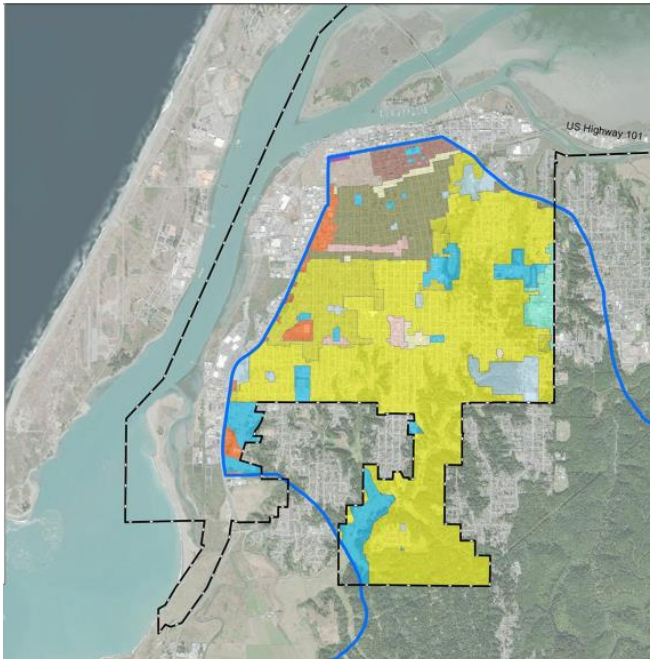


PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

For February 11, 2026 Hearing

Title:	2026 Inland Zoning Code Update
Project No.:	Text Amendment TA-26-1
Location:	Inland portion of the City (outside of the Coastal Zone)
Applicant:	City of Eureka
Amendment Description:	Modifications to various sections of the Inland Zone Code (Eureka Municipal Code [EMC] Chapter 155); addition of new Inland Zoning Code Sections 155.314 (Large Site Development) and 155.348 (Wireless Telecommunication Facilities); and repeal of EMC Chapter 159 (Wireless Telecommunication Facilities)
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):	Exempt pursuant to the Common Sense Exemption (CEQA Guidelines §15061[b][3]) and CEQA Guidelines §15183 (consistency with the City of Eureka 2040 General Plan and its Environmental Impact Report [SCH #2016102025])
Staff Contact:	Cristin Kenyon, Development Services Director
Recommendation:	Hold a public hearing; and Adopt a resolution recommending City Council adopt the proposed code update.
Suggested Motion:	"I move the Planning Commission adopt a resolution recommending City Council adopt the proposed 2026 Inland Zoning Code Update."

Figure 1: Location Map (Coastal Zone boundary shown as blue line and City limits shown as black dotted line)



PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

The City of Eureka is updating its Inland Zoning Code (EMC Chapter 155). The proposed 2026 Inland Zoning Code Update combines general cleanup with targeted amendments to design standards and the design review process. The update includes: (1) strengthened, objective design standards and related changes to how design review is conducted, and (2) targeted, non-design-related zoning amendments responding to State law, City Council direction, Planning Commission input, and implementation experience.

The update also repeals the City's existing inland wireless telecommunication facility regulations located in EMC Chapter 159, last comprehensively updated in 2010, and replaces them with modernized regulations in new EMC 155.348.

While these amendments apply only to inland areas, they are intended to inform a future comprehensive update to the Coastal Zoning Code.

1. Code Sections Implicated

The proposed update amends 20 of the Inland Zoning Code's 31 existing sections and adds two new sections. A summary of key updates is provided below. Clean and redline versions of the proposed amendments are included in Attachments 2 and 3, respectively. Detailed descriptions and explanations of individual changes are provided in Attachment 4 (Building Design Standards, 155.312), Attachment 5 (Wireless Telecommunication Facilities, 155.348), and Attachment 6 (all other amended sections).

Article 2: Zoning District Standards

Amendments to Existing Sections

- **General:** Use classifications are amended in the allowed land use tables to remove timber production and recycling collection facilities as standalone use types, add renewable energy facilities and outdoor visitor-serving markets as new use types, and clarify that trails are included within the parks and playgrounds use type and campgrounds are included within the RV parks use type.
- **155.204 (Residential Zoning Districts) and 155.224 (Overlay Zones):** Neighborhood-serving commercial use provisions are modified to allow these uses in residential zoning districts through a use permit process, replacing the existing overlay-based approach, which requires a zoning code/map amendment.
- **155.208 (Mixed-Use Zoning Districts):** Mixed-use zoning districts are updated to permit non-medical care housing by right where housing is allowed, consistent with State law; allow housing as a principally permitted use in the Hospital Medical zoning district; and remove a discretionary design review requirement for exterior modifications to buildings on designated pedestrian-focused frontages.
- **155.212 (Industrial Zoning Districts):** Industrial zoning districts are amended to allow trails and renewable energy facilities; remove the use permit requirement for artisan

manufacturing; and allow select non-industrial uses in Hinge/Light Industrial zoning districts with a use permit.

- **155.216 (Public Zoning Districts):** Public zoning districts are amended to add non-commercial places of assembly and renewable energy facilities as permitted uses in the Public Facilities zoning district, and to allow RV parks and campgrounds, public utilities, and renewable energy facilities in the Parks and Recreation zoning district with a use permit.
- **155.220 (Resource-Related Zoning Districts):** Because resource-related zoning districts are largely absent from inland areas of the City (only a 0.08-acre portion of one parcel is zoned Agricultural), this section is updated merely to maintain internal consistency across the code.

Article 3: Citywide Standards

Amendments to Existing Sections

- **155.304 (Supplemental Use Regulations):** Vacation rental regulations (155.304.150) are comprehensively revised to establish new definitions, categories, and standards; updated entitlement and renewal procedures; and enhanced tracking and enforcement provisions. These changes respond to Planning Commission concerns, including neighborhood concentration and impacts on housing availability.
- **155.308 (General Standards):** Outdoor lighting standards (155.308.050) are substantially strengthened, with more rigorous and broadly-applicable requirements for shielding, maximum fixture height, color temperature, light trespass, nonconforming lighting upgrades, and lighting plans; and enhanced restrictions on color temperature and light spill for lighting near sensitive gulch greenway areas. Fence/wall screening requirements between commercial/ industrial and residential (155.308.060) are revised to be based on use adjacency rather than zoning district boundaries, with a new Administrative Adjustment allowing deviations where strict compliance would be ineffective or unnecessary. Additional amendments add a runoff prevention standard for outdoor solid waste and recycling storage areas (155.308.070) and introduce new standards for mechanical equipment screening (155.308.080; relocated and strengthened from 155.312 with a new exemption for rooftop renewable energy systems), exterior material quality for accessory structures facing public frontages (155.308.090), and relocated setback and new side wall articulation standards for new buildings other than single-family homes adjoining single-family residential uses (155.308.100).
- **155.312 (Building Design Standards):** This section is amended to strengthen objective design standards for building façades in residential and mixed-use zoning districts including retention of key existing standards; modification of existing standards to broaden applicability, add rigor, and reduce subjectivity; and addition of new standards for massing, entrances, garages, corner buildings, and windows. Applicability is expanded from street-facing façades to all façades facing public streets, trails, and open spaces.
- **155.316 (Accessory Dwelling Units):** Accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations are updated to align with recent (January 1, 2026) State law changes affecting permit

processing, size calculations, and owner-occupancy requirements, reducing regulatory barriers to ADU development.

- **155.324 (Parking):** New vehicle parking exemptions are added for development near major transit stops and for conversion of parking to outdoor dining, consistent with State law. Parking access standards are strengthened by further limiting the number, width, and placement of driveways, while other parking standards are added (e.g., standards for loading dock locations and dedicated pedestrian paths in parking lots) and removed (e.g., a requirement for low perimeter walls around parking lots). A new 75 percent redevelopment threshold is established to bring legal nonconforming sites into compliance with parking access and placement standards. Bicycle parking standards are expanded to apply to a broader range of uses, increase minimum space requirements, and tighten bicycle parking space reduction/alternative provisions, along with new and clarified standards for bicycle parking design, accessibility, security, maintenance, electrical access for e-bikes, and accommodation of larger and heavier cargo and e-bikes.
- **155.344 (Density Bonus):** Density Bonus regulations are updated to align with current State Density Bonus Law, including removing noncompliant local application and finding requirements, as well as to improve readability and usability for applicants, and to reduce the need for frequent local amendments as State law continues to evolve.

New Sections

- **155.314 (Large Site Development):** A new section is added establishing objective, form-based development standards for large sites in residential and mixed-use zoning districts to ensure large-scale projects integrate into the surrounding urban fabric through connected street and block patterns; external connections to adjacent trails, bicycle facilities, and transit stops; internal pedestrian pathways; contextual massing; and on-site communal open space.
- **155.348 (Wireless Telecommunication Facilities):** A new section is adopted to replace EMC Chapter 159 with updated wireless facility regulations that better address current wireless technology and federal law, and better align with Chapter 155 style, while largely maintaining existing policy direction (e.g., prioritization of collocation and protection of residential areas and historic resources).

Article 4: Permits and Administration

Amendments to Existing Sections

- **155.404 (Administrative Responsibilities):** Table 404-1 (Review and Decision-Making Authority) is updated to reflect procedural changes elsewhere in the code update, along with related clarifications and general cleanup.
- **155.408 (Permit Procedures):** Permit procedures are amended to (1) clarify limits on subsequent City staff requests for additional information following an initial notice of application incompleteness; (2) update noticing requirements to reflect recent amendments to State law; and (3) add a new Neighborhood Information Meeting

requirement for certain large, ministerial development projects in or adjacent to residential and mixed-use zoning districts.

- **155.412 (Specific Permits and Approvals):** The Discretionary Design Review regulations are comprehensively updated to reframe Discretionary Design Review as an optional process available only for projects seeking deviations from the objective building design standards in 155.312. The list of qualifying community benefits for the Infill Incentive Permit is expanded to add incentives for all-electric construction; enhanced bicycle parking; end-of-trip facilities for employees who bike to work (e.g., showers); and shared driveways that reduce or eliminate curb cuts.
- **155.416 (Appeals and Reviews):** This section is amended to add clarification that appeal deadlines falling on a weekend or City-recognized holiday are extended to the next business day.
- **155.420 (Post-Approval Provisions):** This section is amended to clarify that the City will not accept a Building Permit application for a project, or will deem it incomplete, until all required discretionary approvals for the project have been granted and are effective.
- **155.424 (Nonconformities):** Nonconforming site feature provisions are updated to establish a ten percent valuation threshold for required upgrades (with disaster-related repair newly exempted), clarify landscaping upgrade requirements, and add new upgrade triggers for various screening provisions. A 75-percent redevelopment trigger is also introduced that activates updated standards for parking lot site placement and access, and large-site connectivity. The amendments also allow expansion of legal-nonconforming one-story buildings in zoning districts with a two-story minimum, and extend the lapse period for nonconforming uses from six to twelve months, with a one-time Director extension of up to two years for actively-marketed properties.

Article 5: Glossary

Amendments to Existing Sections

- **155.504 (Land Use Classifications):** Land use classifications and associated descriptions are updated to align with changes to the zoning district use tables and supplemental use regulations mentioned above, including adding new use classifications (e.g., renewable energy facilities); removing classifications (e.g., timber production); renaming classifications for clarity (e.g., adding “trails” to the parks and playgrounds use classification title), refining distinctions between related use classifications (e.g., more clearly distinguishing government facilities from civic institutions), and redefining certain classifications (e.g., vacation rentals). Various classification descriptions are also updated to align with State housing law (e.g., ADUs, multi-family dwellings, single-family home, and emergency shelters).
- **155.508 (Defined Terms):** Key changes to definitions include adding a definition of “livable space” to support the updated ADU regulations; replacing the “street-facing building wall” definition and illustrative figure with a new “public-facing building façade” definition and figure and other supporting definitions; and adding definitions for terms used in the code (e.g., mechanical equipment, patio, and public infrastructure).

2. Prior Planning Commission Review and Subsequent Revisions

Because of the scope and complexity of the proposed amendments, the Planning Commission reviewed the draft 2026 Inland Zoning Code Update in two discussion-only meetings prior to this public hearing. The discussions took place at the Planning Commission's December 10, 2025 and January 14, 2026 meetings, and were intended to familiarize the Commission with the full scope of the proposed amendments and to solicit preliminary feedback prior to formal public hearing and recommendation.

Following those discussions and associated public input, staff made a number of refinements to the draft amendments. These revisions are summarized in Attachment 7. The version of the 2026 Inland Zoning Code Update included in Attachment 2 (Draft Ordinance) reflects these revisions and represent staff's recommended version for Planning Commission recommendation to the City Council.

3. Planning Commission Role and Next Steps

The Planning Commission's role is to conduct a noticed public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council regarding adoption of the proposed ordinance. A draft resolution recommending City Council adoption is included as Attachment 1.

Following Planning Commission action, the ordinance will be forwarded to the City Council. The City Council hearing on introduction is scheduled for March 3, 2026, with a subsequent vote on adoption tentatively scheduled for March 17, 2026.

ANALYSIS

Pursuant to EMC 155.432.070 (Findings for Approval), the Planning Commission must make the following findings to recommend adoption of an Inland Zoning Code text amendment:

1. The proposed amendment is consistent with the General Plan.
2. The proposed amendment is internally consistent with other provisions of the Zoning Code.
3. The proposed amendment will not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare.

1. General Plan Consistency

The proposed amendments are consistent with, and implement, the City of Eureka's 2040 General Plan. Staff conducted a comprehensive consistency analysis for each substantive amendment, identifying applicable General Plan goals and policies and evaluating how the proposed changes align with and further those provisions. This detailed analysis is provided in Attachment 6.

Several key General Plan themes are furthered by this update, as summarized below, with illustrative examples of supporting code changes provided for each theme. The full text of referenced General Plan policies is included in Attachment 8.

Increase the supply and diversity of housing

[General Plan Policies LU-1.3 (Beneficial Development), LU-5.3 (High Density Housing), H-1.1 (Flexible and Accommodating Regulations), H-1.12 (Diverse Housing Development Options), H-2.1 (Facilitate Diverse Options), H-2.4 (Maximum Density Infill), H-2.10 (Accessory Dwelling Units), and H-2.13 (Density Bonus Laws)]

Examples of supporting code amendments include allowing housing by right in the Hospital Medical zoning district, updating ADU and Density Bonus regulations to align with State law, updating the vacation rental regulations framework to better address concerns about the conversion of full housing units to short-term rentals, and transitioning design review to a fully ministerial process based on objective standards.

Encourage infill and adaptive reuse and reinvestment in vacant and underutilized sites and buildings

[General Plan Policies LU-1.3 (Beneficial Development), LU-1.9 (Existing Buildings and Sites), LU-1.11 (Prior Development), LU-3.2 (Reinvestment), LU-6.2 (Infill First), H-2.12 (Internal Conversions and Adaptive Reuse), H-5.4 (Long-Term Vacancies), E-1.4 (Targeted Development Incentives), E-1.5 (Incentives), and HCP-1.3 (Adaptive Reuse)]

Examples of supporting code amendments include streamlining design review into a solely ministerial process based on objective standards, allowing additional uses in the underutilized Hinge Industrial zoning district, extending lapse periods for legal-nonconforming uses, and allowing for expansion of legal-nonconforming single-story buildings.

Create walkable, bikeable, connected places that reduce reliance on driving

[General Plan Policies LU-1.3 (Beneficial Development), LU-1.16 (Public Access), LU-1.18 (Parking Access), LU-5.2 (Parking Access for Residential Uses); LU-5.6 (New Residential Neighborhoods), H-1.9 (Bike Parking), H-6.5 (Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity), M-1.2 (Investment in Alternative Modes), M-1.3 (Multimodal Options), M-1.6 (Dense Development), M-1.7 (Consider all Users of Transportation System), M-2.9 (Multimodal Access), M-3.2 (Extended Facilities), M-3.3 (Continuous Networks), M-3.9 (Facilities at New Developments), M-3.8 (Bike Parking), M-4.4 (Developer Improvements), and M-5.4 (Parking Lot Location)]

Examples of supporting code amendments include new large site development standards, new loading standards, strengthened parking access standards, new parking access and placement compliance triggers for legal-nonconforming sites, expanded bicycle parking requirements, new incentives for enhanced bicycle facilities and shared driveways, broader applicability of frontage design standards, and more streamlined permitting of neighborhood-serving commercial uses in residential zoning districts.

Ensure attractive, high-quality, human-scale, context-sensitive design that activates public frontages

[General Plan Policies LU-1.2 (Compact Form), LU-1.3 (Beneficial Development), LU-1.19 (Pedestrian-oriented Design), LU-1.12 (Attractive Design), LU-5.5 (Existing Neighborhoods), H-1.11 (Development Standards), and H-4.2 (Enhance Existing Neighborhoods)]

Examples of supporting code amendments include strengthened objective design standards, modernized wireless facility regulations, updated outdoor lighting standards, new and updated contextual development standards adjacent/across from detached homes, and new and upgraded triggers for legal-nonconforming site features.

Remove unnecessary regulatory barriers and provide flexible, streamlined, business-friendly development processes

[General Plan Policies LU-1.6 (Flexible Zoning), LU-1.7 (Parcel Specific Considerations), LU-1.21 (Remove Obstacles), LU-6.1 (Development Regulations and Standards), H-1.1 (Flexible and Accommodating Regulations), E-1.1 (Business Friendly Environment), E-1.9 (Support Local Business Organizations), LU-6.9 (Streamlined Permitting), H-1.2 (Customer Service Standards), and E-1.2 (Predictability and Engagement)]

Examples of supporting code amendments include removal of the discretionary design review requirement for façade improvements on pedestrian-focused frontages, streamlined permitting processes for a variety of beneficial uses (including neighborhood markets, outdoor visitor-serving markets, artisan manufacturing, and home occupations), a new proportional investment threshold for required legal-nonconforming site feature upgrades, new and expanded Administrative Adjustments to allow context-specific deviations from specific code standards, and non-substantive updates to the code to make it easier to interpret and navigate.

Support preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings

[General Plan Policies HCP-1.1 (Preservation), HCP-1.3 (Adaptive Reuse), LU-1.3 (Beneficial Development), and LU-5.5 (Existing Neighborhoods)]

Examples of supporting code amendments include new discouragement of wireless facility siting on listed historic properties, and targeted regulatory flexibility for historic properties, including exemption from a future cap on full-unit vacation rentals, and exemption from outdoor lighting standards for lighting designed to replicate time period historical character and lighting effect.

Promote climate-friendly development

[General Plan Policies LU-1.3 (Beneficial Development), H-4.1 (Energy Efficiency), AQ-1.2 (GHG Reduction), AQ-1.4 (Off-Street Parking), M-5.5 (Alternative Fuel Vehicle Parking), AQ-1.7 (Large Employers), U-5.1 (Energy Conservation), U-5.2 (Energy Conserving Land Use Practices), U-5.5 (Renewable Energy), and U-5.9 (Green Buildings and Businesses)]

Examples of supporting code amendments include streamlined permitting for renewable energy facilities and electric vehicle charging stations, broader allowance for recycling collection facilities, expanded bicycle infrastructure standards, and a new incentive for all-electric buildings.

Protect natural resources and ecosystem functions

[General Plan Policies NR-1.5 (Best Management Practices), NR-1.6 (Water Quality), NR-1.11 (Pervious Pavement), NR-2.1 (Development in Gulches and Greenways), NR-2.5 (Sensitive Species Habitat), NR-2.6 (Buffers), U-3.11 (Stormwater Quality), U-3.9 (Low Impact Development), and U-3.12 (Minimize Drainage Through Design)]

Examples of supporting code amendments include strengthened outdoor lighting standards near sensitive habitat, new runoff prevention standards for outdoor solid waste and recycling storage areas, and expanded allowances for ribbon driveways and other pervious surface treatments.

Taken together, the proposed amendments implement and advance the General Plan’s overarching intent and policy direction. Accordingly, the Planning Commission can find the amendments consistent with the General Plan.

2. Zoning Code Internal Consistency

The proposed amendments are intended to, and do, maintain and ensure internal consistency throughout the Inland Zoning Code itself. Because the Inland Zoning Code is highly cross-referenced and internally interconnected, the scope of this update (amending 20 of the 31 existing sections) was necessary to align standards, procedures, and definitions and avoid internal conflicts.

3. Public Interest, Health, Safety, Convenience, and Welfare

The proposed amendment will not be detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, convenience, or welfare. The amendments clarify and modernize development standards, improve predictability and transparency in the entitlement process, and strengthen objective requirements addressing site design, building design, circulation, and compatibility with surrounding development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, the Planning Commission can make the required findings to recommend adoption of the proposed 2026 Inland Zoning Code Update.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The City Council’s pending decision to adopt the proposed amendment (a decision for which the Planning Commission is providing a recommendation) is a discretionary action subject to environmental review in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). However, the City, as Lead Agency, has determined the proposed amendment is exempt from further environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15061(b)(3) and 15183.

1. Common Sense Exemption – CEQA Guidelines 15061(b)(3)

The proposed amendment consists of revisions, reorganization, and targeted updates to the Inland Zoning Code to improve clarity, internal consistency, and implementation of existing

General Plan policies. It can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the proposed action may have a significant effect on the environment. The amendment does not approve or authorize any specific development project, does not increase allowable development intensity beyond that already contemplated by the General Plan, and does not alter land use designations or development capacity. Accordingly, the proposed amendment is exempt from CEQA pursuant to the Common Sense exemption set forth in CEQA Guidelines 15061(b)(3).

2. General Plan Consistency Exemption – CEQA Guidelines 15183

The proposed amendment is also exempt from additional environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15183, as it is consistent with the City of Eureka 2040 General Plan, which was adopted on October 15, 2018, following certification of a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2016102025). Under CEQA Guidelines 15183, projects that are consistent with the development density established by existing general plan policies for which an EIR has been certified do not require additional environmental review, except as might be necessary to examine whether there are project-specific significant effects peculiar to the project or its site.

The 2040 General Plan EIR analyzed buildout of the City through the year 2040, including anticipated residential and non-residential development, and evaluated associated environmental impacts. In many instances, the EIR concluded that impacts would be less than significant, or would be minimized, based on the future implementation of General Plan policies intended to guide the form, design, and location of development. The Inland Zoning Code, including the proposed amendments, functions as a primary implementation mechanism for those policies by translating them into enforceable, uniformly-applied development standards and permitting requirements. The proposed update refines and strengthens that implementation framework in a manner consistent with the assumptions and analysis in the General Plan EIR.

The proposed amendment meets the criteria of CEQA Guidelines 15183 because it is consistent with the development density and land use framework established by the 2040 General Plan. The amendment does not increase allowable residential or nonresidential densities, does not modify General Plan land use designations, and does not authorize development beyond that contemplated and analyzed in the General Plan EIR. Rather, it refines and strengthens zoning standards and procedures, such as building design, site design, parking, and circulation standards, that function as uniformly applied development policies anticipated by, and relied upon in, the General Plan EIR to ensure that future development contemplated by the General Plan will be compatible with surrounding areas and will avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

The amendment does not give rise to environmental effects that are peculiar to a specific project or site, does not introduce potentially significant off-site or cumulative impacts not previously analyzed, and does not rely on substantial new information indicating that previously identified impacts would be more severe than disclosed in the prior EIR. Accordingly, no additional environmental review is required pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15183.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

2026 Inland Zoning Code Update (TA-26-1)
Staff report for 2.11.26 Planning Commission hearing

Notice of the public hearing before the Planning Commission consisted of publication in the Times Standard on Wednesday, January 21, 2026. The notice was also posted on the City's website and bulletin boards on January 21, 2026.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED

- Attachment 1: Draft Planning Commission Resolution
- Attachment 2: Draft Ordinance of Adoption (Clean Version of Amended Code)
- Attachment 3: Proposed Amendments to Chapter 155 (Redline Edits)
- Attachment 4: 155.312 (Building Design Standards) – Proposed, Existing, and Crosswalk
- Attachment 5: 155.348 (Wireless Telecommunication Facilities) – Proposed, Existing (Chapter 159), and Crosswalk
- Attachment 6: Code Change Summary Table
- Attachment 7: Summary of Revisions Following Planning Commission Dec./Jan. Discussions
- Attachment 8: Applicable General Plan Goals and Policies