



Planning and Development Department
LONG RANGE PLANNING DIVISION

COUNTY CEQA GUIDELINES & ENVIRONMENTAL THRESHOLDS AMENDMENTS

County Board of Supervisors
September 15, 2020

Presentation Outline

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- Background
- Purposes of the amendments
- Summary of the recommended amendments
- Recommended actions

Background

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- *Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 As Amended* (“County Guidelines”)
 - ▣ Adopted 1988; last revised in 2010
 - ▣ State CEQA Guidelines (§15022): directs each public agency to adopt objectives, criteria, and specific procedures consistent with CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines

Background

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- *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* (“ETM”)
 - ▣ Adopted 1988; last revised 2018
 - ▣ State CEQA Guidelines [§15064.7(b)]: encourages each public agency to adopt thresholds of significance

County CEQA Guidelines Amendments

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- Align administrative practices with revised State CEQA Guidelines
 - ▣ 2019 State Office of Planning and Research amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines
- Revise hearing procedures for adopting revisions to the ETM
- Clarify existing County procedures
- Attachment 2, Exhibit 1

Environmental Thresholds Manual

Amendments

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- Delete “Criteria for Amendment” from the ETM
- Revise quality of life guidelines
 - ▣ Clarify how to consider quality of life:
 - Identify physical impacts resulting from changes to quality of life
 - Determine whether a physical change is a significant effect
 - ▣ Nexus between the change to quality of life and physical impact is key

ETM Amendments

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- Revise quality of life guidelines (continued)
 - ▣ Quality of life (e.g., social and economic) impacts may still be considerations of Comprehensive Plan policies and regulations
 - Example: Traffic congestion (level of service)
- Discontinue Class I-IV method of categorizing environmental impacts

ETM Amendments

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□ Revise certain noise thresholds

- ▣ Remove subjectivity and provide quantitative thresholds for determining significant noise effect:

Existing Ambient Noise Environment	Significant effect if the project, or project + cumulative, noise levels increase to:
Indoor	
≤ 45 dB(A)	> 45 dB(A)
> 45 dB(A)	Ambient + 3 dB(A)
Outdoor	
≤ 65 dB(A)	> 65 dB(A)
> 65 dB(A)	Ambient + 3 dB(A)

County Planning Commission

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- County Planning Commission
 - ▣ July 29, 2020 hearing
 - ▣ Recommended the Board:
 - Approve the proposed amendments, with one minor change.

Recommended Actions

- Recommended Actions:
 - ▣ Determine the amendments are exempt from CEQA
 - ▣ Adopt a Board Resolution amending the County CEQA Guidelines (Attachment 2)
 - ▣ Adopt a Board Resolution amending the Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual (Attachment 3)