



APPENDIX D: PLANNING HISTORY

Santa Cruz County's first comprehensive General Plan was prepared in the late 1950s and adopted in 1961. At that time, the County's population was 82,000, and the projected 1985 population was 200,000. The 1961 plan showed urban development along the coastal terrace and around the City of Watsonville, with rural development extending into portions of the foothills and mountains. Large areas were designated for commercial recreation and farming, allowing for development of private recreational facilities such as camps, conference centers and resorts, as well as residences on large parcels. Also, large portions of the County in the mountains along the Summit/Skyline ridge and in the North Coast area were set aside as "conserved" areas to be afforded full protection from any uses that would harm their natural character.

In the 1960s, the County adopted several area plans which later were updated and replaced in the 1970s by a series of Area General Plans covering the planning areas of Bonny Doon, San Lorenzo Valley, Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, La Selva, Pajaro Beach, and Pajaro Valley.

In the late 1960s, comprehensive water planning was expanded with the adoption of the County's Master Plan for Water Development 1968-2020, which identified a series of potential reservoir sites and water facilities to serve the County's water needs. In 1973, the County adopted the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan providing extensive inventories of County resources and policies for protection as well as development of these resources. That plan served as the Recreation, Open Space, and Conservation elements to the County General Plan. A series of other functional elements to the General Plan, as required by state law at that time, were adopted starting in 1969, including the Housing, Seismic Safety, Fire Safety, Noise, and Scenic Highways Elements.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The rapid growth rate of the 1970s, coupled with the community desire for agricultural and environmental protection, and preservation of quality of life, led to the passage in 1978 of a ballot referendum, Measure J (the growth management referendum). Measure J called for a comprehensive growth management system, including population growth limits, the provision of affordable housing, preservation of agricultural lands and natural resources, the retention of a distinction between urban and rural areas, and an enhancement of the quality of life within the County's urban areas. In the early 1980s, the County adopted a series of reports and ordinances with the 1980 General Plan and LCP to implement this ballot referendum.

In addition, from 1977 to 1986, the County adopted several ordinances regulating land use activities. Although these ordinances were not developed solely in response to Measure J, they have also become an integral part of the County's Growth Management System.



An overall evaluation of the Growth Management System was conducted in 1986. The Growth Impact Study encompassed four reports: Growth Trends Report (August 1986), Measure J – A Report on Progress Toward Housing Objectives (September 1986), the Santa Cruz County Growth Management System Environmental Impact Report (December 1986) and the Growth Management Study Final Report (December 1986).

In response to report recommendations, additional emphasis was placed on evaluating the impacts of development on the County's rural resources and the County's policies regarding rural resources. A Preliminary Rural Resources Assessment was completed in 1991 which concluded that the policies relating to rural development have adequately protected the rural natural resources.

1980 GENERAL PLAN

The 1980 General Plan represented a major integration and consolidation of existing planning policy in the County. The Plan brought together the land use and growth management policies previously found in the countywide General Plan and its various functional elements, the several Area General Plans, and other planning documents, resolutions and County ordinances. In addition, the plan included Housing and Transportation Elements, energy policies, and revised General Plan maps prepared to a consistent format and set of mapping designations.

VILLAGE/TOWN/COMMUNITY/SPECIFIC PLANS

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, several companion documents to the General Plan were prepared for various special areas. The purpose of these plans is to provide a more focused and detailed analysis of an area than is otherwise found in the General Plan. All the adopted plans were prepared with extensive citizen participation at community workshops. These village, town, community, and specific plans take a variety of forms and address unique land use and character issues relevant to the focus area.

1983 LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM

As required by the California Coastal Act of 1976, the County prepared and adopted a LCP Land Use Plan for the coastal zone of the County. (See Figure 1-3.) This Land Use Plan was certified by the California Coastal Commission on January 12, 1982. As a part of the implementation of the Land Use Plan, the plan was adopted on November 16, 1982 as an element of the County General Plan to be effective in the unincorporated portion of the coastal zone of the County of Santa Cruz; and thereby amended the previous General Plan policies where the LCP policies were more stringent. The California Coastal Commission certified the County's implementation program and on January 13, 1983, transferred coastal permit authority to the County. Except for coastal inundation and public trust areas, coastal development permits are issued by the County, with right of appeal to the California Coastal Commission in those instances specifically defined



in the County Code Chapter titled 13.20, Coastal Zone Regulations). The LCP Land Use Plan was published as a separate companion volume to the 1980 General Plan.

1994 GENERAL PLAN AND LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM

In 1989, the County Planning staff was directed by the Board of Supervisors to begin an update to the 1980 General Plan, combining it with the LCP Land Use Plan. The process included information gathering with numerous public meetings culminating in the development of a General Plan Background Report, 1991. During this data collection phase, in 1990, Santa Cruz County voters passed Measure C, a referendum declaring the 1990s as the “Decade of the Environment.” The referendum set forth resource protection and development policies and has that strengthened the foundation of the 1994 General Plan.

Based on public input, the four prominent issues outlined in the 1980 General Plan continued to be primary areas of concern.

1. Providing adequate services, particularly water, to the present and future residents;
2. Providing affordable housing;
3. Preserving the County’s environmental quality; and
4. Preventing conversions of agricultural lands.

In addition to these issues, many community meeting participants expressed the desire to see infill development compatible with the existing neighborhoods and incorporating reduced urban densities. The goals of the 1994 General Plan and LCP reflected the concerns for these issues and are further carried through to the 2040 General Plan.

2015 HOUSING ELEMENT

State law requires the County to update the Housing Element every eight years. In April 2016, the County Board of Supervisors adopted the General Plan’s latest Housing Element, which addresses housing goals in the period from 2016 through 2023.

SAFETY ELEMENT UPDATE

Between 2014 and 2021, the County engaged in an update to the General Plan to create a new Safety Element that meets General Plan and Coastal Act requirements. This update addressed recent regulatory changes related to climate change and sea level rise and included updates related to noise, airport safety, air quality, flooding, erosion, and wildfire hazards.