



## COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Alex Tuttle, Deputy Director, Long Range Planning Division  
**STAFF CONTACT:** Ben Singer, Planner, [bsinger@countyofsb.org](mailto:bsinger@countyofsb.org)  
**HEARING DATE:** January 27, 2026  
**RE:** Ordinance Streamlining and Housing Accommodation Amendments  
Case Nos. 25ORD-00006, 25ORD-00007, and 25ORD-00008

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#### Discussion:

On December 16, 2025, Planning and Development staff presented the Ordinance Streamlining and Housing Accommodation Amendments to the Board of Supervisors. Staff is proposing additional refinements to the proposed ordinance amendments in response to the comments received at the December 16, 2025, hearing. The comments centered around the appropriate mix of residential and commercial uses in commercial zones, the appropriate amount of landscaping and open space that should be required for multifamily housing projects, and further ways in which to streamline processes and get to a final decision more quickly. The proposed changes are summarized below and included in Attachments 2, 3, and 4 for the LUDC, CZO, and MLUDC, respectively.

#### **Mixed-Use Development, C-1, CN, and CM-LA Zone Districts**

- A. Residential Density.** To ensure the ongoing commercial nature of the C-1, CN, and CM-LA zone districts, staff is proposing limiting residential density to 10 units/acre, rather than the previous proposal of 20 units/acre.
- B. Commercial Development Requirement.** To similarly ensure the provision of viable commercial spaces, staff is proposing adding a provision requiring the nonresidential space within the C-1 and CN zone districts have a minimum depth of 40 feet, to read as follows:

*Mixed-use development. To ensure the overall purpose and intent of the commercial district is maintained, nonresidential uses shall be located along the*

*street frontage. The nonresidential space shall have a minimum depth of 40 feet.  
Residential uses may be located on an upper story or behind a nonresidential use.*

### **Mixed-Use Development, C-2 Zone District**

- A. Residential Density.** To ensure the ongoing commercial nature of the C-2 zone district, staff is proposing limiting residential density to 20 units/acre, rather than the previous proposal of 30 units/acre.

### **Residential Open Space Requirements**

- A. Amount.** To ensure the provision of a sufficient amount of open space as a residential amenity while ensuring allowed densities are achievable, staff is proposing increasing the amount of required open space as follows:
1. For areas with a maximum density of less than 20 units per acre: 300 square feet of open space per unit, increased from the prior proposal of 200 square feet.
  2. For areas with a maximum density of 20 units or more per acre: 150 square feet of open space per unit, increased from the prior proposal of 60 square feet.
- B. Configuration.** To ensure that the provided common open space is usable, staff is proposing that there must be one area measuring at least 50 feet by 50 feet, increased from 15 feet by 15 feet, and specifying that the minimum dimensions must be uninterrupted by walkways with the primary purpose of providing access to and between buildings, parking areas, or other site features.
- C. Landscaping.** To ensure that landscaping and aesthetic objectives are adequately addressed, staff is proposing adding a requirement that all areas of a site not intended for specific uses must be landscaped, with a minimum 15% of the site landscaped.

### **Variances**

- A. Concurrent Processing.** To provide flexibility for a variety of projects and processing situations, staff is proposing that Variances *may* be processed concurrently with associated permits, rather than that they *shall* be.

### **Appeals of Zoning Administrator Actions**

- A. Appeal Hearing.** To streamline processes and reduce processing times, staff is proposing that decisions of the Zoning Administrator be made appealable directly to the Board of Supervisors, rather than to the Planning Commission.

### **Substantial Conformity Determination Guidelines**

- A. Maximum Square Footage Increase.** To ensure that square footage limitations in the Substantial Conformity Determination guidelines are appropriate for a wide range of

projects and are neither too limiting nor too generous, staff is proposing that the guidelines be amended to allow for a 10% square footage increase, but establish a minimum of 500 square feet and a maximum of 5,000 square feet. The proposed amendment to the guideline would read as follows:

*Generally, the proposed changes do not result in an increase in square footage greater than 10 percent of the total square footage of the original approval or ~~1,000~~ 500 square feet, which is ~~less~~ more, up to a maximum increase of 5,000 square feet, measured cumulatively from the original approval.*

**Recommended Actions:**

- a) Make the required findings for approval, including California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) findings, for the Ordinance Amendments, Case Nos. 25ORD-00006, 25ORD-00007, and 25ORD-00008 (Attachment A of the December 16, 2025, Board Agenda Letter);
- b) Determine that the Ordinance Amendments, Case Nos. 25ORD-00006, 25ORD-00007, and 25ORD-00008, are exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3), 15168(c), and 15265 (Attachment 1 of this memorandum);
- c) Approve the Ordinance Streamlining and Housing Accommodation Amendments by taking the following actions:
  - i) Adopt an ordinance amending the zoning regulations of the County Land Use and Development Code (Case No. 25ORD-00006), Section 35-1 of Chapter 35, Zoning, of the Santa Barbara County Code (Attachment C of the December 16, 2025, Board Agenda Letter), as amended at the January 27, 2026, hearing (Attachment 2 to this memorandum);
  - ii) Adopt an ordinance amending the zoning regulations of the Article II Coastal Zoning Ordinance (Case No. 25ORD-00007), of Chapter 35, Zoning, of the Santa Barbara County Code (Attachment D of the December 16, 2025, Board Agenda Letter), as amended at the January 27, 2026, hearing (Attachment 3 to this memorandum);
  - iii) Adopt an ordinance amending the zoning regulations of the Montecito Land Use and Development Code (Case No. 25ORD-00008), Section 35-2 of Chapter 35, Zoning, of the Santa Barbara County Code (Attachment E of the December 16, 2025, Board Agenda Letter), as amended at the January 27, 2026, hearing (Attachment 4 to this memorandum);
- d) Adopt a resolution (Attachment F of the December 16, 2025, Board Agenda Letter) authorizing the Planning and Development Department to submit the Coastal Zoning

Ordinance Streamlining and Housing Accommodation Amendments (Case No. 25ORD-00007) to the California Coastal Commission (CCC) for review and certification as an amendment to the Santa Barbara County Local Coastal Program; and

- e) Direct the Planning and Development Department to transmit the adopted resolution to the Executive Director of the CCC.

**Attachments:**

1. Notice of Exemption
2. Land Use and Development Code Revisions (excerpts only)
3. Coastal Zoning Ordinance Revisions (excerpts only)
4. Montecito Land Use and Development Code Revisions (excerpts only)