

REPORT ON
YEAR 2025 GROWTH GOAL
for
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S UNINCORPORATED AREA

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1978, Santa Cruz County voters adopted the growth management referendum known as Measure J. This legislation requires the County to establish an annual population growth goal of an amount that represents Santa Cruz County's fair share of statewide population growth. Each year a growth rate is set and then converted into a maximum number of "allocations" of market-rate residential building permits that can be issued in the unincorporated area for the coming year. The process is defined in Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC) Chapter 17.01 (Growth Management), Chapter 17.04 (Annual Population Growth Goal for Santa Cruz County), and Chapter 12.02 (Residential Permit Allocation System). In December 2023, the Board of Supervisors adopted a 2024 growth goal of 0.5%. This report provides information for consideration by the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to determine the annual growth goal for calendar year 2025.

The County of Santa Cruz Planning Division of the Community Development & Infrastructure Department (CDI) recommends the annual growth goal based on several factors, including analysis of population growth trends, resource constraints, and the status of residential building permit allocations for the current year. These factors are examined under the following sections of this report:

- Section II Population Trends: discusses the latest population estimates and population data projections.
- Section III Residential Building Permit Trends and Allocations: presents information on issued residential building permits and the status of the 2024 Measure J allocations including allocations allotted between January and June of 2024 and allocations that have been carried over since the adoption of Measure J;
- Section IV Potential Growth Impacts: details countywide resource constraints and public service issues.
- Section V Housing Needs: examines the Association of Monterey Bay Area Government's (AMBAG's) regional housing needs planning process, the status of the County's General Plan Housing Element, the continued need for affordable housing in the County, and the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Annual Report.
- Section VI Growth Goal Recommendation: presents this year's recommended growth rate and building permit allocation distribution and explains how the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (Senate Bill [SB] 330) will impact the County's growth management system.
- Section VII Conclusion: summarizes the findings from Sections II through VI.
- Section VIII References: lists the sources referenced in this report.

II. POPULATION TRENDS

Population Estimates

The State of California Department of Finance (DOF) publishes annual population estimates for counties across the state in May of each year. Table 1 shows the DOF

population estimates for Santa Cruz County in 2023 and provisional estimates for 2024. These population estimates indicate a countywide population of 262,572 (127,451 in the unincorporated area) as of January 1, 2024 (DOF, 2024). Table 1 also includes the estimated annual population growth rates for 2022 and 2023 in each of the Santa Cruz County jurisdictions, as well as California as a whole.

The County Board of Supervisors adopted a population growth rate of 0.5% growth rate for the unincorporated area for 2023 and 2024. Population growth for the county overall in 2023 experienced a negative growth rate of -0.3%, up from -0.4% growth in 2022. The State of California grew at a rate of 0.2% in 2023, which is up from -0.1% growth last year.

TABLE 1: POPULATION AND GROWTH RATES OF COUNTY JURISDICTIONS					
Area	1/1/2022 Population Estimate ⁽¹⁾	1/1/2023 Population Estimate ⁽²⁾	1/1/2024 Population Estimate ⁽³⁾	2022 Population Growth Rate ⁽²⁾	2023 Population Growth Rate
City of Capitola	9,609	9,558	9,497	-0.5%	-0.6%
City of Santa Cruz	62,809	62,929	62,776	0.2%	-0.2%
City of Scotts Valley	11,943	11,872	11,816	-0.6%	-0.5%
City of Watsonville	51,096	50,820	51,032	-0.5%	0.4%
Unincorporated Area	129,038	128,159	127,451	-0.7%	-0.6%
County Total	264,495	263,338	262,572	-0.4%	-0.3%
State of California	39,114,785	39,061,058	39,128,162	-0.1%	0.2%

Source: California Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit, Report E-5: Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State, January 2021-2024, with 2020 Benchmark (Released: May 2024)

⁽¹⁾ 2020 Census Population Data Benchmark

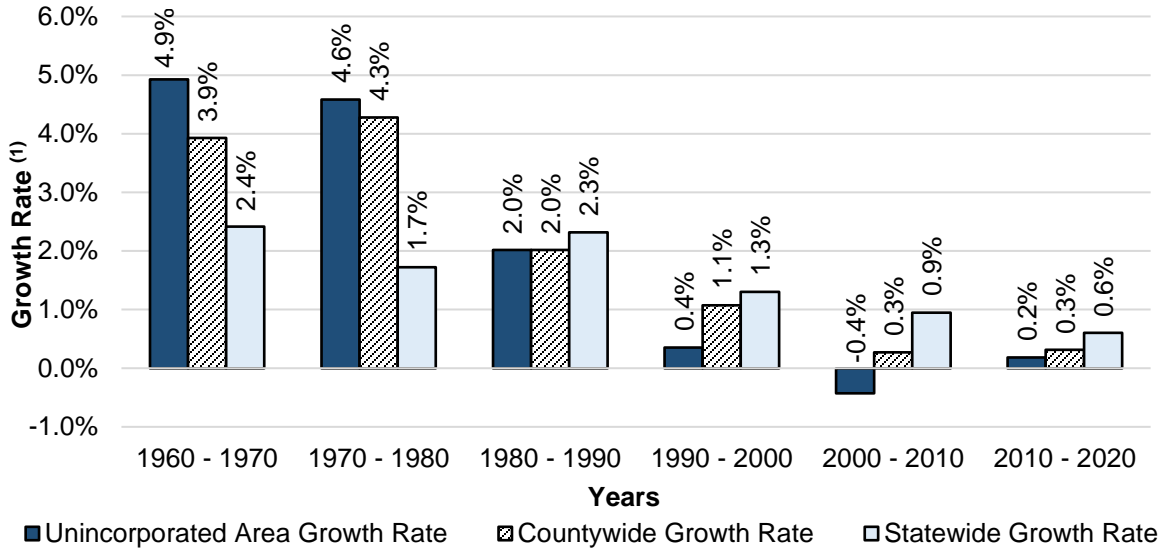
⁽²⁾ Population estimates for previous years are updated based on the latest DOF E-5 data and may differ from last year's report

⁽³⁾ 2024 data is provisional

The estimated 2023 population growth rate for the unincorporated area is -0.6%, a decrease of 879 people, which is less than the previous year's estimate of -0.7% growth. As a result, the allocation for new residential building permits derived from the 0.5% growth goal was more than sufficient to accommodate the demand for residential permits to construct new market-rate units in 2023, as well as the first half of 2024.

DOF population estimates for cities and unincorporated counties are calculated using the Housing Unit Method (HUM). This means that changes in housing unit data, including new construction, annexations, and demolitions, reported by local jurisdictions play a significant role in determining annual population estimates. The DOF also reported that the recent increase in California's population last year was due to three main factors: foreign legal immigration continued to rebound from the pandemic, greater domestic immigration and slowed domestic out-migration, and a natural increase from the net result of births minus deaths. The DOF expects that these factors will continue to contribute to a slower but positive growth rate for California in the near future.

FIGURE A: POPULATION GROWTH RATE BY DECADE



(1) Average annual growth rate; Source: U.S. Census

While population has steadily grown in the state of California and county as a whole since the mid-20th century, population growth in the unincorporated area has had a slightly different trajectory. As shown in Figure A, the unincorporated area’s population grew rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s, surpassing growth rates in the state and county as a whole. However, growth rates have declined in the decades since and the population decreased in our area between the 2000 and 2010 Census years. According to 2020 Census data, the unincorporated area population was 132,213, up from 129,807 in 2010 when the population dropped to 129,807. Since 2020, the population in unincorporated Santa Cruz County has decreased at an average annual rate of -3.76%.

Population Projections

In June of 2022, AMBAG adopted its 2022 Regional Growth Forecast for all jurisdictions in the three-county AMBAG region to cover the period 2015 through 2045. Table 2 presents the 2022 AMBAG projections for all Santa Cruz County jurisdictions. At the tri-county level, the AMBAG population forecast is based on employment and demographic population change models, taking into account historical trends. At the sub-county level, AMBAG disaggregated the County population projections to the local jurisdictions based on historic population trends, adjusting for anticipated housing developments and special population areas like UC Santa Cruz. The AMBAG forecasts are utilized in regional and County planning efforts, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy (MTP/SCS), the regional Air Quality Management Plan, and transportation plans. The 2022 AMBAG forecast projects that the unincorporated area will grow by approximately 963 people between the years 2015 and 2045 to a total population of 135,953 (Source: AMBAG 2045 MTP/SCS, Jun 15, 2022).

TABLE 2: SANTA CRUZ COUNTY POPULATION FORECAST

2022 AMBAG Adopted Forecast ⁽¹⁾

Area	2015	2020	2025 Forecast	2030 Forecast	2035 Forecast	2040 Forecast	2045 Forecast	Numeric Change 2015-45	% Change 2015-45
City of Capitola	10,224	10,108	10,485	10,794	10,957	11,049	11,126	902	9%
City of Santa Cruz	64,223	64,424	68,845	72,218	75,257	78,828	79,534	15,311	24%
City of Scotts Valley	11,946	11,693	11,718	11,837	11,867	11,868	12,010	64	1%
City of Watsonville	52,410	51,515	52,918	54,270	55,138	55,786	56,344	3,934	8%
Unincorporated Area	134,990	133,493	134,675	135,027	135,304	135,625	135,953	963	1%
County Total	273,793	271,233	278,641	284,146	288,523	293,156	294,967	21,174	8%

⁽¹⁾ 2015 - 2020 data from DOF. Forecast years were prepared by AMBAG and the Population Reference Bureau (PRB).

III. RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMIT TRENDS AND ALLOCATIONS

Under the County’s Growth Management System, Measure J allocations are granted when building permit applications for new single-family or multiple-family residences, mobile homes, or other dwelling units are submitted to the Planning Division of the Community Development and Infrastructure Department (CDI) for review. Planning staff tracks the number of allocations granted every year. Replacement units, including housing units impacted by the CZU August Lightning Complex Fires and other natural disasters, affordable units (since 1992), and ADUs are exempted from the allocation system and are not included in these figures. Figure B below shows building permit allocation since 2000. Table 3 provides a more detailed look at the trends going back to 1979, when Measure J was first implemented.

FIGURE B: MEASURE J RESIDENTIAL ALLOCATIONS SINCE 2000

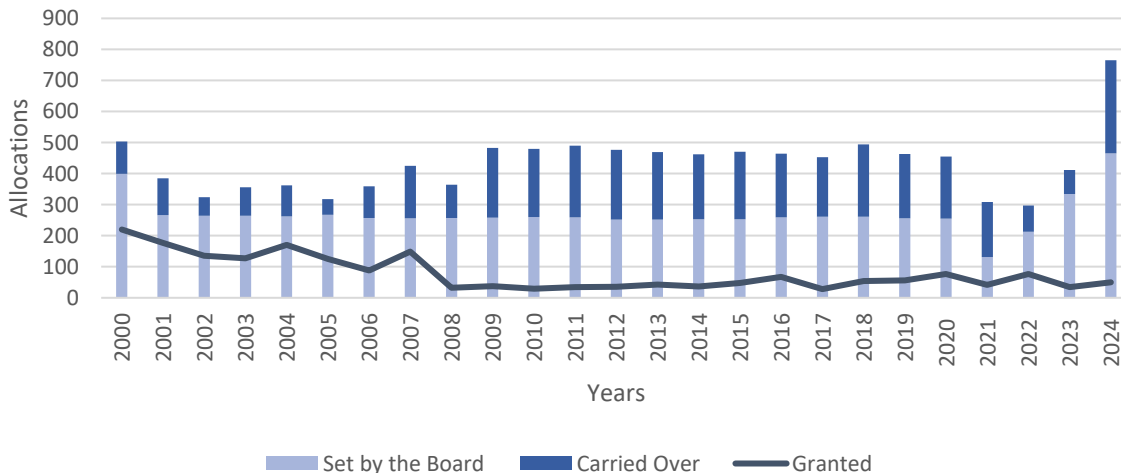


TABLE 3: MEASURE J RESIDENTIAL ALLOCATIONS SINCE 1979

YEAR	ALLOCATIONS CARRIED OVER ⁽¹⁾	ALLOCATIONS SET BY THE BOARD	ALLOCATIONS SET BY THE BOARD (Not Including Exempted Permits) ⁽²⁾	ALLOCATIONS GRANTED ⁽¹⁾⁽³⁾
1979	0	930	--	741
1980	189	1055	--	972
1981	272	937	--	934
1982	275	968	--	738
1983	505	972	--	619
1984	858	991	--	609
1985	1240	757	--	710
1986	1287	768	--	595
1987	1460	468	--	606 ⁽⁴⁾
1988	1322	489	--	670 ⁽⁴⁾
1989	1141	489 + 1384 ⁽⁵⁾	--	420
1990	2594	487	--	267
1991	2814	495	--	173
1992	268	509	433	158
1993	275	512	435	109
1994	326	525	446	168
1995	278	528	449	131
1996	318	530	450	138
1997	312	531	451	197
1998	254	526	447	275
1999	172	396	337	216 ⁽⁶⁾
2000	104	399	339	220
2001	119	266	227	177 ⁽⁷⁾
2002	60	264	227	135
2003	92	264	227	127
2004	100	262	222	171
2005	51	267	227	125
2006	102	257	--	88
2007	169	256	--	149
2008	107	257	--	32
2009	225	258	--	38
2010	220	260	--	29
2011	231	259	--	34
2012	225	252	--	35
2013	217	252	--	43
2014	209	253	--	36
2015	217	470	--	48
2016	205	464	--	67
2017	192	453	--	28
2018	233	494	--	54
2019	207	463	--	56
2020	200	455	--	77 ⁽⁹⁾
2021	178	309	--	47
2022	83	213	--	77
2023	78	334	--	34
2024	222	479	--	25 ⁽¹⁰⁾ /50 ⁽¹¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Totals are updated after year-end to reflect final allocation data and may differ from those recorded in previous years' final reports.
⁽²⁾ Before 1992, the allocation system included both market rate and affordable units. Beginning in 1992, affordable units were exempted from the allocation system, and in 2005, the allocation formula was updated to reflect that policy change and include only market-rate units.
⁽³⁾ Allocations granted to market rate units only (affordable units, ADUs, and replacement units are exempted from the allocation system).
⁽⁴⁾ More building permits were issued than allocated that year due to the issuance of permits from the carryover reservoir.
⁽⁵⁾ A special allocation of 1,384 additional affordable permits was approved to allow attainment of the regional housing goal for the 1980-90 decade.
⁽⁶⁾ 208 from the 1999 allocation and eight (rural) from the 1998 carryover.
⁽⁷⁾ Including 10 carryover allocations authorized by the Board of Supervisors in June 2001.
⁽⁸⁾ Starting on 2025, allocations include carryover allocations from the previous year.
⁽⁹⁾ Including 45 Permanent Room Housing (PRH) units: 22 urban and 23 rural units.
⁽¹⁰⁾ As of July 1, 2024
⁽¹¹⁾ Projected annual total if the current rate continues through the end of the year.

Summary of Recent Allocations and Status of the 2024 Allocation System

Over the past decade, the number of allocations granted has been lower than in previous years, beginning with the 2008-10 recession and then again impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. After an increase in 2022 where 77 allocations were granted, 34 allocations were granted in 2023, and 25 have been granted as of July 1, 2024. If the rate of the first six months continues, 50 allocations are projected to be granted in 2024.

Since 2001, the total number of available allocations derived from the growth goal each year has been sufficient to accommodate the demand for market-rate residential building permits and result in a surplus of allocations to carry over to the following year. Carry over totals, included in Table 4, show that the demand for market rate building permits has not come near the maximum allocated since the year 2004 when all rural allocations were granted, and only urban allocations were carried over.

TABLE 4: UNUSED ALLOCATIONS CARRIED OVER			
Year	Urban	Rural	Total
2001	60	0	60
2002	82	10	92
2003	77	23	100
2004	51	0	51
2005	88	14	102
2006	116	53	169
2007	76	31	107
2008	159	66	225
2009	160	60	220
2010	164	67	231
2011	153	72	225
2012	152	65	217
2013	139	70	209
2014	155	62	217
2015	142	63	205
2016	129	63	192
2017	157	76	233
2018	146	61	207
2019	132	68	200
2020	147	31	178
2021	70	14	84
2022	58	20	78
2023	179	43	222

In addition to tracking annual Measure J allocations, staff also tracks the future demand for allocations that will result from approved and pending minor land divisions (two to four lots) and major projects (five or more lots/units) that will require allocations. While staff can estimate the demand for allocations that will come from the creation of new lots and upcoming projects, timing of actual unit construction is more difficult to estimate since it may be influenced by a number of factors.

Estimates of future demand for allocations are calculated in Tables 5 through 7, which track the status of approved and pending projects as of July 1, 2024. Table 5 lists the major projects that were approved in recent years and the status of their Measure J allocations. This table indicates a future demand of 83 allocations.

TABLE 5: 2024 ALLOCATION STATUS OF APPROVED URBAN PROJECTS (5 OR MORE LOTS/UNITS) AS OF JULY 1, 2024				
Project Name	Total Market Rate Units in Project	Units from Previous Allocations	Units from 2024 Allocation	Remaining Units to be Allocated
Aptos Village	59	53	0	6
Capitola Road Extension*	5	5	0	0
Forest and Meadows	50	49	0	1
Lakeview Estates	7	0	0	7
2740 Mattison Lane	10	0	0	10
3212 Mission Drive*	18	18	0	0
Monterey Ave/Lorraine Ln*	5	0	5	0
Pleasure Point Plaza*	29	0	0	29
Santa Cruz Gardens #8	12	11	0	1
Seascape Uplands	107	102	0	5
Seaview Terrace/Hilltop	9	7	0	2
Soquel Townhomes*	13	13	0	0
Tan Heights/Seacrest	30	29	0	1
Woods Cove/Graham Hill Estates	60	57	0	3
1960 Maciel Ave*+	18	0	0	18
TOTAL	432	344	5	83
*Indicates density bonus used + New for current report				

Table 6 shows the status of pending major projects currently in the development review process and indicates a potential future demand of 333 allocations.

TABLE 6: 2024 PENDING MAJOR PROJECTS (5 OR MORE LOTS/UNITS) AS OF JULY 1, 2024	
Project Name	Market Rate Units to be Allocated
2450 Mattison Ln*	21
3500 Paul Sweet Rd.*^	67
Graham Hill Rd.*^	128
841 Capitola Rd.^	32
5940 Soquel Ave.	60
TOTAL	333
(*) Indicates density bonus used	

Table 7 shows the status of approved and pending minor land division applications and indicates a potential future demand of seven allocations. Tables 5 through 7 estimate a combined potential demand for allocations associated with both approved and pending housing development projects in unincorporated Santa Cruz County.

TABLE 7: 2024 APPROVED AND PENDING MINOR LAND DIVISIONS (2-4 LOTS) AS OF JULY 1, 2024		
Project Location	Approved Number of Lots ⁽¹⁾	Pending Number of Lots ⁽¹⁾
Urban	6	7
Rural	0	0
TOTAL	6	7
⁽¹⁾ The number indicated counts the subject lot(s) being subdivided, which may already contain existing residences. Therefore, the number shown is a maximum and does not necessarily directly translate into the number of new residential building permits that will eventually be needed for buildout of these minor land divisions.		

Table 8 summarizes the status of the Measure J residential allocations for 2024. As of July 1, 2024, 25 allocations have been granted, comparable to July 1st of last year, when 24 allocations had been granted.

TABLE 8: 2024 MEASURE J RESIDENTIAL ALLOCATION STATUS AS OF JULY 1, 2024			
	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL
Allocations Set by Board of Supervisors*	193 (+) 179 = 372	64 (+) 43 = 107	372 (+) 127 = 479
Allocations Granted (as of 7/1 /2024)	13	12	25
Remaining Allocations Available**	180 (+) 179 = 359	52 (+) 43 = 95	454
(*) includes carryover allocations of 179 urban units and 43 rural units from 2023 (**) Measure J allocations given as of 7/1/2024 subtracted from set allocations for 2024.			

This year’s allocation rate continues the trend of relatively low building permit activity over the last decade, particularly since the 2008-10 recession. The continued slowdown of development throughout the county in the past two years is likely also a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, local and state public safety requirements, such as stay-at-home orders and social distancing, as well as related economic impacts, including substantial increases to inflation and mortgage interest rates, may have significantly reduced demand for residential building permits over the past two years. With only 25 allocations granted out of the 479 allocations available for 2024, 454 allocations are still available for this year. Staff anticipates that this will provide ample allocations for the remainder of 2024 in both the rural and urban areas of unincorporated Santa Cruz County.

IV. POTENTIAL GROWTH IMPACTS

The County’s growth management system was instituted to address the impacts of growth on natural resources and public services. The following discussion highlights recent impact issues and steps being taken to ensure adequate resource protection and to ensure that proposed growth can be accommodated with adequate urban services.

Resource Protection

The County General Plan and County Code include numerous policies and measures to protect natural resources and to mitigate any impacts from increased development. These policies and ordinances address watershed protection, protection of biotic resources, protection of agricultural lands, erosion control, stormwater runoff quality and quantity management, and maintenance of groundwater recharge. The most pressing resource impacted by growth in the county is currently water supply, including timing and availability of new supplies. Anticipated growth may also have significant impact to the county’s transportation infrastructure, which already experiences high levels of usage and traffic.

Water Supply Constraints:

All county water purveyors are continuing to pursue solutions to challenges for sustainable water supply due to groundwater overdraft, lack of storage, seawater intrusion, and/or diminished availability of streamflow from persistent drought conditions.

All the main aquifers in this county, the primary sources of the County's potable water and irrigation water are in some degree of overdraft. Overdraft is manifested in several ways including 1) declining groundwater levels, 2) degradation of water quality, 3) diminished stream base flow, and/or 4) seawater intrusion. Surface water supplies, which are the primary source of supply for the northern third of the county, are inadequate during drought periods and will be further diminished because of the need to increase stream baseflows to restore habitat for endangered salmonid populations. The latest climate change projections for the region indicate that in the future, there will be longer drought periods and a shorter rainy season, which will lead to a further reduction in surface flow and groundwater recharge. This will be exacerbated by increased evapotranspiration due to warmer weather.

In response to these challenges, coordinated water resource management has been of primary concern to the County and to the various water agencies. As required by state law, each of the county's water agencies serving more than 3,000 connections must update their Urban Water Management Plans every five years. The most recent update was due in 2021 and includes the addition of a Water Shortage Contingency Plan to help agencies prepare for drought. Smaller systems must develop an Emergency Response Plan that incorporates drought planning elements. The County has adopted the Drought Response and Outreach Plan which identifies activities to build resilience amongst domestic well owners.

County staff are working with the water agencies on various regional programs to provide for sustainable water supply and protection of the environment. Effective water conservation programs by the water agencies have reduced overall water demand in the past 20 years, despite ongoing population growth. Supplemental supply efforts underway include groundwater recharge enhancement, increased wastewater reuse, and transfer of water among agencies to provide for more efficient and reliable use. The County is also working closely with the groundwater agencies to implement the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014, which requires all high- and medium-priority groundwater basins in California to develop groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs) that achieve sustainability within 20 years of implementation. The County is also leading an effort in response to Senate Bill 552 to plan for and provide drought assistance to private wells and state small water systems throughout the County that could be impacted by lowered groundwater levels and water quality challenges.

County staff are actively engaged in the Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) programs for both Santa Cruz County and the Pajaro watershed. Water Resources staff continued to work with water agencies to conduct annual sampling of juvenile salmonids and stream habitats in four watersheds: San Lorenzo, Soquel, Aptos, and Pajaro. Water Resources Staff also continue to work with other County departments and partner organizations to implement the Stream Wood Program and conduct fish passage and habitat restoration projects throughout the County. The Water Quality program continues

to sample the beaches and creeks to monitor water quality and is expanding its capabilities to implement microbial source tracking to identify the cause of water quality impairments.

The following sections describe the localized water supply efforts broken out by geographic area:

City of Santa Cruz and Live Oak: The City of Santa Cruz and surrounding unincorporated urban areas, as well as the University of California – Santa Cruz, are supplied by the City of Santa Cruz Water Department (SCWD), primarily utilizing surface water from the San Lorenzo River, Loch Lomond, and north coast watersheds. During normal years, there is adequate supply, but during drought years, water use reductions are required.

In 2014, the SCWD formed the Water Supply Advisory Committee (WSAC) to evaluate their water supply needs and to develop recommendations for projects to address those needs. Staff turned the recommendations from the WSAC into a Water Supply Augmentation Strategy (WSAS), which includes the evaluation and pursuit of multiple projects to meet those needs. The SCWD is pursuing changes to their existing water rights which will allow for flexibility in how the water system is operated, making it feasible to pursue all of their water management goals.

The SCWD is now actively evaluating the feasibility and pursuing several projects outlined in their WSAS, that would provide adequate water supplies to meet dry year demand. In December 2018, the SCWD began a water transfer pilot project for customers of the Soquel Creek Water District. In 2019, they began testing the ability of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin to store excess winter surface water underground through a process known as Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR). In 2022, water that was injected into the Basin in the winter was recovered during the dry season and distributed to customers as part of a pilot study. Other strategies include further transfers, ASR in the Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin, and the use of wastewater recycling for irrigation, or injection into one of the groundwater basins. Desalination, while not a priority, is still a possibility for future investigation. It is currently in the design phase.

To support the ability to implement both emergency and routine water transfers, the SCWD and the Scotts Valley Water District (SVWD) sought and received a \$9.6 million grant to install an intertie. This intertie represents the last in a series needed to connect all the water utilities from the upper reaches of the San Lorenzo Valley Water District to the Central Water District.

San Lorenzo Valley and Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin: Water supply in the San Lorenzo Valley is provided through a combination of surface water intakes and groundwater wells that extract from the Santa Margarita Groundwater Basin. Private wells and the Scotts Valley Water District (SVWD) rely entirely on the Basin. The San Lorenzo Valley Water District (SLVWD) was severely impacted by the CZU fire in 2020 and has been relying more on groundwater while burned surface water intakes are replaced.

Overdraft in the Santa Margarita Basin underlying parts of San Lorenzo Valley and Scotts Valley has been manifested by a significant decline in groundwater levels and a reduction in stream base flow over the past 40 years. Cooperative efforts by County staff, consultants, SLVWD, and the SVWD over the past several years have led to a better

understanding of the water resources in the Santa Margarita Basin. Recent reductions in pumping due to successful water conservation programs have resulted in stabilized groundwater levels, which, despite showing some increase in 2019, are still 250 feet lower than they were in 1980 in some parts of the Basin.

In 2017, the two water districts and the County adopted a Joint Powers Agreement to form the Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency (SMGWA) which is tasked with developing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to manage the basin under the SGMA. The City of Santa Cruz, Mount Hermon Association, City of Scotts Valley, and representatives of private well owners also have a seat on the Board that governs SMGWA. The SMGWA engaged a consultant to help with the development of the plan, including extensive modeling and technical analysis of groundwater levels and quality in the Basin. The GSP was approved by the Department of Water Resources in 2023.

The overdraft of this basin is currently being addressed in several ways. SVWD built a non-potable wastewater recycling plant in 2002 and has been working to expand the number of users of that reclaimed wastewater for irrigation. The use of treated wastewater for irrigation and landscaping offsets an equivalent amount of potable water pumping and therefore is a valuable component in the water supply portfolio. SLVWD is in the process of developing an Environmental Impact Report to pursue changes to their ability to use their surface water sources conjunctively. They are also pursuing a feasibility study to investigate how best to access an allotment of 313 acre-feet of water per year from Loch Lomond.

Water quality in the Santa Margarita Basin has been impacted by various contaminant sources including gas stations, dry cleaners, and septic systems. The occurrence of these contaminants in the groundwater supply puts some constraints on both the use of the impacted water as well as efforts to enhance groundwater storage. Most of the contaminated sites have been successfully remediated. The GSP outlines a framework to evaluate additional projects and management actions to improve the sustainability and resiliency of the Basin.

Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin: In the mid-county area, overdraft is manifested by groundwater levels below protective elevations necessary to prevent seawater intrusion, indications of seawater intrusion into parts of the aquifer systems, and the probable decline in stream base flows. Water is extracted from the mid-county area aquifers by SCWD, the Soquel Creek Water District (SqCWD), Central Water District (CWD), small public water systems (serving between five and 199 water connections), and individual users. Only the smaller CWD, located in the recharge area of one of these aquifers, appears to have sustainable groundwater supplies for its current customer base. Successful water conservation measures have improved groundwater elevations along the coast in recent years, despite instances of drought conditions.

In 2016, the SqCWD, CWD, County, and City of Santa Cruz adopted a Joint Powers Agreement to form the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA) for management of the Mid-County Basin under SGMA. Pursuant to SGMA, a GSP was submitted to the State Department of Water Resources in January 2020, which outlines how the basin will reach sustainability by 2040. The GSP was approved in June 2021 and updated in 2024. The agency expects to reach sustainability through ongoing water

conservation and implementation of several projects by the partner agencies. There is no current plan to curtail pumping in the basin. The County and water agencies have done numerous outreach activities to engage small public water systems and private well owners that also extract water from the basin.

One of the projects in the GSP is the Pure Water Soquel Project. This project will capture approximately 25% of the existing treated wastewater that is being discharged out into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and recycle it for beneficial reuse, providing 1,500 acre-feet of water per year. The project includes a tertiary treatment facility at the Santa Cruz Wastewater Treatment Facility, an advanced water purification center in Live Oak, over 8 miles of pipelines, and three seawater intrusion prevention wells. The purified water will replenish the groundwater basin, raise groundwater levels to create a seawater intrusion barrier, and protect further seawater contamination from occurring. Construction of the project commenced in July 2020 with the injection wells and May 2021 with the pipelines; the project will be operational by early 2025.

The MGA is wrapping up a grant to support groundwater management planning in the Basin including modeling, the results of which will provide support to both the Pure Water Soquel and SCWD ASR projects.

Groundwater quality impacts from contaminants have been minimal in the Mid-County area. There are several gas station leaks in this region, but none of the leaks has impacted major water supply wells. Groundwater from wells in the Aromas aquifer has been found to contain naturally occurring hexavalent chromium, a carcinogen, sometimes in excess of drinking water standards. SqCWD has addressed this issue by blending the affected water to bring it within drinking water standards. The state has recently approved a lower chromium standard, making continued use of this source potentially much more expensive due to treatment costs. This is going to have the greatest impact on small public water systems, which will be impacted by the standards but do not have a large rate-base to pay for treatment.

Pajaro Valley Basin: Overdraft in the south County aquifers is manifested by depressed water levels, and seawater intrusion. Water levels are below sea level under more than 60% of the basin, elevated chloride levels have been detected in wells near the Pajaro River more than two miles inland from the coast, and segments of Corralitos Creek are drying up earlier in the summer than in previous years. Eighty-five percent of the water use in the Pajaro Valley is by the agricultural industry.

The Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency (PV Water) and the City of Watsonville (CoW) completed construction of an advanced tertiary treatment facility that has been providing recycled water for irrigation in coastal areas since spring of 2009. PV Water operates a project at Harkins Slough that provides groundwater storage and recovery in the shallow aquifer in that area.

PV Water completed its Basin Management Plan update in 2014. The plan provides for reducing overall groundwater use by about 12,000 acre-feet through conservation, increased recycled water use, and implementation of several local projects to optimize existing resources and provide increased supply. The Basin Management Plan was approved as an alternative to a GSP by the Department of Water Resources in July 2019,

and PV Water worked with an advisory committee to submit a required update in December 2021.

Several of the projects outlined in the Plan have undergone environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Construction is progressing on the College Lake Integrated Resources Management Project. The project will develop facilities to use the lake water as an alternative to groundwater for agricultural irrigation. To do this, the proposed project would increase the storage capacity of the lake to approximately 1,700 acre-feet. On average, the Project will supply approximately 1,800 to 2,300 acre-feet per year of water to growers in the Pajaro Valley. The community is actively engaged in supporting these efforts. In addition to College Lake, the Watsonville Slough System Managed Aquifer Recharge and Recovery Project is moving forward as well.

The CoW provides municipal supply for the city and residential areas outside the city limits. The CoW has increased their water conservation programs and charges an impact fee for all new development to support those programs. The CoW also obtained a grant to upgrade treatment facilities to increase winter use of surface water from Corralitos Creek. The City's objective is to meet future development demands without increasing groundwater use.

Water quality in the South County area suffers from seawater intrusion and areas of nitrate contamination from agricultural practices, animal facilities, some areas of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination, and septic systems.

County staff will continue to monitor and provide input to these various water supply and watershed enhancement efforts being carried out throughout the County and will keep the Board of Supervisors updated regarding their status when appropriate including the annual Water Status Reports. County staff also continues to implement and enforce the water efficient landscape ordinance, water conservation ordinance, and well ordinance, and implement new State requirements including SB 552.

Urban Services

The County continues to pursue a number of activities to improve its ability to provide services throughout the urbanized portions of the unincorporated area:

- Yearly adoption of the Capital Improvement Program, which identifies scheduled public service improvements (such as road, roadside, drainage, and park improvements) and provides a basis for development of the necessary financing programs.
- Street plan lines and route design concepts for arterial and collector streets in the urban areas, particularly in the Aptos, Live Oak, Soquel, and San Lorenzo Valley planning areas, which require an on-going effort to provide needed information for roadway design, capital improvement programming, and the review and conditioning of new projects.

Sanitation

In addition, the various County sanitation districts have made numerous sewer-related

improvements over the years, including the projects described below:

- The Davenport Recycled Water Project was completed in 2018. The Davenport County Sanitation District upgraded the existing wastewater treatment plant and constructed a recycled water storage pond. The improvements make it possible for farmers, contractors, business owners, and residents to access disinfected tertiary-treated recycled water that can be used on crops, landscaping, construction sites, and other approved uses. The recycled water can be used to reduce use of potable water benefitting both the community and the environment.
- Currently, the Davenport County Sanitation District has secured a \$3.4-million grant from the Department of Water Resources and a \$357,000 grant from the Integrated Regional Water Management Foundation. These grant funds were used to design and now are being used to construct two new water tanks capable of storing 700,000 gallons of potable water and rehabilitating a 135,000-gallon raw water tank. These tanks will provide backup water storage for approximately eleven additional days for the community to use when their water source is unavailable (due to turbidity, low flows, or infrastructure damage). This water can also be used for fire protection. Construction of these projects is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.
- In 2019, the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District (District) completed a study regarding sewer line infiltration and inflow (I&I). The District has also video inspected over 90% of its sewer collection mains to identify deficiencies. The District is using the I&I study and video assessments to address areas where sewer lines are deteriorating and where stormwater and groundwater may be entering through cracks in the sewer lines. Having stormwater and groundwater in the sewer lines reduces the capacity of the lines which can hinder development. Recently completed projects to rehabilitate sewer mains with these issues include the 2019 Soquel Village Rehabilitation, Capitola Jewel Box Sewer Replacement, Capitola Avenue Sewer Rehabilitation, East Santa Cruz Harbor Sewer Rehabilitation, Rio Del Mar Sewer Rehabilitation, Cliff Drive Area Sewer Rehabilitation, 41st Avenue and Soquel Drive Sewer Rehabilitation, and Cabrillo Park Sewer Replacement Phase 1, 2021 Sewer Pipe Rehabilitation, Rio Sands Sewer Rehabilitation, Rodriguez Street Sewer Rehabilitation, East Cliff Drive Sewer Rehabilitation, Valencia Creek Sewer Rehabilitation, the North Avenue Sewer Rehabilitation, and the 2022 Sewer Pipe Rehabilitation projects were done to specifically address these issues. Another significant project currently under construction to improve sewer infrastructure is the Arana Trunkline Replacement project. In the next couple of years additional large-, mid- and small-scale rehabilitation projects are planned to reduce I&I. Beyond improving capacity, addressing I&I and deteriorated sewer pipes benefit the environment as it reduces the amount of energy required to pump and treat wastewater, improves the environment in areas where wastewater may be leaking out of pipes and reduces the risks of sanitary sewer overflows.
- The Santa Cruz County Sanitation District has completed the Soquel Pump Station Force Main Replacement project which replaced a 40+ year-old sewer force main

under Soquel Creek and upgraded the pump station. This project helps improve the water quality at Capitola Beach and increases the operational reliability of the pump station.

- A sewer connection moratorium exists for the Rodeo Gulch sewer basin. The Santa Cruz County Sanitation District had to complete three projects that together will upgrade the trunk line and pump station to make it possible to lift the moratorium. The Lower Rodeo Sewer Replacement project was completed in 2024. The Upper Rodeo Sewer Rehabilitation project is under construction and will be completed by fall of 2025. The pump station upgrade is scheduled to begin construction in spring of 2025.
- The Freedom County Sanitation District upgraded the Trembley Pump Station in 2019. The pump station is now more efficient and has more capacity to hold wastewater in the event that power is lost to the pumps.
- The Freedom County Sanitation District completed the Freedom Sewer Rehabilitation Phase 1 project which rehabilitated manholes and nearly 14,000 linear feet of sewer mains in the neighborhoods north of the Watsonville Airport, and at the northern end of Green Valley Drive with the help of a near \$9-million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture. The District also secured a \$6-million grant from the State Water Resources Control Agency for the second phase of rehabilitation work which has rehabilitated sewers in additional neighborhoods east of Green Valley Drive. The rehabilitation will reduce I&I which is significant in this area and increase capacity in the sewer lines. The Freedom Sewer Rehabilitation Phase 2 project will be completed in fall of 2024.
- Outside the Urban Services Line, but within the Rural Services Line, CDI completed sewer improvements in County Service Area (CSA) 2, Place De Mer. The CSA's septic system was failing, and an advance treatment septic system was required by the State Water Resources Control Board. The new system has been installed and will protect ground water quality in this coastal community.
- Outside the Urban Services Line, but within the Rural Services Area, CDI worked with a contractor to finalize reconstruction of the Boulder Creek wastewater treatment plant in County Service Area 7. The facility was damaged during the 2020 CZU Fire. Required improvements included repair or replacement of destroyed PG&E transformers, electrical power poles, electrical control panels, motor control center, blowers, generators, office building, piping, valves, and equipment to remotely monitor the wastewater system. The County has secured a \$405,312 grant from the Integrated Water Management Foundation to help fund a project to increase the capacity of the wastewater treatment plant's equalization tank by 120%. The tank is failing and replacing it with a larger tank will improve operations and reduce the need for hauling during storm events.
- Beyond implementation of projects, the Santa Cruz County Sanitation District (District) staff is undertaking planning studies to prepare for future growth within the District boundaries. These efforts include sewer flow modeling incorporating the new allowable housing densities from the County's updated Housing Element.

Identified capacity improvement projects will be reported in the District's 5-year Capital Improvement Program.

Transportation

There has been a significant investment in new and expanded urban services infrastructure in the unincorporated area over the last 20 years, particularly through the former County Redevelopment Agency. However, fully addressing the County's remaining urban service needs will require additional construction of infrastructure capital improvement projects throughout the urban area over an extended period of time.

There are also ongoing challenges to maintaining existing roadway and bridge infrastructure, resulting from the 2017, 2019, 2022, and 2023-24 winter storms that resulted in extensive damage to over 200 locations along County roadways and subsequent delays in receiving disaster relief funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The infusion of state SB 1 funds and local Measure D funds will continue to help the County make progress on improving its pavement condition on publicly maintained roads.

Traffic congestion is a significant concern facing residents throughout the County. A number of planning efforts focused on improving the County's transportation infrastructure are currently underway. In 2018, the Board of Supervisors accepted the Portola Drive Streetscape Concepts, as a component of the Pleasure Point Commercial Corridor Vision and Guiding Design Principles. The Streetscape Concepts propose potential near-term and long-term improvements to a portion of the Portola Drive public right-of-way that is intended to benefit all users in the Pleasure Point Commercial Corridor, including pedestrians and bicyclists, local business owners, and residents. As a planning level document, the Streetscape Concepts would need to undergo design and engineering. The plan has been analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report for the Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update (Sustainability Update).

The Sustainability Update, which was certified by the California Coastal Commission on March 15, 2024, include a new Access + Mobility Element as well as a modernized code that includes a new Parking and Circulation Chapter in the SCCC. The new Access + Mobility Element includes policies and programs that enhance multi-modal transportation infrastructure in order to implement the Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan and address the County's current transportation challenges, as well as a list of transportation projects that can be incorporated into upcoming Capital Improvement Programs.

The County adopted an Active Transportation Plan in 2022 that replaces the 2011 Bicycle Plan and provides a roadmap for future improvements for walking and bicycling in unincorporated Santa Cruz County, including a robust list of infrastructure and program recommendations to improve safety and encourage walking and bicycling. The County previously adopted a Safe Routes to Schools Plan in 2020 which covers 17 County schools, and the recommended projects from the Safe Routes to Schools Plan are

included in the Active Transportation Plan.

The Coastal Rail Trail is the County's largest active transportation project. When complete, it will provide a continuous 32-mile bicycle and pedestrian trail that runs the length of the County along the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL). Over 18-miles of trail are advancing through preconstruction or construction and the remaining approximately 13-miles of trail are beginning development as part of SCCRTC's Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project.

The County received a grant along with its partner agencies, the City of Watsonville, and the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC) from Caltrans to develop and implement a regional Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) mitigation bank. The bank would provide developers a means of mitigating their development with contributions to offsite projects that reduce VMT including active transportation, affordable housing, or transit projects. The grant project is expected to be completed by 2025.

In 2021 the County was successful in procuring \$16.5 million in state grant funds (Solutions for Congested Corridors Program) to construct the Soquel Drive Buffered Bike Lane and Congestion Mitigation Project. Construction of the project has begun and will provide multi-modal improvements to nearly 5.6 miles of Soquel Avenue and Soquel Drive between La Fonda Avenue and State Park Drive. Significant elements of this project include the installation of 10+ miles of continuous separated or buffered bike lanes, 22 signal detection system upgrades including adaptive traffic management software and transit signal priority, ½ mile of sidewalk infill, 100 ADA ramp upgrades, 5.6 miles of pavement resurfacing and 11 mid-block crosswalk upgrades with flashing beacons.

SCCRTC is continuing its State Highway 1 improvement program:

- The Soquel Drive and 41st Avenue Project includes construction of northbound and southbound auxiliary lanes between Soquel Drive and 41st Avenue, historically the busiest section of Highway 1 in the county, and a bike/pedestrian overcrossing at Chanticleer Avenue. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on April 19, 2023, and construction is expected to be completed in 2024.
- Bay Avenue/Porter Street and Park Avenue Project includes new auxiliary lanes from Park Avenue to State Park Drive, a new bike/pedestrian overcrossing at Mar Vista Drive, replacement of the Capitola Avenue bridge with a wider bridge that meets current standards and improves pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Construction on this project is expected to be completed in 2025.
- Freedom Boulevard and State Park Project includes auxiliary lanes and Bus on Shoulder from State Park to Freedom Boulevard and Coastal Rail Trail Segment 12 Project, Soquel Drive Multimodal improvements, and Rapid Bus Transit improvements. This project is currently in the preconstruction phase and funding for construction is being sought. As part of this project, the County has completed five miles of buffered bike lanes and is on target to complete its Soquel Drive project by April 2025.

In October 2023, the SCCRTC began to develop a Concept Report for the Zero Emission Passenger Rail and Trail Project to develop a project rail and trail build concept that will be advanced into subsequent project tasks. The Project proposes a new high-capacity passenger rail service and stations on approximately 22 miles of the Santa Cruz Branch Rail Line (SCBRL) from the City of Santa Cruz to Pajaro. The project aims to provide passenger rail service to connect the most populated areas of Santa Cruz County to each other and to the greater region as well as to provide integrated intercity travel options for riders on the Central Coast. The Project will additionally provide 12 miles of bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Coastal Rail Trail from Rio Del Mar Boulevard through the community of La Selva Beach and the City of Watsonville, as well as the Capitola Trestle reach.

The County is in the preconstruction phases for the Green Valley Road Multi-Use Trail Improvements project which will establish a two-mile-long multimodal corridor for bicycles, pedestrians, and transit, greatly improving mobility in an underserved community with a very high usage of these alternative modes of transportation. The project will construct a 10-foot wide bicycle and pedestrian pathway along Green Valley Road between Airport Boulevard and Mesa Verde Drive in unincorporated Watsonville.

To address infrastructure improvement needs, the County has replaced over 1,140 linear feet of culverts under County roadways, prioritizing areas in poor condition and prone to flooding.

V. HOUSING NEEDS

2023-2031 Housing Element

The County Board of Supervisors adopted the 6th Cycle Housing Element, covering the years 2023-2031, on November 14, 2023, and it was certified by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) in April 2024. In the 2023 Housing Element update, objectives for each of the goals were modified as appropriate to specifically respond to the housing environment in Santa Cruz County from 2023-2031. Policies were also modified as needed to respond to current housing element law and existing and anticipated residential development conditions.

The updated Housing Element has the benefit of many new adopted policies and programs that support more robust housing development. Other projects, such as the “Sustainability Policy and Regulatory Update” (2022); the Public Facility, School Employee, and Farmworker Housing Ordinance (2018); the Permanent Room Housing Ordinance (2020); the Tiny Homes on Wheels Ordinance (2022); and the County’s ADU regulations implement policies in the 2023 Housing Element.

Regional Housing Needs Allocation

Under California law, each jurisdiction’s housing element must ensure adequate land is zoned and available to accommodate the jurisdiction’s share of the projected regional housing need, or Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA). The locality’s share of housing need is divided into distinct household income levels or categories based on detailed estimates of household growth within each income level estimated to occur in that locality during the housing element’s time horizon, which is at least eight years long.

The State Department of Housing and Community Development develops and distributes the RHNA at a regional level; AMBAG then allocates the housing units among the jurisdictions in this area. The current RHNA Plan for the Monterey Bay region was adopted in November 2022. It allocates a goal of 4,634 new housing units to the unincorporated area of the County for the 6th Cycle planning period from 2023 through 2031. Changes in state law led to a considerably higher RHNA compared to previous cycles. Santa Cruz County’s RHNA was approximately 3.5 times higher than the 5th Cycle RHNA. These units are distributed between four income categories, as shown in Table 9 below.

TABLE 9: HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION FOR UNINCORPORATED AREA	
Income	2024-2031 RHNA
Very Low Income (<50% of County Median Income)	1,492 units
Low Income (51-80% of County Median Income)	976 units
Moderate Income (81-120% of County Median Income)	586 units
Above Moderate Income (121% +)	1,580 units
TOTAL	4,634 units

Santa Cruz County had considerable success in meeting its housing needs allocation in the last RHNA cycle (2015 to 2023). The County permitted 1,185 housing units, which represented 90% of its RHNA. Of the units permitted, approximately 38% (446 units) were affordable to low to very low-income households and 62% (739 units) were affordable to moderate to above moderate-income households. Most notably, the County permitted approximately 125% of the required low-income units and approximately 96% of the required moderate-income units allocated in the 5th cycle. Additionally, the County permitted 93% of its above moderate-income and 59% of its very-low-income allocation.

Affordable Housing

Chapter 17.01, the Growth Management provisions of the County Code, requires that “at least 15% of those housing units newly constructed for sale or rental each year shall be

capable of purchase or rental by persons with average or below average incomes.” Chapter 17.10 of the County Code, “Affordable Housing Requirements” contains the County’s inclusionary requirements. It implements the 15% affordable requirement in the Growth Management chapter by establishing standard requirements and procedures for new for-sale residential projects of seven or more net new homes to meet the 15% affordable housing goal. It also requires developers of new rental projects to either pay an affordable housing impact fee or provide affordable rental units as an alternative to the fee. Chapter 17.12 includes the County’s residential density bonus program, which also helps generate affordable units toward the 15% affordability goal.

Table 10 shows the number and percentage of affordable housing units issued building permits in the unincorporated area since 1979 when Measure J was first implemented. Several of the affordable units in Table 10 were in publicly subsidized developments sponsored by the former County Redevelopment Agency, the Housing Authority, or in some cases after the 1989 earthquake, affordable projects built with Federal Emergency Management Agency and Red Cross disaster relief funds. While these are not called out separately, generally whenever the percentage of affordable units permitted in a given year is greater than 15%, this most likely reflects permits issued for one or more of these subsidized affordable projects (sometimes referred to as 100% affordable projects).

The County completed a review and nexus study of its Affordable Housing Policies and Guidelines in 2014, and as a result of that study, the Board of Supervisors directed staff to create an Affordable Housing Impact Fee (AHIF) program, which went into effect in August of 2015. The AHIF is applied to most types of new construction (except for public facilities such as schools and hospitals, and parking structures), including new commercial, industrial, and agricultural structures and additions, market-rate rental housing, new homes, and residential additions and/or replacements greater than 500 square feet) and is calculated on a per-square foot basis.

Residential subdivision or condominium projects of seven or more new units or lots must include 15% of the units as deed-restricted affordable units. As an alternative, developers of such projects may seek Board approval to pay the AHIF or pursue one of the other alternatives to providing on-site units set forth in Chapter 17.10. In late 2018, the Board adopted Ordinance 5286 amending Chapters 13.01, 13.10, 17.10 and 17.12 to better facilitate development of affordable housing through a number of programs, as part of the policy update known as the “Near Term Housing Amendments.” These amendments included changes to existing programs, including R-Combining District regulations, a new discretionary approval requirement for applicants who want to utilize the AHIF program, and a new enhanced density bonus process that expanded existing density bonus regulations.

In 2024-2025, Planning staff will be working on a nexus study to analyze whether any changes to the 15% inclusionary rate are appropriate given current development conditions.

TABLE 10: AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRODUCTION

Year	Total Units Issued Building Permits ⁽¹⁾	Affordable Units Issued Building Permits	ADUs Issued Building Permits	Total Non-ADUs (Market Rate + Affordable)	% Affordable (Including ADUs) ⁽²⁾	% Affordable (Does Not Include ADUs)
1979	741	0	--	741	0.0%	0.0%
1980	972	62	--	972	6.4%	6.4%
1981	934	251	--	934	26.9%	26.9%
1982	738	235	--	738	31.8%	31.8%
1983	619	52	--	619	8.4%	8.4%
1984	609	129	--	609	21.2%	21.2%
1985	710	61	--	710	8.6%	8.6%
1986	595	98	1	594	16.6%	16.5%
1987	606	75	0	606	12.4%	12.4%
1988	710	23	3	707	3.7%	3.3%
1989	420	14	0	420	3.3%	3.3%
1990	267	9	1	266	3.7%	3.4%
1991	173	20	1	172	12.1%	11.6%
1992	367	209	0	367	56.9%	56.9%
1993	149	30	1	148	20.8%	20.3%
1994	192	24	2	190	13.5%	12.6%
1995	152	21	8	144	19.1%	14.6%
1996	145	7	6	139	9.0%	5.0%
1997	203	6	14	189	9.9%	3.2%
1998	304	29	28	276	18.8%	10.5%
1999	217	8	26	191	15.7%	4.2%
2000	287	80	21	266	35.2%	30.1%
2001	190	8	15	175	12.1%	4.6%
2002	163	79	36	127	70.6%	62.2%
2003	231	81	17	214	42.4%	37.9%
2004	249	28	52	197	32.1%	14.2%
2005	261	40	56	205	36.8%	19.5%
2006	209	71	38	171	52.2%	41.5%
2007	110	0	40	70	36.4%	0.0%
2008	97	3	30	67	34.0%	4.5%
2009	60	1	22	38	38.3%	2.6%
2010	59	0	24	35	40.7%	0.0%
2011	141	89	18	123	75.9%	72.4%
2012	138	64	19	119	60.1%	53.8%
2013	75	4	29	46	44.0%	8.7%
2014	82	2	19	63	25.6%	3.2%
2015	60	1	29	31	50.0%	3.2%
2016	117	66	19	98	72.6%	67.3%
2017	104	0	28	76	26.9%	0.0%
2018	74	1	37	37	51.4%	2.7%
2019	78	2	29	49	39.7%	4.1%
2020	142	16	37	105	37.3%	15.2%
2021	133	9	63	70	54.1%	12.9%
2022	298	175	27	271	67.8%	64.6%
2023	145	7	85	60	63.4%	11.7%
2024 ⁽³⁾	81	1	63	18	79.0%	5.6%
Total	13,407	2,191	944	12,463	23.4%	17.6%

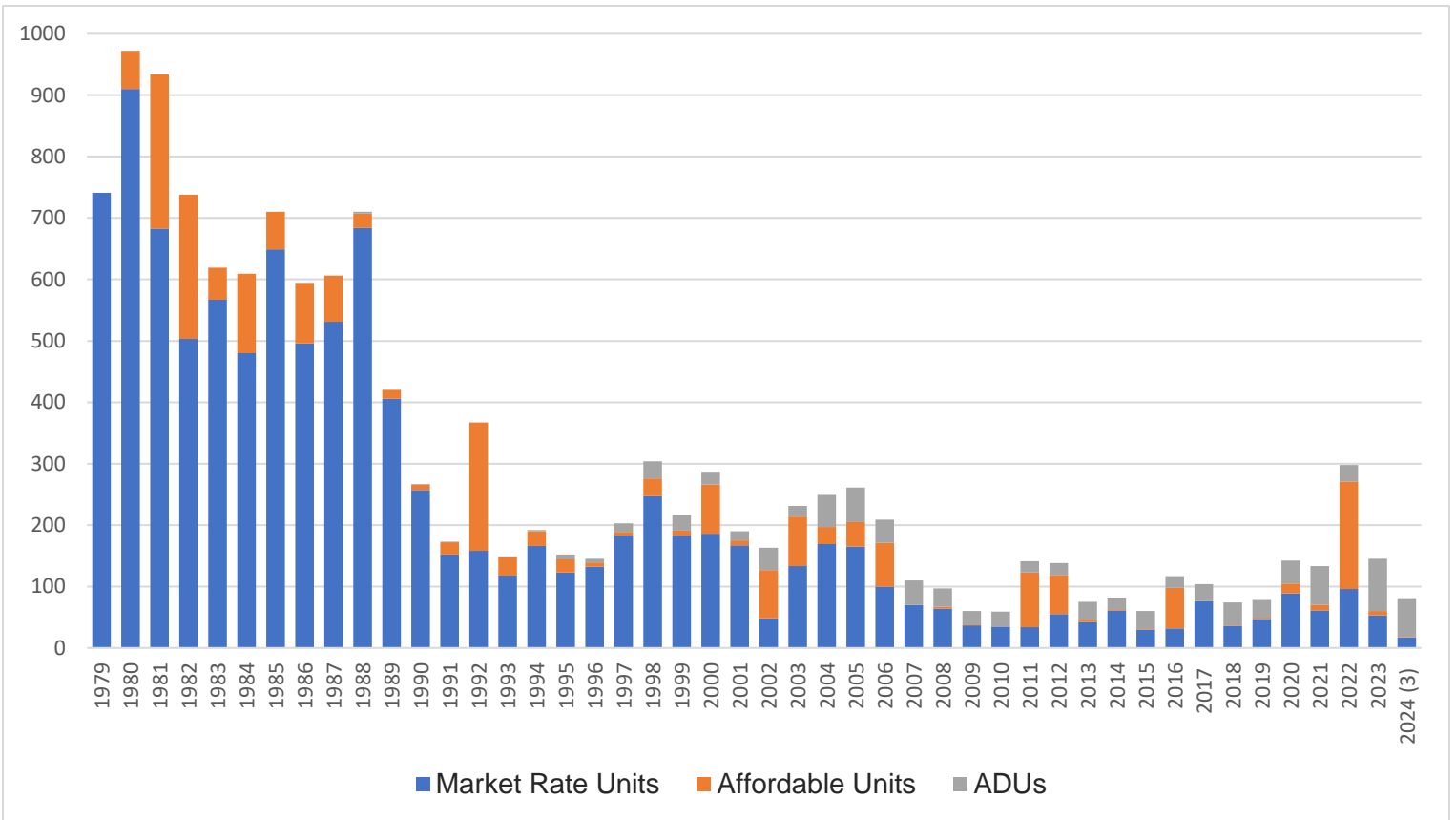
Note: Data shown only includes the unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County

⁽¹⁾ Total number of market rate units, affordable/inclusionary units, and ADUs issued building permits (does not include replacement units).

⁽²⁾ Includes affordable units plus ADUs as a percent of total number of new units.

⁽³⁾ As of July 1, 2024.

FIGURE C: UNITS ISSUED PERMITS, 1979 - JULY 2024



In late 2019, the Board adopted and obtained Coastal Commission approval of several ordinances and General Plan/LCP amendments to update County policies related to development of workforce rental housing for farmworkers, school employees, and others on properties in agricultural and public facility zones. These actions implemented several objectives in the Housing Element and in the County’s Operational Plan.

Since Measure J was first implemented, 23.4% of new housing units constructed in the unincorporated portion of the county, including ADUs, have been affordable to lower- and moderate-income households (household incomes of 120% or less of the County’s Area Median Income or “AMI”). When ADUs are not included, 17.6% of the new housing built in the unincorporated area since 1979 has consisted of affordable units.

To achieve its affordable housing goals, the County continues to exempt affordable housing units (including ADUs) from the County’s growth management regulations. The development of affordable units is, therefore, not limited by the adopted Growth Goal. In addition, recently enacted state law (SB 330) precludes the County from imposing building permit limits on certain areas of the County identified by the State and updated periodically. Currently these areas include four census defined places (CDPs) in the county: Soquel, Live Oak, Pasatiempo, and Paradise Park CDPs.

Demolition Permits

The demolition of existing housing also affects the county’s housing stock and local market conditions. Demolition rates are particularly relevant to affordable housing options since demolished units are often older and likely to be more affordable compared to newly built units. In 2019, staff began tracking demolitions in the unincorporated area to provide a more complete picture of the county’s current housing stock.

Table 11 shows the number of demolition permits issued starting on January 1, 2018. As of July 1st of this year, four units were issued demolition permits, including three single family dwellings (SFDs), and one mobile home (MH) located on a residential parcel. Overall, demolition rates in the County remain relatively low compared to the construction of new housing, and about half of all demolished units are subsequently replaced with new units. Replacement units are exempted from Measure J allocations and therefore are not tracked as part of this report.

TABLE 11: RESIDENTIAL DEMOLITION RATE						
Year	Total Units Issued Demolition Permits ⁽¹⁾	Demolition Unit Types				
		SFD	SFA ⁽³⁾	ADU	MH ⁽⁴⁾	MF ⁽⁵⁾
2018	26	26	0	0	0	0
2019	19	19	0	0	0	0
2020	5	4	0	1	0	0
2021	4	2	0	2	0	0
2022	18	12	0	3	1	2
2023	25	17	0	7	1	0
2024 ⁽²⁾	4	3	0	0	1	0

⁽¹⁾ Data shown includes demolition permits issued for previously permitted residential units in the unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County. Demolition of unpermitted units not included.
⁽²⁾ As of July 1, 2024.
⁽³⁾ Single-Family Attached
⁽⁴⁾ Mobile Homes
⁽⁵⁾ Manufactured Homes

Current Pipeline of Subsidized Affordable Projects

Since 2022, several new affordable housing projects were awarded state and/or federal subsidies to support their development. These projects, some of which are also listed in other tables in this report, are currently either under construction or scheduled to begin construction within several months. These projects and awards are listed in Table 12 below.

All of these projects include extremely low-income units, while the two tax credit projects also include some very low- and low-income units. The [Homekey](#) program is a new State program launched in 2021 to rapidly develop housing for homeless and at-risk households, either through new construction, acquisition/rehabilitation of existing structures, and/or conversion of hotels, motels, or other types of non-residential structures to rental housing. The conversion project option is similar in form to the County’s Permanent Room Housing concept, but without requiring rezoning to Permanent Room Housing (PRH), or discretionary review.

TABLE 12: SUBSIDIZED AFFORDABLE PROJECTS			
Project / Sponsor	Recent Funding Award	Current Status	# of Units
1500 Capitola Rd. / MidPen Housing	2021 Federal Disaster Tax Credits for 2020 CZU Fire	Completed	57
“Pippin II” 78 Atkinson Ln. / MidPen Housing	2021 Federal Disaster Tax Credits for 2020 CZU Fire	Under Construction	80
8705 Hwy 9 / Santa Cruz County Veterans Hall Board of Trustees	State of CA Homekey Round 2	Permit Ready to Issue	21 (11 Rehab + 10 New)
2838 Park Ave. / 2838 Park Ave. L.P.	State of CA Homekey Round 2	Under Construction	36
2716 Freedom Blvd. / CFSC. Inc.	Pending Award of Homekey Round 3	Predevelopment	11
41st Ave. & Soquel Dr./ Linc Housing & Zen Development LLC	Pending Award of Tax-Exempt Funds and County Housing Loan	Predevelopment	286
Soquel Dr. & Thurber Ln./ Anton Thurber LLC	Pending Award of Tax-Exempt Funds and County Housing Loan	Predevelopment	173

Permanent Room Housing (PRH) Projects

In 2020, the County created the Permanent Room Housing (PRH) Combining District to recognize the conversion of obsolete visitor accommodations and care facilities to housing units that are “affordable by design” due to their small unit size. The PRH Combining District creates a pathway for permanent housing to be legalized and upgraded as necessary to meet health and safety criteria. The district is available to any parcel in the county that meets eligibility criteria. Eight PRH applications were approved in 2020, with a total of 66 housing units. While no PRH project applications were received since, the Homekey project located at 8705 Highway 9 would have been a PRH project, if not for the review streamlining provided by the Homekey statute. A new Homekey project at 2716 Freedom Blvd. involving conversion of an existing vacant care facility into 11 studios to provide transitional housing for transition age youth is also similar to the PRH concept in design but will not require rezoning to PRH due to the Homekey streamlining if it receives a Homekey Round 3 award.

Density Bonus Annual Report

As of July 1, 2024, two new applications were received for density bonus projects (41st Ave./Soquel Dr. and Soquel Dr./Thurber Ln.). Three additional density bonus projects were submitted as preapplications under Senate Bill (SB) 330 (3500 Paul Sweet Rd. and Graham Hill Rd.), as indicated Table 13 below.

To date, since the density bonus code update in 2018, a total of 10 density bonus projects have been approved: four in 2019, two in 2020, one in 2021, one in 2022, one in 2023, and one in 2024. Including proposals under preliminary review, the projects listed in Table 13 provide a total of 976 new residential units, including 631 affordable units and 267 density bonus (27% of the total) units.

TABLE 13: DENSITY BONUS PROJECTS

Project	Approval Date	Project Type	Total Units Proposed	Affordable Units		Density Bonus Units	Status
				No.	Level		
Habitat for Humanity, Harper St.	Jan-2019	For-Sale	11	11	Low	1	Completed
MidPen Housing, 1500 Capitola Rd	Nov-2019	Rental / Mixed Use	57	56	Extr. Low to Low	9	Completed
Pleasure Point Plaza	Dec-2019	Rental / Mixed Use	33	4	Very Low	12	Entitled
Soquel Townhomes	Jan-2020	For-Sale	15	2	Mod	2	Completed
432 Capitola Rd. Ext.	Aug-2020	Rental	7	2	Low	2	Construction
3212 Mission Dr.	Apr-2021	For-Sale	21	3	2 Mod, 1 Very Low	5	Entitled, Inactive
2450 Mattison Ln	--	For-Sale	25	4	Mod	1	Discretionary Review
Monterey Ave/ Lorraine Ln.	Mar-2023	For Sale	6	1	Mod	1	Plan Check
2838 Park Ave. (Homekey)	--	Rental	36	35	Extr. Low	16	In Construction
1574 7th Ave	--	Rental / Mixed Use	9	2	Very Low	3	Preliminary Review
1960 Maciel Ave.	Aug-2024	For Sale	21	3	Mod	4	Approved
2021 Chanticleer	--	Rental	30	3	Very Low	10	Preliminary Review
1231-1255 7 th Ave.	--	Rental	27	2	Very Low	6	Preliminary Review
41st Ave. & Soquel Dr.	--	Rental	289	286	107 Extr. Low, 11 Very Low, 168 Low	167	Preliminary Review
Soquel Dr. & Thurber Ln	--	Rental	173	173	TBD	TBD	Preliminary Review
3500 Paul Sweet Rd.	--	For Sale	84	17	Low	24	Preliminary Review
Graham Hill Rd.	--	For Sale	161	33	7 Mod, 26 Low	0	Preliminary Review
TOTAL *	--	--	976	631		267	--

**The Pippin II, an 80-unit affordable subsidized project, is not included on this list as it did not require a density bonus, due in part to the R-Combining Zone added to that site in 2007, which allows 20 units per acre.*

Since the County last updated Chapter 17.12 in late 2018, the State has enacted multiple new laws making further amendments to density bonus law, which in most cases preempt local codes, if in conflict.

Accessory Dwelling Unit Annual Report

As a condition of the Coastal Commission's certification of the amendments to the County's ADU ordinance in 2009 (SCCC 13.10.681[K]), the County is required to prepare an annual report evaluating the cumulative impacts associated with ADUs in each planning area, particularly within the Coastal Zone. This analysis has traditionally been included as part of the annual Growth Report and is intended to provide a brief assessment of the cumulative impact of ADUs on traffic, water, public views, and environmentally sensitive areas.

The County first created a "second unit" (ADU) ordinance in 1983. In 1997, the Board of Supervisors adopted revisions to the ADU ordinance that included increased unit size limits in rural areas. In 2004, the Board adopted amendments to the ordinance to implement Assembly Bill (AB) 1866, eliminating the need for discretionary permits for ADUs in most cases. In 2008, the affordability restriction was lifted outside the Coastal Zone, and in 2009 this restriction was lifted inside the Coastal Zone, meaning that new and existing ADUs are no longer required to be rented at restricted rent levels. In 2016, the County undertook a study to understand the function of ADUs in the local housing market and to identify barriers that discourage new ADUs. In 2018, the ordinance was updated to incorporate recommendations from the study and comply with several state laws (SB 1069, AB 2299, AB 2406, SB 229, and AB 494). Additional state laws passed in 2019 (SB 13, AB 68, AB 587, AB 881, AB 671), 2020 (AB 3182), 2021 (AB 345), 2022 (AB 2221, SB 897), and in 2023 (AB 477, AB 1033, A B976, and AB 671) led to additional updates to local regulations in 2020 and 2021. Updates have included allowing ADUs anywhere single- or multifamily residential land use is allowed; removing discretionary requirements for ADUs; shortening the ADU building permit review period to 60 days; establishing regulations for Junior ADUs; easing development standards such as unit size, setbacks and parking; revising the owner occupancy requirement; removing the requirement for fire sprinklers for many cases; reducing fees for ADUs; allowing for separate sale of ADUs by non-profit organizations, and introducing a five-year ADU code enforcement amnesty program. Additional updates are planned for late 2024/early 2025.

Major barriers to ADU construction include permit and construction costs as well as property owner unfamiliarity with the project planning, design, and construction process. Over the years, the County has developed various programs to address these barriers, including the ADU Forgivable Loan Program, the three year My House My Home partnership with Habitat for Humanity, reduced ADU permit fees and a fee waiver program for small ADUs beyond what is required by state law. Staff has also prepared a suite of resources on the County's ADU website. In 2022, the Board of Supervisors decided to end the ADU Forgivable Loan Program due to low performance, and in its place the County is developing a technical assistance program to aid property owners with ADU project planning, design, and construction.

**TABLE 14: TOTAL ADUs ISSUED BUILDING PERMITS
IN UNINCORPORATED COUNTY BY PLANNING AREA SINCE 2010**

Planning Area	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24⁽¹⁾	TOTAL
Aptos	1	2	2	2	1	1	--	1	3	8	4	18	10	11	9	73
Aptos Hills	6	2	4	8	1	4	2	6	6	--	1	1	1	6	1	48
Bonny Doon	3	1	2	1	--	2	--	1	2	2	1	4	5	2	--	26
Carbonera	2	6	3	2	1	6	--	4	3	3	1	6	4	3	2	46
Eureka Canyon	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	--	2	2	3	1	--	2	1	22
La Selva	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	2
Live Oak	2	2	--	5	6	6	7	10	4	8	19	22	22	30	25	168
North Coast	--	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	2	--	5
Pajaro Valley	3	--	1	1	2	1	2	--	4	1	--	3	5	9	6	38
Salsipuedes	--	--	1	1	2	--	--	2	2	--	--	1	--	1	--	10
San Andreas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	1	--	--	1	2	3	8
San Lorenzo Valley	1	1	--	--	1	2	4	1	4	2	4	3	6	2	3	34
Skyline	--	--	1	--	--	--	1	2	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	6
Soquel	--	1	2	4	2	1	1	--	3	1	2	2	2	10	4	35
Summit	5	--	2	1	1	4	1	1	3	--	1	--	2	5	--	26
TOTAL	24	18	19	29	19	29	19	28	37	29	37	63	58	85	53	547

⁽¹⁾ As of July 1, 2024

Updates to the County’s ADU ordinance and incentive programs are expected to make ADUs more feasible and appealing to County homeowners, and County staff are already seeing an uptick in ADU applications. As Table 14 indicates, after a decrease in permit applications following the 2008-10 recession, application rates for ADUs have steadily increased in recent years, including a significant jump in 2021 with 63 building permits issued for ADUs in the unincorporated area. As of July 1, of this year, 53 ADU permits have already been issued, which is up significantly from 27 at the same time last year, and almost surpassing the total of 58 issued building permits from last year. The County is on track for the highest number of issued building permits for ADUs in the unincorporated area to date.

In order to further reduce barriers to ADU production, the Community Development and Infrastructure Department (CDI) partnered with a design consultant to create three pre-approved sets of ADU architectural plans that are available to applicants on the ADU website free of charge. There are three sizes, each with three design options. Also, designers and pre-fabrication manufacturers have the option to obtain pre-approval for ADU designs that they intend to use for multiple projects, 3 such approvals were given as of July 1, 2024. Additionally, in December 2022, an ordinance addressing the use of tiny homes on wheels, which can be used as ADUs, was adopted.

ADUs in the Coastal Zone

ADUs have been built primarily in rural, non-coastal areas. Recently revised regulations, particularly the removal of a minimum parcel size for an ADU permit and the reduction in required parking in certain cases, could contribute to increased production overall and within the Coastal Zone. Future ADU permit data will indicate what type of latent demand exists for ADUs inside the Coastal Zone and might show a change in development trends.

TABLE 15: TOTAL COASTAL ZONE ADUs ISSUE BUILDING PERMITS IN UNINCORPORATED COUNTY BY PLANNING AREA SINCE 2005

General Plan Area	'10	'11 ⁽¹⁾	'12 ⁽¹⁾	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24 ⁽²⁾	TOTAL
Aptos	--	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	2	6	2	12	8	7	9	49
Aptos Hills	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Bonny Doon	2	1	1	--	--	1	--	2	2	--	1	2	--	1	--	13
Carbonera	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Eureka Canyon	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
La Selva	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	2
Live Oak	--	1	--	3	4	3	4	2	2	4	9	11	12	18	18	91
North Coast	--	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	2	--	5
Pajaro Valley	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Salsipuedes	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
San Andreas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	1	--	--	1	2	3	8
San Lorenzo Valley	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Skyline	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Soquel	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Summit	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
TOTAL	2	4	2	6	4	4	4	4	7	11	12	27	21	30	30	168

⁽¹⁾ Unknown Planning Area for one ADU in 2011 and two ADUs in 2012. ADU total by year is accurate but Planning Area totals are incomplete for these years.

⁽²⁾ As of July 1, 2024

Since 2010, a total of 168 building permits have been issued for ADUs within the Coastal Zone within the unincorporated area. The County has seen a gradual increase in the development of ADUs near the coast in recent years, with approximately 31% of all ADU permits issued in the Coastal Zone in the past 14 years. The County has seen a significant jump in issued ADU permits over all starting in 2021, with another significant increase in 2024, where 30 permits in the Coastal Zone have been issued in the first six months,

matching the total number of permits issued in all of 2023. Given the relatively small number of building permits issued for ADUs in the Coastal Zone, it is likely that there have been limited cumulative impacts to traffic, water, public views, and environmentally sensitive areas, if any, in the Coastal Zone. Some of these potential impacts have been analyzed in aggregate in Section IV, Potential Growth Impacts above. County staff will continue maintain a close review of ADUs in the Coastal Zone, particularly as local and state regulations continue to encourage greater development of ADUs throughout the County.

VI. GROWTH GOAL RECOMMENDATION

Growth Goal

The Board of Supervisors adopted a 0.5% growth rate for the 2024 and 2023 Growth Goals. A 0.25% growth goal was adopted for 2022 and 2021, 0.5% was adopted in each of the years from 2001-2020, and a rate of 0.75% was adopted for 1999 and 2000 during the “dot-com” boom period of the late 1990s.

Table 10 provides insight into the overall building permit activity in the unincorporated area. Building permit activity of all types remained at a fairly high annual rate until late 2006, when there was a slowdown that continued through 2007 and became much slower during the 2008-10 recession and its aftermath. Between 2011 and 2012, and again in 2016, increases in residential building permit activity occurred primarily as a result of permits for affordable units. Market rate permit activity (not including permits for ADUs and affordable units) remained consistently low from 2007 to 2016.

In 2023, permit activity decreased to 145 issued permits, including 85 ADUs. The growth goal still provided an ample number of allocations, resulting in an unused surplus of allocations carried over to 2024, culminating to 222 carryover allocations for 2024. Since 2004, the number of available allocations derived from the established growth rate has been more than sufficient to accommodate the demand for residential building permits.

As of July 1, 2024, there have been a total of 81 permits issued for housing units this year, including rural, urban, and exempt units (including 63 ADUs).

In consideration of the information analyzed in the above sections of this report, staff recommends that the population growth rate be set at 0.75% for calendar year 2025 Growth Goal.

Recent population estimates have shown a negative growth rate for the unincorporated area. However, Census data indicates that the County’s population has actually grown over the past decade, and AMBAG projections show this steady increase is likely to continue. In addition, the number of housing projects currently in the County’s permitting pipeline and on the planning horizon, the adoption of the Sustainability Update and the 2023 Housing Element, and continued legislation from the state point to a potentially increased demand for market rate permits that may continue in coming years. Therefore, setting a growth rate of 0.75% for the year 2025 would allow for Santa Cruz County to continue to provide its fair share of statewide population growth and would not constitute a limitation on providing much needed housing units.

Housing Crisis Act of 2019

In October 2019, Governor Newsom signed into law SB 330. This bill establishes a statewide housing emergency and creates new state laws focused on the production and preservation of housing. SB 330 also adds Section 66300: Housing Crisis Act of 2019 to the Government Code to help address the statewide housing shortfall. These laws will be in effect from January 1, 2020, to January 1, 2030 (extended from 2025 by SB 8).

The Housing Crisis Act of 2019 implements new protections for existing housing as well as new restrictions on local government actions that may reduce the availability of housing. A key provision of this law prevents jurisdictions from limiting the number of housing permits or population within “affected county areas.” Affected county areas are defined as Census Designated Places (CDPs) that lie wholly within Census-defined urbanized areas. In Santa Cruz County, this includes the following CDPs: Live Oak, Pasatiempo, Paradise Park, and Soquel.

In accordance with the Housing Crisis Act of 2019, Santa Cruz County will continue to not enforce the Measure J growth goal limit on residential permit allocations within affected county areas while this temporary statute is in place. Other aspects of Measure J unrelated to limiting residential building permit allocations will not be impacted by this bill, and staff will continue to track Measure J allocations and subsequent building permit issuance in these areas for reporting purposes.

CZU Lightning Complex

The CZU August Lightning Complex Fires that began in August 2020 resulted in an unprecedented level of destroyed and damaged structures within unincorporated Santa Cruz County. The total number of unpermitted residential units impacted by the fires remains unknown; however, it is likely that a significant number of unpermitted housing units may have been destroyed or damaged by the fires. All residential units impacted by the CZU August Lightning Complex Fires continue to be exempt from the Measure J residential permit allocation system to ensure that the County’s growth management measures do not unnecessarily burden County residents who were impacted by this disaster. Note that issued building permits for CZU impacted properties may be included in the total number of new units shown in Table 10 if no existing permit was found in the County’s records. However, similar to affordable units and ADUs, issued permits for CZU properties remain exempt from the allocation system and are recorded in Table 10 for reporting purposes only.

Building Permit Allocations

Each year, the population growth rate established for the coming year is converted into a maximum number of available allocations to be granted to residential building permits in the unincorporated area for that year. The 2025 Growth Rate was formulated based on DOF population estimates and the total number of moderate and above moderate income housing units needed pursuant to the 6th Cycle RHNA, which identified a need for 2,166 moderate and above moderate housing units for the unincorporated areas of the County. It is anticipated that 50 housing allocations will be granted in 2024, therefore 2,116 units will need allocations for the remainder of the 6th Cycle (2025-2031). As such, an annual average of 361 building permit allocations must be made available for the next six years.

The Growth Rate of 0.75% is recommended to ensure that sufficient allocations are available to meet the RHNA target. Table 16 shows the methodology by which the recommended 0.75% population growth rate for 2025 would be converted into a total of 373 residential building permit allocations.

TABLE 16: BUILDING PERMIT ALLOCATION CALCULATION BASED ON A 0.75% ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH RATE FOR 2025	
Estimated Total Household Population 1/1/24 ⁽¹⁾	125,203
Estimated Group Quarters Population 1/1/24 ⁽¹⁾	12,248
Estimated Total Population 1/1/24 ⁽¹⁾	127,451
Approved 2024 Growth Goal Rate	0.50%
Projected 1/1/25 Household Population (based on a 0.50% growth rate from 1/1/24)	125,829
Proposed 2025 Growth Goal Rate	0.75%
Projected 1/1/26 Household Population (based on the proposed 0.75% growth rate from projected 1/1/25 population)	126,773
Projected Household Population Increase During 2025	944
Estimated Persons Per Household (1/1/24) ⁽¹⁾	2.53
Projected New Housing Units (market rate) needed during 2025	373
<small>(1) Source: DOF E-5 City/County Population and Housing Estimates, 1/1/2024 for unincorporated Santa Cruz County (May 2024)</small>	

Allocation Carryover

SCCC Chapter 17.04 directs any unused allocations from the previous year to “roll forward” and be made available for the following year in order to remove unnecessary constraints to the development of housing. Pursuant to this policy, the total number of available allocations in 2025 will include the projected carryover allocations from 2024 for a total of 579.

TABLE 17: RECOMMENDED 2025 ALLOCATION DISTRIBUTION			
Area	2025 Market Rate Unit Allocations	2024 Carryover Allocations ⁽¹⁾	Total 2025 Allocations ⁽¹⁾
Urban	280	167	447
Rural	93	39	132
Total	373	206	579
<small>Note: Per the Housing Crisis Act of 2019, the Measure J growth management system will not be enforced in affected county areas for the years 2020-2030. (See Housing Crisis Act of 2019 section above for more information.)</small>			
<small>⁽¹⁾ Projected year-end allocations available based on continuation of allocation distribution rate for first six months.</small>			

In recent years, allocations have been divided into a 75-25% (urban-rural) ratio to recognize the potential for greater infill development in the urban area. Staff recommends continuing this ratio, as illustrated in Table 17. This division implements the ordinance requirement of encouraging growth in urban areas and discouraging growth in the rural areas.

Rural Land Divisions

County Code Chapter 14.04 limits the number of new residential parcels that can be created in the rural portion of the County to 35% of the number of rural residential allocations granted each year. Based on the recommended 93 rural allocations, a limit of 33 new rural residential parcels could be created. No new rural lots were approved in 2023, or as of July 1, 2024. As the number of new rural residential parcels has not exceeded the yearly limitation for more than a decade, no further action is recommended for the control of rural land divisions.

VII. CONCLUSION

Since 1979, when Measure J was first implemented, the County has established an annual population growth goal that represents Santa Cruz County's fair share of statewide population growth. Each year a growth rate is set and then converted into a maximum number of residential building permit allocations to be granted for the coming year. Given the population growth trends estimated for the unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County in recent years and the potential future increase in demand for residential building permits, County Planning staff recommends that the growth rate be set at 0.75% for calendar year 2025.

Under the 0.75% recommended growth rate along with the estimated 206 carryover allocations from 2024, a maximum of 579 residential Measure J allocations could be allotted in the unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County: 447 in the urban area and 132 in the rural area. As stated previously, in accordance with the Housing Crisis Act of 2019 (SB 330), Santa Cruz County will not enforce the Measure J growth goal limit on residential permit allocations within the following CDPs while the statute is in place: Live Oak, Pasatiempo, Paradise Park, and Soquel.

Consistent with the County General Plan, the unused allocations from 2024 will be carried over and added to the 2025 allocation. Based on the number of allocations that have been granted as of July 1 of this year, it is projected that the combined new and carryover allocations will result in 579 total urban and rural market rate allocations, which is expected to be sufficient to accommodate the demand for residential building permits in the coming year.

If it appears that there will be a shortfall of allocations, Planning staff will bring this matter to the Board of Supervisors' attention during the year. At that time, the Board may make numerical adjustments to the growth goal and number of available allocations for residential building permits.

VIII. REFERENCES

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