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Tough Conversations About Climate Change Planning in California.

The nature of sea-level rise is such that it threatens whole regions at once, with no respect for municipal boundaries. But in most cases, local communities are left to develop their own strategies for addressing the threat. And the decisions they make, based on local concerns about environmental conditions and property rights, have ramifications that spread out to neighboring cities and towns.

The coastal city of Del Mar, California, in San Diego County, is currently facing that challenge. Last week, the Del Mar city council, which represents about 4,300 residents, [voted against](#) including the strategy of “managed retreat” in its long-term Sea-Level Rise Adaptation Plan.

Managed retreat refers to a simple concept that can be very complicated in practice: abandoning land and sometimes developed property in coastal areas as the sea rises. It’s considered a last resort for sea-level rise adaptation. While the city had initially [included the strategy](#) in its plan last month, the city council ultimately decided to strike it from the documents after residents objected that it would sink the values of their properties overnight.

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