

Capitola Planning Commission

Agenda Report



Meeting: October 2, 2025

From: Community and Economic Development Department

Subject: Cliff Drive Resiliency Project and Local Coastal Program Update

Project Description: Application #24-0421 for Amendments to the City's Local Coastal Program including Capitola's Land Use Plan Chapter 2: Public Access and Capitola's Local Coastal Land Use Plan Chapter 7: Natural Hazards. The proposed LCP amendments affect properties within the Coastal Zone and are not effective within the Coastal Zone unless certified by the California Coastal Commission.

Recommended Action: Adopt a resolution recommending the City Council adopt amendments to Capitola's Land Use Plan Chapter 2: Public Access and Chapter 7: Natural Hazards.

Property Owner: The proposed LCP amendments affect properties within the Coastal Zone

Representative: Katie Herlihy, Community and Economic Development Director

Background: The Public Works Department initiated the Cliff Drive Resiliency Project as a comprehensive effort to address bluff erosion, sea-level rise, and stormwater drainage impacts along the Cliff Drive corridor while also enhancing pedestrian, bicycle, and coastal access. The project extends from the western City limit to Capitola Village and includes connections to Hooper Beach and the Capitola Wharf overlook. Following an August 2024 presentation regarding alternatives for the project, the City Council reviewed the feasibility study and directed staff to move forward with Alternative 3 – Full Bluff Protection, which includes continuous bluff stabilization along the project length, a Class I facility, cantilevered sections where needed, overlooks, and reconfigured parking. The City Council received an update on the Cliff Drive Resiliency Project at the August 28, 2025, meeting, including a phased approach due to overall cost and the current \$10.5 million committed funding through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Emergency Relief Program.

The City received a \$500,000 Coastal Commission LCP grant for the Cliff Drive Resiliency Project. As part of the grant contract, the City is required to update the Capitola Local Coastal Program relative to the Cliff Drive improvements.

On September 4, 2025, the Planning Commission reviewed the LCP amendments and adopted a resolution recommending the City Council adopt amendments to CMC Chapters 17.32 Parks and Open Space, Chapter 17.64 ESHA, Chapter 17.76 Parking and Loading, and Chapter 17.68 Geological Hazards. The Planning Commission continued the amendments to Capitola's Land Use Plan Chapter 2: Public Access and Chapter 7: Natural Hazards, due to multiple additional recommended changes during the meeting.

Discussion: Capitola's Local Coastal Program (LCP) is the guiding policy and regulatory framework for development and resources within the City's coastal zone. There are two key components to a Local Coastal Program. The LCP Land Use Plan is a long-range planning document which establishes broad policies for land use, coastal access, habitat protection, and hazard management. The LCP Implementation Plan (sections of CMC Title 17 Zoning Code) contains specific zoning standards, ordinances, and procedures to carry out the Land Use Plan policies. The City must amend the two documents to update outdated references and policies related to Cliff Drive resilience planning. These updates address increased coastal erosion, sea-level rise, and public access needs.

The following list contains the remaining sections of the LCP proposed for amendments:

1. Capitola's Land Use Plan Chapter 2: Public Access
2. Capitola's Land Use Plan Chapter 7: Natural Hazards

The proposed Land Use Plan amendments would update descriptions of existing conditions, replace references to Southern Pacific Railroad with the Regional Transportation Commission, amend policies to include support for multi-modal enhancements, public access, coastal planning for sea-level rise, shoreline structures, and drainage, and introduce new policies for future climate adaptation planning.

Also, at Planning Commission on September 4, 2025, the following list of changes were added to the amendments and are highlighted within Attachments 2 and 3:

- The three references to the Hooper stairs related to storm drainage and temporary closure.
- Policies II-4 and II-10 changed references from bicycles to multi-modal.
- Policy II-7 and VII-8 re-lettering implementation items and clauses from "b" to "a" where "a" was struck.
- Policy II-10 removal of RTC reference.
- Policy VII-2 regarding 50-year planning horizon.
- Policy VII- 11 removal of requirements related to storm water filtration and invasive species.
- Changed one additional reference from Southern Pacific to Regional Transportation Commission and removed language around acquisition of right-of-way.

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Capitola's Land Use Plan Chapter 2: Public Access
3. Capitola's Local Coastal Land Use Plan Chapter 7: Natural Hazards

Report Prepared By: Katie Herlihy, Community and Economic Development Director

Reviewed By: Rosie Wyatt, Deputy City Clerk

Approved By: Katie Herlihy, Community and Economic Development Director