

**ATTACHMENT J: MONTECITO PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT
AND ATTACHMENTS, DATED OCTOBER 7, 2025**

MONTECITO PLANNING COMMISSION

Staff Report for Ordinance Streamlining and Housing Accommodation Amendments

Hearing Date: October 15, 2025

Staff Report Date: October 7, 2025

Case No.: 25ORD-00007 & 25ORD-00008

Environmental Document: Notice of
Exemption

Deputy Director: Alex Tuttle

Division: Long Range Planning

Planner Contact: Ben Singer

Planner Contact Phone #: (805) 568-2025

1.0 REQUEST

Hearing on the request of the Planning and Development Department to consider the following:

- Case No. 25ORD-00007: an Ordinance Amendment to Article II, the Coastal Zoning Ordinance, to streamline and modernize the ordinance and implement and modify standards for housing accommodation;
- Case No. 25ORD-00008: an Ordinance Amendment to the Montecito Land Use and Development Code to streamline and modernize the ordinance and implement and modify standards for housing accommodation; and
- Determine the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3), 15168(c), and 15265, as outlined in the Notice of Exemption included as Attachment B.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION AND PROCEDURES

Your Commission's motion should include the following:

Case No. 25ORD-00007

1. Make the required findings for approval, including California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) findings, and recommend that the County Planning Commission make the required findings for approval, including CEQA findings, and recommend that the Board of Supervisors make the required findings for approval, including CEQA findings, of the proposed amendments, Case No. 25ORD-00007 (Attachment A);
2. Recommend that the County Planning Commission recommend that the Board determine the amendments are exempt from environmental review pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3), 15168(c), and 15265 (Attachment B); and
3. Adopt a resolution (Attachment C) recommending that the County Planning Commission recommend that the Board approve Case No. 25ORD-00007, an ordinance amending Article II, the Coastal Zoning Ordinance, to streamline and modernize the ordinance and implement and modify standards for housing accommodation.

Case No. 25ORD-00008

1. Make the required findings for approval, including CEQA findings, and recommend that the Board make the required findings for approval, including CEQA findings, of the proposed amendments, Case No. 25ORD-00008 (Attachment A);
2. Recommend that the Board determine that this ordinance is exempt from environmental review pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15168(c) (Attachment B); and
3. Adopt a resolution (Attachment D) recommending that the Board approve Case No. 25ORD-00008, an ordinance amending the Montecito Land Use and Development Code to streamline and modernize the code and to implement and modify standards for housing accommodation.

Refer back to staff if the Montecito Planning Commission takes other than the recommended action for appropriate materials and findings.

3.0 JURISDICTION

3.1 Case No. 25ORD-00007

The Montecito Planning Commission is considering the proposed Coastal Zoning Ordinance (CZO) amendment pursuant to Santa Barbara County Code Section 2-25.2. The Santa Barbara County Code states that the Montecito Planning Commission, as the designated planning agency for the unincorporated area of the County located within the Montecito Community Plan Area, may provide recommendations to the County Planning Commission on proposed amendments to the CZO that will affect the Coastal Zone portion of the Montecito Community Plan Area.

3.2 Case No. 25ORD-00008

The Montecito Planning Commission is considering the proposed Montecito Land Use and Development Code (MLUDC) amendment pursuant to Santa Barbara County Code Section 2-25.2. The Santa Barbara County Code requires that the Montecito Planning Commission, as the designated planning agency for the unincorporated area of the County located within the Montecito Community Plan Area, provide recommendations regarding proposed amendments to the MLUDC to the Board.

4.0 ISSUE SUMMARY

The Planning and Development Department has undertaken a series of zoning ordinance amendments to update, modernize, and improve the County zoning ordinances in three phases. Phase I included amendments to the outdoor lighting standards, sign standards, and Shopping Center zone district, and was completed earlier in 2025. Phase II consists of the amendments described in this staff report and the attachments. Phase III includes further amendments to streamline the process and identify more projects that can be processed ministerially, and is currently in development.

The Phase II amendments serve two purposes: amendments to modernize and streamline the ordinances; and amendments to accomplish the housing accommodation actions of Program #1 and Programs #16 of the County's 2023-2031 Housing Element Update. A public workshop with the Montecito Planning Commission was held on September 24, 2025, which provided a comprehensive overview of the proposed ordinance amendments. For more in-depth descriptions of the proposed amendments, see Sections 5.1 and 5.2, below.

5.0 PROJECT INFORMATION

5.1 Ordinance Streamlining Amendments

The amendments to streamline the ordinances are divided into two main parts. Descriptions of the parts and key examples of the changes are listed below. For more detailed summaries of the proposed amendments and references to the sections and pages being amended, see the Ordinance Amendment Summary (Attachment E). For complete draft text amendments, see Attachments C-1 and D-1 for the CZO and MLUDC, respectively.

A. Removing redundancies and simplifying and standardizing language.

These amendments include revisions throughout the MLUDC and CZO to remove redundancies, revise standards and applicability for clarity, remove obsolete provisions, and to simplify and standardize language. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **MLUDC Section 35.422.060 (Resource Protection Zone Findings for Project Approval).** This section requires that the standard findings for approval of a Conditional Use Permit are made in the Resource Protection Zone. It is redundant with Section 35.472.060.E (Findings required for approval of Conditional Use Permits other than Conditional Use Permit applications submitted in compliance with Chapter 35.438 (Sign Standards)), and is therefore deleted.

- **MLUDC Section 35.430.050 (Density).** This section discusses the ability to reduce or increase the densities specified in the County Comprehensive Plan. It is obsolete and no longer generally applicable, and is therefore deleted.
- **MLUDC Chapter 35.436 (Parking and Loading Standards).** This chapter provides the requirements for parking and loading areas related to development. It is revised to clarify applicability, remove redundant language, and improve functionality.
- **MLUDC Chapter 35.500 (Definitions) and CZO Division 2 (Definitions).** These sections define terms used in the ordinances. They are revised to update definitions for clarity.
- **CZO Section 35-150.1 (Voter Approval).** This section provides requirements related to voter approval for changes to any onshore support facility for offshore oil and gas activity. This section has expired, and is therefore deleted.

B. Revising permit procedures and administrative provisions.

These amendments revise procedures, processes, and administrative provisions to standardize, streamline, simplify, and clarify portions of the permit review process. In some cases, this includes downshifting the decision maker from the Montecito Planning Commission to the Director. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Similar Use Determinations.** Revisions to allow the Planning and Development Director (Director) to make similar use determinations in all zones, rather than allowing them only in certain zones upon the approval of the Montecito Planning Commission;
- **Director Deferral to the Montecito Planning Commission.** Revisions to allow the Director to elevate projects customarily under the jurisdiction of the Director to the Montecito Planning Commission when it would serve public interest and with applicant consent;
- **Design Review.** Revisions to 1) create new exceptions to Design Review for accessory structures that are less than 500 square feet and located behind another building or on the rear half of the a lot, 2) to set the order that Design Review approvals happen, and 3) to clarify the appealability of Design Review approvals such that when a project (i.e., discretionary permit) has been approved by the applicable decision maker, preliminary approval by the Montecito Board of Architectural Review cannot be appealed unless it does not substantially conform to the approved project;
- **Coastal Development Permits and Land Use Permits.** Revisions to 1) create a category of Coastal Development Permit which cannot be appealed to the Montecito or County Planning Commission, 2) remove Land Use Permits from the CZO and eliminate the need for a Zoning Clearance in addition to a Coastal

Development Permit for discretionary approvals, and 3) clarify when a Land Use Permit or Zoning Clearance is required in the inland area;

- **Modifications.** Revisions to make the Director the decision maker for Modifications, downshifting from the Montecito Planning Commission;
- **Permit Expiration and Time Extensions.** Revisions to standardize the expiration date of permits to four years after approval, unless there is an approved phasing plan. Additionally, revisions to Time Extensions so that the Director is the decision maker for all Time Extensions (rather than the original decision maker), make the action ministerial (i.e., no noticing required, and the Director's decision is not subject to appeal);
- **Noticing.** Revisions to consolidate and standardize noticing requirements across permit types;
- **Changes to approved projects.** Revisions to clarify the procedure for minor changes to approved projects and set Zoning Clearances as the follow-up permit to Substantial Conformity Determinations, rather than Land Use Permits; and
- **Permit lapse and revocation.** Revisions to remove language that automatically nullified lapsed permits after a certain amount of time, and new requirements for how and when the County can revoke permits.

5.2 Housing Accommodation Amendments

The housing accommodation amendments primarily revise the development standards of the County's zone districts to facilitate housing development, consistent with Program #1 and Program #16 of the County's 2023-2031 Housing Element Update. Program #1 requires, among other things, that by July 2026, the County must revise the development standards (e.g., height, lot coverage, and open space requirements) to ensure that maximum densities can be achieved. Program #16 requires, among other things, that within three years of the Housing Element adoptions, the County must modernize the multifamily residential and commercial zone (e.g., allow mixed uses) districts to facilitate the development of multifamily housing and to implement new state laws which streamline the approval process for housing in commercial zones. To satisfy these requirements, the proposed amendments focused around different zone districts. Examples are listed below. For more detailed summaries of the proposed amendments and references to the sections and pages being amended, see the Ordinance Amendment Summary (Attachment E). For complete draft text amendments, see Attachments C-1 and D-1 for the CZO and MLUDC, respectively.

A. All zone districts.

- **Setbacks.** Setback requirements are simplified for clarity and consistency;
- **Design review.** Design review requirements are standardized;

- **Building separation.** Building separation requirements are addressed in the County Building Code, and are therefore proposed to be removed from the zoning codes;
 - **Condominiums.** Redundant and unnecessary optional conditions for condominiums are removed; and
 - **Affordable housing incentives.** Some affordable housing incentives are obsolete from current programs and proposed standards, and are therefore removed.
- B. Residential zone districts.** The amendments to residential zone districts are specific to the Design Residential (DR) and Planned Residential Development (PRD) zone districts, unless noted otherwise.
- **Site coverage.** The maximum site coverage limit is eliminated to achieve allowable densities; and
 - **Open space.** Requirements for open space are amended to provide a certain square footage per dwelling unit rather than a percentage of the overall site, establish how much open space must be private or common, describe how it can be configured, and set standards for usability and accessibility.
- C. Commercial zone districts.** The amendments to commercial zone districts to accommodate mixed-use development are specific to the Neighborhood Commercial (CN) zone district.
- **Mixed-use development.** The allowed density of mixed-use development is revised to 20 dwelling units per acre, rather than a floor area limit of two bedrooms per 1,000 square feet of commercial development, and residential components are required to be located on an upper story or behind a nonresidential use;
 - **Front setbacks.** The front setback requirement is reduced to 10 feet from the front property line to match the historic development pattern in the CN zone district; and
 - **Site coverage.** The maximum site coverage limit is eliminated to achieve allowable densities.

6.0 PROJECT ANALYSIS

6.1 Environmental Review

The proposed Ordinance Amendment to the CZO, Case No. 25ORD-00007, was evaluated for compliance with CEQA and determined to be exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3), 15168(c), and 15265.

The proposed Ordinance Amendment to the MLUDC, Case No. 25ORD-00008, was evaluated for compliance with CEQA and determined to be exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15168(c).

Therefore, environmental review is not required. Please refer to Attachment B, Notice of Exemption, for additional information.

6.2 Comprehensive Plan Consistency

As discussed in the Findings (Attachment A), the proposed amendments are consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan, including the Coastal Land Use Plan and Montecito Community Plan. The proposed ordinance amendments will streamline and modernize the ordinances and implement and modify standards to accommodate housing. The proposed amendments do not conflict with any goal or policy of the County Comprehensive Plan, and do not include changes to the County Comprehensive Plan or Montecito Community Plan.

6.3 Ordinance Consistency

As discussed in the Findings (Attachment A), the proposed ordinance amendments are consistent with the MLUDC and CZO. The proposed ordinance amendments will streamline and modernize the ordinance and implement and modify standards to accommodate housing. The proposed amendments do not conflict with any section of the MLUDC or CZO that is not being revised as part of the proposed amendments.

7.0 APPEALS PROCEDURE

Ordinance Amendments recommended for approval or denial are automatically forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for final action, therefore no appeal is required.

8.0 ATTACHMENTS

- A. Findings
- B. CEQA Notice of Exemption
- C. Montecito Planning Commission CZO Resolution
 - C-1. Draft CZO Ordinance Amendment
- D. Montecito Planning Commission MLUDC Resolution
 - D-1. Draft MLUDC Ordinance Amendment
- E. Ordinance Amendment Summary
- F. September 24, 2025, Workshop Memorandum

ATTACHMENT A: FINDINGS

INCLUDED AS PART OF ATTACHMENT H TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT B: CEQA NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT B TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT C: MONTECITO PLANNING COMMISSION CZO RESOLUTION
INCLUDED AS PART OF ATTACHMENT H TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT D: MONTECITO PLANNING COMMISSION MLUDC REOSLUTION

INCLUDED AS PART OF ATTACHMENT H TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT E: ORDINANCE AMENDMENT SUMMARY
INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT G TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT F: SEPTEMBER 24, 2025 WORKSHOP MEMORANDUM, AND ATTACHMENTS



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montecito Planning Commission

FROM: Alex Tuttle, Deputy Director, Long Range Planning Division

STAFF CONTACT: Ben Singer, Planner, bsinger@countyofsb.org

DATE: September 16, 2025

HEARING DATE: September 24, 2025

RE: Ordinance Streamlining and Housing Accommodation Amendments,
Case Nos. 25ORD-00007, 25ORD-00008

Recommended Action

Your Commission's motion should include the following:

1. Receive and file a report from the Planning and Development Department regarding proposed amendments to the Montecito Land Use and Development Code and Coastal Zoning Ordinance related to ordinance streamlining and housing accommodation;
2. Provide feedback to staff regarding the proposed amendments; and
3. Determine that the recommended actions are not a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), finding that the actions consist of administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Background

The Planning and Development Department has undertaken a series of zoning ordinance amendments to update, modernize, and improve the County zoning ordinances. Phase I included amendments to the outdoor lighting standards, sign standards, and Shopping Center zone district, and was completed earlier this year. Phase II is the amendments described in this memorandum and attachments. Phase III includes further amendments to streamline the process and identify more projects that can be processed ministerially, and is currently in development.

Summary

The proposed ordinance amendments for phase II consists of two parts: ordinance streamlining amendments and housing accommodation amendments. The ordinance streamlining amendments are further split into two parts:

1. Remove redundancies and simplify and standardize language: removing text throughout the zoning codes that is redundant, obsolete, or unnecessary to shorten and clarify the codes; and
2. Revise certain permit procedures and administrative provisions: streamline the text and structure of certain provisions for clarity, make procedures easier to use and understand, and simplify the permit review process where appropriate without compromising the outcome.

The housing accommodation amendments focus on changes to the County's various zone districts to simplify standards and facilitate housing, consistent with programs and actions identified in the 2023-2031 Housing Element Update. These include:

1. All zone districts: simplification of setback standards, standardization of design review requirements, and removal of redundant and unnecessary language;
2. Residential zone districts: changes to the development standards for height limit, front setback, site coverage, and open space, focusing primarily on the multi-family Design Residential (DR) and Planned Residential Development (PRD) zone districts;
3. Commercial zone districts: changes to residential density limits to allow for more mixed use development, setbacks to match development patterns, and height limits for mixed use development;

For a detailed summary of the proposed amendments, see Attachment A. For the complete text of proposed amendments see Attachment B for the Montecito Land Use and Development Code and Attachment C for the Coastal Zoning Ordinance.

Attachments:

- A. Ordinance Amendment Summary
 - Exhibit 1: Areas zoned for residential development of 20 units/acre or more
- B. Draft Montecito Land Use and Development Code Amendments
- C. Draft Coastal Zoning Ordinance Amendments

ATTACHMENT A: ORDINANCE AMENDMENT SUMMARY
INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT G TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT B: DRAFT MONTECITO LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENTS
INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT E-1 TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT C: DRAFT COASTAL ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS

INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT D-1 TO THE BAORD AGENDA LETTER