

Public Safety and Hazard Management General Plan / Local Coastal Program (GP/LCP) and County Code Amendments

Existing GP/LCP and County Code

The County's existing GP/LCP Public Safety and Noise Element contains general policies that apply to development projects, such as new housing and subdivisions, in areas of the County subject to hazards from earthquakes, landslide, coastal processes, erosion, flooding, fire, noise, and other hazards. Policies addressing airport safety are in other parts of the GP/LCP.

Policies in the GP/LCP are implemented by the regulations in the County Code. This means the County Code must be consistent with the policies in the GP/LCP. These changes to the GP/LCP also require changes to the County Code to maintain consistency.

Proposed Amendments

This project proposes amendments to the GP/LCP Public Safety and Noise Element.

The proposed amendments related to seismic hazards, landslides, and fire hazards are intended to meet current requirements of state law which already apply to development projects. Local policies and codes would be updated but there would be no change to existing requirements.

The proposed amendments related to flooding would rewrite the Floodplain Regulations in the County Code. The basic requirements would not change but the County Code would follow the "model ordinance" format of the state and FEMA. Under the new regulations more activities in flood hazard areas would require permits. New and remodeled homes in flood hazard areas would have to be elevated higher above flood hazard levels compared to existing requirements.

The proposed amendments related to coastal bluffs and beaches would update the County's policies and regulations for building in these areas to address sea level rise. New and remodeled homes on the beach would have to be elevated higher above flood hazard levels compared to existing requirements. New and remodeled homes on coastal bluffs would have to do additional geologic and engineering studies and standards would become stricter for rebuilding storm damaged structures.

A new section on environmental justice would be added to the GP/LCP Public Safety Element to support the needs of low-income areas of the County that may be disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards.

A new GP/LCP Noise Element would be created by moving the policies out of the Public Safety Element. New noise maps would be included for determining noise insulation requirements for new buildings. A new County Code Chapter 13.15 Noise Planning would implement the Noise Element.

The GP/LCP Land Use Element and County Code would be amended to add policies and regulations required by the State Airport Land Use Planning Handbook. Properties within two miles of the Watsonville Municipal Airport would have an additional zoning designation of Airport Combining Zone District. The proposed policies and regulations would have no impact on existing structures. There would be little to no impact on new and expanded structures, but new subdivision of land would be restricted.

The full staff report is on the Planning Department website at www.sccoplanning.com by selecting the active link for this item on the Planning Commission agenda for October 10, 2018.

Reason

State planning law requires an update of the GP/LCP Safety Element to address flooding, fire hazards, climate change, and environmental justice issues. The County in 2011 received a state grant using FEMA funds to begin the update. During this time the County also completed a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and a Climate Action Strategy. These plans would become part of the Safety Element. The updated Safety Element addresses sea level rise and the California Coastal Commission has published a sea level rise guidance document to assist local governments. State law also requires the County to update policies and regulations to protect the public's exposure to excessive noise and safety hazards in the vicinity of the Watsonville Municipal Airport.

Environmental Evaluation

There would be no environmental impacts from the proposed amendments and there would be beneficial impacts where policies and regulations become stricter such as the policies and regulations addressing flooding, grading and erosion control.