

# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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## PLANNING DEPARTMENT

701 OCEAN STREET, 4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060  
(831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TIDD: (831) 454-2123

KATHLEEN MOLLOY, PLANNING DIRECTOR

[www.sccoplanning.com](http://www.sccoplanning.com)

**Date:** July 1, 2020  
**To:** Agencies and Interested Persons  
**Lead Agency:** County of Santa Cruz  
**Contact:** Stephanie Hansen, AICP, Principal Planner  
Santa Cruz County Planning Department  
701 Ocean Street, Fourth Floor  
Santa Cruz, California 95060  
**Subject:** Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Scoping Meeting  
**Project Title:** Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update  
**Project Applicant:** County of Santa Cruz Planning Department

In implementing its duties under Section 15021 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the County of Santa Cruz (as Lead Agency) has determined that it will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update (Sustainability Update or proposed project). In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, the County has prepared this Notice of Preparation (NOP) to provide responsible and trustee agencies, as well as other interested parties, with sufficient information about the proposed project and its potential environmental effects, in order to provide input on the scope of the EIR. The EIR will address all topics listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, as further discussed below.

As specified by the CEQA Guidelines, this NOP will be circulated for a 30-day period, which starts on July 2, 2020 and concludes on August 3, 2020, during which time the County welcomes input from responsible and trustee agencies and interested members of the general public. Please respond with written comments regarding the scope and the content of the EIR as it may relate to your agency's area of statutory responsibility or your areas of concern or expertise. Agencies may need to use the EIR prepared by the County when considering permits or other approvals for the proposed project. If agencies send no response by the end of the review period, the County may presume that the agencies have no comment to make regarding the scope of the EIR. Comments may be submitted in writing or via email to:

Stephanie Hansen, AICP, Principal Planner  
Santa Cruz County Planning Department, 701 Ocean Street, Fourth Floor  
Santa Cruz, California 95060  
[CEQA-NEPA@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:CEQA-NEPA@santacruzcounty.us)

**Written responses are due within 30 days of the receipt of this NOP, as provided by State law.** As such, written responses are requested to be received by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, August 3, 2020.

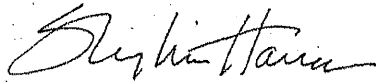
Agencies and interested members of the public are invited to attend a **Public EIR Scoping Meeting** on July 21, 2020, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. This meeting will include a brief overview of the proposed project and EIR process and allow time for oral comments on the scope of the EIR. Due to public health concerns, the scoping meeting will be a web-based video conference; please use the following link to obtain directions for joining the meeting:

[https://dudek.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_OltBnHfeSZKIVGYzlpQQew](https://dudek.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_OltBnHfeSZKIVGYzlpQQew)

This NOP and EIR information are available for public review online at the following web address: <http://sccoplanning.com/PlanningHome/Environmental/CEQAInitialStudiesEIRs/CEQADocumentsOpenforPublicReview.aspx>

More information about the proposed project is available at the following web address: <https://www.sccoplanning.com/sustainabilityupdate>

The proposed project, its location, and potential environmental effects are described on the following pages.



Signature

Stephanie Hansen, AICP

Printed Name

July 1, 2020

Date

Principal Planner

Title

#### ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The County of Santa Cruz does not discriminate on the basis of disability, and no person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied the benefits of its services, programs, or activities. If you are a person with a disability, specifically a communication disability, and you would like to request a reasonable modification or accommodation to fully participate in the meeting via videoconference or telephone, please contact the Planning Department at (831) 454-3137 or [Bernice.shawver@santacruzcounty.us](mailto:Bernice.shawver@santacruzcounty.us) at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting to discuss your accessibility needs. Persons with disabilities may request a copy of the agenda and presentation in an alternative format.

#### Introduction

The purpose of an EIR is to inform decision makers and the public of the significant environmental effects of the proposed project. The EIR process is intended to provide environmental information sufficient to evaluate a project and its potential for significant effects on the environment; discuss

methods of reducing or avoiding adverse environmental impacts; and consider alternatives to the proposed project. Prior to taking any action on the proposed project that relies upon the EIR, the Board of Supervisors must, at a public meeting, certify that the EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA and reflects the independent judgment of the County. Separate notices of the availability of the Draft EIR for public review and comment, the Final EIR, and of the hearings on the project will be released at later dates.

The EIR will be prepared as a "program" EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. A program EIR may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related geographically, by similar environmental effects, as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions. A program EIR can be used as part of the environmental review for later individual development projects to be carried out pursuant to the project previously analyzed in the program EIR, where impacts have been adequately addressed in the program EIR. The CEQA Guidelines encourage agencies to tier the environmental analyses that they prepare for separate but related projects, including general plans, zoning changes, and development projects.

### **Project Location**

The proposed project includes unincorporated lands within the County of Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz County is located between the San Francisco Bay Area on the north and the Monterey Peninsula on the south, and is the second-smallest county in California, containing a total of 446 square miles. Four cities are located within the county: Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, and Watsonville. Figure 1 shows the county's regional location. Five major state highways connect Santa Cruz County with adjacent counties, including San Mateo, Santa Clara, San Benito, and Monterey counties. Highway 1 is located along the coast from San Francisco south to the cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola, and Watsonville, and then on to Monterey. Highway 9 traverses the county from the City of Santa Cruz through the rural villages of Felton, Ben Lomond, and Boulder Creek. Highway 17 crosses the Santa Cruz Mountains into Santa Clara County passing through the City of Scotts Valley. To the south, Highways 129 and 152 join the City of Watsonville with neighboring San Benito and Santa Clara Counties.

### **Project Setting**

The physical environment of Santa Cruz County is characterized by diverse natural features and topography, containing the forested Santa Cruz Mountains in the north and northeast, the mid-county coastal terraces where a large portion of the county's population is located, and the alluvial south county which is predominately in agricultural use. The county is adjacent to the Monterey Bay.

The County maintains a distinction between urban and rural areas through the use of an Urban/Rural Boundary. As shown in Figure 2, the Urban/Rural boundary is represented by an Urban Services Line (USL) and Rural Services Line (RSL). Urban concentrations of development are located within the four incorporated cities in the county and in the unincorporated areas of Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, and Freedom. In addition to the areas within the USL, there are also urban enclaves (located outside the USL) which are recognized as having urban densities which may or may not have all urban services. These enclaves are defined by an RSL and include the communities of Davenport, Boulder Creek, Boulder Creek Country Club, Bear Creek Estates, Ben Lomond, Felton, Paradise Park, La Selva Beach,

Place de Mer, Sand Dollar Beach, Canon del Sol, Sunset Beach, Pajaro Dunes North, and Pajaro Dunes South.

## Project Description

The proposed project is the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update of the County's General Plan/Local Coastal Program (LCP) and County Code. The County's existing General Plan/LCP was adopted in 1994 with a focus on preserving natural and agricultural resources and limiting urban expansion outside the USL. After more than 25 years, the General Plan/LCP requires updating to define a more sustainable growth pattern for the future. The broad sustainability goals of the proposed project include updating the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation strategies of the General Plan/LCP and County Code to:

- Incorporate a new planning horizon for population, housing, and employment growth, consistent with Measure J<sup>1</sup> growth management principles and with the Sustainable Community Strategy for the region as prepared by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG);
- Reflect the sustainability vision and guiding principles of the Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan (SSCC), accepted by the Board of Supervisors in October 2014, as well as the County Strategic Plan (2018) goals of Attainable Housing, Reliable Transportation, Dynamic Economy, Sustainable Environment, Comprehensive Health & Safety, and Organizational Excellence;
- Ensure compatibility with land use and transportation planning principles that support reduction of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Define new land use designations to increase housing choices and workplace flexibility;
- Update and modernize the County Code permit procedures and development standards;
- Adopt Countywide Design Guidelines and special Guidelines for the Pleasure Point and Portola Drive Commercial Corridor;
- Align with recent changes in state law, such as Senate Bill (SB) 375 (the Sustainability Communities Strategy) and SB 1000 (Environmental Justice), among others.

The proposed project arises in part from the SSCC completed in 2014 and accepted by the County Board of Supervisors as a planning and feasibility study. The SSCC describes a vision, guiding principles, and strategies to achieve a more sustainable development pattern in the County with a focus on land use, mobility, housing choice, economic vitality, and urban design. In concert with the SSCC strategies, the General Plan/LCP and County Code revisions also are intended to mitigate climate change, support multimodal transportation, support local agriculture and preserve agricultural land, update commercial zones to support evolving business needs and local job creation, and modernize the land use permit framework and types of uses allowed within various zone districts.

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<sup>1</sup> Measure J is a 1978 voter initiative that established a comprehensive growth management system, provided for affordable housing, distinguished between urban and rural lands, and protected the County's agricultural lands and other resources; it is codified within Title 17 of the County Code.

The proposed project consists of four key components that are further described below:

1. General Plan/LCP amendments to goals, objectives, policies, and programs and text revisions to five chapters:
  - Chapter 1: Introduction
  - Chapter 2: Built Environment (formerly Land Use)
  - Chapter 3: Access + Mobility (formerly Circulation)
  - Chapter 5: Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation (formerly Conservation and Open Space)
  - Chapter 7: Parks, Recreation + Public Facilities

The above-listed General Plan/LCP elements to be amended will join three other existing elements that have already been updated, which will then comprise the entirety of the General Plan/LCP: Chapter 4 Housing (2016), Chapter 6: Public Safety (2020), and Chapter 8: Noise (2019). The current Chapter 8: Community Design Element will be combined with the Built Environment Element.

2. County Code amendments primarily for Title 13—Planning and Zoning Regulations and Title 18—Procedures, but also within Title 14—Subdivision Regulations, Title 15—Community Facilities, and Title 16—Environmental and Resource Protection in order to ensure regulations incorporate current State law and modern practices, and are internally consistent;
3. Adoption of Countywide Design Guidelines, as well as guidelines for special areas such as the Pleasure Point and Portola Drive Commercial Corridor;
4. Land Use and Zoning Map amendments. Selected property-specific rezonings would include implementation of map corrections identified in past years (e.g. within the General Plan Annual Reports), as well as selected analysis of certain opportunity sites such as the large vacant property located at Soquel Drive and Thurber Lane, and selected vacant and underutilized properties along the Portola Drive commercial corridor.

**General Plan/LCP Amendments.** The proposed project includes amendments to the Introduction and several elements of the General Plan/LCP. An overview of the General Plan/LCP text changes is provided below.

- **Chapter 1: Introduction:** The Introduction will be updated to incorporate a new framework for community planning — particularly a vision for land use and transportation improvements that support sustainable communities concepts developed during the extensive public visioning completed during the development of the SSCC. This vision recognizes the continued validity of the Measure J growth management principles, while promoting a new vision for sustainable development within the county's urbanized areas.
- **Chapter 2: Built Environment Element:** The existing Land Use and Community Design elements will be combined in a new "Built Environment Element." The new element will incorporate the land use vision and recommendations of the SSCC, including goals, policies, and implementation strategies that encourage sustainable development in the county's urbanized areas and strengthen the connection with multi-modal transportation planning to develop sustainable urban neighborhoods while protecting natural resources. The amendments will establish a new

residential land use designation and corresponding zoning district—Urban High Flex (Residential Flex Zoning District)—which would allow a mix of residential units at higher urban densities (from 22 up to 45 dwelling units per acre). The proposed project includes identification of disadvantaged communities and incorporation of appropriate goals and policies to address environmental justice.

- **Chapter 3: Access + Mobility Element:** The existing Circulation Element will be renamed and revised to address the transportation system needed for sustainable development, including a functional street classification system to reflect the SSCC vision of a layered network approach to achieve multi-modal transportation and complete streets. The amendments will incorporate planned transportation and trail projects associated with regional transportation plans, as well as those proposed in the SSCC, including a potential overcrossing of Highway 1 in the Soquel area and another in the Aptos area to promote greater north-south circulation. The amendments will update policies regarding level of service and vehicle miles traveled (VMT), including thresholds for establishing impact significance under CEQA. The amendments also will consolidate and update coastal access policies.
- **Chapter 5: Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation Element:** The existing Conservation and Open Space Element will be renamed and amended to address ancillary and support uses in agricultural zones and agricultural buffers; amend timberlands policies; update surface water, and groundwater resource policies to reflect current surface water and groundwater conditions protection and the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014; update other resource management regulations consistent with current state law and practice; and clarify the sections of Highway 1 that are considered locally scenic.
- **Chapter 7: Parks, Recreation + Public Facilities Element:** The Parks, Recreation + Public Facilities Element amendments will update recommended park acquisitions and development priorities to reflect current plans and existing conditions; update coastal access points; and update goals, policies, and implementation strategies related to schools, public safety, utilities, wastewater, water purveyor, and telecommunications planning efforts.

**Santa Cruz County Code Amendments.** The proposed project includes amendments to the Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC) to implement the General Plan/LCP amendments, including sustainable and compact urban design principles in the SSCC, and modernize development code requirements and procedures. The proposed amendments include changes to SCCC Title 5 – Business Regulations, Title 12 – Building Regulations, Title 13 – Planning and Zoning Regulations, Title 14 – Subdivision Regulations, Title 15 – Community Facilities, Title 16 – Environmental and Resource Protection, and Title 18 – Procedures. A full list of the proposed SCCC amendments is provided in Attachment 1, and generally includes the following:

- Revisions regarding uses in existing districts (agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, parks and open space, public and community facilities), including new agri-tourism uses;
- Establishment of new zone districts (including “Work Flex” [C-3] and “Residential Flexible” [RF]);

- Update of regulations/standards, including agricultural zone and timber preserve zone district uses, vineyard and winery changes, temporary uses and special events (e.g., commercial weddings in various zone districts, as well as non-commercial community special events);
- Update and consolidation of transportation demand management, access and circulation, and parking codes;
- Reference to adopted Countywide Design Guidelines, and to policies and guidelines of other town and area plans, such as for the Pleasure Point and Portola Drive Commercial Corridor Design Guidelines; and
- Revisions to simplify and modernize permit nomenclature and procedures.

**Countywide Design Guidelines and Special Area Policies and Guidelines.** Countywide Design Guidelines will generally address concepts related to the bulk, massing, site design, and street relationships of new residential, mixed-use, and commercial developments. The Countywide Design Guidelines, as well as other special area visions, policies, and guidelines from existing area and town plans, and for the Pleasure Point and Portola Drive Commercial Corridor, will be incorporated by reference into the General Plan/LCP and/or County Code and Countywide Design Guidelines as appropriate.

**Portola Drive Corridor and Streetscape.** The proposed project includes re-configuration of the Portola Drive public right-of-way between 26<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenues to reduce the number of vehicle travel lanes from the existing four lanes to three lanes, with widened bicycle lanes with other landscaping and pedestrian amenities, and which may include round-about(s) or traffic signal (41<sup>st</sup>/Portola).

**Parcel-Specific Land Use and Zoning Map Amendments.** The proposed project includes General Plan Land Use Map and Zoning Map amendments to a limited number of selected parcels, including key opportunity sites and key parcels along transportation corridors, including the property located at the northeast corner of Thurber Lane and Soquel Drive and opportunity sites along the Portola Drive Corridor. The proposed project includes rezoning of some parcels to eliminate inconsistencies between General Plan Land Use Map designations and zone districts associated with mapping errors in the 1994 General Plan (or before).

Additional proposed project information can be found online at the following web address:  
<https://www.sccoplanning.com/sustainabilityupdate>

### **Potential Approvals and Permits Required**

Discretionary County approvals required for the proposed project include a General Plan amendment, LCP amendment, and Santa Cruz County Code amendments, as well as adoption of the Countywide Design Guidelines.

Other required approvals and/or permits include approval of an LCP amendment by the California Coastal Commission.

## Potential Environmental Effects

The County has determined that an EIR is the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed project. Pursuant to CEQA and California Code of Regulations (CEQA Guidelines) Section 15064, the discussion of potential project effects on the environment in the EIR will provide a discussion of all topics listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, including the topics listed below. Topics of particular concern include aesthetics, land use, population and housing, transportation, and public services and utilities, including water demand and supply.

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Energy
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

The analysis for all topics will address direct and indirect impacts of the proposed project, as well as cumulative impacts. Consistent with Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines, cumulative impacts will be discussed where the incremental impact of the proposed project is cumulatively considerable when combined with other area projects. The EIR will also evaluate the potential for the project to induce growth. In accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project capable of meeting most of the project objectives and that would avoid or substantially lessen any potential significant effects identified for the proposed project.



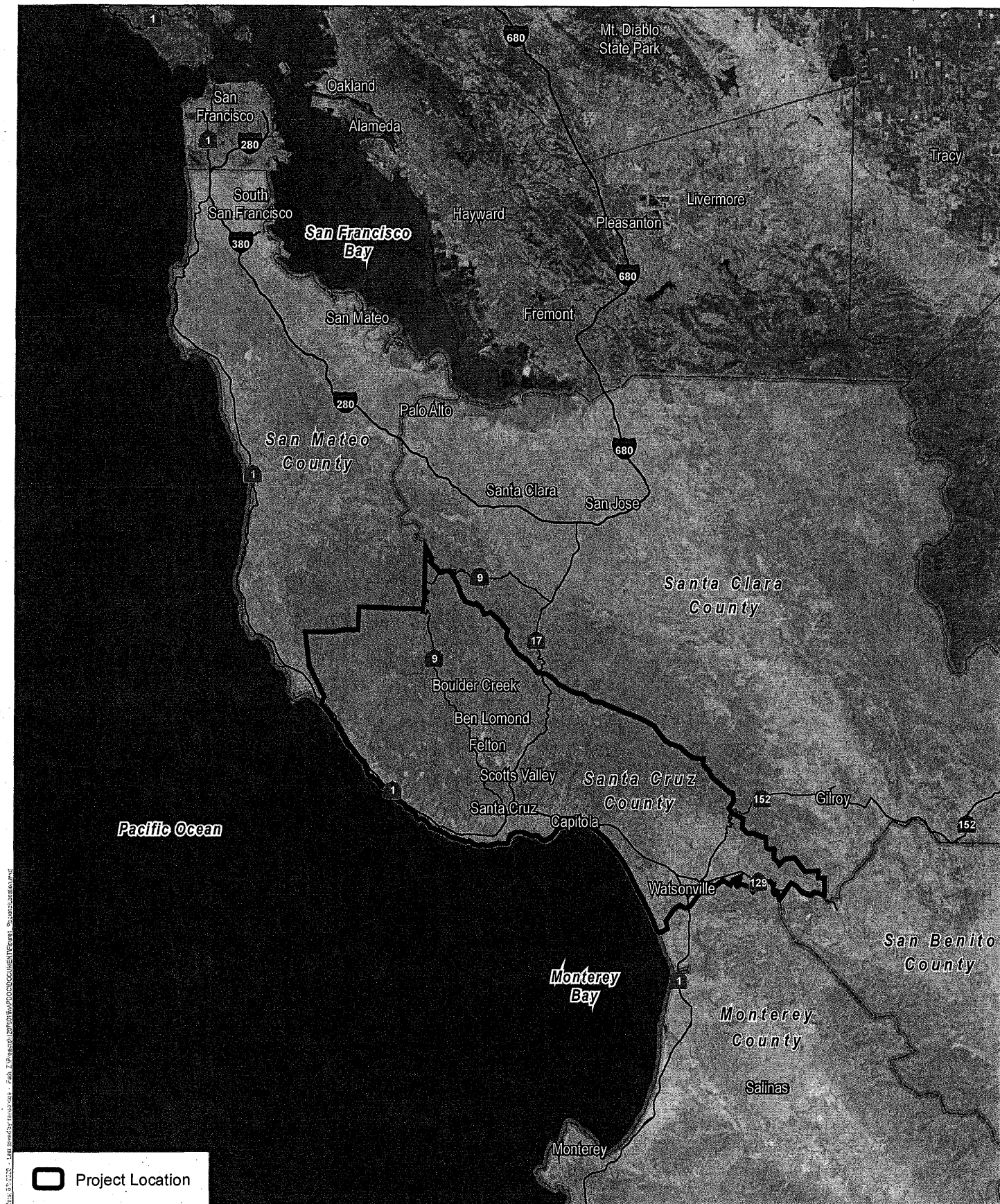
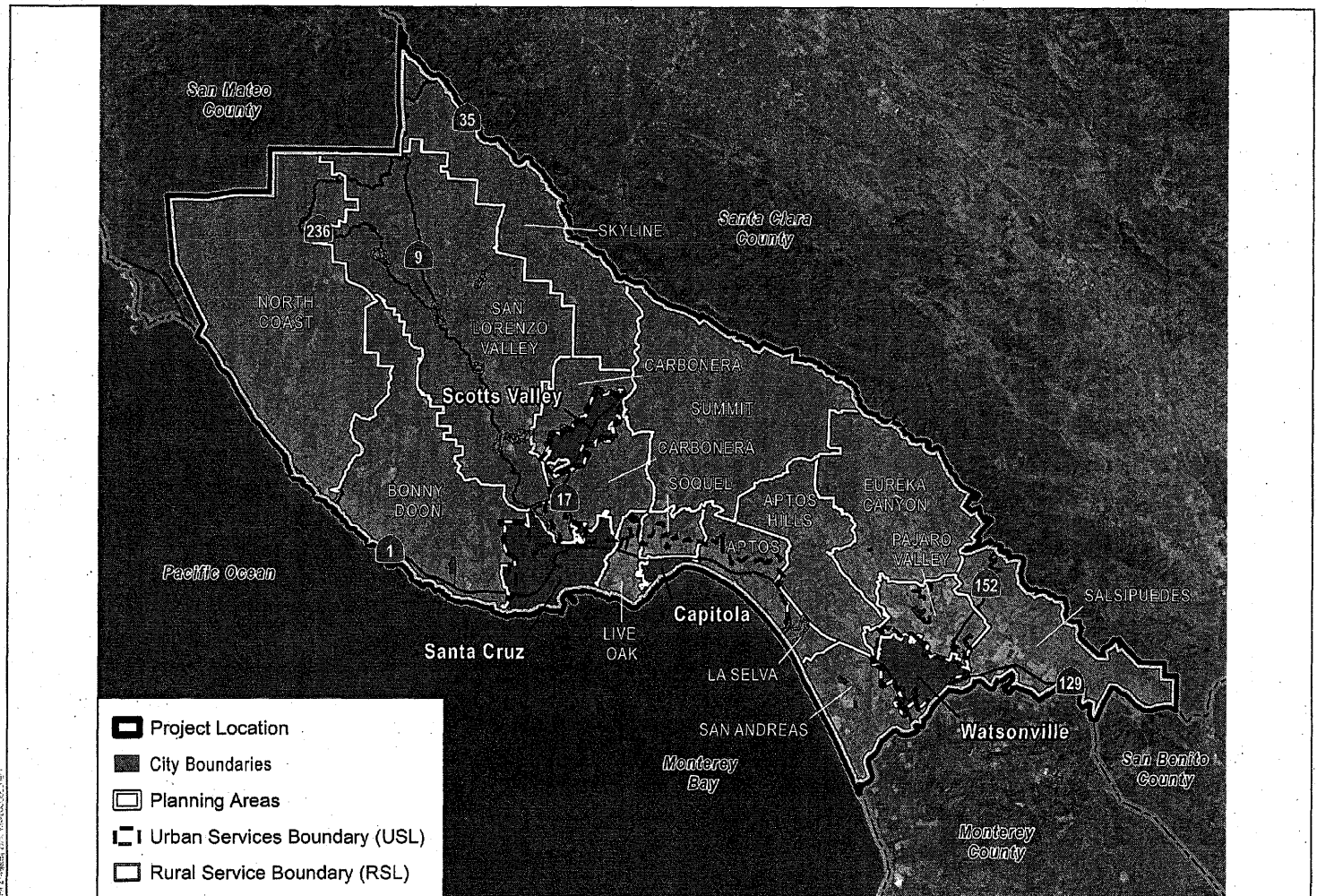


FIGURE 1

# Regional Location

County of Santa Cruz Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update



SOURCE: County of Santa Cruz Planning Department

**FIGURE 2**  
County Planning Areas and Urban / Rural Service Lines  
City of Santa Cruz Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update

# **ATTACHMENT 1**

## **Proposed County Code Amendments**

### **SCCC Title 5—Business Regulations**

- Update the trip reduction ordinance in SCCC Chapter 5.52 to modernize transportation demand management requirements

### **SCCC Title 12—Building Regulations**

- Revise building permit procedures in SCCC Chapter 12.10 to ensure consistency with new zoning procedures in SCCC Title 18
- Remove local solar access requirements in SCCC Chapter 12.28 to ensure consistency with state law

### **SCCC Chapter 13.10—Zoning Regulations**

- Administration and permit procedures
  - Modify various code sections to organize, clarify and amend permit processing procedures
- All zone districts
  - Update permit types, clarify coastal zone permitted uses and appeal procedures
- Agricultural Zone Districts:
  - Update uses allowed, development standards, and permit requirements in agricultural zones
  - Detail requirements for permanent and temporary fencing for agricultural uses
  - Amend regulations for agricultural processing and storage, agricultural service establishments, agriculture within structures, greenhouses
  - Add new standards for wineries, breweries, and distilleries in residential and agricultural zone districts
  - Add agri-tourism and education regulations
  - Add provisions for temporary produce sales
  - Add provisions for temporary landfills and wastewater treatment
- Residential Zone Districts
  - Establish new Residential Flexible (RF) zone that can be available for opportunity sites and areas along transportation corridors, to offer greater intensities of residential development
  - Revise development standards to make more efficient use of land within multi-family residential (RM) zones
  - Revise density standards for urban residential development to allow the number of units to be calculated using gross acreage (instead of net acreage) to encourage the more efficient use of urban lands
  - Establish a density unit structure to encourage the development of smaller dwelling units and discourage the development of overly large units on urban lands
  - Add new standards for small lot single family developments to accommodate development on small urban lots
  - Make minor adjustments to single family (R-1) development standards to ensure appropriate scale of development
  - Clarify and simplify floor-area ratio (FAR) calculations

- Commercial Zone Districts
  - Update allowed commercial uses
  - Update development standards for commercial zones
  - Provide regulations for mixed-use development
  - Incorporate standards for the new Workplace Flex Zone District (C-3)
  - Establish regulations for drive-up service windows
  - Provide regulations for mixed medical uses
- Public Facilities Zone District
  - Incorporate new Medical Mixed-Use as a special use in the PF zone, including taller building heights (60 feet) to accommodate elevators and other mechanical equipment
- Timber Production Zone District
  - Add master plan requirements
- Temporary and Secondary Uses
  - Establish new regulations and permit requirements for temporary uses, including commercial weddings on private residential properties and for other non-commercial community events
- Animal Regulations
  - Revise regulations for large and small animals
  - Clarify regulations for animal hospitals and kennels
  - Update definitions
  - Update and add definitions used in the Code
- Parking Regulations
  - Update and Consolidate parking standards

### **SCCC Chapter 13.11—Site, Architectural and Landscape Design Review**

- Incorporate use of new Countywide Design Guidelines, as well as Special Area Guidelines
- Establish consolidated site development permit requirements based on physical development rather than use
- Parking Regulations
  - Update and Consolidate parking standards

### **SCCC Chapter 13.16—Access, Circulation and Parking**

- Establish a new chapter, consolidating access, circulation, and parking standards that currently exist throughout the County Code
- Revise parking standards to conform with industry accepted standards to ensure appropriate parking requirements
- Update the County's Transportation Demand Program to ensure impacts related to vehicle travel are mitigated appropriately

### **SCCC Title 14—Subdivision Regulations**

- Update requirements in SCCC Title 14—Subdivision Regulations as needed to ensure compliance with State law and current practice, and for internal consistency with other amendments to General Plan/LCP and County Code

**SCCC Chapter 15.10—Community Facilities**

- Update roadside improvement requirements in SCCC Chapters 15.10, and other changes as needed to ensure compliance with State law and current practice, and for internal consistency with other amendments to the General Plan/LCP and County Code

**SCCC Title 16—Environmental and Resource Protection**

- Update and consolidate design standards in SCCC Chapter 16.20 for rural private roadways and driveways
- Update SCCC Chapter 16.50 to clarify existing agricultural land preservation standards
- Update requirements in SCCC Title 16—Environmental and Resource Protection as needed to ensure compliance with State law and current practice, and for internal consistency with other amendments to General Plan/LCP and County Code

**SCCC Title 18—Procedures**

- Revise and reorganize permit processing, including simplification and modernization of permit approval levels