the county has placed many warning signs explaining the dangers presented by the cliffs. Unfortunately, these signs are often stolen and found on the walls of dorm rooms and I.V. apartments. Accidents happen at night then signs are not as visible.

- We are working with County Parks to install durable signage, ideally well-lit.
- As mentioned, the county has already initiated a pilot project to light some of the signs.

4. Bathrooms

We've learned that one reason for people to hop the fence and/or get too close to the edge is to urinate. More public bathrooms in Isla Vista has long been a priority for the Isla Vista Community Services District.

- Weeks ago, the Capps office put a porta potty at Walter Capps Park.
- IVCSB has allocated \$15,000 for more. Working with them, there are now 4 porta potties along Del Playa.
- We know there are issues with portable bathrooms and will pursue more permanent bathroom options.

5. Education

Isla Vista Community Service District has led the charge of educating students and the community about bluff safety. We are grateful to the media for providing such valuable information about these inherent dangers, and of course to the families of those who have died for the public service they have provided for us all.

- We will maintain our collaborative efforts with Santa Barbara City College, UCSB, and the Isla Vista Community Services District to both educate the community and further enhance existing initiatives.

6. Horticulture

It has been suggested that there is effective shrubbery that makes it harder for people to trespass where it is unsafe for them to be, due to thorns, prickles or other sharp characteristics.

- We are working with County Parks to explore the kinds of horticulture that can be planted that make it difficult to traverse.
- Once we have recommendations we will share this information with property owners for them to do the same.

7. Memorial

We support and envision a memorial for the 13 people who have died as a way to honor their life and serve as a powerful reminder for safety.

- Supervisor Capps is contacting the families to make sure they are comfortable with this idea.
- We are looking for who might want to sponsor this memorial.

8. Enforcement

There is a process already in place to address enforcement issues in Isla Vista as proposed by students, UCSB campus representatives, IVCSD and the I.V. Foot Patrol. We are supportive of this process and once it is finalized we look forward to helping with the implementation.

- With the IVCSD, the Sheriff's office and the community we are working to strengthen the tools they have to prevent unsafe situations from escalating into dangerous situations.
- This work began in early 2023.
- This process does not involve increase police presence in I.V. We support that.

Alcohol and Drug Use Considerations

It is essential to acknowledge that alcohol and drug use have played roles in some of the cliff falls that have occurred in Isla Vista over the years. Efforts to address these issues have included ongoing education and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting responsible behavior and personal safety, particularly during events like Deltopia and other gatherings. The presence of alcohol and drug use underscores the importance of increasing safety measures that can effectively deter individuals from accessing precarious areas along the bluffs, even when under the influence. Education alone, while valuable, may not always be sufficient to prevent accidents, especially when impaired judgment is a factor.

Therefore, it remains imperative to proceed with the proposed eight point plan as an integral component of our community's commitment to awareness and increased safety. This proactive approach not only addresses immediate safety concerns but also complements ongoing educational efforts by providing an additional layer of protection to residents and visitors, regardless of their state of sobriety or awareness.



Second District Supervisor
Santa Barbara County