



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Santa Barbara, CA 93101
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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA LETTER

Department Name:
Planning and Development
Department Number:
053
Agenda Date:
July 7, 2026
Placement:
Departmental Agenda

Estimated Time:
30 Minutes
Continued Item:
No
If Yes, date from:
No
Vote Required:
Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director(s): Lisa Plowman, Planning and Development Department

DocuSigned by:
Lisa Plowman
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CONTACT: Lisa Plowman, Planning and Development Department

SUBJECT: Land Use Regulations for Immigration Enforcement Facilities and Detention Centers

Concurrences:

County Counsel Concurrence:
As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence:
As to form: No

Other Concurrence:
As to form: No

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file this report on land use regulations for immigration enforcement facilities and detention centers.
- b) Determine that this report does not constitute a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15378(b)(5).

- c) Direct Planning and Development to monitor the potential for private entities to develop immigration enforcement facilities and detention centers in the unincorporated areas and return for further direction regarding the adoption of a moratorium, if needed, if such facilities are proposed.

Summary Text:

On April 10, 2026 the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Planning and Development Department in coordination with County Counsel to analyze and report back to the Board on land use, zoning, and permitting tools that may be used to prohibit the siting, expansion, or use of immigration enforcement facilities and detention centers in unincorporated areas of the County, including public notice and discretionary review options.

The existing Santa Barbara County land use development codes do not define or allow immigration enforcement facilities and detention centers that are proposed by private entities.

Discussion:

The Santa Barbara County land use development codes include provisions stating that they do not apply to either federally owned or federally leased properties.

However, the codes do regulate land uses on properties owned or leased by private entities. A review of the Land Use and Development Code (LUDC), Montecito Land Use and Development Code (MLUDC) and the Coastal Zoning Ordinance (CZO) found that immigration enforcement facilities and detention centers are not listed as an allowed use in those codes. The codes state that when a land use is not listed in the allowable land use tables it is not allowed or permitted, except as provided through a similar use determination process.

A use determination provides for a potential permit path for any use that is not listed in the allowable land use tables if the proposed use can be found to be sufficiently similar to a listed use. If it is sufficiently similar, the proposed use could be permitted through the same permit type as the listed/allowed use. The Director has jurisdiction on making the use determinations. Staff has reviewed the codes and there is not a listed use in the code that would be considered sufficiently similar to an immigration enforcement facility and detention center. Therefore, there is not an existing permit path for a facility of this nature.

In the event that there is an immediate threat of that use being proposed or considered in the unincorporated areas even though there is no permit path, the Board could also direct the Department to prepare a moratorium for the Board to protect public safety, health, and welfare. The moratorium would allow for additional research to be conducted to determine the full impact and conflicts with the general plan, specific plan, or zoning proposal of an immigration enforcement facility and detention center. The moratorium would initially be in effect for 45 days and may be extended for up to almost 2 years. Moratoriums and any extensions may be enacted when the following findings can be made:

- Public safety, health, and welfare: There is a current and immediate threat to the public safety, health, and welfare.
- Zoning ordinance: Approving additional entitlements under the zoning ordinance would result in the threat to public safety, health, and welfare.

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The adoption of a moratorium requires a 4/5 vote by the Board of Supervisors. As discussed above, the existing ordinances do not allow for the private development of an immigration enforcement facility and detention center. Additionally, the Department is not currently aware of any property being considered by a private entity to either convert an existing structure or build a new structure for an immigration enforcement facility and detention center in the unincorporated areas of Santa Barbara County.

The Board could direct the Department to monitor the potential for private entities to develop an immigration enforcement facility and detention center in the unincorporated areas and return for further direction regarding the adoption of a moratorium if such facilities are proposed.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

No Fiscal Impacts

Special Instructions:

None

Attachments:

N/A