



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Community Development and Infrastructure

Subject: 2025 Miscellaneous Amendments

Meeting Date: May 20, 2025

Formal Title: Consider approving in concept an "Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz Amending Santa Cruz County Code Chapters 12.10, 13.10, 13.20, 14.01, 15.10, 16.42, and 18.10, and Amending the Zoning Map to Change the Zoning of Parcel APN 070-281-01, to Ensure Compliance with State and Federal Law and to Improve Clarity, Accuracy, and Consistency within Santa Cruz County Code", confirm the proposal is exempt from requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, and take related actions

Recommended Actions

1. Hold a public hearing to consider proposed amendments to the Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC), General Plan/Local Coastal Program (LCP), and proposed Zoning Map amendment;
2. Adopt a Resolution amending General Plan/LCP Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5;
3. Approve in concept an "Ordinance of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Cruz Amending Santa Cruz County Code Chapters 12.10, 13.10, 13.20, 14.01, 15.10, 16.42, and 18.10, and Amending the Zoning Map to Change the Zoning of Parcel APN 070-281-01, to Ensure Compliance with State and Federal Law and to Improve Clarity, Accuracy, and Consistency within Santa Cruz County Code";
4. Determine that the action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3);
5. Direct the Clerk of the Board to publish and post the Notice of Proposed Ordinance Summary pursuant to applicable legal requirements;
6. Direct the Clerk of the Board to schedule second reading and final adoption of the Ordinance on June 10, 2025; and
7. Direct staff to submit the proposed amendments to the General Plan/LCP and coastal-implementing code amendments to the California Coastal Commission for certification.

Executive Summary

The proposed amendments to the Santa Cruz County General Plan/LCP and various County Code chapters are part of an ongoing effort to update and improve the County's regulatory framework, ensuring consistency with current policies, legal requirements, and land use goals. The proposed amendments include updates to Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5 of the General Plan/LCP, as well as changes to SCCC Chapters 12.10, 13.10, 13.20, 14.01, 15.10, 16.42, and 18.10. Additionally, a Zoning Map amendment is proposed for parcel APN 070-281-01 to correct a mapping error and align the Zoning and General Plan land use designation. The Board is requested to hold a public

hearing, consider the Planning Commission's recommendation, and approve the proposed amendments.

Discussion

The proposed amendments to the Santa Cruz County General Plan/ LCP and various County Code chapters are part of an ongoing effort to update and refine the County's regulatory framework to address evolving legal changes, inconsistencies found by staff and applicants, and changes necessary for internal consistency. These amendments will ensure consistency with current policies and improve clarity and functionality across the County Code and General Plan/LCP. Changes to SCCC Chapters 13.10, 13.20, 15.10, and 18.10 also represent amendments to the County's Local Coastal Implementation Plan. As such, these amendments will require certification by the California Coastal Commission following the County's adoption.

General Plan/Local Coastal Program Amendments

Minor amendments to the County's General Plan/LCP are proposed in the following chapters: Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2: Built Environment Element, Chapter 3: Access + Mobility Element, and Chapter 5: Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation Element. The amendments include corrected references to the County's latest Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) replacing the old 2013 Climate Action Strategy (CAS), along with one incorrect County Code Chapter reference in the Built Environment Element. Proposed amendments to the General Plan/LCP Chapters can be seen within the attached Resolution.

Santa Cruz County Code Amendments

Amendments are being proposed to County Code Chapters 12.10, 13.10, 13.20, 14.01, 15.10, 16.42, and 18.10, including various sections within each of these chapters. The detailed sections and the proposed language changes can be found in the attachments, including the draft ordinance, the table of changes, and the strikethrough text attachment.

The amendments include removal of the term "Level" in the Code, as this is an outdated term following the Sustainability Update. Several definitions throughout the County Code have been updated for added clarity and consistency. The County's Electrification Code has been slightly revised to confirm that electrification of new residential is not mandatory, as recent case law struck down such requirements (new ordinance provisions are under consideration as part of the CAAP implementation). SCCC Section 13.10.616(E), which was inadvertently removed through the Sustainability Update, is proposed to be re-adopted back into County Code with no changes. Lastly, the calculation for residential densities is proposed to now be rounded up when a calculation results in a partial unit. This reflects current practice and mirrors density bonus law.

Two of the proposed County Code amendments are worth highlighting to provide additional detail:

- SCCC 14.01.504, 14.01.512, and 14.01.630:
 - 14.01.504 Removes grading requirements tied to Final Subdivision Maps and allows staff to concurrently process and permit grading prior to final map approval.

- 14.01.512 Removes the requirement that grading plan and improvement plans must not be permitted prior to recording the final map.
- 14.01.630 Removes grading from the extension or tolling of the expiration of Tentative Maps.
- SCCC 18.10.320:
 - The second notable amendment is to SCCC 18.10.320, now proposed to be titled “Appeals of staff determinations.” These amendments clarify which types of administrative appeals are heard by the Planning Director and which are heard by the Planning Commission, in accordance with State law.

Zoning Map Amendment

A specific parcel (APN 070-281-01) is proposed for rezoning to ensure consistency with its General Plan designation, existing land use, and the surrounding neighborhood character. This rezoning is necessary to allow the property owner to pursue a proposed project that is currently submitted. The current Light Industrial (M-1) designation would be amended to Residential Agriculture (RA) to align with both the General Plan designation of Mountain Residential (R-MT), and the rezoning will ensure that the zoning accurately reflects the General Plan's intent.

Planning Commission Hearing

At the April 9, 2025, Planning Commission public hearing, the Commission considered staff's presentation and recommendations on the General Plan/LCP, County Code, and Zoning Map amendments. The Commission recommended Board of Supervisors approval, including specific support for the clarifications on the removal of grading requirements tied to Final Subdivision Maps, the appeals of staff determinations, and the proposed rezoning of APN 070-281-01.

Public Comment

No public comments were made during the Planning Commission public hearing on April 9, 2025. In addition, no public comments have been received by staff to date.

Local Coastal Program Consistency

The proposed amendments to the General Plan/LCP and SCCC Chapters 13.10, 13.20, 15.10, and 18.10 would apply within the Coastal Zone and will be incorporated into the County's Local Coastal Program and implementing ordinances. After adoption by the Board of Supervisors, staff will submit the approved amendments to the Coastal Commission for review and approval within the Coastal Zone. The proposed amendments within the coastal zone do not promote conversion of agricultural lands, conflict with coastal access, or with protected resources. Coastal Commission staff have conducted a preliminary review of the proposed amendments and do not anticipate any issues with certification.

General Plan Consistency

The proposed amendments to Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5 of the County General Plan are minor and involve correcting outdated references. These amendments will align and strengthen the objectives, policies, general land uses, or programs outlined in the General Plan. Amendments to the SCCC are also consistent with, and implement, the General Plan.

Environmental Review

Adoption of these amendments would be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the "common sense" exemption. The amendments and rezoning are minor in nature and will not have a significant effect on the environment. A Notice of Exemption has been prepared by staff and is attached for the Board of Supervisors' determination.

Financial Impact

The proposed amendments do not result in a financial impact to the General Fund.

Strategic Initiatives

Operational Plan - Operational Excellence

Climate Action - Government Operations

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Recommended By:

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Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.