

ATTACHMENT 1: FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL

2023-2031 Housing Element Update

Case No. 22GPA-00000-00002

1.0 CEQA FINDING

- 1.1 The Board of Supervisors (Board) finds the proposed project exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3). CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. Please see Attachment 2, Notice of Exemption.

2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE FINDINGS

2.1 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT FINDINGS

Findings required for all Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, Development Code, and the County Zoning Map. In compliance with County of Santa Barbara (County) Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) Section 35.104.060, prior to the approval or conditional approval of an application for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, Development Code, or Zoning Map, the review authority shall first make all of the following findings as applicable:

2.1.1 The request is in the interests of the general community welfare.

The Board finds the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment to adopt the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update (HEU) is in the interests of the general community welfare. Santa Barbara County is experiencing one of the nation's most severe housing crises, including high costs, inadequate supply, and overcrowding. As required by State housing element law, the HEU includes goals, policies, programs, and actions to help meet existing and projected housing needs for all residents in the unincorporated county, including residents in all income levels. In addition to fostering an adequate supply of housing, the HEU promotes housing and land use strategies that address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, promoting higher-density and infill housing for lower and moderate-income workers in the South Coast will reduce daily commutes and vehicle miles traveled. Therefore, adoption of the HEU is in the interests of the general community welfare, and this finding can be made.

2.1.2 The request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the requirements of State planning and zoning laws, and this Development Code.

The Board finds that the HEU is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the requirements of State planning and zoning laws, and the Land Use and Development Code.

Chapter 5, Housing Plan and Resources of the HEU contains goals, policies, and programs to help meet the housing needs of all segments of the community and

comply with State housing element law. The goals and policies establish principles and set the foundation for future decisions and actions. Examples include “Promote new housing opportunities throughout the unincorporated county” (Policy 1.1), “Preserve the affordable housing stock” (Policy 4.1), and “Promote the inclusion of affordable housing units as part of residential land use and development (Policy 6.2). The goals and policies address housing and, where they relate to provisions in other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, were written to be consistent with these provisions. Examples include “Promote housing opportunities near employment centers through regional and local planning efforts, including updates to the Comprehensive Plan and County Code [e.g., zoning ordinances]” (Policy 1.3) and “Identify and, where feasible, eliminate or reduce governmental constraints to the development of housing” (Policy 5.2). As a result, the HEU’s goals and policies are in the public interest and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, including the Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP) and community plans, and zoning ordinances.

The HEU’s programs contain specific actions to implement the goals and policies. As with the goals and policies, the programs and their accompanying actions are limited to housing-specific topics and complement or have little or no effect on provisions in other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Examples include “Annually, meet with housing developers and large employers to explore opportunities for affordable housing for the workforce” (Program 6), “Annually, permit approximately 100 [accessory dwelling units]” (Program 10), and “By the end of 2025, amend the County’s zoning ordinances to comply with current changes to [State Density Bonus Law]” (Program 13).

Most programs are in-and-of-themselves consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. For example, Program 1 may require the County to rezone some sites within the Urban Areas of Eastern Goleta Valley from agricultural use to high-density residential use. The Eastern Goleta Valley Community Plan (EGVCP) includes a policy that calls for the preservation of urban agricultural lands to the extent feasible (i.e., EGVCP Policy LUA-EGV-1.5). Another related policy lists circumstances when County decision-makers may allow the conversion of urban agricultural lands to another use, such as, in part, when decision-makers find that there is an overriding public need for conversion to other uses (i.e., EGVCP Policy LUA-EGV-1.6). County decision-makers could therefore make this finding consistent with this policy based on the current housing crisis and State housing element law that requires the County to rezone sufficient land to accommodate its RHNA.

Some programs may conflict with the Comprehensive Plan depending on how they are implemented but are nonetheless mandatory under State housing element law. For example, some of the potential rezones in the North County would allow more residential development than permitted in the Orcutt Community Plan’s Key Site policies and development standards. In these instances, the County would need to amend the existing provisions of the Comprehensive Plan to achieve consistency with the HEU’s programs and State housing element law. Implementation of the programs will be separate projects subject to separate decision-maker review and approvals, at

which time decision-makers will need to make findings that the programs are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. As a result, the HEU's programs and actions would ultimately be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, including the CLUP, community plans, and zoning ordinances.

The HEU is consistent with State planning and zoning laws. Government Code (GC) Section 65588 requires that each jurisdiction update its Housing Element every eight years. The County prepared the HEU pursuant to GC Sections 65358 and 65580 et seq. The California Department of Housing and Community Development (State HCD) reviewed the HEU and reported its findings to the County in a letter dated October 16, 2023, pursuant to GC Section 65585(b). State HCD's letter states "The revised draft element meets the statutory requirements that were described in HCD's June 30, 2023 review. The housing element will substantially comply with State Housing Element Law (Gov. Code, § 65580 et seq) when it is adopted, submitted to and approved by HCD, in accordance with Government Code section 65585." Thus, the HEU is in compliance with GC Section 65588 and other relevant sections of State housing element law.

2.1.3 The request is consistent with good zoning and planning practices.

The Board finds that the HEU is consistent with good zoning and planning practices. The County developed the HEU through well-established zoning and planning practices. In general, the County applied State statutory requirements and State HCD's technical guidelines, including *Building Blocks: A Comprehensive Housing Element Guide and Housing Element Sites Inventory Guidebook*. County staff began the housing element planning process by compiling information on population, socioeconomic characteristics, housing characteristics, housing production, land use, and other key factors. Staff used this information and public input to identify existing and projected housing needs and issues. Chapter 5 of the HEU contains goals, policies and implementation programs and actions. The County developed these provisions to address specific housing needs in the unincorporated areas of the county. In part, the HEU promotes programs and actions that update existing zoning code provisions and land use designations to help increase the housing supply, such as allowing more diverse housing types and more efficient and higher density residential development. The programs and actions also foster infill development, inclusionary housing, and siting new residential development near existing services, utilities, and public transit. Therefore, the housing element planning process and adoption of the HEU are consistent with good zoning and planning practices, and this finding can be made.

2.1.4 The request is deemed to be in the public interest.

The Board finds that the HEU is deemed to be in the public interest. The State has identified the availability of decent and suitable housing for every Californian as a "matter of vital statewide importance and a priority of the highest order" [GC Section 65580(a)]. The State has also declared that "local and state governments have a

responsibility to use the powers vested in them to facilitate the improvement and development of housing to make adequate provision for the housing needs of all economic segments of the community.” [GC Section 65580(d)] To that end, the County prepared a HEU that includes goals, policies, and programs that focus on removing barriers to housing development, furthering fair housing, and facilitating housing development for all segments of the community, including households with special housing needs (e.g., seniors, farmworkers, and persons with disabilities). Therefore, it is in the public interest to adopt the HEU, as all residents of the county deserve access to high-quality, affordable housing, and this finding can be made.