



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

701 OCEAN STREET - 4TH FLOOR, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060
(831) 454-2580 FAX: (831) 454-2131 TDD: (831) 454-2123

KATHLEEN MOLLOY PREVISICH, PLANNING DIRECTOR

March 28, 2011

Agenda Date: April 13, 2011

Item # : 11

Time: After 9:00 a.m.

Planning Commission
County of Santa Cruz
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Subject: Proposed Submittal of a Planning Grant Application to the Disaster Recovery Initiative (DRI) Program

Members of the Commission:

The Planning Department recently became aware of the availability of funds for planning activities under the Department of Housing and Community Development Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2008 Disaster Recovery Initiative (DRI) Program. The DRI Program provides grants and assistance to counties and cities to assist with the physical and economic recovery from wildfires, earthquakes, flooding, and other declared disasters. Prior to submitting a funding application for any of the CDGB grant programs, the funding agency requires that two public meetings be held to allow input from local citizens. This item on your agenda is the first, or "Program Design", public meeting to allow discussion of the content of the grant application program. A second hearing is proposed to occur before the Board of Supervisors on May 3rd, prior to submission of the grant application.

Background

On May 21, 2010, The Department of Housing and Community Development announced the availability of approximately \$38.3 million in 2008 Disaster Recovery Initiative (DRI) funds. The 2008 DRI funds are available to jurisdictions directly impacted by wildfires that resulted in two disaster declarations by the federal government. The Martin, Summit, and Trabing Fires were included in the disaster declaration of June 28, 2008 and the County of Santa Cruz is therefore eligible to apply for these funds. Distribution and monitoring of DRI grants is under the direction of The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) State Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The Department has allocated \$15 million of the program funds for planning efforts and development of strategies which will help to prevent or reduce damage from future disasters.

Overview of Grant Proposal

Planning staff have identified a number of planning efforts that could be accomplished through DRI grant funding. The County of Santa Cruz has adopted a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) under the guidelines established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. That Plan contains a list of priority actions for follow-up that were identified as part of the Plan that, if accomplished, would reduce the vulnerability and risk from fire, flooding, earthquakes, slope instability, and other geologic hazards. Planning Department staff is proposing grant funding for a number of items that are included in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan as Priority Action items, as follows:

1. Update and revise the flood provisions of the County Geologic Hazards Ordinance. The current County floodplain regulations within the County Geologic Hazards Ordinance were adopted in 1982. Since that time, there have been numerous updates to flood requirements in the California Building Code and Residential Code and through FEMA technical bulletins and updates. We are proposing to separate flood regulations from the Geologic Hazards Ordinance (County Code Section 16.10) and to create a separate Floodplain Ordinance that will update and consolidate flood requirements into one location and provide more clarity on flood zone requirements. Floodplain Ordinance development would include:
 - Evaluation of FEMA technical bulletins to determine which FEMA suggested requirements should become ordinance requirements.
 - Review Appendix G, "Flood Resistant Construction", of the California Building Code for items to be incorporated into the new Floodplain Ordinance.
 - Establish more specific guidelines for determining "substantial improvement" thresholds for projects within flood zones.
 - Establish clear criteria for Elevation Certificate and V-Zone (coastal wave run-up area) Certificate requirements.
 - Establish new freeboard requirements (above the base flood elevation) for V-zone structures.
 - Create new guidelines, procedures and requirements for flood issues outside of the FEMA zones.

After working out the content and details of the above bulleted items, staff would draft a new Floodplain Ordinance, bring it forward for adoption by the County Board of Supervisors and train staff on the new requirements.

2. Apply for and participate in Community Rating System (CRS) for Floodplain Management. Participation in the CRS program lowers flood insurance costs for residents. The CRS program awards points for floodplain management requirements and activities that are above and beyond National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements. In order to participate, Planning staff will:
 - Prepare for and complete a Community Assistance Visit with FEMA staff.
 - Conduct analyses of Repetitive Loss Areas and create action plans for each of these areas, including steps to prevent future losses.
 - Create and maintain an online database for Elevation Certificates.

- Review and summarize CRS credits, working with a CRS representative for inclusion in the CRS program.
3. Update the Safety Element of the County General Plan. We are proposing to review the Safety Element of the General Plan, which has not been updated since 1994, to modernize flood policies and goals as needed. The following sections would be reviewed and, if necessary, revised to reflect the most current flood management policies and practices:
 - Section 6.2, Coastal Bluffs and Beaches
 - Section 6.3, Erosion
 - Section 6.4, Flood Hazards
 - Section 6.5, Fire Hazards
 4. Separate the flood-related provisions of the Geologic Hazards Ordinance from other hazards and update. Flood, slope instability, and earthquake-related hazards are covered under the Geologic Hazards Ordinance. This has resulted in an ordinance that is difficult to interpret and apply. County staff is proposing to create a new, stand alone ordinance that pertains solely to flood hazards. In addition, since the ordinance was last amended, FEMA has issued a number of technical guidelines. Our goal is to create one ordinance pertaining to flood hazards and to update that ordinance to be consistent with current FEMA policies, regulations, and guidelines.
 5. Update the non-flood provisions of the Geologic Hazards Ordinance. The last update to the County's Geologic Hazards Ordinance occurred in 1999. Since that time, the State has updated guidelines with respect to geologic hazards such as landsliding, earthquakes and liquefaction. County staff would like to evaluate State guidelines to determine whether our Geologic Hazards Ordinance meets or exceeds the State guidelines, and update accordingly.
 6. Planning for future elevation of structures within 100-year flood zones. Santa Cruz County has numerous properties with structures that are within 100-year floodplain areas and the coastal wave run-up zone. Losses from future flood events could be significantly mitigated by elevating as many structures as possible above base flood elevations. Financial assistance to property owners for structural work is not within the scope of this DRI planning grant; however, the pre-planning and assessment required to develop a County structural elevation program is a much-needed planning task for which DRI funding could be sought. Developing a structural elevation program would involve:
 - Evaluating the repetitive loss areas within the County where an elevation program would have the most effect.
 - Making field assessments in these areas to determine if other hazards (e.g. landslides) would make elevating/rebuilding more expensive or complex.
 - Reviewing the zoning ordinance for height restrictions or other regulations that might restrict structural elevation, and recommend ordinance amendments as needed.
 7. Evaluation of and updates to storm water runoff policy, including ordinance requirements and standards. Because flood severity is determined by the quantity and the rate at which storm runoff enters the waterway, staff proposes a comprehensive evaluation of our

current policies for storm water runoff and detention in order to identify improvements and/or new policies consistent with low impact development (LID) principles being promulgated by the State of California. Once new policies are identified, County staff would draft ordinance amendments and bring them to the Planning Commission and County Board of Supervisors for review and approval.

8. Development of public education materials on flood protection and mitigation. Many actions that would result in significant flood protection and mitigation can be taken by individual members of the public. Therefore, public education, particularly for residents in flood hazard areas, is important. County staff is proposing to produce informational materials in print format and also for County websites through use of DRI grant program funding.
9. The 2008 Bonny Doon (Martin) Fire Tree Removal Permit. Staff is seeking funds to reimburse the Planning Department for the time spent on an initiative that followed the Martin Fire, part of the FEMA-declared emergency area for which the DRI grant funds are available. Hours of staff assessment and planning work went towards establishing guidelines and an expedited permit process by which fire-affected land owners could remove dead and dying trees that threatened roads and structures after the wildfire event. This effort has been completed and is eligible for reimbursement through the DRI program grant.
10. Eucalyptus control in the Trabing Road Fire area. Funds are being sought for development of a planning document to address the spread of eucalyptus in fire-prone and sensitive-habitat areas in the vicinity of Trabing Road. This planning effort would entail staff coordination with local landowners and the fire agency to generate a management plan.
11. Planning manual for fuel load reduction in salamander habitat areas. Grant funds are being sought to prepare a planning document that would specifically address fire clearance and fuel load reduction in salamander sensitive habitat areas of the County. Staff would work with County Fire agencies to develop the most appropriate and protective management protocols, and the effort would result in the publication of a manual.

Environmental Review

The Environmental Coordinator has determined that the various activities envisioned in the DRI program grant application are eligible for Categorical or Statutory Exemptions from CEQA (CEQA Sections 15269, 15307, 15308). Because the grant application will be used to access funds that originate on the federal level, NEPA compliance was also evaluated. Staff have determined that the items proposed for inclusion in the grant application are exempt under NEPA statute 58.34(a)(1). These exemptions will be prepared for submission to the funding agency, along with the grant application.

Conclusion

The Disaster Recovery Initiative grant program provides a unique opportunity for funding a number of activities that could increase public safety and reduce property loss related to future

flood events and geologic hazards. These efforts would likely not be accomplished without the availability of these funds.

Recommendation

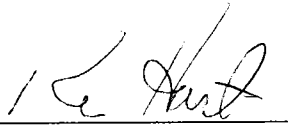
Hold a public hearing to gather input on a Planning Department grant application for Disaster Recovery Initiative funds, as required by the funding agency, the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Sincerely,



Alice Daly, AICP
Planner, Development Review

Reviewed By:



Ken Hart
Principal Planner
Development Review