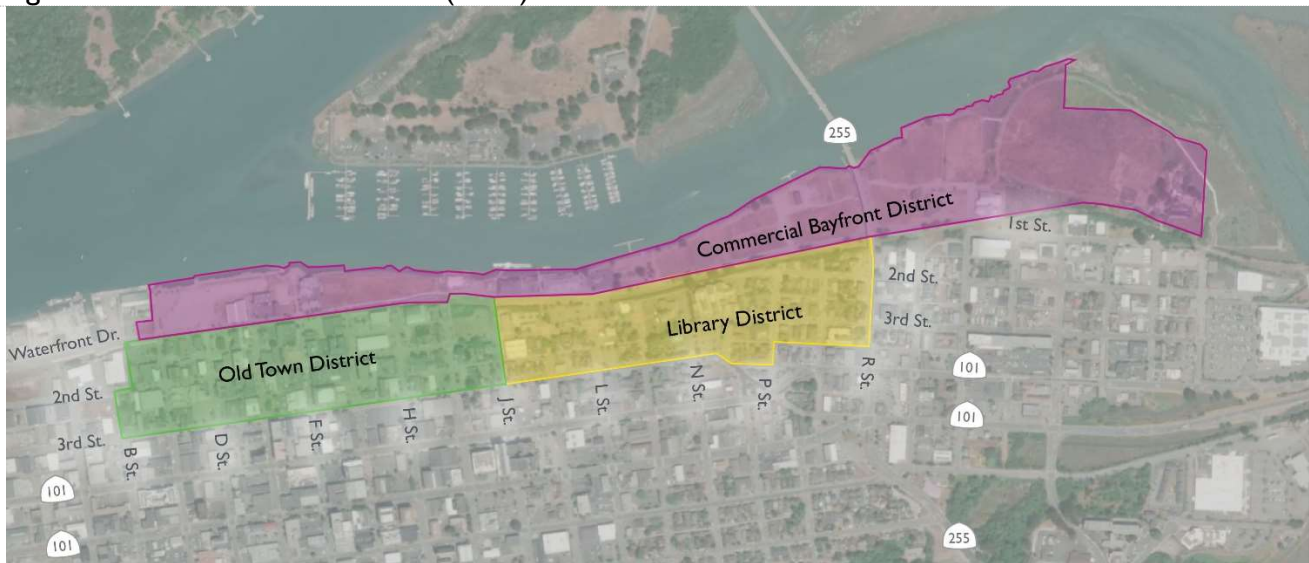


Project Title:	Waterfront Eureka Plan (WEP)
Project	City Project CITY-21-0003
Location:	Coastal Core Area (Old Town, Commercial Bayfront, and Library District as identified in the 2040 General Plan)
Purpose/Use:	A specific plan for implementation of Eureka’s 2040 General Plan in the Coastal Core Area. The plan includes zoning regulations, development standards, design guidelines, vision statements, strategies, and implementing actions to provide a roadmap for development and redevelopment of the vacant and underutilized sites and buildings along and near Eureka’s northern waterfront, to facilitate new mixed-use development and accelerate housing production.
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):	Addendum to 2040 General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (State Clearinghouse #2016102025) pursuant to §21166 of CEQA and §15162 of the CEQA Guidelines
Staff Contact:	Cristin Kenyon, AICP, Development Services Director
Recommendation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold a public hearing; 2. Consider the draft WEP and CEQA Addendum; and 3. Adopt a resolution recommending the City Council adopt the WEP and CEQA Addendum
Suggested Motion:	<i>“I move the Planning Commission adopt a Resolution recommending the City Council adopt the Waterfront Eureka Plan and associated CEQA Addendum to the 2040 General Plan EIR.”</i>

Figure 1: Waterfront Eureka Plan (WEP) Plan Area



PROJECT SUMMARY

The City of Eureka (City) is proposing to adopt a specific plan, the Waterfront Eureka Plan (WEP; Attachment 2) and CEQA Addendum (Attachment 3) for the systematic implementation of Eureka's 2040 General Plan in the City's Coastal Core Area. 2040 General Plan Land Use Goal LU-2 sets a vision of a thriving, compact, and pedestrian oriented Core Area that serves as the heart of Eureka's civic, cultural, business and visitor activity and is appealing to new investment. The WEP includes zoning regulations, development standards, design guidelines, vision statements, strategies, and implementing actions to provide a roadmap for development and redevelopment of the vacant and underutilized sites and buildings along and near Eureka's northern waterfront to facilitate new mixed-use development and accelerate housing production in alignment with the 2040 General Plan.

The Plan Area encompasses approximately 130 acres and consists of three districts identified in the 2040 General Plan as comprising the Coastal Core Area: the Commercial Bayfront, Old Town, and the Library District. The WEP is supported by two State grants: (1) an SB2 Planning grant and (2) a Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) grant, both intended to accelerate and streamline housing production in the City. Staff plans to present the final WEP to the City Council for adoption at a noticed public hearing May 6, 2025. To meet grant deadlines, the WEP must be adopted by City Council this summer.

What is a Specific Plan and How Is It Adopted?

A specific plan provides detailed guidance for the future development of a particular area, establishing a link between the goals and policies of the general plan and individual development proposals within the defined area. A specific plan is not a component of the general plan; it is a separately adopted document the purpose of which is the systematic implementation of the general plan. Public agencies use specific plans to set clear development expectations, while developers rely on them to determine where and what to build.

A specific plan must be prepared and adopted in accordance with California Government Code (CGC) §65450 et seq. Under CGC §65451, a specific plan must include a statement of its relationship to the general plan (see WEP Chapter 1) and text and diagram(s) specifying all of the following in detail:

1. The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan. (WEP Chapters 3 and 4 cover land use and zoning; WEP Chapter 7 covers parks and open space)
2. The proposed distribution, location, extent, and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan. (WEP Chapter 6 covers transportation; WEP Chapter 8 covers other infrastructure; and WEP Chapter 9 covers infrastructure vulnerability and adaptation to climate change)
3. Standards and criteria by which development will proceed and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, where applicable. (WEP Chapter 4 includes development standards)
4. A program of implementation measures, including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out items 1-3 above. (WEP Chapter

4 includes regulations; WEP Chapters 5-9 include implementing actions including measures, programs, and projects; WEP Chapter 10 covers additional details of implementation and financing)

Additionally, a specific plan may also include any other subjects necessary or desirable for general plan implementation (CGC §65452).

Under CGC §65453, a specific plan is prepared, adopted, and amended in the same manner as a general plan, except that a specific plan may be adopted by resolution (like a general plan) or by ordinance (like a zoning ordinance) and may be amended as often as deemed necessary by the legislative body.

Since the Plan Area is within the Coastal Zone, the WEP's land use regulations and zoning standards must be approved (certified) by the California Coastal Commission to become effective. Staff recommends initially adopting the WEP via resolution now, followed by a later resolution and ordinance to adopt the land use and zoning standards as part of the City's Local Coastal Program (LCP) Update, and a later resolution to submit the LCP Update to the Coastal Commission for certification.

What is the Standard of Review for WEP Adoption?

A specific plan must be consistent with the adopted general plan of the jurisdiction within which it is located (CGC §65454). Appendix C of the WEP outlines how the WEP is consistent with the 2040 General Plan.

Once the WEP is adopted, all subsequent subdivisions, development, public works projects, and zoning regulation amendments within the WEP Plan Area must be found consistent with the WEP.

What is the Relationship of the WEP to the LCP Update?

The City will use insights from the WEP to inform and facilitate the ongoing comprehensive LCP Update, and the WEP's land use and development standards will be incorporated into the LCP as described above. While the WEP does not need to be fully consistent with the currently certified LCP, it must conform with the California Coastal Act. The City received and attempted to address comments from the Coastal Commission's staff on the original 2023 Public Draft WEP and on the updated WEP zoning taken to Planning Commission in March 2025; the cover letter for the Coastal Commission staff's 2023 comments is included in Attachment 5, the Coastal Commission staff's most recent comments on the current 2025 Draft WEP are included in Attachment 4.

How Did We Get Here?

The idea for the WEP first arose during the 2040 General Plan Update (2013-2018), resulting in 2040 General Plan Policy LU-2.11 calling for a specific plan for the City's Core Area. The City received \$215,000 in grant funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (SB2 and LEAP grants) for this effort. After a competitive selection process, the City selected Dudek as the WEP consultant, with work commencing in January 2022.

A Public Review Draft of the WEP was released in May 2023 for public review and comment. The Planning Commission and City Council reviewed the draft at public meetings in July and August 2023. Revisions have been made in response to the public and stakeholder comments received (see Attachment 5 for comments on the 2023 Draft WEP). Changes to the zoning were specifically made to address feedback from the California Coastal Commission staff regarding the need to further prioritize coastal-dependent, coastal-related, and visitor-serving use, as well as insights from an inventory and analysis of ground-floor uses in Old Town conducted by Cal Poly Humboldt students in Spring 2024.

In March 2025, the City presented the updated 2025 Draft WEP's vision, land use, and zoning sections to the Planning Commission for initial feedback. The full 2025 Draft WEP was published online in late March 2025 to the City's website: <https://www.eurekaca.gov/978/Waterfront-Eureka-Plan-WEP>. Comments received on the 2025 Draft WEP at the time of publishing of this staff report are included in Attachment 4.

What Are the Key Differences Between the 2023 Draft WEP and Updated 2025 Draft WEP?

Some key differences between the two drafts include:

1. **Reorganization:** The 2023 Draft WEP included all background information on the Plan Area in Chapter 2, "Background Report," and all goals and policies in Chapter 5, "Land Use, Housing, and Mobility." In contrast, the 2025 Draft WEP features individual chapters focused on housing (Chapter 5); mobility and access (Chapter 6); culture and community (Chapter 7); economy and infrastructure (Chapter 8); and coastal hazards and climate change (Chapter 9). Each of these chapters includes background information as well as a vision, strategies, and implementing actions related to the topic of interest. The vision statements and strategies replace the goals and policies of the 2023 Draft WEP. Because the background information is now integrated by topic in Chapters 5-9, the background report chapter has been removed. By eliminating the background report and condensing the introduction and community engagement chapters, the 2025 Draft WEP reaches the core content of the plan more quickly.
2. **Redundancies Removed:** The 2023 Draft WEP included guiding principles in the Introduction (Chapter 1) that were similar to, but slightly different from, the goals included in the Land Use, Housing, and Mobility Chapter. The 2023 Draft WEP also included "preferred futures" for each of the three Plan Area districts in a Future Opportunities Chapter, which were similar to, but slightly different from, "Core Area descriptions" included in the Land Use, Housing, and Mobility Chapter. The 2025 Draft WEP removes redundancy by combining the guiding principles and goals into a single set of vision statements (included in Chapters 5-9), and merging the preferred futures and Core Area descriptions into one unified set of preferred futures for the Plan Area districts (included in Chapter 3).
3. **Updated and Refined Information:** The 2025 Draft WEP incorporates a variety of updates to background information, vision statements, strategies, and implementing actions in response to public comments and recent City initiatives. For example, in response to community feedback on the 2023 Draft WEP (included in Attachment 5), the 2025 Draft WEP includes new background information, strategies, and implementing actions related to homelessness, vandalism, and crime. The 2025 Draft WEP also references and furthers a number of City plans, policies, programs, and projects not included in the 2023 Draft

WEP. For example, the City Council adopted a Complete and Green Streets Policy in January 2023 and the Eureka Bike Plan in September 2024; the new Mobility and Access Chapter (Chapter 6) discusses and aligns with both. Similarly, the information on sea level rise vulnerability and adaptation now included in Chapter 9 has been updated to reflect and align with the City's 2023 Sea Level Rise Vulnerability and Capital Improvement Program Adaptation Plan, as well as initial work on an upcoming Citywide Coastal Resilience Plan. Finally, after compiling a list of potential new ideas for WEP implementing actions based on public comment and existing plans, policies, programs, and projects, the Planning Team met with implementing parties, such as the City's Community Services Department, Engineering Department, and Economic Development Division, to further refine the actions to ensure their feasibility and effectiveness.

4. Updated Development Standards: The 2023 Draft WEP categorized allowed uses in the table of uses by location: "upper floors," "ground-floor, not street-facing," and "ground-floor, street-facing." In the 2025 Draft WEP, additional limitations and standards for ground-floor, street-facing tenant spaces are addressed entirely through a "pedestrian-focused frontage" overlay, which applies in addition to the table of uses. The 2025 Draft WEP also removes regulations that will be addressed in the Citywide Coastal Zoning Code, such as temporary use provisions, and instead focuses only on regulations that are unique to the Plan Area.
5. Expanded Design Guidelines: The 2025 Draft WEP includes more detailed design guidelines than the 2023 Draft WEP.

Both the current 2025 Draft WEP and previous 2023 Draft WEP are available on the City's website for reference: <https://www.eurekaca.gov/978/Waterfront-Eureka-Plan-WEP>

How is the Zoning Changing under the WEP?

Currently Old Town and the Commercial Bayfront are both zoned "Waterfront Commercial" (CW), and the Library District is zoned "Office Residential" (OR). Under the proposed WEP, Old Town would have its own Old Town (OT) zoning district; the Commercial Bayfront would be divided into two zoning districts: Bayfront Commercial (BC) and Bayfront Flex (BF); and the Library District would have its own Library District (LD) zoning. Attachment 6 includes the currently allowed uses in the Plan Area – the current CW and OR zoning districts both allow for a mix of primarily residential and commercial uses, with some limited industrial, civic, and public facilities uses also allowed. The general mix of uses would remain the same under the proposed WEP; however, the listed use categories would be updated. The current listed use categories are overly specific and dated – for instance, uses in the CW zoning district include "telegraph offices," "realtors and real estate offices," "messengers' offices," and "savings and loans offices." Under the proposed WEP, use classifications would be broader – for instance, the example use types listed in the previous sentence would all fit under one use type: "offices".

Currently the CW zoning district only allows coastal-dependent, coastal-related, and visitor-serving uses as principally permitted uses, but allows another 73 uses with a conditional use permit including general residential, commercial sales, commercial service, office, industrial, civic, and public facilities uses. Under the proposed OT zoning for Old Town, instead of using Conditional Use Permits to prioritize visitor-serving uses, a "Pedestrian-Focused Frontage" (PFF) overlay is utilized to specifically target ground-floor, street-facing tenant spaces, further regulating the form and allowed uses of these tenant spaces to promote an active and engaging pedestrian

environment (i.e., a visitor-serving atmosphere at street-level). For example, while currently offices are allowed with a conditional use permit in all tenant spaces, under the proposed zoning, new offices would not be allowed in a ground-floor, street-facing tenant space on PFFs designated “Active Ground-Floor Dependent Use Locations,” but would be allowed principally permitted above or behind an active ground-floor use.

The proposed BC and BF zoning districts for the Commercial Bayfront continue to prioritize coastal-dependent, coastal-related, and visitor-serving uses like the current CW zoning. Visitor-serving uses are prioritized through a PFF overlay similar to the proposed OT zoning district described above. Coastal-dependent and coastal-related uses are prioritized by only allowing certain use types if they meet the definition of coastal-dependent or coastal-related (footnote 7 in WEP Table 4-1), or requiring a conditional use permit if the use does not meet the definition of coastal-dependent or coastal-related (footnote 7 in WEP Table 4-1). While currently new residential and office uses are allowed anywhere in the Commercial Bayfront with a conditional use permit, under the proposed BC and BF zoning districts, new residential and office uses would only be allowed as part of a mixed-use development when the use is located above or behind a ground-floor, non-residential, non-office primary use facing the adjacent sidewalk, boardwalk, or other publicly accessible outdoor space (footnote 3 in WEP Table 4-1).

What Are the Next Steps?

The Planning Commission must hold a public hearing for the purpose of recommending action to the City Council. After receipt of the Planning Commission’s recommendation on the WEP, the City Council will hold a public hearing to consider adoption of the WEP, scheduled for City Council’s May 6, 2025 regular meeting. The City Council may approve, approve with modification, or deny the WEP. If Council chooses to adopt the WEP, the WEP’s land use and development standards will be incorporated into the ongoing LCP update to be adopted and submitted to the Coastal Commission for certification at a later date. The LCP update is a City priority with the goal of adoption and transmittal to the Coastal Commission before the end of 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Adoption of the WEP is subject to CEQA, and an Addendum to the 2040 General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared (See Attachment 3).

In 2018, the City of Eureka prepared the City of Eureka 2040 General Plan Update Program EIR (State Clearinghouse #2016102025) in its capacity as lead agency and in compliance with CEQA. The EIR consisted of the Notice of Preparation, the Draft EIR including technical appendices, the Responses to Comments, Final Corrections and Additions, and the Project Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations. The 2040 General Plan EIR was certified by the City Council on October 15, 2018, at the same time the General Plan was adopted.

The General Plan EIR can be found on the City’s website: <https://www.eurekaca.gov/806/2040-General-Plan-Update-Preparation>

Pursuant to §21166 of CEQA and §15162 of the CEQA Guidelines, a subsequent EIR is required only when certain conditions are met. The WEP does not meet any of these conditions. Therefore, an Addendum to the General Plan Program EIR has been prepared (Attachment 3). The WEP’s EIR Addendum analyzes the potential direct, indirect, and/or cumulative

environmental impacts. It verifies that the WEP will not result in a new or substantially more severe significant environmental impact beyond what was identified in the General Plan EIR.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public notification of the public hearing before the Planning Commission consisted of notification by mail of property owners within a 300-foot radius of the Plan Area boundary on Friday, March 28, 2025, and publication in the Times Standard on Tuesday, April 2, 2025. In addition, the notice was posted on the City's website and bulletin boards, and emailed to individuals who signed-up to stay informed of the WEP process, on Friday, March 28, 2025. Notices were also posted around the Plan Area on Friday, April 4, 2025.

STAFF CONTACT

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DOCUMENTS ATTACHED

Attachment 1: Resolution

Attachment 2: 2025 Draft WEP

Attachment 3: CEQA Addendum

Attachment 4: Public and Agency Comments on the 2025 Draft WEP

Attachment 5: Public and Agency Comments on the 2023 Draft WEP

Attachment 6: Existing Zoning in Plan Area