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# Built Environment Element

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## Chapter 2 of the Santa Cruz County General Plan/LCP

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

2.1 Introduction .....	2-1
2.2 Existing Built Environment .....	2-3
2.3 Development Plan .....	2-7
2.4 Goals, Objectives, Policies + Implementation Strategies .....	2-13
GOAL BE-1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK .....	2-13
Objective BE-1.1 Urban Growth + Rural Preservation .....	2-13
Objective BE-1.2 Corridors + Connections .....	2-16
Objective BE-1.3 Vibrant Activity Centers .....	2-19
Objective BE-1.4 Complete Neighborhoods .....	2-23
Objective BE-1.5 Coordinated Regional Growth .....	2-27
GOAL BE-2 RESIDENTIAL LAND USE .....	2-30
Objective BE-2.1 Urban Residential Designations .....	2-30
Objective BE-2.2 Rural Residential Designations .....	2-37
Objective BE-2.3 Attainable Housing .....	2-41
Objective BE-2.4 Home Occupations .....	2-45
Objective BE-2.5 Short-Term Rentals .....	2-46
GOAL BE-3 COMMERCIAL + INDUSTRIAL LAND USE .....	2-47
Objective BE-3.1 Commercial/Industrial Designations .....	2-47
Objective BE-3.2 Residential + Public Land Uses on Commercial Property .....	2-52
Objective BE-3.3 Flexible, Efficient + Dynamic Workplaces .....	2-55
Objective BE-3.4 Tourism + Consumer Commercial Vitality .....	2-60
Objective BE-3.5 Visitor Accommodation .....	2-64
Objective BE-3.6 Cannabis Industry .....	2-68
GOAL BE-4 COMMUNITY CHARACTER + DESIGN .....	2-70
Objective BE-4.1 Quality + Context .....	2-70
Objective BE-4.2 Design with the Environment .....	2-75
Objective BE-4.3 Public Realm + Placemaking .....	2-79
Objective BE-4.4 Nonconforming Development .....	2-84
GOAL BE-5 POLICIES FOR SPECIFIC AREAS .....	2-85



Objective BE-5.1 Coastal Zone Development..... 2-85

Objective BE-5.2 Special Area Plans + Guidelines..... 2-93

Objective BE-5.3 Disadvantaged Communities ..... 2-95

Objective BE-5.4 Airport + Airspace Land Use Compatibility + Safety ..... 2-98

Objective BE-5.5 West Of Watsonville..... 2-105

GOAL BE-6: PLANNING, PERMITTING + PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ..... 2-109

Objective BE-6.1 Operational Excellence ..... 2-109

Objective BE-6.2 Environmental Review..... 2-111

Objective BE-6.3 Outreach and Engagement..... 2-112

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1: Santa Cruz County Focused Growth Areas 2020 - 2040 ..... 2-8

Figure 2-2: Urban Corridors + Activity Centers ..... 2-18

Figure 2-3: The Fifteen-Minute Neighborhood..... 2-24

Figure 2-4: Residential Land Use Map..... 2-31

Figure 2-5: Infill Housing Types ..... 2-34

Figure 2-6: Commercial + Industrial Land Use Map..... 2-48

Figure 2-7: Flexible Workplace ..... 2-56

Figure 2-8: Visitor Accommodation Options ..... 2-65

Figure 2-9: Site Design Considerations..... 2-71

Figure 2-10: Placemaking..... 2-80

Figure 2-11: Coastal-Dependent Industries + Priority Uses..... 2-90

Figure 2-12: Special Area Plans and Guidelines..... 2-94

Figure 2-13: Disadvantaged Communities ..... 2-96

Figure 2-14: Watsonville Municipal Airport Influence Area ..... 2-99

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1: Urban Residential Land Use Designations ..... 2-30

Table 2-2: Rural Residential Land Use Designations ..... 2-37

Table 2-3: Commercial + Industrial Land Use Designations ..... 2-47



## LIST OF REFERENCED APPENDICES (LOCATED AT END OF GENERAL PLAN)

Appendix A - Background Sources and Reference Documents

Appendix B - Land Use Designation Maps

Appendix C - Community Profile

Appendix E - Environmental Justice Policies and Implementation Strategies

Appendix F - Natural Resource + Environmental Hazard Areas: Maps + Development Constraints

Appendix G - Coastal Priority Sites Use and Development Standards

Appendix H - Airport Land Use Compatibility Requirements and County Strategy

Appendix N - MOU regarding City of Watsonville LCP Amendment 1-99



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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Built Environment Element is to guide sustainable growth and development in Santa Cruz County by addressing the distribution, location, design, density and intensity<sup>1</sup> of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses. The Built Environment Element promotes a balanced and functional mix of land uses consistent with community needs, desires, and values, including economic vitality, resource protection, and safe, healthy and attractive neighborhoods with a diversity of housing choices and mobility options available to all.

The Built Environment Element applies the following guiding principles of the General Plan *vision*:

- Focused Development
- Open Space and Resource Preservation
- Unique Community Character
- Economic Vitality
- Housing Options
- Equity and Inclusive Decision-Making
- Governmental Coordination
- Fiscal Sustainability

The goals, policies and implementation strategies of the Built Environment Element follow these principles to plan for development that can accommodate the County’s projected growth, while maintaining and improving the environment, economy, and quality of life for those who live and work here. This is the concept of “sustainable growth.”

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ELEMENTS

The Built Environment Element is closely related to the *Access + Mobility (AM) Element*, because the distribution of land uses directly informs circulation design and infrastructure requirements, and vice versa. In fact, Senate Bill 375 requires that land use and circulation policies be coordinated in order to develop and sustain vibrant communities where residents can choose to live in neighborhoods with a full range of mobility options to access jobs, services, and neighborhood amenities. Street design and land use policies can combine to foster compact, walkable neighborhoods and location-appropriate high intensity development, with associated quality of life and environmental benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> Building intensity (also sometimes referred to as “building density”) is the amount of development permitted per parcel for a given land use. Measures of building intensity include dwelling units per acre, floor area ratio, building height, and lot coverage. In comparison, “population density” is the number of people within a given area. General plans should define building intensity and population density for all land uses.



The Built Environment Element also aligns with other General Plan elements. For example, residential, commercial, and industrial land uses must be compatible with the physical limitations and constraints of the land, described in the *Public Safety (PS) Element*, as well as with resources protected by the *Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation (ARC) Element*. The Built Environment Element identifies an adequate amount of land to accommodate the County's fair share of housing production as documented by the Regional Housing Needs Assessment in the *Housing (H) Element*. The Built Environment Element is also consistent with Housing Element policies that address zoning for a diverse range of housing types. The types and location of housing directly influence the need for park and recreation facilities and other public services discussed in the *Parks, Recreation + Public Facilities (PPF) Element*. Additionally, Built Environment policies encourage building form and siting compatible with the restrictions of the *Noise (N) Element*. Environmental justice (EJ) policies in the Built Environment Element are related to environmental justice policies in other elements, especially *Housing* and *Access + Mobility* (see *Appendix E: Environmental Justice* for a full list of EJ policies).

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS + REGULATIONS

Santa Cruz County's built environment is governed by the land use policies and implementation strategies in the text of this General Plan/Local Coastal Program (LCP) Land Use Plan, as well as land use and facilities maps and diagrams (Appendix B), resources and constraints maps (Appendix F), the ordinances contained in the Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC), and the Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines. There are also several adopted plans that provide more detailed guidelines, site-specific policies, and development standards for historic town centers and unique coastal neighborhoods. Together, these documents define where and how development should and should not occur; thereby regulating the quality of development, controlling the pace of development consistent with the availability of public facilities and services, and protecting the County's natural resources and agricultural lands.

The Built Environment Element policies and implementation strategies are also aligned with other County and regional plans. For instance, this element implements the conceptual plans and strategies developed in the *Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan*. This element also implements the County's Climate Action and Adaptation policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to energy use and transportation. The element includes commercial and mixed-use design and use policies and implementation measures that advance the County's *Economic Development Vision and Strategy and Economic Vitality Study*. The element takes into account the public health goals of the County's *Community Health Improvement Plan*, and furthers the *County Strategic Plan*, especially the goals for Attainable Housing, Sustainable Environment, and Dynamic Economy.



## 2.2 EXISTING BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Santa Cruz County's built environment has developed over time in response to topography, population growth, economics, community values, and land use regulations. The existing built environment presents opportunities and constraints for future land use planning and development.

**Development Pattern.** The County's overall development pattern is shaped by the natural setting of hills, ocean, and creeks. Urban development exists primarily along the coast, in the Live Oak, Soquel, and Aptos planning areas. There is also concentrated development in historic towns and villages in the San Lorenzo Valley. Low-density rural residential development is scattered throughout the County alongside timberland, agricultural land, and open space.

The County's urban coastal development is organized around a network of corridors, districts, and neighborhoods. Soquel Drive is the dominant commercial corridor and changes in character along its seven-mile length. In the Soquel and Aptos planning areas, a series of employment and commercial centers are surrounded by residential neighborhoods. In Live Oak, commercial centers and residential neighborhoods are shaped by an intersecting pattern of roadways leading to the coast and to destinations in the Cities of Santa Cruz and Capitola.

Some neighborhoods are isolated from non-residential land uses, but other neighborhoods include pockets of commercial and community uses such as supermarkets, corner stores, cafes, schools, and libraries, enabling residents to walk or bike for some daily trips. These neighborhoods tend to be located in village centers that were initially developed prior to the advent of the automobile and therefore are more compact and pedestrian scale.

Outside of village centers, block lengths in urban areas tend to be greater than the 200 to 400 feet needed to support walkable neighborhoods. Long block lengths are compounded by numerous cul-de-sacs, dead-end streets, and limited mobility infrastructure, further limiting connectivity and access.

**Residential Land Use.** Single-family is the predominant residential land use in both the rural and urban unincorporated County, with detached single-family homes comprising two-thirds of all housing units according to the 2018 American Community Survey (US Census Bureau 2018). Unfortunately, the large housing unit size and expensive price tag make single-family housing poorly suited to meet the needs of singles, students, young families, seniors planning to age in place, and others seeking smaller, low- and moderate-income housing options. This is especially relevant given recent trends of decreasing household size, increasing senior residents, and increasing housing cost. See *Appendix C: Community Profile* for detailed demographic information.



Multifamily developments are located mostly along major corridors in the Live Oak, Soquel, and Aptos planning areas. Most multifamily developments are small-scale, and larger developments tend to be organized in multiple buildings to scale with single-family neighborhoods. Mobile home parks are found throughout the County, consisting of about 60 parks with a total of over 3,200 mobile homes, with the largest concentration in Live Oak.



*Center Street in Seacliff Village, with a mix of housing types in walking distance to neighborhood businesses and services. Photo Credit: Placeworks, Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan*

**Retail/Restaurant/Entertainment Land Use.** Most retail, restaurant, and entertainment land use in the unincorporated County is neighborhood-scale and exists along commercial corridors and in historic village cores. “Big box” stores serving a wider community are focused along the Soquel Drive corridor and upper 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Regional shopping and entertainment destinations are primarily located within the incorporated cities of Santa Cruz and Capitola. The County experiences “retail leakage” when residents make purchases outside County boundaries. However, potential for retail growth in the unincorporated county is limited by the rise in e-commerce as well as the presence of strong established retail centers in neighboring jurisdictions. New businesses tend to arrive in the County as either tenant improvements of existing buildings or as part of mixed-use developments.

**Office Land Use.** Office uses are located along major corridors, in village cores, and in transitional areas between more intensive commercial uses and quiet residential neighborhoods. The County’s existing office space is small-scale, and larger office complexes tend to be broken up into smaller tenant offices. There has been little recent office development, although there are opportunities for job growth, especially in the health care and technology/innovation sectors.



## Jobs/Housing Balance

The jobs/housing ratio is as an indicator of a sustainable community. As this ratio approaches 1:1, residents should be able to work near home, reducing commute time and increasing quality of life. However, this leaves out an important point: if resident job skills do not match the local jobs available, then a high jobs/housing ratio does not yield these benefits.

In Santa Cruz County, the jobs/housing ratio is relatively balanced (0.87:1). However, according to the 2017 Economic Census, 46 percent of resident workers have jobs outside the County, and 38 percent of County workers do not live in the County. These percentages have increased in recent years. In order to improve quality of life and reduce road congestion, the County encourages job creation and housing strategies that improve the match between local workers and local jobs.

- **Health Care.** There is a concentration of medical uses in the western Soquel Drive area. Also, Sutter/PAMF has acquired the site currently in use as a flea market near the junction of Soquel Drive and Chanticleer Avenue and may consolidate medical uses on this site. The County is planning for integration of medical land uses into a cohesive, functional, and employment-dense medical district. The health care sector offers a range of career ladder job opportunities, and this sector is expected to grow considerably as baby boomers age and access to care programs expands.
- **Technology/Innovation.** Santa Cruz County is well positioned near Silicon Valley, a national hub for technology and innovation. According to the 2017 Economic Census, nearly half of resident workers commuted to jobs outside of Santa Cruz County (US Census Bureau 2017). This percentage has increased in recent years, reflecting a trend of more residents with technology/ innovation jobs based over the hill. Land use, transportation and technology infrastructure and development policies could support job growth in this industry within the County.

**Service Commercial + Industrial Land Use.** The County has a variety of service commercial and light industrial land uses such as auto services, storage, landscape businesses, research/development, manufacturing, and processing. These land uses are concentrated in the vicinity of 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue, State Route (SR) 1 and Soquel Drive as well as additional pockets of Live Oak. There is high demand and low vacancy for service commercial and light industrial spaces. However, these businesses often require a large land area to operate and may be associated with negative community impacts such as truck traffic and air and noise pollution. As a result, areas where these businesses are located may be inhospitable to pedestrians and can serve as a barrier between neighborhoods, offices, and shopping areas.

The County does not currently have heavy industrial land use aside from quarries, which are addressed in *Chapter 5: Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation*.



*Dominican Hospital.*

*Photo Credit: Santa Cruz County*

**Visitor Accommodation Land Use.** Santa Cruz County is a popular tourist destination, and there are a variety of commercial visitor accommodation land uses along the coast and the SR 9 corridor, ranging from camps and cabins to recreational vehicle (RV) parks, motels, hotels and resorts. Visitor accommodations are more in demand during the summer tourist season and have a higher vacancy rate outside this season. In 2018, annual hotel/motel occupancy countywide (including incorporated cities) was 71%, ranging from a low of 53% in January to a high of 86% in July. Tourist activities are focused mostly on the County’s natural resources; there are few year-round tourist attractions.

The County is underserved by higher-end visitor accommodations, and many existing facilities have not been updated to keep pace with the demands of today’s visitors. For many decades, renting out single family homes as short-term vacation rentals has been popular, especially along the coast. In recent years, residents have also begun to offer rooms within their homes as commercial short-term rentals (“hosted rentals”). The County limits growth of vacation rentals and hosted rentals in order to preserve housing stock for permanent housing.

**Public/Institutional Land Use.** Public/institutional land uses include federal, state, and County government facilities, utilities, churches/cemeteries, hospitals, and schools. See *Chapter 7: Parks, Recreation + Public Facilities* to learn more about existing public/institutional land uses.

**Looking for more information about existing County land use?**

A countywide land use map is provided in Chapter 1, Figure 1-2. Land use maps for specific planning areas can be found in *Appendix B*. Further data regarding existing County land uses is provided in *Appendix C: Community Profile*. Information about agriculture, timber, quarry, and open space land uses is located in *Chapter 5: Agriculture, Natural Resources + Conservation*. Information about parks and public facility land uses is located in *Chapter 7: Parks, Recreation + Public Facilities*.



## 2.3 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The population of the unincorporated county is projected to grow by 1.6 percent from 2015-2040, with 6.5 percent employment growth over the same period (AMBAG 2022). Residential, commercial, and industrial land use policy directly impact where and how growth will occur. The following discussion summarizes the County's development plan, which provides a road map to achieve the *vision* of this General Plan.

### SUSTAINABLE GROWTH + DEVELOPMENT

The County maintains a distinction between urbanized and nonurbanized areas with Urban and Rural Services Lines (USL and RSL). It is critical to accommodate new development primarily within the USL and RSL in order to make efficient use of existing urban land while preserving agricultural land and open space to sustain the County's agriculture, timber, and tourism economic bases, conserve natural resources, and restrict growth in areas with high hazard risk and/or limited infrastructure.

Even within the USL/RSL, residents today still rely heavily on personal vehicles to travel within and between neighborhoods and commercial centers. It is important that the County's projected population and job growth is coordinated with focused transportation system improvements that ease car travel congestion and provide for alternative mobility options. For this reason, higher-intensity residential and commercial development is planned around multimodal corridors, high-quality transit stops, and centers of community activity. Figure 2-1 illustrates these key focused growth areas.

At the neighborhood scale, the "15-minute neighborhood" framework encourages integrated commercial and community land uses within neighborhoods to give residents the choice of walking or bicycling to destinations like grocery stores, schools, parks, gyms, libraries, and other gathering places (Congress for the New Urbanism 2021). Land use planning for health and wellness is especially critical given recent data indicating a local increase in obesity and decrease in access to healthy food.

### USL/RSL

#### **Urban Services Line (USL):**

A boundary that defines where urban infrastructure is provided or planned. Within the USL, urban densities and intensities are appropriate. The communities of Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, and portions of the Pajaro Valley and Carbonera planning areas are within the USL.

#### **Rural Services Line (RSL):**

In some rural areas, there are existing communities that are developed at urban densities. These unique communities are within the RSL. County policy allows the provision of full urban services to serve these communities. Areas within the RSL include (from north to south) the communities of Davenport, Boulder Creek, Boulder Creek Country Club, Bear Creek Estates, Ben Lomond, Felton, Mount Hermon, Paradise Park, La Selva Beach, Place de Mer, Sand Dollar Beach/Canon Del Sol, Sunset Beach, Pajaro Dunes North, and Pajaro Dunes South.



## Figure 2-1: Santa Cruz County Focused Growth Areas 2020 - 2040



## Context: California Housing Crisis

An ongoing concern about housing affordability in Santa Cruz County reflects a statewide housing crisis. As the state recovered from the Great Recession, housing unit production fell short of accommodating housing needs and population growth.

The state has responded to the housing crisis with laws restricting local control over some types of urban housing projects, and requiring local jurisdictions to approve ADUs and multifamily projects with certain objective criteria. See **Chapter 4: Housing Element** to learn more about state housing legislation.

County housing policies reflect state regulations, and are customized for our community to the extent possible.

At the community scale, the County coordinates long-range planning and review of major development projects with incorporated cities as well as neighboring counties, and regional and state agencies. Additionally, coordination with special districts ensures that sufficient utility infrastructure and public facilities are available or planned for areas where the County plans to accommodate growth.

## RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

Residential land use designations ensure that building intensity and population density are appropriate for the level of infrastructure and services available in a given area. In rural areas, lower density development is maintained with a rural density matrix based on resource and infrastructure constraints. Within the USL/RSL, land use designations provide for residential land use intensity ranging from 1 to 45 units per acre, with density bonuses available to projects that incorporate affordable housing units.

The General Plan encourages preservation and construction of small housing units in order to expand housing choices and promote residential diversity in terms of household size, age, income, and other demographic factors. Housing types such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), townhomes, small lot single-family homes, and apartment buildings can all work as context-appropriate infill development (NAHB 2019). Greater housing diversity in Santa Cruz County offers an opportunity to support a more diverse community, which in turn will help employers attract and retain workers as more people can afford to both live and work within the County. Infill development also adds population density to support a wider range of neighborhood businesses, enhancing the potential for 15-minute neighborhoods.

In today's economy, more and more workers are able to run a business or work remotely from their homes. The County encourages neighborhood-appropriate commercial uses within residences, recognizing that home offices and businesses can have many community benefits, including reduced commute traffic, a more balanced jobs/housing ratio, and enhanced



neighborhood stability and vitality as home business workers spend more time in the community and support other local businesses.

## COMMERCIAL + INDUSTRIAL LAND USE

The County's commercial and industrial land use designations include employment-focused as well as consumer-focused designations. Future development must recognize the evolving shopping, service and workplace needs of residents, businesses and visitors. Land use policies support the County's existing industries and encourage development of key industries that will reduce out-commuting and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and generate more fiscal sustainability, in alignment with the County's *Economic Vitality Strategy*.

**Focus on Employment.** Modern, flexible office growth is encouraged along multimodal corridors and in community activity centers. The "workplace flex" (C-3) zone district bridges the gap between traditional office and light industrial land use, and is characterized by dynamic high-employment centers with a mixture of office, commercial, manufacturing, and research-oriented uses, as well as ancillary retail and services. Medical mixed-use policies provide for modern medical building designs paired with affordable workforce housing, senior care facilities, offices, and associated retail uses. Small businesses are encouraged to grow in incubators, coworking spaces, and satellite offices.

Traditional "heavy" commercial service and industrial development is encouraged to locate in areas with access to appropriate routes for freight and goods movement, away from high-density urban commercial corridors. In particular, businesses that require a large land area to operate but have few employees are not appropriate for commercial centers, or along corridors with urban infrastructure where the County is planning to accommodate population and job growth. Policies in this plan improve land use compatibility and avoid situations where businesses must leave the County when suitable land or facilities are unavailable. Special policies are provided regarding the location and licensing of cannabis businesses.

**Focus on Consumers.** Retail, restaurants, personal services, visitor accommodation, and other consumer commercial land uses are appropriate in towns and villages, along commercial corridors and in neighborhood and community-scale activity centers. Mixed-use residential and commercial development presents a key opportunity to foster vibrant neighborhoods and activity centers with co-benefits of housing diversity, economic viability, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions and road congestion. Existing shopping centers are encouraged to redevelop and rebrand as mixed-use community activity centers. New and renovated visitor accommodations are encouraged to locate in commercial areas to generate "multiplier effect" benefits as overnight visitors spend money at other businesses. Amenities such as conference centers, sports venues, and temporary events can serve to highlight Santa Cruz County as a tourist destination year-round.



## COMMUNITY CHARACTER + DESIGN

This General Plan provides community design policies to be implemented in conjunction with the *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines*. The County's policies and guidelines encourage high-quality design and development at an appropriate size and scale. Building massing, articulation, clustering, and open space are addressed, as well as connections and transitions between land uses. Building and site design should incorporate "green building" features to conserve energy, water and other natural resources, and support healthy indoor and outdoor environments.

The General Plan also provides design guidance for enhancing the public realm and promoting the County's unique and eclectic design character. Accessible, pedestrian-oriented development is appropriate along multimodal corridors and main streets, with active ground floor uses, deprioritized car parking, and places for public gathering. Urban design should integrate street trees, public art, and recognize key local history. Historic buildings can enhance the sense of community in village centers, rural areas, and established neighborhoods.

Throughout the County, there are legally established land uses that do not conform with uses currently allowed by the zone district or General Plan land use designation, and many legally built structures that do not conform to current site standards for the zone district. Although nonconforming, these legal uses and structures often contribute to the community, providing housing, architectural character, a sense of history, and contributing to economic vitality. The County allows legal nonconforming uses and structures to be appropriately maintained and improved, which supports existing businesses and housing, including many lower-cost housing options and reduces the pressure to develop outside the USL by encouraging the continued use of previously developed sites and existing buildings.

## REGULATIONS FOR SPECIFIC AREAS

There are several geographic areas where specific land use regulations are appropriate:

- **Coastal Zone.** In the Coastal Zone, coastal-dependent agricultural and visitor-serving land uses are prioritized over other land uses, and development projects must be consistent with the Coastal Act.
- **Area-Specific Plans and Guidelines.** Development projects must follow the village/town area or special area plans that apply to certain village and town centers, coastal communities, and other commercial corridors and activity centers.
- **Disadvantaged Communities.** In areas identified as "disadvantaged communities" due to demographics, environmental impacts, and/or geographic isolation, environmental justice policies apply. Please see *Appendix C: Community Profile* and *Appendix E: Environmental*



*Justice Policies and Implementation Strategies* for information about and policies related to disadvantaged communities in Santa Cruz County.

- **Airport and Airspace Land Use Compatibility.** This plan promotes compatibility between the Watsonville Municipal Airport and land use in the surrounding airport influence area, in compliance with State noise and safety regulations. The plan contains objectives regarding private airport and heliport compatibility. Additionally, the plan acknowledges that military airspace above South County does not currently limit development, but compatibility planning may be required in the future.
- **West of Watsonville.** The rural area west of State Route 1 and the City of Watsonville is protected from urban development via a Memorandum of Understanding between the County, Coastal Commission, and City of Watsonville and these protections are carried out with a series of policies and implementation strategies.

## PLANNING, PERMITTING + PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A key role of the County Community Development and Infrastructure Department (CDID) is to understand and communicate development potential and limitations on any given property and assist property owners with obtaining the appropriate permits to legally pursue use and development of private property. This General Plan includes strategies that will enable staff to serve project applicants more efficiently, accessibly, and consistently. The Plan also provides for consideration of environmental impacts associated with proposed projects, as per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Public engagement and open communication are essential to achieving high-quality development projects and long-range plans and policies that are appropriate for Santa Cruz County. The public planning and land use permitting processes include notification to neighbors and the general public, public hearings and community meetings, environmental review, and additional coordination and correspondence as necessary for specific policy topics and development projects. This plan addresses strategies to engage a wider swath of community members in the planning and development review processes through neighborhood engagement, multilingual outreach, community partnerships, and targeted outreach to disadvantaged communities.



## 2.4 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES + IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

### GOAL BE-1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Plan for growth and development in urban areas. Encourage walkable neighborhoods and vibrant activity centers that foster increased mobility, health, and quality of life. Coordinate land use and transportation planning and collaborate across agencies locally and regionally.

#### OBJECTIVE BE-1.1 URBAN GROWTH + RURAL PRESERVATION

(LCP) To preserve a distinction between urban and rural areas of the County. Encourage new development to locate within urban areas at a growth rate compatible with the availability of existing public facilities and services and their reasonable expansion, and at a rate that does not exceed the State's overall growth rate.

*See also Goals PPF-3: Public Services and PPF-4: Public Infrastructure.*

#### Policies

**BE-1.1.1 (LCP) Maintain an Urban Services Line (USL).** Maintain a USL to clearly delineate areas with full urban services that are appropriate for development. Discourage changes to the USL. Require that any proposal to expand the USL demonstrate that:

- Full urban services, including adequate water supply during drought years, sewage treatment and road capacity such that new development will not exceed LOS as described in Access + Mobility Policy AM-6.2.1, are available or planned to serve the expansion area;
- The proposed expansion will not have an adverse impact on service levels for existing development or future development within the existing boundaries of the USL as planned by the General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan;
- The proposed expansion will not result in the loss of agricultural resource lands as designated in the General Plan or Zoning Ordinance or have adverse effects either individually or cumulatively on environmental and natural resources, including coastal resources;
- No significant adverse impact on regional infrastructure, such as transportation corridors, will occur from the proposed expansion; and
- There are overriding public benefits from the proposed expansion that outweigh any identified unavoidable adverse effects on regional infrastructure and agricultural lands.

**BE-1.1.2 (LCP) Maintain a Rural Services Line (RSL).** Maintain a RSL to serve as a distinct boundary between rural areas and the following existing rural communities with urban densities:



Davenport, Boulder Creek, Boulder Creek Country Club, Bear Creek Estates, Ben Lomond, Felton, Mount Hermon, Paradise Park, La Selva Beach, Place de Mer, Sand Dollar Beach/Canon del Sol, Sunset Beach, Pajaro Dunes North, and Pajaro Dunes South. Prohibit the expansion of the RSL.

**BE-1.1.3 (LCP) Growth Rate.** Require new urban development to locate within the USL/RSL. Establish and manage urban and rural growth rates appropriately based on the County's share of long-term regional and State-projected population and job growth and the level of existing and planned infrastructure and services.

**BE-1.1.4 (LCP) Siting New Development.** Require new urban residential, commercial, or industrial development to locate within, next to, or near existing developed areas with adequate public services and where development will not have significant adverse effects on agricultural land or natural resources.

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-1.1a (LCP)** Delineate the USL and RSL on General Plan/LCP Land Use and Facilities Maps. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-1.1b (LCP)** Coordinate with special districts that provide urban services to match existing and planned district service boundaries to the USL and RSL. Permit exceptions to such boundary adjustments only: (1) for existing development currently served by the district, (2) where such service is necessary for water resource protection and enhancement, or (3) to provide limited services to accommodate land-extensive uses at appropriate locations near but outside of the USL/RSL, in order to conserve urban services for land intensive uses within urbanized areas. (Responsibility: CDID, Special Districts)

**BE-1.1c (LCP)** Maintain yearly population growth rates inside and outside the USL. Manage these growth rates through an annual limitation on the approval and issuance of building permits and rural land divisions, as detailed in SCCC 17.04, Annual Population Growth Goals for Santa Cruz County. Consult with special districts and agencies providing public services when establishing permit allocations to coordinate infrastructure use and development. Coordinate the allocation of County building permits in a city's sphere of influence area with that city's growth plans. Allow exemptions from building permit allocation quotas for ADUs and for affordable housing units, as defined in the SCCC. (Responsibility: Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, CDID)

**BE-1.1d (LCP)** Support appropriate housing and job growth in the Pajaro Valley through City of Watsonville annexation of non-agriculturally designated land, and development. Support extension of urban services adjacent to the City of Watsonville only in conjunction with annexation by the city. Prohibit subdivision of lands outside the Urban Services Line and in the Watsonville Sphere of Influence until annexation, unless the division would not adversely affect the City's



General Plan affordable housing goals and is of non-agricultural lands and is determined to be of an overriding public benefit. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)  
*See also Objective BE-5.5: West of Watsonville and Policy ARC-1.3.3: Conversion to Non-Agricultural Uses Near Urban Areas.*



## OBJECTIVE BE-1.2 CORRIDORS + CONNECTIONS

(EJ) To coordinate land use and transportation planning to plan for population and job growth along key transportation corridors that can accommodate increased building intensity in order to support land use patterns with less traffic congestion and more mobility.

*See also Policy AM-1.1.3: Land Use Form and Street Types.*

**BE-1.2.1 (LCP) Coordinate Land Use and Transportation Planning.** Coordinate land use and transportation planning such that high building intensity land uses are approved and constructed concurrently with supporting transportation infrastructure. Prioritize funding and seek grant funds to complete improvements of transportation corridors prior to or soon after development of such higher-intensity land uses.

**BE-1.2.2 (EJ) High-Quality Transit Corridor Land Use.** In Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) opportunity areas located within one-half mile of high-quality transit corridors, encourage new development to include compact housing, infill development, mixed use commercial development, and commercial activity centers, with associated public facilities and public services land uses as needed. Do not support General Plan or zone map amendments in these transit corridor areas to less intensive land use designations or zone districts.

*See also Policy AM-1.1.2: Transit Infill Development.*

**BE-1.2.3 Multimodal Corridor Land Use.** Along multimodal corridors, encourage high building intensity residential and commercial land use designations with compact housing options, mixed use development, and diverse employment opportunities to support more frequent and convenient transit service.

**BE-1.2.4 Active Connector Land Use.** Along Active Connectors where pedestrians and bicycles are prioritized, encourage land uses to facilitate neighborhood trips and “last mile” commutes. Diverse housing options, neighborhood commercial and personal services, and small office land uses, as well as community facilities such as schools, religious institutions and parks, are appropriate.

**BE-1.2.5 (EJ) Main Street Land Use.** Along Main Streets where pedestrians are prioritized, encourage ground floor retail, restaurant, and other “active” commercial land uses that serve to enliven pedestrian activity. Encourage infill mixed-use development to increase building intensity and support economic vitality of Main Street businesses.

**BE-1.2.6 (LCP)(EJ) Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail.** New development adjacent to the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail (MBSST) should complement its recreational and transportation functions and should provide direct pedestrian access to the trail. Commercial development should be designed with public orientation toward the trail, or an option to modify the site to add this public orientation in the future.



See also: *Implementation Strategies AM-4.1a, AM-4.1g.*

**BE-1.2.7 (EJ) Mobility Hub Land Use.** Encourage the economic viability and safety of mobility hubs<sup>2</sup> by encouraging a diversity of high building intensity land uses that facilitate an active hub area during both the daytime and evening.

See also *Policy AM-3.1.2: Mobility Hubs.*

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-1.2a** Form a CDID working group to coordinate priorities for transportation improvements and grant applications with major pipeline commercial, mixed use, and residential projects. (Responsibility: CDID)

See also *Implementation Strategy AM-5.1a.*

**BE-1.2b** Conduct an inventory of potential development sites within one-quarter to one-half mile of existing and proposed transit stops and mobility hubs to identify potential locations for higher intensity development. Use additional data to further refine the viability of development in specific locations, such as market analyses, origin and destination studies, ownership information, and transit ridership projections. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrator's Office)

**BE-1.2c** Analyze ridership required to support successful high-quality transit corridors and multimodal corridors and determine whether current land use designations allow enough building intensity to supply the needed level of ridership. Consider zoning tools such as Combining Zone Districts, Specific Plans, Master Plans, and Planned Unit Developments to identify support for and to accommodate increased building intensity along key corridors, mobility hubs, and activity nodes. (Responsibility: Santa Cruz Metro, CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

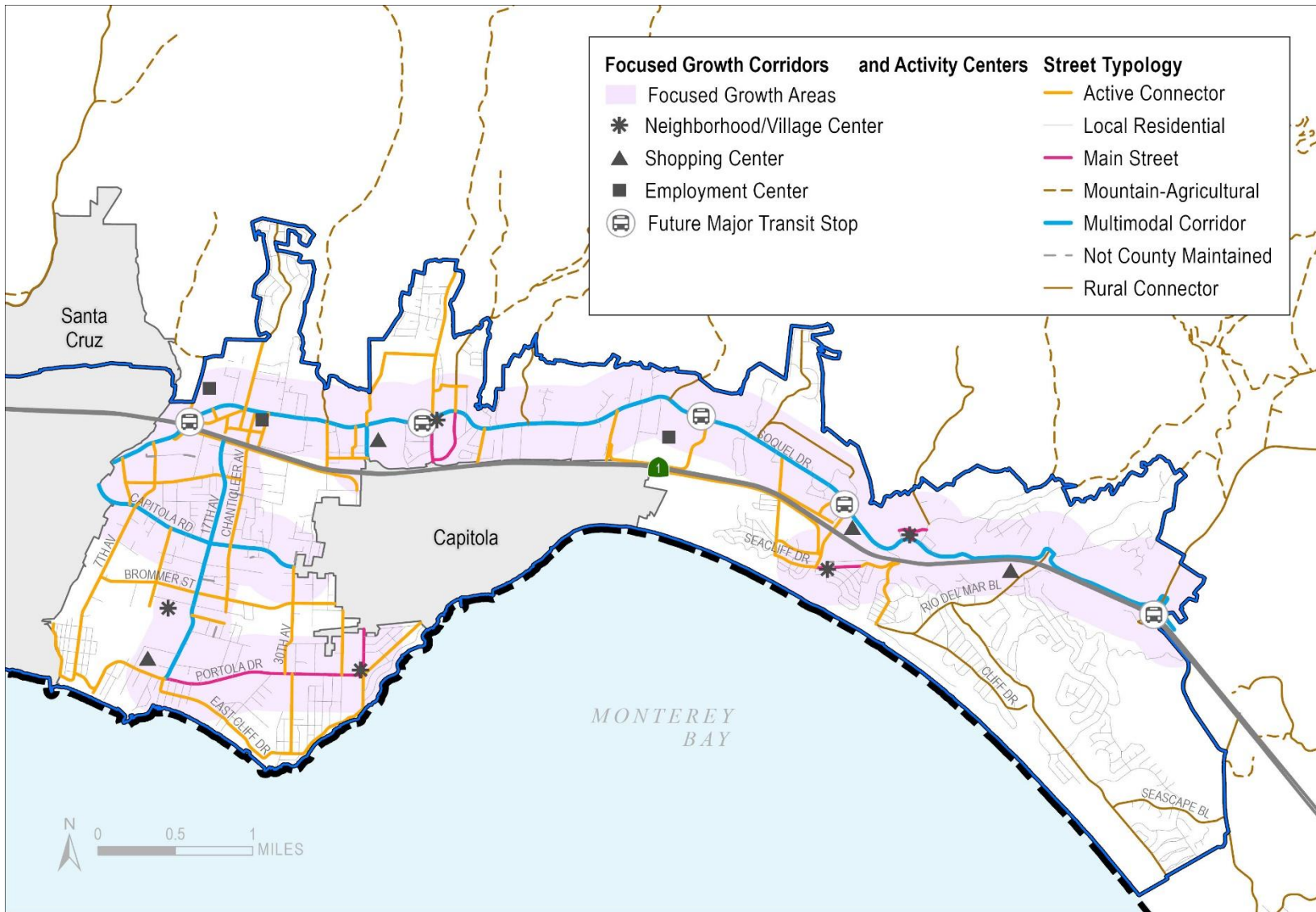
**BE-1.2d (LCP)** Analyze MBSST corridor and identify, redesignate, and rezone appropriate sites for new commercial, mixed use, and multifamily residential development. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

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<sup>2</sup> Mobility hubs are places of connectivity where different modes of travel – walking, biking, transit, and shared mobility – seamlessly converge. They are best suited near high-frequency transit and where there is a concentration of employment, housing, shopping, and/or recreation. They provide an integrated suite of mobility services, amenities, and technologies to bridge the distance between high-frequency transit and an individual's origin or destination.



**Figure 2-2: Urban Corridors + Activity Centers**



Source: Santa Cruz County. Please refer to the Santa Cruz County GISWeb for the latest data and maps available.



## OBJECTIVE BE-1.3 VIBRANT ACTIVITY CENTERS

To encourage centers of concentrated commercial, residential, and community land uses serving living, shopping, service, and office needs that accomplish the “5 Ds” for reduced trip generation: diversity, design, density, destination, and distance to transit.

*See also Policy AM-1.1.4: Activity Centers.*

### Policies

**BE-1.3.1 Identify Activity Centers.** Identify existing and potential neighborhood, community and regional-scale activity centers, which can include a variety of different land use types and configurations but should all include the following components:

- Mix of businesses, services, and gathering places that combine to create an appropriately-scaled destination.
- Pedestrian-centered core and pedestrian and bicycle connection to neighborhoods.
- Direct access to transit via Main Street, Active Connector, or Multimodal Corridor.

**BE-1.3.2 Mixed-Use Development.** Encourage developments with a mix of land uses in appropriate locations where the combination of uses is complementary and contributes to establishing and enhancing activity centers.

*See also Objective BE-3.2: Residential + Public Land Use on Commercial Property.*

**BE-1.3.3 (LCP) Appropriate Density for Activity Centers.** Within activity centers, prioritize land uses with higher residential and employment density than surrounding neighborhoods to allow for vibrant pedestrian cores, community amenities, and transit service.

**BE-1.3.4 Employment Centers.** Facilitate employment-focused activity centers along the Soquel Drive corridor, coordinated with provision and development of high-quality transit, pedestrian, and bicycle amenities, and complementary land uses such as multifamily housing, retail, and restaurants.

**BE-1.3.5 Village and Town Centers.** Strengthen the role of historic villages and towns as activity centers by encouraging infill development and land use changes that foster active day and evening land uses while retaining and enhancing the unique historic character and charm of these places.

**BE-1.3.6 Shopping Centers as Activity Centers.** Encourage redevelopment and rebranding of existing commercial shopping centers to vital and modern activity centers, through higher-intensity development, mixed uses, public gathering places, event programming, and reorientation of buildings and parking facilities to improve walkability and connection to transit.

*See also Policy BE-3.4.2: Customer Experience.*



Retail activity center, Berkeley California. Source: Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines.

**BE-1.3.7 Neighborhood Activity Centers.** Promote local activity centers by encouraging neighborhood-appropriate infill and mixed-use development at major intersections, especially within the Live Oak Planning Area.

**Implementation Strategies**

**BE-1.3a** Review land use designations and zoning for existing and potential activity centers and redesignate/rezone sites to accommodate higher residential and employment densities as needed to support vitality objectives. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-1.3b** Consider an incentives ordinance to allow exceptions to development standards and/or extra building intensity for projects that provide public benefits that enhance activity centers, such as public plazas, parks, bike/pedestrian infrastructure or event programming. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



**BE-1.3c** Consider development standards or exceptions that would allow for taller buildings for specific land uses in certain zone districts or within larger-scale activity centers, where adequate buffering, screening, and setbacks can be provided to minimize impacts to residential neighborhoods. In particular, taller buildings may be appropriate to make modern employment-generating developments economically feasible, and may be necessary to accommodate business, equipment, and programming needs for land uses such as hotels and medical facilities. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-1.3d** Support proposals for infill, mixed use, and boutique hotel development in village and town centers that improve the function of these places as activity centers while retaining the Main Street context. Consider a “Main Street” revitalization strategy. Amend village and town plans as necessary, or use other flexible zoning tools, to allow for new or intensified development that is consistent with the character of the area, and warranted in order to ensure feasible business operations. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-1.3e** Apply planning tools such as special community and corridor plans and policies, specific plans, site master plans, planned unit developments, and special medical-use area policies and development standards. In particular, encourage land use designations, tools and development projects that support and augment the existing clustered medical uses along Soquel Drive between Mattison Lane and Soquel Ave, in order to foster an activity center focused on medical services and complementary land uses like workforce housing, assisted living facilities, visitor accommodations, workforce-serving retail, and restaurants. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

*See also Policy BE-3.2.3: Medical Mixed Use.*

**BE-1.3f (LCP)** Facilitate employment-focused activity centers with “workplace flex” (C-3) zoning at 41<sup>st</sup> Ave/Soquel Drive and 17<sup>th</sup> Ave/MBSST. Consider preparation of specific or master plans to coordinate future development of light industrial, office and consumer commercial land uses with supportive infrastructure in these areas. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-1.3g** Support development of Cabrillo College area as an activity center with higher-density housing, limited “walkable” college-serving retail and services within and near the college, as well as improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Explore land use opportunities associated with a connection over State Route 1 to the MBSST. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



**BE-1.3h** Facilitate and coordinate development of publicly-owned parcels at the intersection of 7<sup>th</sup> Ave/Brommer Street as a neighborhood activity center in a manner consistent with the Coastal Act, Surplus Lands Act, economic and market realities, environmental constraints, and neighborhood/community character and desires.

*See also Policy BE-5.1.4: Designation and Development of Priority Sites, and Appendix G: Coastal Priority Sites Use and Development Standards.*

**BE-1.3i** Participate in review of the Capitola Mall site redevelopment as a mixed-use shopping, entertainment, housing and transit center. Assess and pursue land use and transportation strategies that would complement the broad objectives of this redevelopment project, mitigate its impacts, and improve functional aspects of multi-modal transportation opportunities related to the site. (Responsibility: CDID, City of Capitola Planning Department)

**BE-1.3j** Require adequate infrastructure and utilities serving activity centers so that higher density development can be safely accommodated without significant adverse impacts, particularly on adjacent neighborhoods and the environment, and with adequate mitigation. Identify prioritized facility repair, replacement and upgrades. (Responsibility: CDID, water districts, Environmental Health Department)

*See also Policies PPF-3.1.1: Public Infrastructure (Facility and Service) Standards for New Development and PPF-4.1.1: Linking Growth to Water Supplies and Objective PPF-4.2: Sanitation Facilities.*



## OBJECTIVE BE-1.4 COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS

(EJ) To ensure that residents and visitors within the USL and RSL have convenient access to shopping and services within one-half mile (15-minute) walkshed to meet daily needs in order to reduced reliance on car travel and enhance opportunities for neighborhood mobility, social connections, and healthy lifestyles.

### Policies

**BE-1.4.1 Neighborhood Stores, Services and Gathering Places.** Support the thoughtful integration of corner grocery stores, cafes, small personal health businesses such as yoga and fitness studios, and other neighborhood-serving commercial businesses into residential areas to improve local resident access to convenience goods and services and to foster neighborhood gathering opportunities. Discourage national retailers and encourage locally-owned businesses.

**BE-1.4.2 Neighborhood Mobility Infrastructure.** Encourage sidewalks, bike lanes, and bus routes that support a variety of transportation options within and between neighborhoods, with particular emphasis on routes to schools, parks, grocery stores, and gathering places.

*See also Objective AM-3.2: First + Last Mile Gaps, policies AM-1.1.5: 15-Minute Neighborhoods, and AM-2.2.3: Infrastructure Safety, and implementation strategy AM-6.1f.*

**BE-1.4.3 Public Facility Uses in Residential Land Designations.** Allow public and quasi-public facility and service uses in residential designations with appropriate buffers and context-appropriate design for residential neighborhoods.

*See also Policy PPF-1.1.1: Public Facility/Institutional Designation.*

**BE-1.4.4 (EJ) Physical Recreation Facilities.** Support private gyms, studios, and public recreational facilities in neighborhood locations that are convenient and accessible by walking and bicycling.

**BE-1.4.5 (EJ) Health Services.** Support health services in locations that are convenient and accessible by walking, bicycling and public transit. Cluster major health facility land uses so that those seeking medical care can travel to one area for multiple medical services.

**BE-1.4.6 (EJ) Access to Nature.** In residential and commercial development areas, facilitate pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure connecting development to nearby public trails and parks, as well as alternatives to public parks such as parklets, temporary parks, and privately-owned public spaces.

*See also Policies PPF-2.1.10: Private Local Parks and PPF-2.2.3: Mini-Park Sites.*



Figure 2-3: The Fifteen-Minute Neighborhood



Diagram credit: <https://seattlegreenways.org/15minutecity/>.

Photo Credits: SDOT and Paul Kreuger via Flickr. <https://www.strongtowns.org>.



## Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture, also known as urban farming or urban gardening, is the practice of cultivating food in or around urban areas, generally at a scale larger than a single residential parcel. Urban agriculture includes a range of food growing practices, such as:

- Community gardens
- School gardens on school property
- Urban farms where food is grown for commercial sale
- Animal keeping for eggs, milk, meat

Key benefits of urban agriculture include:

- Creating new community gathering places
- Improving community health
- Increasing food security
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport of food

**BE-1.4.7 (EJ) Eliminate Food Deserts.** Encourage small markets and grocery stores to locate in “food deserts” where there are not currently healthy food options within a one-half mile radius. If the market cannot support economic viability of a traditional grocery store within a one-half mile walkshed, encourage neighborhood corner stores, scheduled food truck visits, and farmer’s markets selling fresh produce and other healthy foods.

*See also Policy AM-3.1.5: Healthy Food Access.*

**BE-1.4.8 (EJ) Urban Agriculture.** Allow ancillary food cultivation as part of park/recreation, residential, public/quasi-public, and commercial developments, where feasible and appropriate. Allow animal keeping with conditions dependent on parcel size and location, as well as type and number of animals. Encourage urban agriculture as an appropriate temporary use on vacant lots.

*See also Implementation Strategy ARC-1.1k. Note that cannabis cultivation is subject to locational constraints (see Objective BE-3.6: Cannabis Industry).*

**BE-1.4a (EJ) Map one-half mile walksheds from grocery stores, schools, health services, parks, gyms, and other neighborhood gathering places, with particular emphasis on disadvantaged communities. Identify gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, neighborhood commercial land uses, healthy food options, and health and fitness opportunities. In areas where “15-minute neighborhoods” do not exist, redesignate/rezone parcels or apply a combining zone district to allow for neighborhood-scale nonresidential land uses, and identify grant opportunities to fund improved pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure and access to nature. (Responsibility: County Administrative Office, CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)**

### Implementation Strategies

**BE-1.4b** Explore zoning and development standards updates that could allow for neighborhood-appropriate accessory commercial uses in residential neighborhoods, that would exceed regular parameters for home occupations but would be compatible with the neighborhood.

*See also Objective BE-2.4: Home Occupations.*



**BE-1.4c** Identify vacant or underutilized neighborhood commercial spaces and explore regulatory and incentive options to encourage full tenancy. Consider temporary conversion of these spaces to community event spaces, public parks, farmer’s markets, and other similar uses. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office)

**BE-1.4d (EJ)** Consider providing incentives for development projects that provide community benefits related to access to healthy food options and access to nature. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-1.4e (EJ)** Identify opportunities to convert public right of way into neighborhood parklets, especially in neighborhoods without public parks, without compromising bicycle or pedestrian access. (Responsibility: CDID)

*See also Policy BE-4.3.8 and Implementation Strategy AM-5.1c.*

**BE-1.4f (EJ)** Support urban agriculture uses for food production and greenscaping, regulate safety and aesthetics of urban agriculture, and allow urban agriculture in appropriate locations. (Responsibility: CDID, Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



*Community Garden. Photo Credit: Placeworks, Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan.*



## OBJECTIVE BE-1.5 COORDINATED REGIONAL GROWTH

(LCP) To acknowledge and cooperate with the plans and development activities of incorporated cities, adjacent counties, special districts, Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO), Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), California Coastal Commission (CCC) and other land use planning agencies to ensure coordinated regional growth.

### Policies

**BE-1.5.1 (EJ) Regional Sustainable Communities Strategy and Metropolitan Transportation Plan.** Coordinate with AMBAG and SCCRTC to maintain consistency between local land use and regional transportation planning objectives so that development occurs in transportation-efficient locations as identified in the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy/Metropolitan Transportation Plan (SCS/MTP).

*See also Policies AM-1.1.7: Sustainable Communities Strategy and AM-8.1.6: Coordination with Regional and State Agencies.*

**BE-1.5.2 Local Agency Plans and Projects.** Be aware of development projects and plans from incorporated cities, adjacent counties, special districts and agencies, and review, comment, and coordinate when appropriate to avoid and mitigate adverse impacts and ensure compatibility with the County's General Plan.

**BE 1.5.3 Funding Coordination.** Coordinate with other local agencies on grant applications for land use and transportation projects that benefit mutual planning goals.

*See also Objective AM-8.1: Funding.*

**BE-1.5.4 (LCP) Spheres of Influence and City Annexation.** Adhere to special district and city spheres of influence set by LAFCO, and support expansion of spheres of influence and orderly annexation of urban areas to adjacent cities or districts only where consistent with the County's General Plan/LCP land use policies related to urban uses and annexations.

**BE-1.5.5 (EJ) Public Facility and Service Extensions.** Coordinate public service planning with cities, special districts, and LAFCO to ensure sufficient and efficient service delivery to all communities. Program the timing and location of public service capacity expansions or extensions to support projected levels of development and to maintain economic, social, and environmental quality.

*See also Goal PPF-3: Public Services.*

**BE-1.5.6 Implementing State Planning Law.** Stay informed about new and proposed state laws impacting local land use regulations, and coordinate with other local jurisdictions on a cohesive regional interpretation, implementation, and response to State requirements.



## Implementation Strategies

**BE-1.5a** Participate in AMBAG and SCCRTC regional planning efforts and programs and meet regularly with AMBAG and SCCRTC staff to discuss local and regional land use and transportation strategies. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE 1.5b** Conduct regular staff-to-staff communication with cities, adjacent counties, special districts, and CCC, regarding current and long-range planning. Attend public meetings and review and comment on plans and proposals as necessary. Identify opportunities for collaboration on grant applications and development efforts. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-1.5c** Participate in Cabrillo College and UCSC long-range planning efforts to ensure that student capacity, housing, programming, and other changes planned by these institutions take County land use plans into account and vice versa, and do not exacerbate the community's housing crisis. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-1.5d (LCP)** Regularly meet with local CCC staff to discuss planned County LCP amendments and major coastal development projects, with the goal of ensuring consistency between County planning activities and the California Coastal Act. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-1.5e** Review and comment on sphere of influence determinations and annexation and district reorganization proposals under consideration by LAFCO, based on the County General Plan/LCP, other established County policy, and general planning considerations. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Office)

**BE-1.5f (EJ)** Review special district capital improvement programs, infrastructure master plans and proposed infrastructure projects for consistency with the County General Plan/LCP, and to ensure sufficient and efficient service delivery to disadvantaged communities (per California Government Code Section 65402(c)). (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission)

*See also Objective BE-5.3: Disadvantaged Communities and Implementation Strategy PPF-3.1b.*

**BE-1.5g** Ensure that County staff engage with legislative processes regarding housing and other land use topics, attend California State Association of Counties (CSAC) meetings as necessary, and correspond with other jurisdiction staff, state agency staff, and state lawmakers for the purposes of (1) understanding new laws and preparing the County for accurate implementation of these laws, (2) providing County commentary to the legislature regarding the content of proposed laws, and (3) cohesively interpreting state land use laws across local agencies for the benefit of public health, safety, and welfare. (Responsibility: CDID)



## Agency Coordination for Sustainable Growth + Development

State Legislation: Office of Planning + Research (OPR), Department of Housing + Community Development (HCD), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), CA Legislative Information

Regional Planning: Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), Regional Transportation Commission (SCCRTC), Santa Cruz Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)

Planning in the Coastal Zone: California Coastal Commission

Incorporated Cities: Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Watsonville

Adjacent Counties: Monterey, San Benito, San Mateo, Santa Clara

Colleges: Cabrillo College, University of California – Santa Cruz

Unified School Districts: Aromas-San Juan, Pajaro Valley, San Lorenzo Valley, Scotts Valley

Elementary School Districts: Bonny Doon Union, Happy Valley, Lakeside Joint Union, Live Oak, Loma Prieta Joint Union, Mountain, Pacific, Santa Cruz City, Soquel Union

High School Districts: Los Gatos – Saratoga Union, Santa Cruz City, Soquel Union

Water Districts: Central Water, Davenport, Pajaro Valley, San Lorenzo, Santa Cruz City, Scotts Valley, Soquel Creek, Watsonville City

Sewer Districts: Boulder Creek, Davenport, Freedom, Rolling Woods, Salsipuedes, Santa Cruz County

Fire Districts: Aptos/La Selva Beach, Aromas Tri-County, Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, Branciforte, County Fire, Central, Felton, Pajaro Valley, Scotts Valley, Zayante

Flood Control Districts: Zones 5, 6, 7, and 8

Other Districts: Santa Cruz County Port District, Recreation Districts, Resource Conservation Districts



## GOAL BE-2 RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

Provide rural and urban residential land use designations and densities that enable a diversity of housing opportunities. Encourage attainable housing through mixed-use development and other flexible land use strategies. Allow neighborhood-appropriate home businesses to improve the jobs/housing balance, provide alternative visitor lodging options, and contribute to neighborhood stability and vitality.

### OBJECTIVE BE-2.1 URBAN RESIDENTIAL DESIGNATIONS

(LCP) To offer urban residential land use designations that allow for a diverse range of single and multifamily housing types, with higher-density development along multimodal corridors, within activity centers, and on key opportunity sites.

#### Policies

**BE-2.1.1 (LCP) Urban Residential Land Use Designations.** Provide urban residential land use designations at a range of building intensities to accommodate single and multifamily development as indicated in Table 2-1. (Additional units per acre may be allowed for qualifying projects via a density bonus, using development agreements if necessary.)

Table 2-1: Urban Residential Land Use Designations					
Land Use Designation	Units per Acre (Building Intensity) <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Residents per Acre (Population Density) <sup>2</sup>	USL	RSL	Implementing Zone Districts <sup>3</sup>
Urban Very Low (R-UVL)	1–5	3–20	Yes	Yes	R-1
Urban Low (R-UL)	4–10	10–35	Yes	Yes	R-1, RB, RM
Urban Medium (R-UM)	7–15	15–45	Yes	No	R-1, RB, RM
Urban High (R-UH)	11–30	25–60	Yes	No	R-1, RM
Urban High Flex (R-UHF)	22–45	35–75	Yes	No	RF

<sup>1</sup>Units/acre is in terms of gross parcel area. On sites with mapped natural resources and hazard risks, overriding minimum site area and building intensity rules may apply (see *Appendix F*).

<sup>2</sup> Population density is provided as an estimated range and is not tied to any development standard or requirement. According to the American Community Survey, in 2017 there were an average of 2.4 people per household in the unincorporated County, ranging from 2.6 people per household in single-family homes, down to 1.6 people per household in large apartment buildings (US Census Bureau 2018). This table adjusts estimated population density based on the mix of housing types appropriate in each land use designation. The table also adds estimated ADU residents to the high end of the population density range for each land use designation except for R-UHF, since ADUs are not expected to be common at this high level of building intensity.

<sup>3</sup>R-1 = Single Family Residential; RB = Ocean Beach Residential, RM = Multifamily Residential, RF = Residential Flex.



## Figure 2-4: Residential Land Use Map



**BE-2.1.2 (LCP) Urban Very Low Density Residential (R-UVL).** The R-UVL designation characterizes residential development at one to five units per gross acre on lots within the USL or RSL served by a full range of urban services. R-UVL is appropriate for developments that may include detached single-family homes, or two attached single-family homes or duplexes in urban areas with significant environmental constraints or as a transition to rural residential development.

**BE-2.1.3 (LCP) Urban Low Density Residential (R-UL).** The R-UL designation characterizes residential development at four to ten units per gross acre within the USL or RSL on lots served by a full range of urban services. R-UL is appropriate for developments that may include detached single-family homes or two attached single-family homes, duplexes, and small lot single-family detached houses.

**BE-2.1.4 (LCP) Urban Medium Density Residential (R-UM).** The R-UM designation characterizes residential development at 7 to 15 units per gross acre in areas within the USL served by a full range of urban services, with neighborhood shopping facilities and with easy driving, bicycling, transit and/or walking access to activity centers. R-UM is appropriate for detached or attached single-family homes, small lot detached single-family homes, duplexes, patio homes, bungalow courts, row houses, townhomes, and mobile home parks.

**BE-2.1.5(LCP) Urban High Density Residential (R-UH).** The R-UH designation characterizes residential development at 11 to 30 units per gross acre in areas within the USL served by a full range of urban services, with neighborhood shopping facilities and with multimodal access to activity centers. R-UH is appropriate for developments that may include small lot detached single-family homes, attached single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, condominium units, mobile home parks, small apartment buildings, and senior communities.

## Residential Flex

The R-UHF land use designation is intended to accommodate seniors, singles, students, and others who prefer and benefit from compact housing units near transit stops, multimodal corridors, employment, education, shopping centers, and neighborhood services. R-UHF improves access and mobility for residents and focuses residential growth in areas with infrastructure to accommodate higher density development. The R-UHF land use designation is implemented by the “RF” zone district. Compared to other residential zone districts, this zone district includes flexible development standards appropriate to the more urban nature of this district.



**BE-2.1.6 (LCP) Urban High Density Flex Residential (R-UHF).** The R-UHF designation characterizes residential development at 22 to 45 units per gross acre within the USL, served by a full range of urban services, located within or with easy access to activity centers, multimodal corridors, mobility hubs, and on key opportunity sites. R-UHF is appropriate for compact units in housing types such as quadplexes, apartment buildings, townhomes, and condominiums. Ground floor commercial use is allowed if compatible with surrounding land uses.



## Figure 2-5: Infill Housing Types

**Small Lot Single-Family Detached**



**Single-Family Attached (townhomes, row houses, patio homes)**



**Bungalow courts, duplexes/triplexes/quadplexes**



**Stacked apartments or condominiums**



*Photo Credits: Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines; Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments Sustainable Communities Strategy Implementation Toolkit (AMBAG 2016).*



**BE-2.1.7 (LCP) Urban Residential Infrastructure Requirements.** New or redesignated parcels receiving an urban residential land use designation must have existing or planned (and available at the time of occupancy) required road standards, public water and sewer infrastructure, drainage/stormwater infrastructure and fire response times meeting current state and County requirements.

*See also Goals PPF-3: Public Services and PPF-4: Public Infrastructure.*

**BE-2.1.8 (LCP) Public Services, Environmental Constraints, and Density.** Consider adequacy of roads, sewer and water service, drainage and stormwater infrastructure, terrain, presence of environmental resources, neighborhood land use, and public benefits in determining the number of units to be permitted for projects within each residential density range. Where adequate public services exist, development at the high end of the density range allowed by the land use designation is preferred and encouraged in order to maximize the utility of scarce land resources served by public infrastructure.

**BE-2.1.9 (LCP) Development Below the Minimum Density.** A development on a site within the USL/RSL zoned for multi-family use cannot be approved at a density below the designated density range, except where written findings required by California Government Code Section 65589.5 have been made; or the approving body makes a finding that unusual site conditions exist that render minimum density infeasible or that development at minimum density would conflict with regulations in SCCC Title 16 protecting the environment and protecting the public from hazards, or that the proposed development would conflict with policies and regulations in the LCP protecting coastal resources, and no alternate design and/or site layout that could achieve this minimum density would be feasible on the subject site. This shall not preclude redevelopment after natural disasters.



*Live Oak Neighborhood with mix of apartments, small-lot single family dwellings with ADUs, and condominiums.  
Photo Credit: Santa Cruz County.*



## Implementation Strategies

**BE-2.1a (LCP)** Implement urban residential land use designations through the zone districts shown in Table 2-1 and in SCCC 13.10.170. Maintain single-family and multifamily zone subdistricts associated with minimum land area per dwelling unit to implement ranges of building intensity. Establish allowed uses and design and development standards for each zone district. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

*See also Objective BE-4.1: Quality + Context.*

**BE-2.1b (LCP)** Within the USL/RSL, maintain zoning and subdivision regulations setting maximum lot area per dwelling unit to encourage development at the high end of the allowed density range for a parcel's land use designation and zone district. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors).

**BE-2.1c** Explore potential strategies to streamline and simplify residential zone districts, such as consolidating certain R-1 and RM subdistricts, and identify trade-offs for consideration and direction by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, regarding implementation of strategies. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-2.1d** Identify opportunity sites appropriate for R-UHF and coordinate with property owners to complete General Plan/LCP amendments adding these sites to the R-UHF designation, and zoning map amendments rezoning these sites as RF (Residential Flex). (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



## OBJECTIVE BE-2.2 RURAL RESIDENTIAL DESIGNATIONS

(LCP) To provide rural residential land use designations to maintain patterns of lower-density rural residential development that are compatible with physical limitations of the land, natural and cultural resources of the County, availability of public services, and protection of natural resources, agricultural land and open space.

### Policies

**BE-2.2.1 (LCP) Rural Residential Land Use Designations.** Provide rural residential land use designations at building intensities to accommodate low-density residential development as indicated in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2: Rural Residential Land Use Designations					
Land Use Designation	Lot Size Per Unit <sup>1</sup> (Building Intensity)	Estimated Residents per Acre (Population Density) <sup>2</sup>	USL	RSL	Implementing Zone Districts <sup>3</sup>
Mountain Residential (R-MT)	10–40 acres	0.05–0.5	No	No	RR, RA, TP, A, R-1
Rural Residential (R-R)	2.5–20 acres	0.15–1.5	No	No	RR, RA, A, R-1
Suburban Residential (R-S)	1–5 acres	0.5–5.0	No	Yes <sup>4</sup>	RR, RA, R-1

<sup>1</sup>Units/acre is in terms of net developable parcel area. On sites with mapped natural resources and hazard risks, overriding minimum site area and building intensity rules may apply (see *Appendix F: Natural Resource/Environmental Hazard Areas: Maps + Development Constraints*).

<sup>2</sup>Population density is provided as an estimated range and is not tied to any development standard or requirement. According to the American Community Survey, in 2017 there were an average of 2.6 people per single-family household in the unincorporated County (US Census Bureau 2018). This table utilizes this baseline data and adds estimated ADU residents to the high end of each population density range.

<sup>3</sup>RR = Rural Residential; RA = Residential Agriculture, TP = Timber Production, A = Agriculture, R-1 = Single-Family Residential. Note that outside the USL/RSL, R-1 zoning is generally appropriate only to recognize existing small legal residential parcels of record as conforming parcels. R-1 is not an appropriate zone district for newly created rural residential lots.

<sup>4</sup>R-S designation may be allowed within RSLs as indicated in certain village and town plans (see BE-2.2.6 and BE-2.2c).

**BE-2.2.2 (LCP) Mountain Residential Designation (R-MT).** The R-MT designation characterizes residential development at 10 to 40 net developable acres per unit. R-MT is appropriate in areas unsuited to more intensive development due to the presence of physical hazards and development constraints, the necessity to protect natural resources and rural open space, and the lack of public services, adequate-width roadways and other facilities.



## Rural Density Matrix

The matrix determines average allowed density on rural residential parcels according to the following factors, as represented on the County's Resources and Constraints Maps:

- Water Supply (system, availability, quality)
- Water Resource (watersheds)
- Road Access (ability of roads to meet development needs)
- Timber Resources (mapped resources)
- Sensitive Habitats (mapped or field-identified habitats)
- Erosion, Landslides (rock type, slope)
- Seismic Activity (fault zones, potential for liquefaction, shaking)
- Fire Hazards (mapped hazard areas, roads, response time)

**BE-2.2.3 (LCP) Rural Residential Designation (R-R).** The R-R designation characterizes residential development at 2.5 to 20 net developable acres per unit. R-R is appropriate on lands suitable for rural development with adequate fire protection and access from roads maintained to rural road standards. In R-R areas, more intensive development is restricted due to limited public services and facilities, physical hazards and development constraints including water availability and septic capability, and the desire to protect natural resources and to maintain rural character. On R-R parcels in the Bonny Doon Planning Area, minimum parcel size is five acres.

**BE-2.2.4 (LCP) Suburban Residential Designation (R-S).** The R-S designation characterizes residential development at one to five net developable acres per unit. R-S is appropriate in areas with developable land, access from roads maintained to rural road standards, soils of good septic suitability, and fire protection. Public water service is desirable but not required.

**BE-2.2.5 (LCP) Rural Density Matrix.** Outside the USL and RSL, maintain a Rural Density Matrix to determine maximum residential density for development permits and tentative map approvals based on: physical development hazards or constraints present; natural resources to be protected and/or sustainably used or harvested; adequacy of access; and level of public services and facilities available. The maximum density calculated for a parcel using the matrix should be within the density range for the parcel's land use designation, with the following caveats:

- If fire response time is more than 20 minutes, development may only take place at the lowest density allowed for the parcel's land use designation.
- The matrix does not apply to school employee housing (a quasi-public use) or agricultural employee housing (an agricultural use).
- Within the Coastal Zone, affordable housing projects cannot be approved below the minimum density allowed by the land use designation and zone district, and including density bonus provisions as applicable, unless findings are made per *Policy BE-2.1.9: Development Below the Minimum Density*.



**BE-2.2.6 (LCP) Residential Land Use Designations and Density within the RSL.** Residential parcels within the RSL should be designated R-UL or R-UVL, except if assigned an R-S land use designation in a town or village plan. On all residential parcels within the RSL where community sewage disposal systems are not available, density is determined by the Rural Density Matrix.

*See also Policy PPF-4.2.2: Sewage Disposal Systems, within the Rural Services Line.*

**BE-2.2.7 (LCP) Overriding Minimum Lot Size.** Where other General Plan/LCP policies require a larger parcel size for adequate resource protection or risk management, those policies should override other policies regarding minimum lot size.

*For a table of overriding minimum lot sizes, see Appendix F: Natural Resource + Environmental Hazard Areas: Maps + Development Constraints.*

**BE-2.2.8 (LCP) Averaging Parcel Sizes for Rural Land Divisions.** Allow averaging of required minimum parcel sizes for new rural land divisions only under the following conditions:

- The development envelopes must be clustered as appropriate to minimize grading, impervious surfaces, and overall site disturbance;
- The maximum number of new parcels resulting from a land division cannot exceed the total number of parcels otherwise allowable without averaging, based on consistency with the Rural Density Matrix and all other applicable General Plan/LCP Land Use Plan policies and zoning regulations; and
- The resulting parcels from a clustered land division must be restricted by deed and conditioned to ensure that the acreage cannot be further divided.

**BE-2.2.9 Small Rural Parcels.** Recognize existing legal residential parcels outside the USL/RSL that are less than one acre in size as conforming with the General Plan/LCP (to be “grandfathered in” as compliant). Maintain and regulate these parcels using the site standards of the appropriate urban residential implementing zone district associated with the parcel size.



Boulder Creek home. Photo credit: Lookout Santa Cruz. <http://www.lookout.co/santacruz>

### Implementation Strategies

**BE-2.2a (LCP)** Implement rural residential land use designations with the zone districts shown in Table 2-2 and in SCCC 13.10.170. Establish allowed uses and development standards for each zone district. In recognition of differences in physical settings and community character, some rural residential zone districts should have a primarily residential character and other zone districts should allow or prioritize agricultural and timber production uses along with the rural residential use. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

*See also Objective BE-4.1: Quality + Context.*

**BE-2.2b (LCP)** Maintain the Rural Density Matrix criteria in SCCC 13.14: Rural Residential Density Determinations. Review and update the General Plan/LCP Resources and Constraints maps used in the matrix system as new information becomes available. Administer the factors covered by the matrix using consistent and efficient methods, and amend and refine the matrix factors as warranted, based on analysis, to incorporate capacity for site-based refinements and to ensure attainment of goals and objectives. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-2.2c** Recognize R-S designated parcels with urban and rural densities as delineated by the Boulder Creek Specific Plan adopted land use map. (Responsibility: CDID)



## Affordable by Design

The Santa Cruz County General Plan supports the concepts of “affordable” and “attainable” housing. These are two similar but separate concepts relating to housing affordability and choice.

“Affordable Housing” refers to housing units that are deed-restricted to be rented or sold to households making less than a certain percentage of the area median income.

“Attainable Housing” refers to the broader idea of providing a wide variety of rental and for-sale housing types in the market that are affordable to residents with a variety of incomes and household sizes.

Attainable housing units are likely to be “affordable by design” due to factors such as smaller lot size, attached unit types, smaller unit size, older unit age, efficient layout, and decoupled

### OBJECTIVE BE-2.3 ATTAINABLE HOUSING

To encourage the preservation and production of housing that is attainable to residents of all income levels and household sizes through flexible residential land use strategies.

*For additional policies related to the provision of attainable housing, see also Objective BE-3.2: Residential + Public Land Use on Commercial Property; Chapter 4: Housing Element; Objective ARC-1.4.9: Farmworker Housing; and Policy PPF-1.1.2: Public Facility/Institutional Intensity of Use.*

#### Policies

**BE-2.3.1 (LCP) Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).** Encourage the provision of context-appropriate ADUs associated with single-family and multifamily dwellings, recognizing that ADUs not only increase housing affordability (both for homeowners and tenants), but also create a wider range of housing options within neighborhoods, enable seniors to age in place, allow for extended families to live together, and facilitate efficient land use in established neighborhoods.

*See also Housing Element Policy 2.3.*

**BE-2.3.2 Small Lot Single-Family Development.** Within the USL and RSL, encourage detached and semi-detached single-family homes on small lots to support higher single-family densities and more attainable housing costs.

**BE-2.3.3 Multiple Units in Single Family Zone Districts.** Allow multiple detached dwellings or up to two attached or semi-detached dwellings per single-family zoned parcel, subject to density and development standards.

**BE-2.3.4 Missing Middle Housing.** Allow and encourage “missing middle” housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, bungalow courts, patio homes and townhouses to provide infill development appropriate to the scale of existing established neighborhoods.

**BE-2.3.5 Small Units in Multifamily Zone Districts.** Encourage smaller housing units in multifamily zone districts through zoning controls for building intensity and density.



**BE-2.3.6 Multifamily housing in non-residential areas.** Encourage integration of multifamily residential development within non-residential areas through mixed-use development strategies. *See also Policy BE-3.2.1: Residential Uses in Commercial Designations.*

**BE-2.3.7 (LCP) Density Bonus for Affordable Housing.** In exchange for provision of deed-restricted affordable housing units beyond the County's inclusionary housing requirements, reward project applicants with increased density allowances and other incentives and concessions.

*See also Chapter 4, Housing Element, Policy 2.5.*

**BE-2.3.8 Mobile Home Parks.** Recognize the importance of mobile home parks as a housing type that is affordable by design and regulated at the state level. Preserve mobile home parks and discourage conversion of mobile home park properties to short-term visitor accommodations or other land uses.

**BE-2.3.9 Adaptive Reuse.** Consider vacant or underutilized non-residential buildings for redesignation and rezoning to support conversion of sites to residential use at context-appropriate housing densities, while weighing other land use policies and considerations.

*See also Policy BE-3.2.7: Converting Commercial to Residential Land Use.*

**BE-2.3.10 (EJ) Unpermitted Residential Structures.** Recognize that there are existing unpermitted structures that are providing attainable housing for Santa Cruz County residents. Promote preservation of these structures through programs such as the "Safe Structures Program" (also known as the Limited Immunity Amnesty Program) to allow a legal pathway for health and safety upgrades to these units.

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-2.3a (LCP) Implement ADU use and development standards in SCCC 13.10 and update as necessary to align with State law and County housing production goals. (Responsibility: CDID)**

**BE-2.3b** Maintain single-family zone district standards implementing urban residential land use designations that provide lot size, width, depth, FAR, and lot coverage appropriate for small lot single-family development. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-2.3c** In the SCCC, maintain a Mobile Home Park Combining District to denote and regulate properties where mobile home parks have been legally established. Encourage projects to upgrade infrastructure and facilities at mobile home parks. Discourage mobile home park conversions and maintain procedures requiring findings to allow for conversion to other land uses. (Responsibility: CDID)



## In Search of the Missing Middle

“Missing middle” housing refers to housing types such as duplexes/half-plexes, triplexes, quadplexes, bungalow courts, patio homes and townhouses that have densities between those of single-family homes and mid-rise apartments. Missing middle housing types were common prior to World War II when fewer people drove cars and communities were designed to be more compact. These housing types are recognized as an effective way to reduce suburban sprawl and add housing diversity through infill development. Missing middle housing structures can blend into existing single-family areas without compromising scale and neighborhood character. The increased population density associated with missing middle housing also enables economic viability of local businesses and transit service, improving neighborhood quality of life.

**BE-2.3d** Review existing, constructed “missing middle” housing and consider whether these dwellings meet the County’s current residential development standards. Determine what, if any, changes to development standards might be appropriate to enable further development of low-impact, context-sensitive missing middle housing. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-2.3e (LCP)** Implement density bonus and enhanced density bonus requirements in SCCC 13.10 and SCCC 17.12 and update as required to meet State law. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-2.3f (LCP)** In multifamily zone districts, maintain zoning controls to increase maximum allowed FAR and lot coverage as building intensity increases, to accommodate economically viable higher-density multifamily development projects with small and moderately sized housing units near transportation corridors, on opportunity sites, and within activity centers. Allow for subdivision of multifamily zoned parcels for small-lot single family development where appropriate. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-2.3g (LCP)** Explore the concept of using a “density unit” calculation as a strategy to encourage economically feasible multifamily development on multifamily-zoned parcels that are too small to qualify for a density bonus. A density unit calculation would adjust the number of dwelling units allowed on a parcel based on unit size; for instance, compact units with two bedrooms might be counted as three-quarters of one unit. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-2.3h (LCP)** Maintain a Permanent Room Housing (“PRH”) Combining Zone District to regulate the conversion of former visitor accommodation and care facilities to multifamily housing with long-term (greater than 30 day) residential occupancy. Regardless of residential land use designation, allow existing densities at the time of rezoning to the PRH district to remain, consistent with an approved Use/Development Permit. (Responsibility: CDID)



**BE-2.3i (EJ)** Implement the Safe Structures Program with safety inspections for structures that cannot feasibly be modified to meet current SCCC building and zoning standards. Structures completing the Safe Structures Program receive a certificate and are marked as a low priority for code enforcement, and residential occupancy is allowed even though the units are not fully permitted as compliant with all applicable codes. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-2.3j** Review permit and impact fee structures applicable to small units with two or fewer bedrooms and 700 square feet or less. Consider fees at a 50% of usual residential unit fee, based on square footage and housing type/population density. (Responsibility: CDID, Housing Division)

**BE-2.3k** Review residential policies and development standards for compliance with State “Prohousing Designation Program” and consider updates to policies and standards to meet requirements for application to this program.



*Parkhurst Terrace Apartments, Watsonville. Photo credit: Santa Cruz County.*



## OBJECTIVE BE-2.4 HOME OCCUPATIONS

To allow home-based business activity that is compatible with surrounding residential land uses.

### Policies

#### BE-2.4.1 Small Businesses as Residential Accessory Uses.

Encourage small businesses and cottage industries as residential accessory uses, recognizing that home businesses provide economic stability for property owners while adding to neighborhood land use diversity.

#### BE-2.4.2 Regulation of Home Occupations.

Maintain and administer SCCC regulations to allow home occupation activities while preventing adverse impacts on surrounding properties. Maintain clear performance standards for home occupations, and only require permits for businesses that propose to exceed the “by right” thresholds.

#### BE-2.4.3 Telecommuting.

Encourage full or part-time telecommuting, recognizing that many jobs can be conducted remotely, and commuting to a physical office may not be necessary. Telecommuting can improve quality of life for workers with the co-benefits of reducing commute traffic and VMT. Typical home office work should not require a home occupation permit.

*See also Policy BE-3.3.5: Flexible Work Formats and Implementation Strategy AM-1.1e.*

### Implementation Strategies

#### BE-2.4a

Maintain home occupation performance standards in the SCCC related to factors such as signage, square footage, number of employees, visitor traffic, noise-generating activity, and hazardous materials. Require permits for home occupations that exceed performance thresholds and risk adversely impacting the surrounding neighborhood. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

#### BE-2.4b

Support broadband development to enable and support remote work and home business activity conducted online. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office)

*See also Policy BE-3.3.6: Strategic Broadband Development and Objective PPF-4.7: Telecommunications + Broadband.*

## What is a Home Occupation?

Home occupations are businesses run by residents from their homes. Home occupations can involve the manufacture, provision or sale of goods or services, but must be secondary to the residential use of the property and cannot affect the residential character of the property or neighborhood. Therefore, the County Code limits factors such as signage, square footage, employees, visitor traffic, noise-generating activity, and hazardous materials for home occupations.

Temporary events such as commercial weddings and community fundraisers and events are not considered home occupations, but at some locations may be allowed with an appropriate permit. See Policy BE-3.4.4 regarding events on private residential property.



## OBJECTIVE BE-2.5 SHORT-TERM RENTALS

(LCP) To provide a regulatory framework for short-term residential home rentals that protects and preserves neighborhood character and available long-term rental housing stock, while offering accommodations to visitors and income to homeowners, consistent with standards and limitations.

*See also Objective BE-3.5: Visitor Accommodation.*

### Policies

**BE-2.5.1 (LCP) Short-Term Rental Regulation.** Allow a limited number of vacation rental homes and “hosted rental” rooms within homes to be rented on a short-term (less than 30 day) basis, balancing potential impacts of rentals on neighborhoods with the benefits of extra revenue for homeowners and local businesses and additional lodging options for visitors. Short-term rentals require permits that are associated with the property owner and do not run with the property upon sale.

**BE-2.5.2 (LCP) Short-Term Rentals and ADUs.** Do not allow short-term rentals in ADUs or on properties where ADUs are located, recognizing the importance of ADUs in addressing housing needs as small units that are affordable by design.

**BE-2.5.3 (LCP) Short-Term Rentals in Coastal Tourist Areas.** Accommodate a stabilized level of short-term rentals in coastal tourist areas and other areas of the County, consistent with historic use and appropriate neighborhood thresholds of intensity, in order to balance visitor accommodation with preservation of neighborhoods and availability of housing.

*See also Objective BE-5.1: Coastal Zone Development.*

### Implementation Strategies

**BE-2.5a (LCP)** Maintain vacation rental (unhosted whole-house rental) and hosted rental (rental of one or two bedrooms hosted by the property owner) ordinances establishing short-term residential rental rules and regulations and require permits for these uses. Set performance standards for short-term rental permits regarding number of guests, noise, events, parking, and other factors to prevent inappropriate impacts on surrounding homes and neighborhoods. Periodically adjust regulations as needed. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-2.5b (LCP)** In designated geographic areas that are popular with visitors, set overall maximums for the number of short-term rental permits allowed, as well as maximum percentage allowed per residential block. Periodically review and adjust these maximums and also set Countywide maximum permits as needed. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



## GOAL BE-3 COMMERCIAL + INDUSTRIAL LAND USE

Encourage context-appropriate commercial and industrial land uses and provide flexible land use and infrastructure solutions to stimulate and sustain economic vitality.

### OBJECTIVE BE-3.1 COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL DESIGNATIONS

(LCP) To establish commercial and industrial development land use designations for the provision of consumer goods and services and employment opportunities, with associated building intensities, at appropriate locations.

#### Policies

**BE-3.1.1 (LCP) Commercial Land Use Designations and Building Intensity.** Provide commercial land use designations at a range of building intensities to accommodate differing land uses as indicated in Table 2-3.

Table 2-3: Commercial + Industrial Land Use Designations			
Land Use Designation	Building Intensity	Estimated Building Area Per Employee (Employment Density) <sup>2</sup>	Implementing Zone Districts <sup>3</sup>
<b>Consumer Commercial</b>			
Neighborhood Commercial (C-N)	FAR <sup>1</sup> 0.5–1.5	400–1,300 sq ft	C-1, CT, PA
Community Commercial (C-C)	FAR 0.5–1.5	400–1,300 sq ft	C-1, C-2, CT, VA, PA, C-3
Visitor Accommodations (C-V) Type A <sup>4</sup> Type B <sup>4</sup>	FAR 0.5–1.5 FAR 0.0-1.5	1,500–5,000 sq ft	VA, CT
<b>Employment Focus</b>			
Professional Office (C-O)	FAR 0.5–1.5	400–700 sq ft	PA, C-3
Service Commercial + Light Industrial (C-S)	FAR 0.1–1.5	1,000–10,000 sq ft	PA, C-3, C-4, M-1
Heavy Industrial (I)	FAR 0.1–1.0	1,000–10,000 sq ft	M-1, M-2
<sup>1</sup> Floor area ratio (FAR) is the ratio of building floor area to lot area. FAR calculations exclude parking garages. Exceptions to maximum FAR limits may be appropriate for projects providing alternatives to surface parking lots. <sup>2</sup> Employment density assumptions are based on US Energy Information Administration 2012 Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey and estimate density of employees only, not visitors (US Census Bureau 2012). Employment density is an estimate, not a requirement. <sup>3</sup> C-1: Neighborhood Commercial; C-2: Community Commercial; CT: Tourist Commercial; VA: Visitor Accommodations, PA: Professional + Administrative Offices; C-3: Workplace Flex; C-4: Commercial Services; M-1: Light Industrial; M-2: Heavy Industrial. <sup>4</sup> Type A: hotels, motels, bed + breakfasts. Type B: rural camps and conference centers, hostels, RV and tent-camping parks.			



## Figure 2-6: Commercial + Industrial Land Use Map



**BE-3.1.2 (LCP) Neighborhood Commercial (C-N).** The C-N designation characterizes small-scale neighborhood or visitor-oriented retail sales, restaurants, recreational equipment sales, and personal services. This designation may also be appropriate for mixed-use commercial/residential development, small offices, community facilities including child care facilities, schools and studios, rental services, and similar types of retail, public/quasi-public and service activities. Within the USL/RSL, C-N parcels should be within walking distance of neighborhoods and/or visitor attractions. In rural areas, C-N parcels should be centrally located to serve rural communities, or on sites appropriate for neighborhood corner markets.

*See also Objective BE-1.4: Complete Neighborhoods.*

**BE-3.1.3 (LCP) Community Commercial (C-C).** The C-C designation characterizes concentrated commercial uses within the USL/RSL that serve the general shopping, entertainment, service, and office needs of community or region-wide market areas. C-C is appropriate for retail sales, personal services, offices, hotels, schools, restaurants, entertainment venues, and similar types of community and visitor-serving activities, as well as mixed-use commercial/residential development and public/quasi-public uses.

C-C parcels should be located within existing or planned activity centers. Amendments to land use designations to establish C-C parcels outside of activity centers require County approval of a master plan, specific plan, and/or planned unit development, in order to carefully review for consistency with County economic vitality objectives.

*See also Objective BE-1.3: Vibrant Activity Centers.*

**BE-3.1.4 (LCP) Professional and Administrative Offices (C-O).** The C-O designation characterizes non-retail employment-based uses in buffer areas between residential neighborhoods and more intensive commercial development, as well locations where a demonstrated need for professional services exists, such as medical and employment activity centers. C-O is appropriate for professional and administrative offices, medical offices, research labs with high employment density, public/quasi-public uses, mixed-use commercial/residential development, and limited retail, restaurant, service, and other land uses that are secondary to, and supporting, office use.

**BE-3.1.5 (LCP) Visitor Accommodations (C-V).** The C-V designation characterizes overnight visitor accommodations and associated services located in activity centers and near tourist attractions. C-V is appropriate for motels, hotels, bed and breakfast inns, lodges, recreational vehicle parks, hostels, commercial camping, as well as limited associated services such as restaurants, visitor services, retail shops, health and sports-related uses, and child care.

*See also Objectives BE-3.5: Visitor Accommodation, and PPF-1.3: Organized Camps and Conference Centers.*



**BE-3.1.6 (LCP)(EJ) Service Commercial and Light Industrial (C-S).** The C-S designation characterizes a range of commercial services and light industrial activities including assembly and manufacturing; commercial service facilities such as auto repair, contractors' yards, warehousing and storage; and outdoor sales facilities, such as nurseries, lumber yards, and boat and auto sales. Ancillary land uses are allowed including office and retail uses associated with items produced on site, and services for employees such as restaurants and cafes, personal services, and child care.

C-S uses are generally most appropriate within the USL in locations with access to appropriate routes for freight and goods movement, where the impacts of noise, traffic, and other nuisances and hazards associated with such uses will not adversely affect other land uses. C-S uses with high employment density and managed impact to neighborhoods may be appropriate in employment-based activity centers. Low-impact C-S uses with large land requirements, and which do not rely upon urban infrastructure, may be more appropriate in rural areas along appropriate routes for freight and goods movement, outside of the USL/RSL.



*Auto Repair on 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Live Oak. Photo credit: Santa Cruz County.*



**BE-3.1.7 (LCP)(EJ) Heavy Industrial (I).** The I designation characterizes heavy industrial activities such as lumber mills and major manufacturing plants. Such I uses are appropriate in locations with access to appropriate routes for freight and goods movement, separated from residential neighborhoods and activity centers, where it has been determined through environmental review that the noise, traffic, and other nuisances and hazards associated with such uses will not adversely affect other land uses.

*The I designation does not include quarries. For policies regarding quarry development, see Objective ARC-7.2: Mineral Resources.*

**BE-3.1.8 (LCP) Commercial and Industrial Infrastructure Requirements.** New or redesignated parcels receiving a commercial or industrial land use designation must have existing or planned road access meeting fire standards, adequate water and sewer infrastructure, and adequate transit service, unless the nature of the use does not rely upon urban services, has a lower employment density, and is more appropriate for location outside of the USL/RSL.

*See also Objective AM-7.1: Freight Service, and Goal PPF-3.0: Public Services.*

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-3.1a (LCP)** Implement the commercial and industrial land use designations through the zone districts shown in Table 2-3 and SCCC 13.10.170. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.1b (LCP)** Ensure compatibility between commercial and industrial development and adjacent areas through environmental review, development standards, and permit procedures. Disallow businesses in close proximity to sensitive receptors such as neighborhoods and schools based on potential for public nuisances, unmitigated adverse environmental impacts, or inappropriate content for children. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.1c (LCP)(EJ)** Require buffer zones between new industrial facilities and sensitive land uses, following distances recommended in the California Air Resources Board Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective. Ensure that industrial development does not adversely impact water supply watersheds and is in compliance with the State Water Resources Control Board's Industrial Stormwater General Permit. Do not allow heavy industrial uses in the Bonny Doon or North Coast Planning Areas, but consider light industrial uses with appropriate permits and mitigation measures to ensure no significant adverse environmental impacts. (Responsibility: CDID, Water Districts)



## Mixed-Use Development

Mixed-use developments are projects with a mix of land uses on a single property, site, or plan area. Most mixed-use developments include housing. Residential development can make commercial projects financially viable (or vice versa), with the co-benefit of providing attainable infill housing.

Thoughtful design is critical to the success of mixed-use projects. Developments can be “vertical” (stacked uses) or “horizontal” (side by side uses). Vertical mixed-use is more common at activity centers and along major corridors. Horizontal mixed-use is more common for transitions between commercial and residential areas.

Please see the County Code and *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines*.

### OBJECTIVE BE-3.2 RESIDENTIAL + PUBLIC LAND USES ON COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

To provide for residential and public facility uses on commercial properties where these uses contribute to establishing vibrant activity centers, complete neighborhoods, and/or attainable housing, while including an appropriate and viable level of commercial land uses.

*See also Policy 1.3.2: Mixed Use Development.*

**BE-3.2.1 (LCP) Residential Uses in Commercial Designations.** In the C-N, C-C, and C-O designations, allow mixed-use residential and commercial developments with appropriate design considerations to ensure compatibility between land uses on site and with adjacent sites. Residential square footage (including common areas within residential portions of a structure) may account for up to 80% of building square footage. A higher percentage of residential square footage is allowed only via a waiver or concession associated with a density bonus project, per *Policy BE-2.3.7*. Residential density is per the R-UHF Land Use Designation, per *Policy BE-2.1.6*.

**BE-3.2.2 Public Facilities Uses in Commercial Designations.** Allow public and quasi-public facility uses in the C-N, C-C, C-O, and C-S designations when in the public interest, consistent with public health, safety and welfare.

*See also Policy PPF-1.1.6: Public Facilities in Other Land Use Designations.*

**BE-3.2.3 Medical Mixed-Use.** In targeted areas, encourage coordinated development of hospitals, medical offices, and clinics along with complementary land uses such as retail, restaurants, personal services, professional offices, congregate care, transitional and permanent supportive housing, assisted living facilities, and higher intensity “workforce housing” residential uses.

*See also Implementation Strategy BE-1.3e.*



**BE-3.2.4 Ground Floor Commercial Uses.** In mixed-use developments in commercial land use designations, prioritize street-facing ground floor spaces for commercial use, especially in areas of pedestrian activity.

*See also Policy BE-4.3.6: Active Ground Floor Uses.*

**BE-3.2.5 Care Facilities.** Skilled nursing facilities, continuing care retirement communities, residential care facilities for the elderly (also known as assisted living facilities), health care facilities and other institutional facilities that are licensed to provide residents with regular care services (assistance with daily living), and/or nursing or other medical services, are considered nonresidential uses and are allowed in the C-N, C-C, and C-O commercial designations. Senior rental housing offering services such as meals and social activities, but not licensed care and/or nursing services, is considered a residential use and is allowed in the C-N, C-C, and C-O designations per *Policy BE-3.2.1*, and in the PF designation per *Policy PPF-1.1.3*.

*See also Chapter 4, Housing Element.*

**BE-3.2.6 (LCP) Permanent Room Housing (“PRH”) Uses in Commercial Designations.** Regardless of commercial land use designation, with the exception of the Visitor Accommodations Designation (C-V) in the Coastal Zone, allow 100% residential use on properties within the PRH Combining District with an approved use permit.

**BE-3.2.7 (LCP) Converting Commercial to Residential Land Use.** Recognize the importance of preserving and prioritizing the County’s commercial land for accommodating consumer commercial and employment uses, while responding to changing market conditions that may increase demand for residential development and lessen demand for commercial development. Encourage mixed-use developments that preserve ground floor square footage for non-residential uses, with residential uses on upper floors.

Any visitor accommodations that are converted to permanent occupancy residential use should conform to the requirements of the PRH Combining District.

*See also Policy BE-5.1.3: Maintaining Coastal Priority Uses.*



*Concept for mixed-use development in Seacliff. Image credit: Placeworks Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan.*



## Implementation Strategies

**BE-3.2a** Apply unique development standards for mixed-use projects in the SCCC to ensure appropriate balance and buffering between land uses within the project and between the project and adjacent land uses. Apply guidance in the *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines* for vertical and horizontal mixed-use development. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.2b** Investigate the potential for live/work units within mixed-use consumer commercial, office, and residential development, with the understanding that live/work units can provide flexibility for residents to conduct office, retail, service, and nonpolluting light industrial business uses out of their homes at a level beyond what is allowed for home occupations (see *Objective BE-2.4*). Research what has worked and what has not worked for other jurisdictions. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-3.2c** Identify opportunity sites for medical mixed-use within the USL, on or near the Soquel Drive multimodal corridor and near existing medical land uses. Coordinate with property owners to determine appropriate zoning tools to implement to achieve mixed-use development goals on specific properties, with particular attention to the former drive-in movie site. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.2d** In the SCCC, develop clear definitions and use and development standards for care facilities, supportive housing, and other facilities or residential land use types that typically offer residents full or partial assistance with daily living, or other support. Ensure that the SCCC allows for small licensed institutional facilities as well as unlicensed residential housing in residential zone districts per State law. Ensure that appropriate licensed facilities and congregate care uses are allowed as a commercial use, and that the SCCC also accommodates other alternate unlicensed residential housing arrangements, with the potential for such to be accommodated on residential, commercial and public facility lands as outlined in the SCCC. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-3.2e** In the SCCC, allow rezoning from commercial to residential land use only when a finding can be made that the site has low commercial potential as reflected by existing vacancies, outdated low value improvements, low employment density, or low market demand for commercial use. Favor mixed use development rather than rezoning to fully residential use, as feasible. (Responsibility: CDID)



## OBJECTIVE BE-3.3 FLEXIBLE, EFFICIENT + DYNAMIC WORKPLACES

To provide appropriate land, infrastructure and regulations to enhance existing industries and workplaces while enabling economic growth and diversification to allow more Santa Cruz residents to work within the County.

### Policies

**BE-3.3.1 Economic Vitality.** Ensure that development regulations and proposed projects are aligned with the policies and priorities of the Santa Cruz County *Economic Vitality Study (EVS)* and *Economic Development Vision and Strategy*.

**BE-3.3.2 Focused Employment Density.** Encourage development with high employment density along the Soquel Drive Corridor as well as other major corridors and activity centers. Discourage businesses with low employment density in these locations.

*See also Policy BE-1.3.4: Employment Centers.*

**BE-3.3.3 Integrated Workplace Development.** Recognizing that workers need access to transit, restaurants, child care, and other goods and services, encourage the development of workplaces within walking distance to these land uses, and/or encourage development of transit and complementary land uses concurrently with new workplace development. Encourage employment activity centers. Discourage employment “islands” that require workers to drive in order to access food and services.

*See also Policy AM-3.1.5: Healthy Food Access.*

**BE-3.3.4 Flexible Work Spaces.** Enable and encourage commercial development with built in flexibility to accommodate a variety of workplace functions including offices, retail, research and development, light assembly, and shipping/distribution.

**BE-3.3.5 Flexible Work Formats.** Enable and encourage employers to utilize flexible work schedules and telecommuting as strategies for business success, workplace safety, and reduced vehicle miles traveled.

*See also Policy BE-2.4.3: Telecommuting.*

**BE-3.3.6 Strategic Broadband Development.** Identify geographic areas that offer opportunity sites for new employment activity centers appropriate for innovative technologies and prioritize broadband infrastructure development in those areas to support business needs.

*See also Implementation Strategy BE-2.4b and Objective PPF-4.7: Telecommunications and Broadband.*



**BE-3.3.7 Small Business Growth.** Encourage the preservation and growth of diverse small businesses, recognizing that small businesses are an essential component of Santa Cruz County’s identity. Support entrepreneurs and business start-ups and accommodate incubator and coworking spaces.

**BE-3.3.8 Service Commercial and Light Industrial Development.** Provide adequate land to enable the preservation, growth, and development of service commercial and light industrial land uses, especially in technology/innovation and other growth industries. Encourage continued operation of existing industrial uses and their reconstruction, modernization, and expansion to the extent compatible with adjacent uses and to the extent that environmental impacts can be mitigated.

**Figure 2-7: Flexible Workplace**



*Flexible workplaces can accommodate a mix of office, light industrial, and retail uses for large businesses or groups of small businesses. Image credits: Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines; flueprintinteriors.com; meengineering.com*



## Workforce Development

The County's policies for employment growth must be accompanied by workforce development, to give local residents the opportunity to learn skills to access new jobs that will become available in the County's economic growth sectors.

The Santa Cruz County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and Workforce Santa Cruz County Program lead local workforce training. Training is especially needed in South County where unemployment is higher and education attainment is lower than elsewhere in the County.

The County's EVS prioritizes the following actions to support workforce training:

- Train educators and partner with schools, youth mentorship, and intern programs.
- Support nonprofits, incubators, and small business development center with grants, loans, and training.

**BE-3.3.9 (LCP) Service Commercial Development in Rural Areas.** Allow development in rural areas with “land extensive” service commercial land uses that require a lot of land or acreage but have low employment density and minimal urban service needs, without impacting prime farmland.

**BE-3.3.10 (EJ) Food Processing Industry.** Accommodate food processing, wholesaling, and distribution facilities within Santa Cruz County to connect local agriculture to markets such as retailers, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and other institutions.

### Implementation Measures

**BE-3.3a** Review development regulations related to growth industries identified in the County's *Economic Vitality Study*, and update as necessary to remove barriers and add incentives to modernize commercial properties and attract growth industry businesses. (Responsibility: County Administrative Office, CDID)

**BE-3.3b** Design and implement a business license program, possibly with voter approval, to allow for collection of basic information to analyze business growth, direct communication with business owners, taxes to support business infrastructure, and further targeting of economic vitality efforts. (Responsibility: County Administrative Office, CDID, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.3c** Maintain a “Workplace Flex” (C-3) zone district with development standards that accommodate a variety of office, service commercial and light industrial land uses, as well as complementary consumer commercial land uses. Identify opportunity sites appropriate for the Workplace Flex zone along multimodal corridors and in activity centers, and coordinate with property owners to rezone these sites. Cannabis businesses are not suitable for the Workplace Flex zone district. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

*See also Objective BE-1.3: Vibrant Activity Centers.*



**BE-3.3d** Explore County partnerships with businesses, nonprofits and educational institutions to encourage or create flexible incubator, co-work, and “maker” workspaces for small businesses. (Responsibility: County Administrative Office, CDID)

**BE-3.3e** Consider options to increase building intensity and employment density in and around Research Park, south of Soquel Drive between Rodeo Gulch Road and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Consider the development of a specific plan and/or master site plans to ensure integrated, efficient site development. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.3f** Allow hand-made product fabrication with on-site retail sales to locate within implementing zone districts of the Neighborhood Commercial, Community Commercial and Service Commercial land use designations. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-3.3g** Explore opportunities to transition key opportunity sites along the Soquel Drive Corridor away from existing lower-intensity auto service and repair businesses to higher-intensity employment and mixed uses, in order to use urbanized areas more efficiently for jobs, housing and services. Concurrently evaluate opportunities for alternative locations for auto-oriented and other commercial service and light industrial uses, in order to maintain job diversity and meet economic demand for service commercial and manufacturing space. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.3h** Inventory existing C-4 land uses. Explore creation of a new zone district or special policies, requirements, and uses within the C-4 zone district that would allow commercial service uses with high acreage requirements and non-urban infrastructure and service needs to locate outside of the USL. (Responsibility: CDID)



*Sash Mill with flexible workplaces, City of Santa Cruz. Photo credit: Santa Cruz County.*



## OBJECTIVE BE-3.4 TOURISM + CONSUMER COMMERCIAL VITALITY

To energize shopping centers and expand the local hospitality and entertainment industry in order to address evolving consumer commercial needs and highlight Santa Cruz County as a year-round tourist destination.

### Policies

**BE-3.4.1 Consumer Commercial Growth.** Encourage commercial development that accommodates resident and visitor demands for goods and services to be met within the County, in alignment with the County's *Economic Vitality Study*.

**BE-3.4.2 Customer Experience.** Recognizing that many retail needs are met with online purchases, plan for retail success with shopping centers that incorporate programming and space planning for locally-focused products, services, studios, and special events.

*See also Policy BE-1.3.6: Shopping Centers as Activity Centers.*

**BE-3.4.3 Outdoor Seating, Mobile and Pop-Up Businesses.** Provide a regulatory framework to allow and encourage outdoor seating as well as food trucks and other mobile and pop-up businesses to activate and complement temporary events and permanent land uses.

*See also Policy AM-5.1.3: Support Placemaking and Objective BE-4.3: Public Realm + Placemaking.*

**BE-3.4.4 (LCP) Temporary Events.** Provide a regulatory framework to encourage special events such as art programs, festivals, parades, races, weddings, and filming, while minimizing negative impacts to neighborhoods and communities. Recognize that special events often partner with local food, beverage, entertainment, lodging, and other businesses, contributing to community economic vitality.

*See also Policy AM-4.1.13: Temporary Events.*

**BE-3.4.5 (LCP) Year-Round Attractions.** Recognizing that the County's competitive tourism advantage wanes during the winter months, support conferences, business meetings, and other special events that draw visitors year-round, facilitating continued economic viability of tourism-based businesses.



*Pleasure Point Street Fair. Photo credit: Santa Cruz County*

**BE-3.4.6 Heritage Tourism.** Support the preservation and marketing of natural and built environments, artifacts, and activities as tourist attractions that authentically represent the diverse cultural influences in Santa Cruz County, such as native tribes, agriculture/food history, explorer/settler history, natural history, surf culture, immigrant/ethnic heritage, as well as eccentric local attractions such as Mystery Spot and the SS Palo Alto.

*See also Policy BE-4.3.11: Connecting to Local History and Objective ARC-8.2: Historic Resources.*

**BE-3.4.7 (LCP) Coastal Visitor Services.** Encourage the provision of visitor-serving commercial services within certain Coastal Special Communities, as follows:

- Davenport: State Route 1 frontage.
- Seacliff Beach Area: Entire Special Community.
- Rio Del Mar Flats/Esplanade Area: Esplanade frontage to Stephen Road.
- East Cliff Village Tourist Area: East Cliff Drive (front portion of properties) between 12th Avenue and 17th Avenue.
- Harbor Area: Lower 7th Avenue between Brommer Street and Eaton Street.

*See also Policy BE-5.1.9: Mixed-Use Commercial Development in the Coastal Zone.*



## Implementation Strategies

**BE-3.4a** Review zoning and use and development standards associated with existing shopping centers and explore strategies that would add flexibility for easier repurposing of spaces for alternative uses. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office)

**BE-3.4b** Allow limited drive-through business uses as appropriate, reflecting modern business practices, with land use limitations and design requirements to ensure preservation of neighborhood and community character.

**BE-3.4c** Maintain provisions within the SCCC to allow businesses to have outdoor seating with a permit. Provide an expedited permit option for social/physical distancing when it is less safe to do business indoors. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-3.4d** As needed, develop an ordinance allowing and regulating food trucks and other pop-up and mobile businesses. (Responsibility: CDID, Environmental Health Division, County Administrative Office, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.4e** Support farmer's markets and other opportunities that showcase local agricultural products, artisan and cottage foods, and other food and beverage enterprises. (Responsibility: County Administrative Office, CDID)





*Kaiser Permanente Arena, Santa Cruz. Photo credit: SF Gate*

**BE-3.4f** Consider creation of an Arts Combining Zone District or other zoning tools to preserve and promote art studios and galleries with integrated retail, studio, performance and special event space. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office, Arts Commission, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

*See also Objective PPF-2.8: Cultural Arts.*

**BE-3.4g (LCP)** Maintain temporary uses and special event permit application and review processes with an emphasis on allowing events to occur while avoiding negative impacts to residents, businesses and visitors. Require appropriate permits or licenses for uses and events on both private and public property. Condition permits in the Coastal Zone to minimize impacts to public access, recreation and coastal resources. (Responsibility: CDID)

*See also Policy AM-4.1.13: Temporary Events.*

**BE-3.4h** Identify appropriate site options within the County for regional destinations such as conference centers, sports complexes, and performance venues. Consider locations within walking distance to current or future planned visitor accommodations, transit service, and activity centers with restaurants and entertainment. (Responsibility: County Administrative Office, CDID, Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitor's Council)

*See also Policy PPF-2.8.2: Performing Arts Facilities.*



## OBJECTIVE BE-3.5 VISITOR ACCOMMODATION

(LCP) To provide for a range of lodging options that meet demand for modern visitor accommodations and enable visitors of all income levels to enjoy Santa Cruz County.

*See also Objective BE-2.5: Short-Term Rentals, and Objective PPF-1.3: Organized Camps and Conference Centers.*

**BE-3.5.1 (LCP) Visitor Accommodations for All.** Provide a variety of accommodation types including hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, hostels, and organized camps and RV parks. Plan for a mix of accommodations serving visitors of all income levels. In particular, protect and encourage lower-cost visitor accommodations within the Coastal Zone.

**BE-3.5.2 (LCP) Match Supply to Visitor Demand.** Ensure that the County's commercial visitor accommodations meet modern tourist needs, so that the County does not lose tourist business due to mismatched supply and demand. Recognize that existing visitor accommodation businesses may need to be co-located with other businesses and services to remain economically viable year-round. Regulate short-term rental of residences to accommodate some visitors but limit the number of vacation and hosted rentals in order to preserve permanent housing supply and neighborhood character.

*See also Objective BE-2.5: Short-Term Rentals.*

**BE-3.5.3 Integrate Visitors into Commercial Areas.** Encourage development of visitor accommodations in walkable areas with visitor-serving commercial uses, such as restaurants and entertainment, in addition to traditional attractions such as public beaches and recreational assets. Recognize that when overnight visitors can safely and conveniently access a variety of attractions, this improves the visitor experience with the co-benefits of adding value to visitor accommodation businesses, contributing to vibrant activity centers, and benefiting local businesses.

**BE-3.5.4 Employment Center Visitor Accommodations.** Plan for development of visitor accommodations in close proximity to existing and planned employment centers near State Route 1 and the Soquel Drive corridor, catering to traveling professionals as well as those visiting residents and medical patients.

**BE-3.5.5 (LCP) Small-Scale Visitor Accommodations in Neighborhoods.** In neighborhoods and rural areas, encourage small scale visitor accommodations such as bed and breakfasts and boutique hotels, where the use is compatible with neighborhood character, available infrastructure capacity, resource protection, and adjacent land uses.



## Figure 2-8: Visitor Accommodation Options

**Type A: Hotel/Motel  
(attached rooms)**



**Type A: Motel (cabins/cottages)**



**Type A: Bed and Breakfast Inn**



**Type B: Organized camp**



Photo Credits: <https://www.riosands.com/>; <https://slvpost.com/masoods-lodge/>; <https://www.westcliffinn.com/>;  
<https://www.mounthermon.org>



**BE-3.5.6 (LCP) Time-Share Condominium Beach Development.** Recognize condominium time-share beach development as a resource for visitor accommodations. Limit new development of beach-oriented housing for short-term visitor accommodations at urban densities to areas within the USL or RSL.

**BE-3.5.7 (LCP) Accommodating Visitors in Rural Areas.** Visitor-serving facilities that cannot feasibly be located in existing developed areas should be located in existing developments or at selected points of attraction for visitors, where adequate public services, such as water, public sanitation facilities, roads, and fire protection are available. Place limitations on special events as appropriate to maintain rural character. Allow for conversion of existing historic or other rural structures to small scale visitor accommodations.

*See also Policies ARC-1.1.6: Principle Permitted Uses on Agricultural Land and objective ARC-1.6: Non-Commercial Agricultural Land regarding agritourism.*

**BE-3.5.8 (LCP) Visitor Accommodations at Commercial Recreational Facilities.** Allow development of appurtenant overnight visitor accommodations at appropriate commercial recreation facilities where such use is consistent with maintaining recreational use, and with other General Plan/LCP policies.

**BE-3.5.9 (LCP) Climate Change and Visitor Accommodation.** Plan for evolving visitor accommodation needs related to climate change, such as an increase in demand for ecotourism, climate-resilient design of visitor facilities, and an influx of visitors to the County from hotter inland regions during extended and more frequent heat waves.

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-3.5a (LCP)** Maintain a Visitor Accommodations (VA) zone district with use and development standards for both “Type A” accommodations (hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts) as well as more rustic “Type B” accommodations (hostels, organized camps and RV parks). Ensure that adequate land is zoned VA to accommodate existing and anticipated future visitors. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-3.5b (LCP)** Explore creative strategies to facilitate construction, renovation, and year-round economic viability of visitor accommodation properties that are underdeveloped or in need of repair. Consider strategies such as extended stay lodging options, mixed-use development, and incentive programs such as limited-time reductions in Transient Occupancy Taxes, with an objective of providing lower-cost visitor accommodations (defined as the lowest 40% of average room rates in the Santa Cruz market). (Responsibility: County Administrative Office, CDID)



## Preserving Low-Cost Lodging

Santa Cruz County has been a tourist destination for over 150 years. However, the existing hotel and motel stock is aging and some facilities are in need of repair in order to meet modern tourism standards. Older hotels and motels that are able to stay in business tend to offer lodging at a lower price point, but often cannot afford repairs and slowly deteriorate over time. Some of these structures are eventually converted to permanent rental housing.

County policies support retention of low-cost lodging in the Coastal Zone and elsewhere in the county, and flexible zoning strategies should be used to allow for a variety of visitor accommodation price points.

**BE-3.5c (LCP)** Support efforts of nonprofit and other organizations, such as the Conference and Visitors Council, to conduct an inventory of existing visitor accommodation stock, including lodging types, vacancy rates, price points, and climate change resiliency. Define budget, economy, mid-price, and upscale price points for visitor accommodation. Type A accommodations should be available at budget, economy, mid-price, and upscale price points; Type B accommodations tend to be affordable by design. Consult *Economic Vitality Study* and update as necessary to identify gaps where the existing supply is mismatched to visitor demand. Consider strategies that ensure renovation and preservation of budget and economy visitor accommodation in the Coastal Zone. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office, California Coastal Commission staff, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.5d** Evaluate commercial sites visible and/or accessible from State Route 1 for hotel and motel development, especially along the Soquel Drive corridor in Live Oak where medical uses are concentrated. Redesignate and rezone sites as appropriate. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.5e** Explore land use and development barriers and opportunities for additional lodging in the San Lorenzo Valley to accommodate visitors to state parks, historic towns, and wineries, as well as guests at weddings and events in the area. Consider options that meet visitor needs and reduce code enforcement activity related to illegal visitor accommodations. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office)



## Cannabis in Santa Cruz County

State law authorizes a range of commercial cannabis activities. Local jurisdictions that allow cannabis businesses must adopt state licensing rules and may also establish local regulations governing cannabis.

Santa Cruz County is supportive of a legal cannabis industry. The County has allowed the sale of medical marijuana for many years, and now allows nonmedical commercial cannabis businesses as well. The key challenge is to establish a licensing and permitting system that financially enables business owners to leave the black market, while appropriately mitigating negative impacts that can be associated with these businesses.

Noncommercial cannabis activities such as cultivation for personal recreational or medical use (as defined in state and local code) are not subject to commercial licensing requirements.

### OBJECTIVE BE-3.6 CANNABIS INDUSTRY

(LCP) To provide for legal commercial cannabis activities in a manner that discourages black market operations and protects the County's fragile environmental resources, coastal resources, neighborhood quality of life, and public health, safety and welfare.

*See also Policies ARC-7.1.3: Discretionary Uses within Timber Production Zones, and ARC-2.3.4: Cannabis Industry and Agricultural Diversity, regarding cannabis cultivation, and Objective PS-6.3: Erosion.*

#### Policies

**BE-3.6.1 (LCP) Cannabis Business Licensing.** Recognize the cannabis industry as a segment of the local economy and require cannabis dispensary and non-retail cannabis businesses to maintain state and County licenses and necessary permits to operate legally. Limit new cannabis dispensary licenses.

**BE-3.6.2 (LCP) Cannabis Dispensary Siting.** Cannabis dispensaries are located on parcels with commercial land use designations and are prohibited in close proximity to residential zone districts, schools, other cannabis dispensaries, or alcohol/drug treatment facilities.

**BE-3.6.3 (LCP) Non-Retail Commercial Cannabis Siting.** Commercial cannabis cultivation, manufacturing, and distribution uses are most appropriate on parcels with agricultural or light industrial land use designations and zoning. Parcels with other land use designations and zoning may allow non-retail commercial cannabis use, subject to use and development limitations and licensing requirements. Disallow non-retail commercial cannabis businesses in environmentally protected areas or in close proximity to parks, schools, day care and youth centers, alcohol/drug treatment facilities, and other sensitive receptors. Allow re-use of existing structures and development, but prohibit construction of new structures associated with non-retail commercial cannabis businesses within the Coastal Zone.



**BE-3.6.4 (LCP) Ancillary Uses in Residential Areas.** Require that any non-retail commercial cannabis activities on lands designated for residential uses be designed and of a scale that is ancillary to the primary residential use of the property. Disallow commercial cannabis cultivation on lands designated for residential uses within the Coastal Zone.

**BE-3.6.5 (LCP) Improve Existing Environmental Conditions.** Impose conditions of approval on discretionary land use permits for commercial cannabis activities, where appropriate, to reduce environmental impacts from existing disturbed areas, including but not limited to restoration related to site work and to roadways.

**BE-3.6.6 Cannabis Industry and Commercial + Industrial Diversity.** In order to ensure that the cannabis industry does not create loss of healthy diversity in the economy, and ensure that commercial and industrial space is available for a variety of economic enterprises, monitor and evaluate the scale and location of cannabis enterprises to avoid overconcentration of cannabis sector activities.

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-3.6a (LCP)** Maintain cannabis business licensing systems and land use permit requirements, with separate regulations for cannabis dispensaries and various types of non-retail commercial cannabis operations. Require environmental review, pursuant to California Public Resources Code Division 13 (commencing with section 21000), to regulate cannabis business locations in order to protect public health, safety, and welfare in Santa Cruz County. (Responsibility: Cannabis Licensing Office, CDID)

**BE-3.6b (LCP)** Maintain special use and development regulations for cannabis businesses with buffers, lot sizes, structural limitations, and other parameters to ensure compatibility between cannabis businesses and neighboring land uses. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-3.6c** Monitor the effectiveness of commercial cannabis regulatory programs, including licensing and land use regulations, to ensure effective protection of natural resources, coastal resources, neighborhood compatibility, and public health, safety and welfare. Where appropriate, modify programs over time. (Responsibility: Cannabis Licensing Office, CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-3.6d** Establish a cannabis enforcement program to address unlicensed and unpermitted commercial cannabis activities, and to ensure that licensed operations are operating consistent with licensing requirements, permit conditions, and all applicable provisions of the SCCC. (Responsibility: Cannabis Licensing Office)



## GOAL BE-4 COMMUNITY CHARACTER + DESIGN

Enhance community character with high-quality building and site design that responds to neighborhood context, respects the environment, and fosters attractive and vibrant places.

### OBJECTIVE BE-4.1 QUALITY + CONTEXT

To encourage functional and high-quality development through clear design standards and guidelines that support a variety of development types compatible with neighborhood character.

#### **Policies**

**BE-4.1.1 Objective Design and Development Standards.** Maintain objective standards consistent with community character and design objectives, for the purpose of ensuring quality design of development projects.

**BE-4.1.2 Design Review.** Require design review for certain types of development projects for consistency with both objective and nonobjective design standards and guidelines set forth in the SCCC and *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines* and *Design Guidelines* for specific geographic areas. All projects are encouraged to consider the *Design Guidelines*, to enhance design quality of developments.

**BE-4.1.3 (LCP) Rural and Urban Character.** Establish design and development standards that recognize and enforce differences in character among the County's rural areas, suburban communities, and urban corridors, so that development strengthens rather than stresses the character and qualities of each unique place. In rural areas, development standards and projects should protect sensitive coastal and environmental resources. Within the USL and RSL, as land use intensity and density increases, development standards should provide for an increasingly urban pattern and form for the built environment.

**BE-4.1.4 (LCP) Neighborhood Scale, Size, and Context.** New residential development may be different from but must take into account the scale and size of the existing surrounding neighborhood, while allowing for infill development, innovative design, and creative expression. Development projects that introduce a change in neighborhood character should provide appropriate building massing so as not to overwhelm or primarily shade adjacent properties, including appropriate setbacks and adequate and maintained landscape buffering to reduce the perception of bulk and height.

### Figure 2-9: Site Design Considerations



*New and existing trees buffer adjacent development.*



*New Development in Aptos Village is compatible with neighborhood design character, massing and scale.*



*Taller massing is stepped back from the street and set back from one and two-story residential and commercial development.*



*Open space area with furniture, landscaping and shade trees fosters gathering and relaxation.*

*Photo Credits: Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines.*



**BE-4.1.5 (LCP)(EJ) Landscape Design.** Establish standards for landscaping associated with new construction and major renovation projects. Landscape design should relate to the building and the site design, and trees and plants should be appropriate to the site conditions with consideration for growth pattern, solar access, maintenance, screening for privacy, safety, and water conservation. Existing mature trees and native vegetation should be preserved as appropriate. Fencing, walls, site furniture, and lighting should be integral and compatible elements of the site design.

**BE-4.1.6 Quality Open Space.** All residential development projects should include areas for outdoor enjoyment. In multifamily projects, ensure that open space areas include both active and passive open spaces that are large enough to be functional.

**BE-4.1.7 (EJ) Residential/Nonresidential Transitions.** Provide appropriate transitions and buffers between residential and nonresidential properties to protect residential access to light and air, and to consider privacy as feasible.



*Photo Credit: MIG, Inc. 2021.*



**BE-4.1.8 Coordinated Development + Connectivity.** Coordinate development between adjacent sites with similar uses, for the purpose of improving design, increasing development efficiency, consolidating or enhancing open space, and preserving natural features. Encourage shared parking and circulation, including bicycle and pedestrian pathways connecting to established routes and destinations. Where appropriate, encourage parcel mergers to allow for improved layout of buildings, infrastructure, and amenities.

*See also Policy AM-6.3.2: Shared Parking, and Implementation Strategy AM-3.2e.*

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-4.1a** Maintain objective building and site design standards in the SCCC to support functional, attractive, and compatible buildings and sites. Where required, replace subjective standards with objective standards for the purpose of supporting good design and streamlining the design review process. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.1b** Maintain permit requirements and require design review for projects exceeding certain scale and scope criteria. Design review will consider standards and criteria of the SCCC as well as the *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines* and any area-specific criteria and guidelines. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.1c** Provide illustrated *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines* that present building massing, siting, and streetscape concepts appropriate for residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments, with consideration to the street typologies defined in *Chapter 3: Access + Mobility*. Provide an appendix to the *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines* for the Pleasure Point Commercial Corridor, drawing from the *Pleasure Point Commercial Corridor Vision and Guiding Design Principles*. Review projects for substantial conformance with *Design Guidelines* as part of the site development review process. Periodically review and update *Design Guidelines* as appropriate. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.1d** Review design review procedures in the SCCC and assess whether any additional streamlined review procedures are appropriate in order to remove barriers to development, while still ensuring that developments are attractive and functional. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



**BE-4.1e (LCP)** Require consideration of neighborhood character and transitions to surrounding development as a part of the design review process in the SCCC. Give careful attention to building height, massing, setbacks, landscaping, signage, access, fencing, drainage, parking, traffic patterns, visual impacts, and mitigation of potential nuisance factors. Accessory commercial uses, structures, and functions should be screened and sited away from residential parcels to provide visual compatibility and minimize impacts to adjacent properties. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.1f** Require new single-family residences larger than 5,000 square feet in floor area, and additions larger than ten percent of existing residential structures larger than 5,000 square feet in floor area, to obtain a Large Dwelling site development permit. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.1g (LCP)** Review the landscape maintenance agreement requirements in the SCCC and update as necessary to ensure that landscapes are maintained and damaged or unhealthy trees and plants are replaced, with attention to ensuring ongoing consistency with applicable water-efficient landscaping (WELO) requirements. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.1h** Maintain development standards that encourage coordinated development between adjacent sites while maintaining an overall development design and scale that is appropriate for the location. Require master plans, planned unit developments, or specific plans for large-scale development projects to address connectivity improvements, shared parking, parcel merger where appropriate, and other land use and design considerations. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



## Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

In order to address climate change, the County of Santa Cruz has adopted the 2022 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP), which was developed by an interdepartmental working group. The 2022 CAAP includes the most current data on climate impacts for unincorporated Santa Cruz County. The 2022 CAAP is comprised of actionable steps towards reducing the causes of global warming, adapting our communities to climate hazards, and ensuring the safety and well-being of those most vulnerable to climate change.

### OBJECTIVE BE-4.2 DESIGN WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

(EJ) To encourage building and site designs that conserve energy and water, reduce material waste and carbon emissions, and support a healthy indoor and outdoor environment.

#### Policies

**BE-4.2.1 (LCP) *Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) Coordination.*** Ensure that land use plans and development projects are aligned with the Santa Cruz County CAAP policies and priorities. (*Amended 5/20/2025 Board of Supervisors Resolution 88-2025*)

**BE-4.2.2 (LCP) *Site Design for Environmental Protection.*** Review new developments for compliance with SCCC Title 16 environmental ordinances. Siting and designs should minimize grading, avoid or provide mitigation for geologic hazards and sensitive habitats, reduce fire risk, conform to the physical constraints and topography of the site, and maintain natural drainage patterns. Streams should remain daylighted rather than piped, where possible, with development incentives or variances allowed to ensure feasibility and property owner support for open streams. Development on slopes should be low profile and step down the hillside. Unnecessary grading for the purpose of meeting building height restrictions is prohibited.

*See also Objectives ARC-5.1: Protection of Visual Resources, and PS-6.3: Erosion.*

**BE-4.2.3 (LCP) *Clustered Building Siting.*** Encourage clustering of buildings to preserve or enhance natural amenities, resources and open space. In rural areas on parcels where dwelling groups are allowed, require clustering as appropriate to minimize grading, impervious surfaces, and overall site disturbance.

*See also Policies ARC-5.1.4: Preserving Natural Buffers and ARC-7.1.5: Conditions for Clustered Development Proposals on Timber Production Zoned Lands.*



**BE-4.2.4 (LCP) Wildlife-Compatible Development.** Limit reflectivity, glare, and artificial light pollution from buildings and sites as practicable in order to preserve dark skies and reduce impacts to wildlife, especially in rural areas and over marine waters. Encourage landscapes that provide habitat for birds and wildlife as appropriate based on the location and intensity of development. Encourage the use of native plants and discourage the use of invasive species.

*See also Objective ARC-3: Biological Resources Protection.*

**BE-4.2.5 (LCP) Stormwater Runoff Reduction.** Encourage the use of design elements such as permeable pavers and bioswales, in order to minimize impervious area and to reduce and pretreat stormwater flowing off site into the public storm drain system, and to improve the quality of stormwater infiltrating into the groundwater supply both on- and off-site.

*See also Policies PPF-4.4.3: Minimizing Impervious Surfaces & PPF-4.4.5: Control Surface Runoff.*

**BE-4.2.6 (LCP)(EJ) Water Conservation.** Encourage development projects to conserve water with efficient fixtures indoors and sustainable site elements outdoors such as drought-tolerant plants, rainwater catchment systems, graywater irrigation systems, and other strategies.

*See also Objective PPF-4.1: Water Supply and Conservation.*

**BE-4.2.7 (EJ) Energy Conservation.** Development should enable passive solar heating and lighting through building location, orientation and massing wherever practicable. Passive solar should be a priority for energy conservation in building design. Further energy conservation should be achieved with energy-efficient building envelopes, lighting, heating, cooling, and ventilation systems, and renewable energy design components.

*See also Goal Housing-4: Promote Energy Efficiency in Residential Structures.*

**BE-4.2.8 (EJ) Healthy Indoor Environment.** Ensure that building regulations provide for safe and healthy indoor air quality through moisture control and ventilation and reduction of exposure to lead, mold and other indoor health hazards. Encourage the use of toxin-free building materials.

*See also Chapter 4: Housing.*

**BE-4.2.9 (EJ) Construction Material Conservation.** Reduce the volume of construction waste going to landfills through promoting retention and re-use of existing structures, efficient design



and construction techniques, use of recycled-content materials, and structure deconstruction<sup>3</sup> instead of demolition.

**BE-4.2.10 Solar Panels on Commercial Parking Lots.** Encourage surface parking lots in commercial developments to be covered with solar panels to create energy-efficient covered parking.



*Rainwater cistern, window shades, and permeable pavement are sustainable design strategies.  
Photo Credit: MIG, Inc. 2021.*

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-4.2a** Update local building regulations in a timely manner to align with periodic updates to the California Building Code, including but not limited to CALGreen green building standards, and educate staff and the public about changes incorporated in each update. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-4.2b (LCP)** Implement policies and priorities identified in the *Climate Action and Adaption Plan* related to building design and construction. Periodically review the *Climate Action and Adaption Plan* and revise as needed considering changes in state and federal laws and regulations. (Responsibility: Office of Response, Recovery + Resilience, CDID, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.2c** Provide information to applicants regarding building techniques and financial assistance for green building and sustainable site development. (Responsibility: CDID)

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<sup>3</sup> Deconstruction is when a building is taken apart carefully so that building materials can be saved and reused for other project.



**BE-4.2d** Consider providing incentives and/or a recognition program for development projects that meet or exceed local, state or federal green building thresholds. Consider development of green building standards or recognition programs specific to Santa Cruz County (Responsibility: CDID, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.2e (LCP)** Periodically update the Water Efficient Landscaping Ordinance (WELO) with current best practices and review for conformance with State law. (Responsibility: CDID, Water Advisory Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.2f (LCP)** Explore strengthening the SCCC and County Design Criteria regarding the related problems of urban heat islands and stormwater runoff. Consider requiring a minimum percentage of site hardscape to be permeable paving. Consider establishing maximum impervious area limits and requirements related to stormwater storage and reuse. Consider adding design criteria for pervious pavement. Consider codifying low-impact design requirements and the provisions of the *Homeowner's Guide to Greening Stormwater Runoff*. (Responsibility: CDID, Water Advisory Commission, Board of Supervisors)

*See also Implementation Strategy PPF-4.4c.*



## OBJECTIVE BE-4.3 PUBLIC REALM + PLACEMAKING

To enhance the public realm and provide a sense of place by fostering accessible, safe, and human-scale public spaces and increasing physical, social, and cultural connections.

### Policies

**BE-4.3.1 Pedestrian-Oriented Development.** Along Main Streets, Active Connectors and Multimodal Corridors, orient commercial and mixed-use buildings to face the street. Encourage connected blocks with shorter block lengths or midblock pedestrian connections. Provide wayfinding signage where appropriate. Encourage dynamic, attractive, and engaging streetscapes through design strategies such as varied building heights, setbacks, building styles, architectural features, and materials; ground floor glazing; and outdoor landscaping and gathering spaces.

*See also Policy AM-5.1.3: Support Placemaking.*

**BE-4.3.2 Public Gathering and Placemaking.** Encourage public gathering spaces both in public and private projects, including spaces such as parklets, pocket parks, plazas, sidewalk seating, and areas for outdoor dining that provide a sense of place. Locate gathering places so they are visible and accessible from public streets and connected to other pedestrian facilities.

**BE-4.3.3 (EJ) Deprioritize Vehicles.** Wherever possible, locate parking lots behind buildings. Screen parking lots located adjacent to residential parcels with fences, walls, and/or landscaping. Encourage bicycle storage, shared parking structures, and park and ride lots. Provide incentives to developers to provide alternatives to surface parking lots, such as underground garages, multi-story above-ground garages, and podium parking.

*See also Policy AM-9.2.4: Plan for Space Reallocation and Implementation Strategy AM-6.3k.*

**BE-4.3.4 (EJ) Accessible Streetscape.** Along streets where pedestrians are prioritized, ensure that all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements are met or exceeded and consider Universal Design Criteria as well as design strategies for those with hearing and visual or reading impairments. Provide ample seating and wider sidewalks to support streets that are safe, comfortable, and convenient for everyone.

*See also Policy AM-2.3.1: People with Disabilities.*

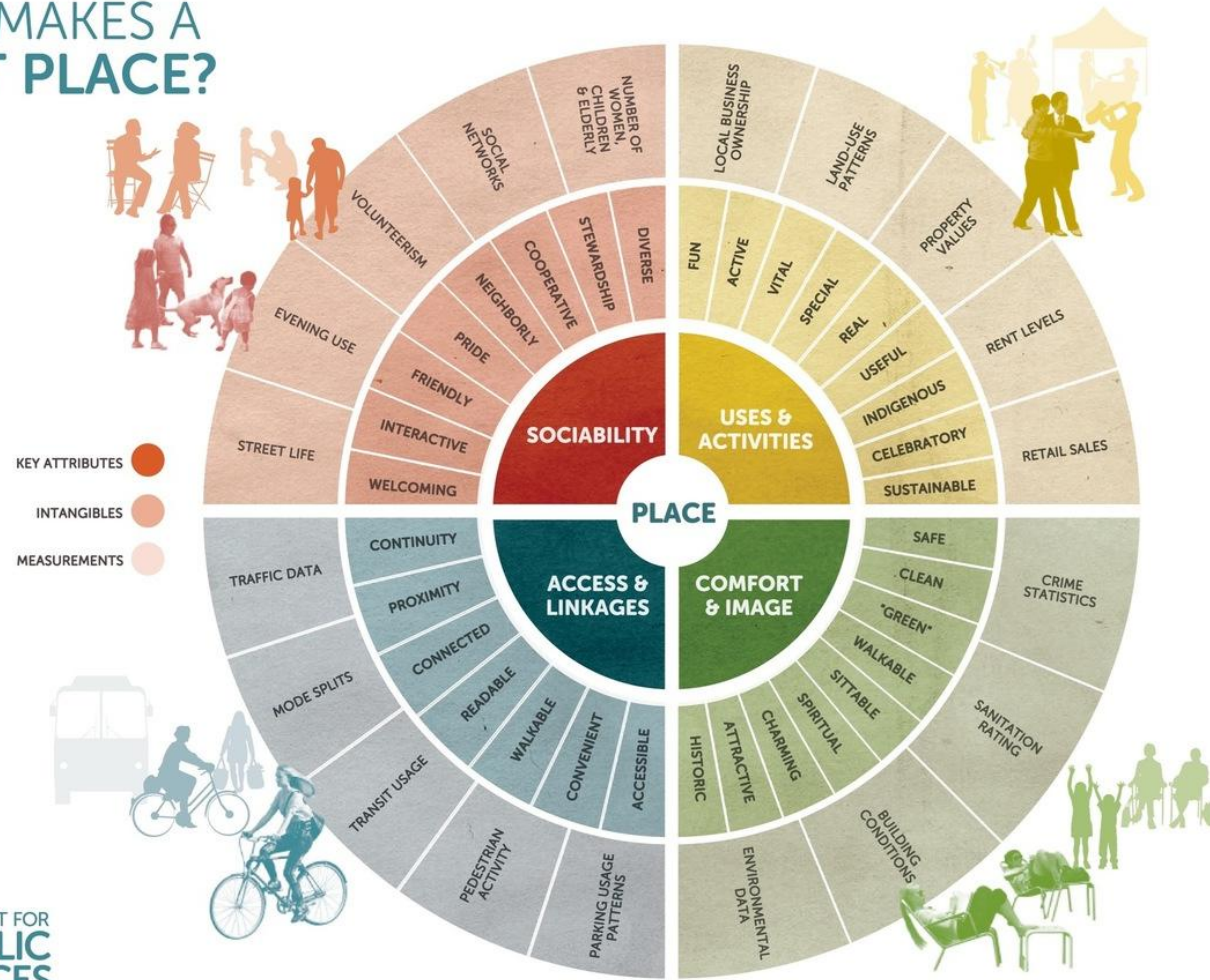
**BE-4.3.5 (EJ) Public Safety and Community Design.** Enhance public safety in neighborhoods, centers, streets, and public spaces by providing street-fronting uses (“eyes on the street”), adequate lighting and sight lines, and features that cultivate a sense of community. Provide adequate public space for social/physical distancing during public health emergencies.

*See also Implementation Strategies BE-3.4c and AM-2.1h.*



Figure 2-10: Placemaking

# WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?





**BE-4.3.6 Active Ground Floor Uses.** Encourage active ground floor uses such as retail stores and cafes in commercial and mixed-use projects along streets that prioritize bicycle and pedestrian travel in order to contribute to an active and engaging streetscape.

*See also Policy BE-2.1.6: Urban High-Density Flex Residential and BE-3.2.4: Ground Floor Commercial Uses.*

**BE-4.3.7 (LCP)(EJ) Green Space.** Encourage publicly accessible green plazas, landscaping, and open spaces to be incorporated into the site design of new development projects in order to improve aesthetics, create more shade, increase pedestrian activity, and promote sustainability through the application of on-site prefiltration of stormwater. Encourage residential projects to provide public plazas or other types of open spaces that are accessible to the public or contribute visually to the public sphere.

**BE-4.3.8 (LCP) Low Impact Streetscape Landscaping.** Use low-maintenance native and/or drought-tolerant plant species in streetscape landscaping to minimize water consumption and maintenance. Install landscaping that is naturally drained, depressed and designed to filter and infiltrate stormwater where appropriate on sidewalks, medians, bulb-outs, quasi-public parks, and plazas.

*See also Implementation Strategies AM-5.2f and PPF-4.4l.*

**BE-4.3.9 (LCP)(EJ) Urban Greening of Streets, Parking Lots, and Development Sites.** Incorporate street trees to soften the linear appearance of streets, sidewalks, and building planes and provide shade at regular intervals to improve the pedestrian experience and the scenic qualities of corridors. Select appropriate trees and locate to increase shade for parking areas, buildings, and the public realm. Use trees to visually break up building facades, screen private spaces, create buffers between streets and pedestrian areas, and soften scale differences between buildings, with the co-benefit of reducing the urban heat island effect.

**BE-4.3.10 Integrating the Arts.** Encourage the inclusion of publicly visible and accessible murals, curbside art, decorative paving, sculpture, fountains, shade trees, and other features that provide character and community expression. Encourage private development projects to include artists as members of their design team. Encourage functional features such as bike racks and benches to be designed as public art.

*See also Policy PPF-2.8.5: Integrating the Arts into Development Projects.*

**BE-4.3.11 Connecting to Local History.** Encourage public projects and private development to include interpretive information regarding the history of a site, neighborhood or community in public art displays, plazas, and courtyards to enhance the sense of community and convey the significance of a particular place. Where appropriate, encourage building styles and forms that reinforce a sense of place through the adaptation of local architectural influences.

*See also Policy BE-3.4.6: Heritage Tourism and Objective ARC-8.2: Historic Resources.*



## Implementation Strategies

**BE-4.3a** Provide clear and objective design standards and guidelines for pedestrian-oriented building and streetscape design in SCCC development standards and *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines*. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

*See also Implementation Strategy AM-5.1d.*

**BE-4.3b** Support business improvement districts and community volunteer initiatives for projects such as beautification, tree planting, parking area and plaza management, and trash collection to strengthen the vitality and attractiveness of neighborhoods, commercial areas, and gathering places. (Responsibility: CDID, County Administrative Office, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.3c** Coordinate with property owners and business owners to connect private drainage/outflows to low-impact design stormwater management systems located in the public realm. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-4.3d** Consider updates to standards and plans to daylight creeks, channels, and piped stormwater systems within streetscape and community spaces to promote urban greening and to highlight the connection of public spaces with local environmental resources. Research grant opportunities for implementation of projects. (Responsibility: CDID)



*Photo Credit: Placeworks, Sustainable Santa Cruz County Plan.*



**BE-4.3e (LCP)** Require projects to comply with the street tree guidelines of the *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines*, *SCCC*, and *County of Santa Cruz Design Criteria* (which incorporates the County's Street Tree Planting List and the Urban Forestry Master Plan). Review these resources and update as needed to ensure consistent County guidance, compliance with CalGreen requirements for parking lot tree cover, and clarification of maintenance and maintenance responsibilities. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)  
*See also Implementation Strategy AM-2.3d and AM-5.2f.*

**BE-4.3f (LCP)** Consider updates to standards and plans to increase the tree canopy and the number of trees along public streets and in urban public spaces. Research grant opportunities for conducting street tree inventories and planting street trees, prioritizing disadvantaged communities and areas with heavy pedestrian use and a low percentage of street tree cover. (Responsibility: CDID, Parks, Open Space & Cultural Services [Parks] Department, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.3g** Designate sites throughout the County for art enhancement or gateways. Explore grant opportunities as well as partnership opportunities with private property owners and developers for design and installation of community gateway projects (Responsibility: CDID, Parks Department, Arts Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.3h** Within the Pleasure Point Commercial Corridor, explore opportunities to display public art by local artists that reflects Pleasure Point's unique history and culture at entry gateways, along Portola Drive, and on wide sidewalk spaces. Consider a cohesive series of art pieces that is highly visible and becomes an iconic feature for Pleasure Point. (Responsibility: Planning and Parks Departments, Arts Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-4.3i** Consider amending the *SCCC* to require larger commercial and residential development projects to include decorative and/or functional art installations or interpretive historic displays that are accessible to the public. (Responsibility: CDID, Parks Department, Arts Commission, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



## OBJECTIVE BE-4.4 NONCONFORMING DEVELOPMENT

To preserve and improve legally established nonconforming structures, uses and signage in order to benefit the community by providing housing, supporting the local economy, and allowing for the safe and sustainable reuse of existing resources.

### Policies

**BE-4.4.1 Nonconforming Structures.** Encourage legal nonconforming structures to be maintained and improved. Allow additions and renovations, with variable permit requirements depending upon whether the owner does or does not propose to increase the degree of structural nonconformity. Allow reconstruction after a catastrophic event. Require discretionary review for voluntary reconstruction of nonconforming structures, subject to appropriate findings and conditions to ensure that the proposed project will not be detrimental to public health, safety or welfare.

**BE-4.4.2 Nonconforming Uses.** Allow existing legal nonconforming uses in use for three or more of the previous five years (the threshold for “continuous history of property use”) to continue and require discretionary review to reestablish a nonconforming use that has lapsed. Require discretionary review for expansion, changes, or intensification of legal nonconforming uses, subject to appropriate findings and conditions of approval to ensure that the change will not be detrimental to public health, safety or welfare. Maintain a process whereby the Board of Supervisors may terminate any nonconforming use that is significantly detrimental to public health, safety, welfare or the environment.

**BE-4.4.3 (LCP) Nonconforming Signage.** As new developments are proposed on sites with nonconforming signage, require that signage be brought into conformance with current County sign ordinance standards or otherwise be permitted in accordance with the SCCC, as a condition of the discretionary development permit.

### Implementation Strategy

**BE-4.4a** Maintain clear procedures in the SCCC providing for continuation of legal nonconforming structures and uses, with an allowance for increased intensity of nonconformities with discretionary review. Phase out or abate, as appropriate, nonconforming uses that are creating a nuisance or have a negative impact on the community health, safety or welfare. (Responsibility: CDID, County Counsel, District Attorney’s Office)



## GOAL BE-5 POLICIES FOR SPECIFIC AREAS

Apply location-specific plans and policies to protect and preserve unique resources and land uses in defined geographic areas.

### OBJECTIVE BE-5.1 COASTAL ZONE DEVELOPMENT

(LCP) To ensure priority for coastal-dependent and coastal-related development over other development on the coast. Ensure orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of Coastal Zone land, considering the social and economic needs of the people of Santa Cruz County.

*See also: Objectives AM-4.1: Recreational + Coastal Access, AM-6.3: Parking, ARC-1.1: Preserve Commercial Agricultural Land for Agriculture, PS-6.4: Coastal Bluffs and Beaches, and PPF-2.6: Coastal Recreation).*

#### **Policies**

**BE-5.1.1 (LCP) Requirement for Development Permit.** Development in the Coastal Zone shall be consistent with Local Coastal Program (LCP) policies and provisions.

**BE-5.1.2 (LCP) Priority of Uses within the Coastal Zone.** Maintain a hierarchy of land use priorities within the Coastal Zone:

- First Priority: Agriculture and coastal-dependent industry.
- Second Priority: Recreation including public parks, visitor-serving commercial uses, and coastal recreation facilities.
- Third Priority: Private residential, general industrial, and general commercial uses.

### Local Coastal Program

Santa Cruz County's Local Coastal Program includes:

1. A "Land Use Plan" that consists of selected General Plan policies, land use maps and tables that are marked "(LCP)."
2. A "Local Coastal Implementation Program" that consists of chapters in Santa Cruz County Code Titles 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 18.

The LCP scope is described in County Code Chapter 18.60



**BE-5.1.3 (LCP) Maintaining Coastal Priority Uses.** Discourage the conversion of any existing priority use or any existing priority use designation to another use or designation of lower priority. “Conversion” means (1) a redesignation and/or rezone from a higher to a lower priority LCP land use designation and/or zoning district; and/or (2) a change in use from a higher to a lower priority use (e.g., a conversion from coastal-dependent industrial (first priority) to general commercial (third priority) use).

Prohibit conversion of coastal agricultural land to non-agricultural use, except where specifically allowed for a public/quasi-public use pursuant to policy ARC-1.3.1. In all cases, and in addition to any other requirements and findings, any conversion of agricultural land shall meet the requirements of Coastal Act Sections 30241, 30241.5, and 30242.

Prohibit conversion of existing coastal-dependent industry unless three years have passed since cessation of industrial use.

Prohibit conversion of visitor-serving commercial uses except if all of the following criteria are met:

- The proposed conversion will not adversely affect the ability of the County to provide appropriate locations for adequate amounts and/or types of visitor-serving commercial land uses, as demonstrated by remaining visitor-serving commercial land uses or land use designations in proximity to the proposed conversion; and
- Market analysis or land use analysis demonstrates that the existing priority use or priority use designation is no longer feasible or appropriate, and
- Any conversion of lower-cost overnight accommodations (defined as a room rate that is no more than 75% of the statewide average daily room rate) to residential uses is required to provide an equivalent number of units on-site, offsite, and/or via an in-lieu fee deposited into an account held by the County that is adequate to provide for replacement of any such converted units. If converting any other type of overnight accommodations (i.e., not lower-cost) to a residential use, as mitigation, either (a) 100% of the new residential units shall be affordable, and the project shall also provide one or more community and visitor-serving benefits/amenities (e.g., a coastal trail segment, bike racks, publicly accessible parks/gardens, visitor-serving commercial facilities, etc.) or (b) an equivalent replacement shall be provided in the manner as explained above with respect to conversion of lower-cost units to residential uses.

Particularly discourage conversions of existing developed visitor accommodation uses to other uses, and instead strive to provide incentives or other measures to help retain older visitor accommodation facilities for lower-cost visitor accommodations. New visitor-serving uses shall not displace existing lower-cost visitor-serving uses unless an equivalent replacement is provided.



**BE-5.1.4 (LCP) Designation and Development of Priority Sites.** Reserve specific sites for coastal priority uses as indicated in *Appendix G* and facilitate priority land use development of these sites, with priority allocations of any limited public services.

*See also Implementation Strategy BE-1.3h.*

**BE-5.1.5 (LCP) Coastal Special Communities.** Designate and maintain certain areas as Coastal Special Communities or Special Scenic Areas based on the presence of unique scenic, historic, and natural resources, and/or coastal tourism focus.

These areas shall include but not be limited to:

- Bonny Doon special scenic area
- Davenport special community
- Harbor area special community
- Pleasure Point Community
- Rio Del Mar Esplanade special community
- Seacliff Beach area special community
- Seascape Beach Estates
- Swanton Road special scenic area

**BE-5.1.6 (LCP) Avoid Impacts to Environmentally Sensitive Coastal Habitats.** Within coastal environmentally sensitive habitat areas, only allow resource-dependent development consistent with Coastal Act section 30240, such as trails, low-impact camping, educational signage and kiosks, research, and restoration projects.

*See also Policy ARC-3.1.3: Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas.*

**BE-5.1.7 (LCP) Development and Coastal Access.** Ensure that new development protects the public's right to coastal access and does not impact existing access. Allow owners to mitigate public access impacts through joint funding and provision of new or improved public coastal access facilities.

*See also Policy AM 4.1.5: Protecting Public Access.*



*Historic Building (originally Buckhart's Confectionary) in the East Cliff Village Coastal Special Community.  
Photo Credit: Santa Cruz County*

**BE-5.1.8 (LCP) Low and Moderate-Income Housing in the Coastal Zone.** Encourage the provision of housing for low and moderate-income households in the Coastal Zone. Restrict conversion or demolition of existing residential units occupied by persons or families of low or moderate income, unless provision has been made for replacement units for persons of lower or moderate income. If units that are converted or demolished are in the Coastal Zone, replacement units should be located elsewhere within the Coastal Zone, if feasible.

*See also Goal Housing-4: Preserve + Improve Existing Housing.*

**BE-5.1.9 (LCP) Mixed-Use Commercial Development in the Coastal Zone.** Prioritize visitor-serving commercial uses in mixed-use commercial developments in the Coastal Zone.

*See also Policy BE-3.4.7: Coastal Visitor Services.*

**BE-5.1.10 (LCP) Industrial Development in the Coastal Zone.** Recognize that it may be necessary for certain types of industrial developments to locate in the Coastal Zone. On sites designated for industrial land use in the Coastal Zone, prioritize coastal-dependent and coastal-



related<sup>4</sup> industrial development over other industrial development. Encourage multicompany co-use of sites and facilities. Disallow oil and gas development. Designate new sites for coastal-dependent or light industrial use in the Coastal Zone only when:

- Alternative locations are infeasible or more environmentally damaging;
- There is a demonstrated need for new sites;
- The site is not suitable for or designated for a non-industrial coastal priority use;
- A compelling public need is demonstrated;
- Adverse environmental effects will be mitigated to the maximum extent feasible; and
- Development of the site is consistent with all General Plan and LCP Land Use Plan resource protection policies.

*See also Policies ARC-7.2.13: Resource Based Industry Within the Coastal Zone, PS-6.8.4(a): Offshore Oil Development and PS-6.8.4(b): Onshore Oil and Gas Development.*

**BE-5.1.11 (LCP) Davenport Cement Plant Reuse.** Consistent with the Davenport Cement Plant (CEMEX) Coastal Reuse Plan, redevelop the CEMEX site in a manner that recognizes the natural resources and attributes of the area, is compatible with Davenport community character, accommodates creation of jobs, supports public infrastructure and services for the community, and welcomes visitors. (Responsibility: County Administrative Office, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

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<sup>4</sup> “Coastal-dependent industries” require a site on or adjacent to the ocean to function. Examples include aquaculture, ports, fishing, and some energy facilities. In comparison, “coastal-related industries” rely on a coastal-dependent development to function and may or may not require a coastal location.



## Figure 2-11: Coastal-Dependent Industries + Priority Uses



### Implementation Strategies

**BE-5.1a (LCP)** Require a discretionary coastal development permit (CDP) for development in the Coastal Zone in order to ensure LCP consistency. In the SCCC, maintain CDP thresholds in order to (1) establish the permit review process and appropriate reviewing body, and (2) exempt or exclude certain project types from this permit requirement. (Responsibility: CDID, California Coastal Commission)

**BE-5.1b (LCP)** Maintain design criteria for any development within the Coastal Zone requiring a CDP, with a focus on conserving coastal resources and preserving public coastal viewsheds and coastal access. Maintain unique criteria for Coastal Special Communities and Coastal Scenic Areas as necessary. (Responsibility: CDID, California Coastal Commission)

**BE-5.1c (LCP)** Review priority sites indicated for development in *Appendix G*. For sites that are not actively being used for their designated coastal priority land use, identify barriers to establishment of the priority use and establish a strategy and timeline to attempt to remove those barriers and facilitate the intended use. Consider changes to the priority use designation if the use is determined to be infeasible in the past and for the foreseeable future. (Responsibility: CDID, Parks Department, County Administrative Office)

**BE-5.1d (LCP)** For all designated coastal priority land use sites that are not already or proposed to be fully developed, require a master plan with an integrated design providing for full utilization of the site and a phasing program based on the availability of infrastructure and projected demand. Where priority use sites include more than one parcel, require that the master plan address the issues of site utilization, circulation, infrastructure improvements, and landscaping, design and use compatibility for the remainder of the designated priority use site. Review the Master Plan as part of any development permit approval related to the priority site. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-5.1e (LCP)** Assess proposed development projects in the Coastal Zone for impacts to public coastal access and recreation. Require access easements or alternate mitigations/in-lieu fees as a condition of new development as warranted, consistent with the principles of nexus and proportionality. (Responsibility: CDID, Parks Department)

*See also Objective AM-4.1: Recreational + Coastal Access.*

**BE-5.1f (LCP)** Review projects outside the Coastal Zone for Coastal Zone impacts in conformance with the California Coastal Act (per Public Resources Code Section 30200). (Responsibility: CDID, Coastal Commission)



BE-5.1g (LCP) Require applications for new coastal-dependent industry to include:

- A site plan of the entire area under lease or ownership, and of surrounding properties, showing relationship of proposed facilities to ultimate development of all facilities;
- A map showing relationship of proposed facilities to other buildings, structures, and/or natural or artificial features, including sensitive habitats, prime agricultural lands, commercial fisheries, tourist dependent resources, recreational areas, scenic resources, and archaeologically sensitive sites, either on the project site or on adjacent/surrounding properties;
- A plan for the consolidation, to the maximum extent reasonable or feasible, of facilities;
- A phasing plan for the staging of development that indicates the approximate anticipated timetable for project installation, completion, and for decommissioning, where appropriate;
- A plan for eliminating adverse impacts on habitat areas, prime agricultural lands, tourist dependent resources, commercial fisheries, recreational areas, scenic resources, archaeologically sensitive sites, neighboring residents, and neighborhood character due to siting, construction or operation of facilities;
- Plans and profiles of any major grading required for construction and production;
- An analysis of the visibility of proposed facilities from off-site public viewing areas and a landscape plan to minimize this visibility including methods and materials for screening such as fencing, plant species, depression below grade or other methods;
- Summary description of procedures for transport and disposal of all solid and liquid wastes;
- Fire prevention procedures;
- Compliance with the air quality regulations of the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District and other applicable air quality regulations;
- Compliance with all regulations affecting the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary;
- Adequacy of local infrastructure, such as water, sewer, stormwater drainage, fire protection and road capacity, to service project needs. Water requirements and a detailed description of proposed conservation techniques of the project; and
- Procedures for the abandonment and restoration of the site that indicate restored contours of the land, topsoil replacement and revegetation upon abandonment, unless abandonment-in-place is determined to be less environmentally damaging.

(Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, Coastal Commission)



## OBJECTIVE BE-5.2 SPECIAL AREA PLANS + GUIDELINES

(LCP) To implement plans and design guidelines for unique town centers and other focal points for living, working, shopping, and tourism in Santa Cruz County. Special area plans and design guidelines should include a high level of planning detail and public involvement; guide future public and private improvements; and promote economic vitality and coherent community design. *See Figure 2-12 for existing special area plans and guidelines.*

### Policies

**BE-5.2.1 (LCP) Adopted Special Area Plans and Guidelines.** Require new development to comply with adopted special area plans and guidelines. Encourage property owners and businesses to follow adopted special area guidelines for the design and development of the built environment.

*See also Policy AM-5.1.2: Specific and Area Plans.*

**BE-5.2.2 (LCP) Consistency with General Plan/LCP.** Special area plans and guidelines should generally align with the General Plan/LCP and *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines*, and should provide more detailed guidance for design and development in specific geographic areas. Where there is a conflict between policies or implementation measures in the General Plan/LCP Chapters 2 – 8 and a provision of a special area plan or guidelines, the special area plan or guidelines take precedence unless a finding can be made that a provision in the special area plan or guidelines has been made obsolete by modern regulations or the passage of time.

### Implementation Strategies

**BE-5.2a (LCP)** Review existing special area plans and guidelines and update and modernize as necessary, with public input, to reflect and align with the current General Plan/LCP and other rules and regulations regarding land use and transportation at the County and other agencies. Consider incorporating design guidelines from special area plans as appendices to *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines*. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-5.2b (LCP)** Initiate development of a new special area plan or guidelines if need is demonstrated based on unique issues or character that cannot be appropriately addressed using existing General Plan/LCP policies, implementation strategies, and *Santa Cruz County Design Guidelines*. Special area plans qualifying as specific plans must meet the criteria of California Government Code Section 65450-65457 Article 8: Specific Plans. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-5.2c (LCP)** Consider special area or master plans to support coordinated land use and transportation improvements in locations where the County is planning for concentrated population and job growth. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)



**Figure 2-12: Special Area Plans and Guidelines**



Source: County of Santa Cruz. Please refer to the Santa Cruz County GISWeb for the latest data and maps available.



## OBJECTIVE BE-5.3 DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

(EJ) To ensure that disadvantaged communities in unincorporated Santa Cruz County are identified and targeted for prioritized assistance in provision of services and facilities.

### Policies

**BE-5.3.1 (EJ) Disadvantaged Community Definition.** In Santa Cruz County, “disadvantaged communities” include communities that are defined as such by HSC section 39711, and by state agencies such as the California Air Resources Board, the California Environmental Protection Agency, and the State Water Resources Agency, or Census tracts where the majority of the population are low income, poverty, or minority as defined by Census data or local income surveys. Communities disproportionately impacted by unmapped environmental factors such as water quality impacts, low-efficiency/high-cost water and sewage treatment, and air pollution from woodburning fireplaces and stoves, or unmapped flood hazards may also be considered disadvantaged. Fringe, legacy, and island communities may or may not be considered disadvantaged communities.

**BE-5.3.2 (EJ) Protect Disadvantaged Communities.** Ensure that future improvements in disadvantaged communities will not produce negative impacts on the community, such as an increase in toxic exposures, a net loss of affordable housing, loss of open space or access to parkland or community gardens, or the displacement of residents and local legacy businesses.

**BE-5.3.3 (EJ) Target Uses and Development.** Encourage uses and development in disadvantaged communities that serve to improve circumstances for these communities, such as increased affordable housing, employment opportunities, environmental remediation, public infrastructure including the addition of parks and open space, and community services.

*See also Objective 6.3: Outreach + Engagement, Goal AM-3.0: Equitable Access, Policies AM-4.1.7: Enhancing Public Access and PPF-2.1.7: Priorities for Park Development, and Implementation Strategies PPF-3.1e and PPF-4.5r.*

## Definitions

**Community:** Inhabited area including at least ten dwellings adjacent or near one another.

**Disadvantaged Community:** Community that is disproportionately low income, minority and/or affected by environmental pollution or hazards.

**Legacy Community:** Geographically isolated unincorporated community that has existed for at least 50 years.

**Fringe Community:** Unincorporated community within a city’s sphere of influence.

**Island Community:** Unincorporated community surrounded by cities (may be within sphere of influence).

*Source: CA Government Code 65302.10(a).*



## Figure 2-13: Disadvantaged Communities



**BE-5.3.4 (EJ) Services for Legacy Communities.** For each legacy community identified as a disadvantaged community, ensure that water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, and structural fire protection needs are met. If these needs are not met, seek funding to extend services to these communities.

*See also Implementation Strategy BE-1.5f.*

**BE-5.3.5 (EJ) Services for Fringe and Island Communities.** Encourage and evaluate where appropriate annexations of non-agricultural land for fringe and island communities to incorporated cities. Prior to annexation, the County should assist cities in provision of services for fringe and island communities within city spheres of influence.

### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-5.3a (EJ)** Collaborate with public, private, and philanthropic entities to facilitate environmental justice-related investments in or programs benefiting disadvantaged communities, such as ensuring access to affordable housing, quality affordable medical care, healthy food options, parks, utility infrastructure and street safety improvements. (Responsibility: CDID, Parks Department, Public Health, Environmental Health Division, County Administrative Office)

*See also Policy AM-3.1.5: Healthy Food Access and Implementation Strategies PPF-2.5c and PPF-3.1f.*

**BE-5.3b (EJ)** For each mapped disadvantaged legacy community, analyze water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, and structural fire protection needs or deficiencies, or identify programs that would address needs. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-5.3c (EJ)** Analyze potential funding mechanisms that could make the extension of services, facilities or programs to disadvantaged fringe, island or legacy communities, as financially feasible. Seek grants and philanthropic funds. (Responsibility: CDID)

*See also Objective AM-8.1: Funding.*

**BE-5.3d (EJ)** Annually review mapped disadvantaged communities in reference to any changes in city spheres of influence and coordinate with cities regarding services for fringe and island disadvantaged communities. (Responsibility: CDID and Parks Departments; Water, Sewer, and School Districts)

*See also Implementation Strategy PPF-3.1e.*



## OBJECTIVE BE-5.4 AIRPORT + AIRSPACE LAND USE COMPATIBILITY + SAFETY

(LCP) To require compatibility between the Watsonville Municipal Airport and future land uses in the unincorporated area of the County that surround the airport, control the development and use of private air strips and heliports, and comply with State and federal safety regulations governing airport and military airspace land use compatibility.

*See also Appendix H: Airport Land Use Compatibility Requirements and County Strategy for more information and figures diagramming safety zones, airspace obstructions, and noise contours.*

### Policies

**BE-5.4.1 (LCP) Airport Influence Area.** The Airport Influence Area (AIA) is defined as the area within two miles of the boundary of the Watsonville Municipal Airport.

**BE-5.4.2 (LCP) Airport Land Use Compatibility.** All land uses and development activity within the AIA must comply with the height, use, noise, safety, and density criteria that are compatible with airport operations as established by the latest version of the *California Department of Transportation Division of Aeronautics Airport Land Use Planning Handbook* (Handbook), and any applicable federal aviation regulations, including, but not limited to, Part 77 (commencing with section 77.1) of Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

**BE-5.4.3 (LCP) Safety Zones.** Establish safety zones around the Watsonville Municipal Airport runways. Within each safety zone establish density standards for residential uses, and intensity standards for nonresidential uses compliant with the Handbook. Require that new structures or additions be sited to minimize potential safety conflicts.

**BE-5.4.4 (LCP) Land Use Limitations in Airport Safety Zones.** New development within the airport safety zones must comply with the uses, densities, and intensities as established by the Handbook and federal law.

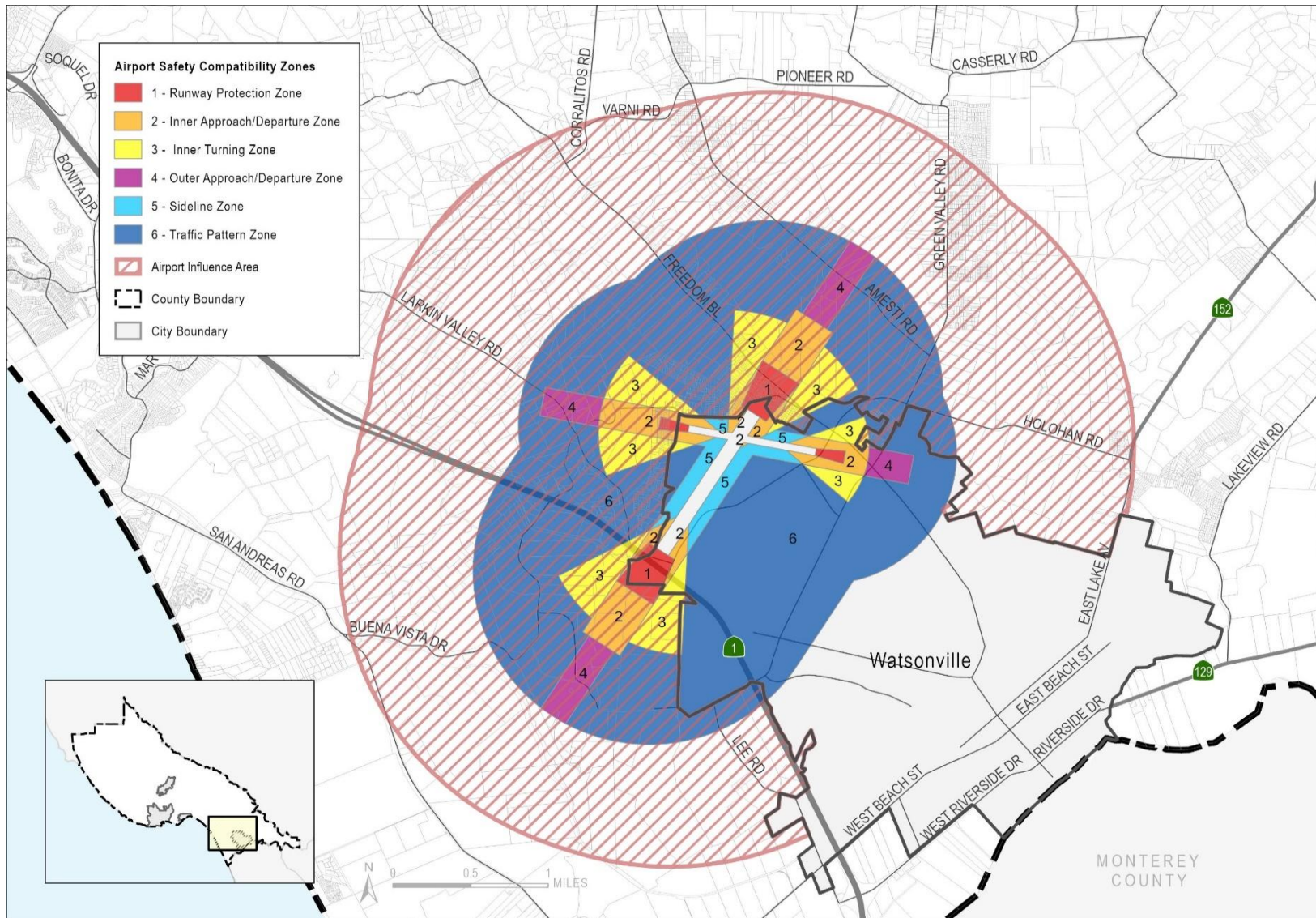
**BE-5.4.5 (LCP) Creation of New Parcels in Airport Safety Zones.** Density and intensity of new development must conform to the standards for each airport safety zone. Lot line adjustments cannot increase safety conflicts by placing potential building envelopes in a more hazardous area.

**BE-5.4.6 (LCP) Existing Residential Parcels.** The policies in this section do not prevent construction of a main dwelling, and an accessory dwelling unit, on an existing legally created parcel, in all areas of the AIA.

**BE-5.4.7 (LCP) Existing Uses.** These policies do not prevent the continuation of existing uses that do not change. Expansion of an existing use, conversion to a different use, or other development activities that require a ministerial or a discretionary permit and that create new or increased airport compatibility conflicts, are subject to these policies.



Figure 2-14: Watsonville Municipal Airport Influence Area



Source: County of Santa Cruz. Please refer to the Santa Cruz County GISWeb for the latest data and maps available.



**BE-5.4.8 (LCP) Mixed Uses.** All uses in a mixed-use development must meet Airport Land Use Planning Handbook and federal criteria for allowable uses, density, and intensity. Mixed-use developments involving residential and nonresidential uses should calculate intensity by converting allowable residential densities into intensity levels using current “persons per household” data from the best available data from State or regional planning agencies.

*See also Policy 3.2.1: Residential Uses in Commercial Designations.*

**BE-5.4.9 (LCP) Nonconforming Structures and Uses.** Remodeling or expansion of existing nonconforming structures and uses within the AIA is subject to the Handbook, and to County policies and regulations on nonconforming structures and uses.

*See also Objective BE-4.4: Nonconforming Development.*

**BE-5.4.10 (LCP) Airspace Obstructions.** Limit the height of buildings, antennas, other types of structures, and trees so as not to pose a potential hazard to flight. The criteria for determining the acceptability of a project or other condition with respect to height is determined by the standards set forth in Federal Aviation Regulations Part 77, Subpart C, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace; the United States Standard for Terminal Instrument Procedures; and applicable airport design standards published by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Airspace protection surfaces for the Watsonville Municipal Airport are detailed in *Appendix H: Airport Land Use Compatibility Requirements and County Strategy*. Any object that penetrates one of these surfaces is, by FAA definition, deemed an obstruction.



*Watsonville Airport. Photo Source: Santa Cruz County GIS*



**BE-5.4.11 (LCP) Wildlife and Other Hazards to Flight.** Land uses that may cause visual, electronic, or wildlife hazards, particularly bird strike hazards, to aircraft in flight or taking off or landing at the airport are allowed within the airport influence area only if the uses are consistent with the Handbook and FAA rules and regulations. Specific characteristics that are prohibited include:

- Sources of glare (such as from mirrored or other highly reflective buildings or building features) or bright lights (including search lights, lasers, and laser light displays);
- Lights that could be mistaken for airport lights;
- Sources of dust, steam, or smoke that may impair pilots' vision;
- Sources of steam or other emissions that cause thermal plumes or other forms of unstable air;
- Sources of electrical interference with aircraft communications or navigation; and
- Any proposed use that creates an increased attraction for wildlife and that is inconsistent with FAA rules and regulations including, but not limited to, FAA Order 5200.5A, Waste Disposal Sites on or Near Airports, and Advisory Circular 150/5200-33, Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on or Near Airports. Of particular concern are landfills and certain recreational or agricultural uses that attract large flocks of birds that pose bird strike hazards to aircraft in flight.

**BE-5.4.12 (LCP) Deed Recordation Acknowledging Aircraft Overflight.** Require, as a condition to any parcel map, subdivision, discretionary permit or building permit for expansion of any structure or the creation of any new structures in the AIA, that a statement be recorded on the deed for the parcel(s) acknowledging the property is located in an AIA, and describing the annoyances and inconveniences associated with proximity to airport operations, such as noise, vibration, or odors. Individual sensitivities to those annoyances can vary from person to person. Before purchasing the property, individuals should consider whether these annoyances are acceptable to them. Where disclosure is required, the State statutes dictate that the following statement shall be provided:

“NOTICE OF AIRPORT IN VICINITY: This property is presently located in the vicinity of an airport, within what is known as an airport influence area. For that reason, the property may be subject to some of the annoyances or inconveniences associated with proximity to airport operations (for example: noise, vibration, or odors). Individual sensitivities to those annoyances can vary from person to person. You may wish to consider what airport annoyances, if any, are associated with the property before you complete your purchase and determine whether they are acceptable to you.”



**BE-5.4.13 (LCP) Development within Airport Noise Contours.** Limit development within airport noise contours as detailed in *Objective N-2.2: Aircraft Noise*.

**BE-5.4.14 (LCP) Airport Expansion.** Require a development permit and environmental review for any new air strip or airport or any proposed expansion of any air strip or airport over which the County has jurisdiction, including any increase in the number of flights that may increase the noise level of surrounding areas.

**BE-5.4.15 (LCP) Private and Commercial Heliports.** Prohibit private noncommercial heliport construction and helicopter use, and permit heliports and uses only in conjunction with emergency medical treatment, emergency law enforcement, commercial agricultural purposes, and other commercial purposes as may be approved by the County Board of Supervisors.

**BE-5.4.16 (LCP) Private Air Strips.** Allow the continued operation of existing private air strips in rural residential and agricultural areas, provided air strip use is restricted to the property owner's planes and those of an occasional guest, and is consistent with all use permit requirements for the private air strip.

**BE-5.4.17 Military Considerations.** Acknowledge the existence of a designated military flight path in South Santa Cruz County that is not a low-level flight path and does not impact land use or development. Recognize the potential for future changes such as military installations, special use airspace, or low-level flight paths that may require consideration of land use and development impacts to military readiness activities.

### Military Planning Requirements

Per state planning law, jurisdictions must consider the impact of growth on military readiness activities.

**"Military readiness activities"** mean all of the following: training, support and operations that prepare the men and women of the military for combat; operation, maintenance, and security of any military installation; and testing of military equipment, vehicles, weapons, and sensors for proper operation or suitability for combat use.

**"Military installation"** means a base, camp, post, station, yard, center, homeport facility for any ship, or other activity under the jurisdiction of the US Department of Defense as defined in the United States Code.

**Military Presence in Santa Cruz County.** In 2020, there are no military installations in Santa Cruz County but there is a military instrument flight path over South County. This is not a low-level flight path and therefore does not limit land use development or require coordination between the County and the US military (CMLUCA 2018).



### Implementation Strategies

**BE-5.4a (LCP)** Coordinate with the City of Watsonville, the State Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics (CDOA), aviation interests, and community members to ensure compatibility between the airport and surrounding neighborhoods. Include the Watsonville Airport manager as appropriate in review of project applications located within the AIA. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, City of Watsonville)

**BE-5.4b (LCP)** Encourage the City of Watsonville and its airport manager to review and update noise contour measurements for Watsonville Airport periodically as aircraft operations increase or change in nature, and to forward any new data to the County. (Responsibility: CDID, City of Watsonville)

**BE-5.4c (LCP)** Maintain an Airport Combining Zone District for properties located within the AIA around the Watsonville Municipal Airport, to provide development criteria related to airport safety zones, density, airspace obstructions, and noise contours that are compatible with airport operations. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-5.4d (LCP)** Require that a Use Permit be approved by the Board of Supervisors for any private air strip and apply the following minimum standards:

- No new air strip may intrude on agriculturally productive land. No less than 75% of the proposed air strip may be on non-agriculturally productive land.
- The air strips must be outside of air traffic control zones and a safe distance from existing airports (generally three miles).
- Sites for proposed air strips must be a reasonable distance from urban and suburban residential areas, and compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.
- The total number of airplanes at any private air strip is limited to those owned by the property owner.
- A drainage plan for the air strip must be approved by CDID if significant drainage problems are identified.
- Obtain approval by the State Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics (CDOA).

(Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors)

**BE-5.4e** Consult the *California Military Land Use Compatibility Analyst* annually to determine if there is any change to the County's 2020 status as having no military facilities, special use airspace or low-level flight paths. If the County's status changes, modify allowed land uses, development standards, and development review procedures to incorporate consideration of military readiness activities. (Responsibility: CDID)



**BE-5.4f** Notify the appropriate branch of the U.S. Armed Forces whenever a proposed development project or general plan amendment meets one or more of the following conditions:

- Is located within 1,000 feet of a military installation;
- Is located within special use airspace; or
- Is located beneath a low-level flight path.

(Responsibility: CDID)



## OBJECTIVE BE-5.5 WEST OF WATSONVILLE

(LCP) To prevent the extension of urban services to undeveloped/rural areas west of the City of Watsonville, so as to discourage urban development in the farmlands, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas in the Coastal Zone west of Watsonville.

*See also Appendix N: MOU Regarding City of Watsonville Amendment 1-99.*

### **Policies**

**BE-5.5.1 (LCP) Urban/Rural Boundary – San Andreas Planning Area.** Maintain a stable urban rural boundary and protect rural agricultural land, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive habitat areas by ensuring that there will be no additional urban development outside the western boundary of the City of Watsonville, and by providing for concentrated urban development within City of Watsonville city limits. Any amendments to this policy, including revocation, require a super-majority vote of the Board of Supervisors. (*Resolution No. 342-2003*)

*See also Objective BE-1.1: Urban Growth and Rural Preservation.*

**BE-5.5.2 (LCP) Prohibition on Utility Extensions – San Andreas Planning Area.** Prohibit the extension of new wastewater and/or potable water utilities, emanating from within the City of Watsonville into the San Andreas Planning Area, except for one wastewater and one water line to serve permitted high school development on City of Watsonville Coastal Zone Area C, by establishing a Utility Prohibition Strip along and immediately adjacent to the City's boundaries west of Highway One, so as to discourage additional urban development in the Coastal Zone west of the City of Watsonville. Any amendments to this policy, including revocation, require a super-majority vote of the Board of Supervisors. (*Resolution No. 342-2003*)

*See also Objectives PPF-4.1: Water Supply + Conservation and PPF-4.2: Sanitation Facilities.*

**BE-5.5.3 (LCP) Minimize Utility Sizing – San Andreas Planning Area.** Any new wastewater or potable water supply pipelines emanating from within the City of Watsonville City limits shall be limited in size to the minimum capacity necessary to serve the intended existing and/or proposed development so as to discourage additional urban development in the coastal zone west of the City of Watsonville. Any amendments to this policy, including revocation, require a super-majority vote of the Board of Supervisors. (*Resolution No. 342-2003*)

*See also Objectives PPF-4.1: Water Supply + Conservation and PPF-4.2: Sanitation Facilities.*



**BE-5.5.4 (LCP) Watsonville Utility Pipeline Non-Access Strips – San Andreas Planning Area.** In the San Andreas Planning Area, designate one-foot wide Pipeline Non-Access Strips along all sides of any existing or new: 1) wastewater or potable water supply pipeline easements granted to the City of Watsonville by the County; and/or 2) wastewater or potable water supply pipelines emanating from the City of Watsonville and crossing County right-of-way or other County land. The one-foot wide Pipeline Non-Access Strips shall completely surround any such pipelines and/or pipeline easements and will prohibit any future pipeline attachments and/or extensions to the affected pipeline, thus discouraging additional urban development in the Coastal Zone west of the City of Watsonville. Any amendments to this policy, including revocation, require a super-majority vote of the Board of Supervisors. (*Resolution No. 342-2003*)

See also *Objectives PPF-4.1: Water Supply + Conservation and PPF-4.2: Sanitation Facilities.*



*Harkins Slough and the City of Watsonville*  
*Photo Credit: Santa Cruz County GIS*



**BE-5.5.5 (LCP) Harkins Slough Road Improvements.** Harkins Slough Road (including any Highway One overpass/interchange improvements) shall be limited to the minimum width/capacity necessary to provide for roadway, bikeway and/or pedestrian access: 1) to serve permitted high school development on City of Watsonville Coastal Zone Area C, and/or 2) as needed to meet minimum County or Caltrans design standards. Any such road improvements shall be designed in tandem with the development to be served by the road improvements in such a way as to minimize the linear extent of any such road improvements; Harkins Slough Road improvements not necessary to serve the permitted development to be served are prohibited.

Any Harkins Slough Road improvements that (1) expand the roadway prism outside of the existing paved area; (2) constitute a major public works project; or (3) are necessary to serve permitted development located within City of Watsonville Coastal Zone Area C, shall provide enhanced habitat connectivity: 1) for Hanson Slough, if the Hanson Slough portion of the road is improved (e.g., by replacing the existing culvert within an alternative structure, such as a box culvert, that better connects slough resources on either side of Harkins Slough Road); and 2) between the west branch of Struve Slough north of Harkins Slough Road and the Department of Fish and Game reserve south of Harkins Slough Road by replacing the culverts under Harkins Slough Road with a bridge of adequate span to provide for flood protection and habitat connectivity with regard to slough resources on either side of Harkins Slough Road, unless an alternative that is environmentally equivalent or superior to a bridge is identified. Fill of any portion of the west branch of Struve Slough, except for incidental public services, is prohibited. Any such road improvements to Harkins Slough Road shall include measures to protect habitat, and shall be sited and designed to minimize the amount of noise, lights, glare and activity visible and/or audible within the sloughs. Night lighting shall be limited to the minimum necessary to meet safety requirements and shall incorporate design features that limit the height and intensity of lighting to the greatest extent feasible; provide shielding and reflectors to minimize on-site and off-site light spill and glare to the greatest extent feasible; avoid any direct illumination of sensitive habitat areas; and incorporate timing devices to ensure that the roadway is illuminated only during those hours necessary for school functions and never for an all night period. Any amendments to this policy, including revocation, require a super-majority vote of the Board of Supervisors. *(Resolution No. 342-2003)*

*See also Objective AM-2.1: All Transportation Modes and ARC-3.1: Biological Diversity.*



## Implementation Strategies

**BE-5.5a (LCP)** Establish and maintain, upon County-owned lands in the San Andreas Planning Area (including County rights-of-way), a one-foot wide Pipeline Non-Access Strip along all sides of any existing or future: 1) wastewater or potable water supply pipeline easements granted to the City of Watsonville by the County; and/or 2) wastewater or potable water supply pipelines emanating from the City of Watsonville and crossing County right-of-way or other County land. The one-foot wide Pipeline Non-Access Strips shall completely surround any such pipelines and/or pipeline easements. New pipeline connections to the existing wastewater or potable water pipeline will be prohibited through, over, or under the Pipeline Non-Access Strips.

**BE-5.5b (LCP)** Maintain the “Watsonville Utility Prohibition Combining District” that establishes and maintains a one-foot wide wastewater and potable water supply Utility Prohibition Strip, across, over, or under which wastewater and/or potable water utility pipelines or pipeline extensions will not be permitted. The Utility Prohibition Combining Zone overlay district will be applied to parcels located to the west of and abutting the western edge of the Highway One right-of-way. Where the Watsonville City limits encompass parcels west of Highway One, the combining zone overlay district shall apply to all parcels directly abutting the Watsonville City limits (and to parcels abutting any County right-of-way that is contiguous with the Watsonville City limits west of Highway One). The Utility Prohibition Strip will be located along the parcel boundaries that directly abut either the Highway One right-of-way or the Watsonville City limits, as applicable. The Utility Prohibition Strip shall extend north of Watsonville to Buena Vista Drive and south to the Monterey County line, to the points where Buena Vista Drive and the County line each intersect the western edge of the Highway One right-of-way. If additional County land is annexed into the City of Watsonville, extend the Utility Prohibition district to abut and surround the new City area as necessary to maintain a continuous utility prohibition zone along the western edge of all new City lands and/or Highway One so as to discourage urban development in the farmlands, wetlands and other environmentally sensitive habitat areas in the Coastal Zone west of the City.

New wastewater and potable water supply utility pipelines/easements from the City of Watsonville shall also be prohibited from crossing or otherwise occupying any and all County rights-of-way (including those on Harkins Slough Road, Lee Road, and Ranport Road) where they border or contact the Watsonville City limits west of Highway One. Wastewater and/or potable water utility pipeline extensions will not be permitted through or across the one-foot wide Utility Prohibition Strip, except for one wastewater and one water line to serve the permitted high school development on City of Watsonville Coastal Zone Area C.

**BE-5.5c (LCP)** Endeavor to acquire, or to encourage other appropriate third parties (e.g., land trusts or other non-profit organizations) to acquire, the one-foot wide Utility Prohibition Strip, as described above in Program f, as permanently held easements on each affected parcel.



## GOAL BE-6: PLANNING, PERMITTING + PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Prioritize public engagement, communication, structured project review, and consideration of environmental impacts for successful planning and permitting of land use development.

### OBJECTIVE BE-6.1 OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

To provide development project applicants and members of the public with consistent and efficient service.

#### **Policies**

**BE-6.1.1 Customer Service.** Foster a customer service-oriented culture where staff strives to provide information to applicants and to members of the public in a clear, concise, and transparent manner, through a variety of electronic and in-person methods.

**BE-6.1.2 Development Project Review.** Review ministerial and discretionary project applications in a timely, efficient, and consistent manner. Coordinate feedback from reviewing agencies. Help applicants plan for success by setting expectations regarding the scope, cost and time involved in the permit application process.

*See also Implementation Strategy AM-5.1a.*

**BE-6.1.3 Interdepartmental Coordination.** Ensure consistency between long-range plans and implementation approaches related to land use across County departments and other reviewing agencies.

#### **Implementation Strategies**

**BE-6.1a** Conduct periodic staff training focused on external and internal customer service and provision of information, as well as implementation of new land use policies and development review procedures. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-6.1b** Maintain accessible and up-to-date website and hard copy information regarding applications, property research, permit types, new legislation, and other key topics for public access and education. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-6.1c** Ensure that official project records are maintained, organized, and available to the public upon request. Provide timely responses to Public Records Act requests per State law. (Responsibility: CDID, County Counsel)

**BE-6.1d** Complete the transition of project application submittal and review from paper-based to electronic processes, and strive to convert paper records to electronic format. (Responsibility: CDID, Environmental Health Division)



**BE-6.1e** Align development review and permitting practices with the Santa Cruz County Strategic Plan’s “Continuous Improvement” goal, in accord with the *Process Improvement Onward (PRIMO!)* initiative. Review permit procedures to identify inefficiencies, inconsistencies, and training needs. Improve the process by leveraging technology to improve process organization and coordination among reviewing agencies. (Responsibility: CDID, Environmental Health Division)

**BE-6.1f** Establish cross-department/agency review of department strategic plans, General Plan, Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and other plans and implementation strategies related to land use development to ensure a consistent approach across departments. (Responsibility: CDID, Environmental Health Division, Public Health, Parks Department, County Administrative Office, and other County departments and divisions as necessary)



Photo credit: <https://www.folsom.ca.us/government/community-development/planning-services/design-review>.



## OBJECTIVE BE-6.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

(LCP) To protect the environmental resources of the County; to ensure adequate and consistent consideration of development hazards and constraints in reviewing projects; and to comply with CEQA requirements.

### Policies

**BE-6.2.1 Environmental Review Required.** Require environmental review per CEQA (California Public Resources Code, Title 13, Sections 21000–21178; and California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 15000-15387) and associated guidelines for all non-exempt development projects, rezonings, and General Plan Amendments.

**BE-6.2.2 Mitigation Measures Required.** Require mitigation measures as identified through the environmental review process to be incorporated into all approved projects as conditions of approval or require adoption of statements of overriding considerations if mitigations cannot be implemented to reduce environmental impacts below significance thresholds.

### Implementation Strategies

**BE-6.2a** Designate an Environmental Coordinator to guide projects to the appropriate level of environmental review, provide quality control for environmental review documents prepared by staff or applicants, and ensure that legal procedural steps are followed in the environmental review process. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-6.2b** Review and comment on Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) of other jurisdictions affecting the County. (Responsibility: CDID, Planning Commission)



Photo Credit: Santa Cruz County



## OBJECTIVE BE-6.3 OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

(EJ) To actively promote public engagement in land use development and decision making, especially in disadvantaged communities.

### Policies

**BE-6.3.1 Public Process.** Maintain a robust public process for land use development projects. Public notification should be commensurate with the scope and scale of the proposed project and potential impacts and must be consistent with legal requirements. Public notification should clearly inform the public when and where public comment is encouraged, when and where public hearings will be conducted, and how decisions may be appealed.

**BE-6.3.2 (EJ) Community Meetings.** Conduct community meetings to discuss pending special area plans, policy updates, and major development projects, with an emphasis on gathering public input at the beginning of the planning process to maximize opportunities for participation. Major development projects must provide evidence of neighborhood meeting(s) as part of application submittal.

**BE-6.3.3 (EJ) Community Partnerships.** Foster partnerships with community-based organizations to ensure that all affected members of the community learn about and have an opportunity to make public comments regarding development projects and policies. Partner with organizations that have relationships, trust, and cultural competency with target communities to outreach for local initiatives and issues.

**BE-6.3.4 (EJ) Accessible Public Engagement.** Conduct outreach and public meetings with communication methods that convey complex and/or technical information in an easily understandable manner. To the extent possible, conduct outreach and meetings at times and places designed to engage a wide variety of participants. Facilitate meetings and workshops using diverse methods that can engage all participants and can appeal to multiple learning styles. Ensure that public meetings accommodate attendees with physical disabilities.

**BE-6.3.5 (EJ) Alternatives to Public Meetings.** Recognize that members of the public may not be able to attend public meetings or events in person. Ensure that alternative public comment and participation options are available, such as electronic platforms.

**BE-6.3.6 (EJ) Targeted Outreach to Disadvantaged and Multilingual Communities.** When a proposed development project or policy may impact a disadvantaged or multilingual community, conduct enhanced outreach to that community. In particular, consider outreach to these communities regarding topics such as affordable housing, employment opportunities, environmental remediation, and improved public infrastructure and services.

*See also Objective 5.3: Disadvantaged Communities.*



## Implementation Strategies

**BE-6.3a** Meet public process requirements as provided in the California Government Code and SCCC. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-6.3b** Prepare a *Santa Cruz County CDID Public Participation Handbook* to consolidate and summarize information about statutory requirements and outreach strategies. The handbook should be written for use by both staff and the public and should outline the following aspects of the public process at a minimum:

- Community meetings (facilitated by County staff or project developers, as appropriate).
- Public notification (timing, content, format, geographic distribution).
- Public hearings (Zoning Administrator, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors).
- California Environmental Quality Act public process.
- Meeting times, locations, and accessibility.
- Public comment options (in person, handwritten, online).
- Alternative outreach and participation formats (community events and partnerships, preference surveys, charettes, games, social media, multilingual outreach).
- Community partners.

(Responsibility: CDID)



*Community meeting in Santa Cruz. Photo credit: Santa Cruz County.*



**BE-6.3c (EJ)** Maintain a list of neighborhood, environmental and business group leaders and contacts, and actively develop relationships with these contacts as community partners. These contacts should include representatives of traditionally underrepresented groups in the public process, such as farmworkers, English as a second language speakers, youth, UCSC and Cabrillo College students, and working-age singles and families. Inform community partners about proposed development projects and policies. (Responsibility: CDID)

**BE-6.3d (EJ)** As appropriate for specific projects, organize outreach events, and conduct surveys directly to specific disadvantaged communities. Require outreach in the languages that are most commonly spoken in the community. (Responsibility: CDID)