

**ATTACHMENT K: COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT AND
ATTACHMENTS, DATED OCTOBER 21, 2025**

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Staff Report for Ordinance Streamlining and Housing Accommodation Amendments

Hearing Date: October 29, 2025

Staff Report Date: October 21, 2025

Case No.: 25ORD-00006 & 25ORD-00007

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-00006: an Ordinance Amendment to the County Land Use and Development Code to streamline and modernize the ordinance and implement and modify standards for housing accommodation;
- 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; 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:

1. Make the required findings for approval, including California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) findings, and recommend that the Board of Supervisors make the required findings for approval, including CEQA findings, of the proposed amendments, Case Nos. 25ORD-00006 and 25ORD-00007 (Attachment A);
2. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors determine that 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 Board of Supervisors approve Case No. 25ORD-00006, an ordinance amending the County Land Use and Development Code, and Case No. 25ORD-00007, an ordinance amending the Coastal Zoning Ordinance, to streamline and modernize the ordinances and implement and modify standards for housing accommodation.

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

3.0 JURISDICTION

The County Planning Commission is considering the proposed County Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) and Coastal Zoning Ordinance (CZO) amendments pursuant to Santa Barbara County Code Section 2-25.2. The Santa Barbara County Code states that the Planning Commission, as the designated planning agency for the unincorporated area of the County, provides recommendations regarding proposed amendments to the LUDC and CZO to the Board of Supervisors.

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 Program #16 of the County's 2023-2031 Housing Element Update. A public workshop with the 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 D). For complete draft text amendments, see Attachments C-1 and C-2 for the LUDC and CZO, respectively

A. Removing Redundancies and simplifying and standardizing language.

These amendments include revisions throughout the LUDC 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:

- **LUDC Section 35.22.060 (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 35.82.060.E (Findings required for approval of Conditional Use Permits other than Conditional Use Permit applications submitted in compliance with Chapter 35.38 (Sign Standards)), and is therefore deleted;

- **LUDC Section 35.30.050 (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;
- **LUDC Chapter 35.36 (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;
- **LUDC Chapter 35.110 (Definitions) and CZO Division 2 (Definitions).** These sections define terms used in the ordinances. They are revised to update definitions for clarity; and
- **LUDC Section 35.52.020 (Voter Approval – Facilities on South Coast That Support Offshore Oil and Gas Activities) and 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 Planning Commission or Zoning Administrator 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 County Planning Commission;
- **Director Deferral to the County Planning Commission.** Revisions to allow the Director to elevate projects customarily under the jurisdiction of the Director to the County 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 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;
- **Minor Conditional Use Permits.** Allow Zoning Administrator public hearings to be waived if no request for a public hearing is made, similar to current allowance for Modifications and Coastal Development Permits with Hearings;
- **Modifications.** Revisions to make the Director the decision maker for Modifications, downshifting from the Zoning Administrator;
- **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, which may be the Planning Commission or Zoning Administrator), and 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 nullifies 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 D). For complete draft text amendments, see Attachments C-1 and C-2 for the LUDC and CZO, 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 (DR and PRD zones).

- **Height limit.** For sites with a maximum allowable density of 20 units per acre or more, the allowable height limit is increased from 35 feet to 45 feet;
- **Front Setback.** For sites with a maximum allowable density of 20 units per acre or more, the required front setback is reduced from 20 feet to 10 feet;
- **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.

- **Neighborhood Commercial (CN) and Limited Commercial (C-1) Zones.**
 - i. **Residential density.** The allowed density of residential portions 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;
 - ii. **Front setbacks.** The front setback requirement is reduced from 20 feet to 10 feet for the CN zone district and from 15 feet to 0 feet for the C-1 zone district to match the historic development patterns;
 - iii. **Site coverage.** The maximum site coverage limit is eliminated in the CN zone to achieve allowable densities and remove redundant standards; and
 - iv. **Street frontage.** Nonresidential uses are required along street frontages and residential uses are limited to upper stories or behind nonresidential uses.
- **Retail Commercial (C-2) Zone.**
 - i. **Residential density.** The allowed density of residential portions of mixed-use development is revised to 30 dwelling units per acre, rather than a

floor area limit of two bedrooms per 1,000 square feet of commercial development;

- ii. **Nonresidential uses.** Reduce nonresidential uses from 50 percent to 25 percent of the total gross floor area; and
- iii. **Height limits.** Height limits are increased from 35 feet to 45 feet for mixed-use development located more than 50 feet from a residential zone.

- **General Commercial (C-3) and Professional and Institutional (PI) Zones.**

- i. **Residential density.** The residential density is limited to one unit per 1,000 square feet of commercial development rather than two bedrooms per 1,000 square feet, with a gross floor area limit remaining at 50 percent.

- **Community Mixed-Use – Los Alamos (CM-LA) Zone.**

- i. **Residential density.** The residential density is modified to 20 units per acre rather than a bedroom per commercial square footage ratio of two bedrooms per 700 square feet.

D. Special purpose zone districts.

- **Mixed-Use (MU) Zone.**

- i. **Residential Density.** Density allowances are modified from a Planning Commission determination to 40 units per acre;
 - ii. **Height.** The allowable height is increased from 35 feet to 45 feet;
 - iii. **Building location.** Criteria for building location are modified/streamlined;
 - iv. **Open space.** Open space requirements are modified to require a minimum amount per residential unit rather than a percentage of the gross floor area, along with configuration standards;
 - v. **Street frontage.** Standards for what uses can be along the street frontage are established; and
 - vi. **Residential area.** The limit on residential square footage is modified from 50 percent of the total area to 50% of the ground floor.

- **Old Town Orcutt (OT-R, OT-R/LC, OT-R/GC) Zones.**

- i. **Density.** Standards for densities that are not allowed in the zone are removed;
 - ii. **Open space.** The requirement for 40 percent open space is removed; and
 - iii. **Site coverage.** Limitations on site coverage for residential structures are removed to achieve the allowable densities given generally small lot sizes.

E. Overlay zone districts

- **Pedestrian Area – Old Town Orcutt (PA-OTO) Overlay Zone.**

- i. **Site coverage.** Site coverage limits in the Peripheral Pedestrian Area are removed to achieve the allowable densities; and
 - ii. **Parking.** Overlay specific parking requirements are relocated from LUDC Chapter 35.36, Parking and Loading Standards, into the overlay standards and clarified.

- **Mixed-Use – Santa Ynez Valley (MU-SYV) Overlay Zone**

- i. **Parking reduction.** The allowable parking reduction is clarified; and

- ii. **Residential use.** The limit on residential uses is simplified to upper stories rather than a floor area ratio of at most 66 percent residential.

6.0 PROJECT ANALYSIS

6.1 Environmental Review

The proposed Ordinance Amendment to the LUDC, Case No. 25ORD-00006, 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).

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.

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 applicable community plans. 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, including the Coastal Land Use Plan and community plans, and do not include changes to the County Comprehensive Plan.

6.3 Ordinance Consistency

As discussed in the Findings (Attachment A), the proposed ordinance amendments are consistent with the LUDC and CZO. 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 section of the LUDC or CZO that is not being revised as part of the proposed amendments.

6.4 Montecito Planning Commission Recommendation

The Montecito Planning Commission reviewed the proposed amendments to the CZO during their October 15, 2025, hearing, and recommended that the County Planning Commission recommend that the Board approve the amendments with the following revisions:

1. Remove the proposed provision for accessory structures of less than 500 square feet located behind another structure or on the back half of a property to be exempted from Design Review;
2. Allow appeals by applicants of Time Extensions that are denied by the Director;

3. Allow for an additional Time Extension to be approved by the Planning Commission, in addition to the proposed Time Extensions of two years approved by the Director; and
4. Increase the proposed allowance for Director review and approval of Development Plans for structures and additions from up to 1,000 square feet to up to 2,000 square feet.

The Montecito Planning Commission similarly recommended that the Board approve the amendments to the Montecito Land Use and Development Code (MLUDC) incorporating these same revisions.

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. County Planning Commission Resolution
 - C-1. Draft LUDC Ordinance Amendment
 - C-2. Draft CZO Ordinance Amendment
- D. Ordinance Amendment Summary
- E. September 24, 2025, Workshop Memorandum

ATTACHMENT A: FINDINGS

INCLUDED AS PART OF ATTACHMENT I TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT B: CEQA NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT B TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT C: COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION
INCLUDED AS PART OF ATTACHMENT I TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

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

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



COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: County 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-00006, 25ORD-00007

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 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;
4. Special purpose zone districts: modifying density standards, height limits, open space requirements, and other development standards, and removing redundancies for the Mixed-Use (MU) and Old Town Orcutt (OT) zone districts; and
5. Overlay zones: removal of redundancies and simplification and clarification of standards for the Pedestrian Area – Old Town Orcutt (PA-OTO) Overlay and Mixed-Use – Santa Ynez Valley (MU-SYV) Overlay zones.

For a detailed summary of the proposed amendments, see Attachment A. For the complete text of proposed amendments see Attachment B for the 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 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 LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENTS

INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT C-1 TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER

ATTACHMENT C: DRAFT COASTAL ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS
INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT D-1 TO THE BOARD AGENDA LETTER