COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 6/4/2026

File #: 26-584

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Public Hearing

SUBJECT:
Conditional Use Permits for Nine Short-Term Rentals Located in the Tsunami Hazard Zone and Special Permits for Six Short-Term Rentals for Exceptions to Neighborhood Concentration Standards

Assessor Parcel Numbers: 305-073-081, 400-031-008, 400-071-036, 401-243-026, 401-331-009, 401-343-004, 401-344-003, 401-344-004, 401-344-006

Record Numbers: PLN-2025-19422, PLN-2025-19424, PLN-2025-19425, PLN-2025-19431, PLN-2025-19432, PLN-2025-19433, PLN-2025-19438, PLN-2025-19439, PLN-2026-19492
Samoa, Fairhaven, Manila and King Salmon Area

Nine Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) for short-term rentals located within a Tsunami Hazard Zone within the Humboldt Bay Area Plan, pursuant to section 313-61.05.6.3 of Humboldt County Code. In addition, five of the proposals require approval of a Special Permit for an exception to the neighborhood concentration requirements for short-term rentals pursuant to Section 313-61.05.10.6.2 of Humboldt County Code. All of these applications are for pre-existing short-term rentals and are being brought forward at the same time for consideration by the Planning Commission.

RECOMMENDATION(S):
That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolutions (Attachment 2-10), which do the following:

    a. Finds the Planning Commission has determined that the projects are exempt from environmental review per section 15301 Existing Facilities (which allows minor alteration of existing public or private structures that involve negligible or no expansion of existing or former use) of the State CEQA Guidelines; and

b. Make all of the required findings for approval of the Conditional Use Permits and Special Permits based on evidence in the staff report and public testimony; and

c. Approves the Conditional Use Permits and Special Permits as recommended by staff and subject to the Conditions of Approval (Attachment 2A through 10A).

DISCUSSION:
Project Locations: See Attachment 1

Present General Plan Land Use Designations:
See Attachment 1

Present Zoning:
See Attachment 1

Environmental Review:
The projects are exempt from environmental review per section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) which allows operation of existing public or private structures that involves negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.

State Appeal Status:
Projects are located within the Local appeals jurisdictions of the Coastal Zone but are not proposing new development or a change in use and therefore do not require Coastal Development Permits. The Conditional Use Permit is NOT appealable to the Coastal Commission.

Major Concerns:
Tsunami Hazard Area and Neighborhood Concentration of STR's

Monitoring Required:
None.

Executive Summary:
A consolidated Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the operation of 9 pre-existing short-term rentals (STRs) located within a Tsunami Hazard Zone pursuant to HCC Section 61.05.6.3. The proposed short-term rentals are spread around the Humboldt Bay area with five properties located in Samoa, two in Manila, one in Fairhaven, and one in King Salmon. All parcels are built with existing dwellings and no new development in proposed. In addition, six of the short-term rentals exceed the neighborhood concentration standards for short-term rentals and require approval of a Special Permit. All parcels are served by community sewer and water through the Manila, Peninsula, and Humboldt Bay Community Service Districts.

Land Use and Zoning:
The subject properties are within the Humboldt Bay Area Plan (HBAP) and have the following land use designations and zone classifications. All properties are zoned Residential Single Family and have combining zones including Archeologic Resources (A), Beach and Dune Areas (B), Design Review (D), Flood Hazard Zone (F), Manufactured Home (M), Planned Unit Development (P), Qualified Zone (Q), Coastal Wetlands (W), and No further Subdivision (X). The General Plan designations for the parcels are Residential Low-density (RL) with one property being Rural Exurban (RX).

Principal uses on all of the properties include single-family dwellings, and the projects will be conditioned to follow all applicable zoning regulations for any future development. NO physical development is proposed as part of any of these permits.

Biological Resources:
No biological or cultural resource impacts are anticipated with the proposed project. All of the projects are within existing single-family dwellings and no ground disturbance or other development is proposed.

Tsunami Concerns:
All of the proposed projects are within a mapped Tsunami Hazard Area. A Conditional Use Permit is required to allow a short-term rental within a tsunami hazard area due to the concerns of putting visitors at risk that are not aware of potentially catastrophic tsunami dangers. Conditions of approval have been included for the short-term rental to require educational materials and emergency protocols in the event of a warning. Additionally, booking and reservation sites will be required to contain a warning that the short-term rental is within a tsunami hazard area. Attachment 10 shows the location of the project sites relative to the hazard areas and evacuation areas.

Within Tsunami Hazard Areas, 100-year tsunami run-up elevations are further identified, and development is restricted in the Humboldt Bay Area Plan (HBAP) and Section 313-21.1.5 of Humboldt County Code (HCC). 100-year tsunami run-up elevations were analyzed and determined at specific latitudes within Technical Report H-78-26 from the US Army Corps of Engineers. While this restriction does not technically apply to the projects as no new development is proposed, the location of the properties relative to the 100-year run-up area is relevant from a hazard and risk perspective.

Table 1. The short-term rentals parcel elevation compared to the elevation of the 100- and 500-run up zones, determined by review of the diagram on page 57 of Technical Report H-78-26 by the Army Core of Engineers (Attachment 11).

Name	Parcel Elevation	Aprx. Latitude	100-year	500-year
1. Bayfront Getaway	5-31'	40° 51'	10.5'	19'
2. Mills	16-20'	40° 50'	10.4'	19.1'
3. Fairhaven Retreat	11-14'	40° 47'	11.1'	21.8'
4. Vista	8-10'	40° 44'	10.2'	18.7'
5. Burtchett	37-43'	40° 49'	10.7'	20.2'
6. Samoa Ocean	37-39'	40° 49'	10.7'	20.2'
7. Feldman	15-31'	40° 49'	10.7'	20.2'
8. Serenity	19-32'	40° 49'	10.7'	20.2'
9. Beach Break	31-37'	40° 49'	10.7'	20.2'

Manila: The permit for the Bayfront Getaway STR (#1 in Table 1) is conditioned to provide an evacuation plan and route to the closest area out of the Tsunami Hazard Zone, approximately 3,085 feet away from the parcel. The subject parcel is at latitude 40 degrees and 51 minutes, and according to the Humboldt County GIS Bay Contours (LiDAR), the subject parcel has elevations between 5 feet and 31 feet above sea level. However, the ADU proposed as the STR is between 20 and 25 feet above sea level. While this is within the tsunami hazard zone, it is outside of the 100-year and 500-year Tsunami Run-up zone according to Plate 15 in the Technical Report. The STR is unlikely to experience inundation during the most likely tsunami events, and an evacuation area is within a walkable distance. If approved, the existing single-family residence used as a STR is not anticipated to adversely impact the health, safety and welfare of the community.

The evacuation route for the Mills STR (#2 in Table 1), has been provided by the applicant (Attachment 3E) and is approximately 980 feet away. While the STR may be inundated in the most extreme scenario, but an evacuation area is within a walkable distance. If approved, the existing single-family residence used as a STR is not anticipated to adversely impact the health, safety and welfare of the community.

Fairhaven: The evacuation route for the Fairhaven Retreat STR (#3 in Table 1), has been provided by the applicant (Attachment 4E) and is approximately 1,150 feet away at an approximate elevation of 33 feet. The subject parcel is at latitude 40 degrees and 50 minutes, and according to the Humboldt County GIS Bay Contours (LiDAR), the subject parcel has elevations between 11 feet and 14feet above sea level. This is within the tsunami hazard zone, the 100-year, and 500-year Tsunami Run-up zone according to Plate 15 in the Technical Report. The STR is likely to be inundated in these more likely Tsunami scenarios, but an evacuation area is within a walkable distance. The U.S. Coast Guard is stationed 1.5 miles away and the Peninsula Community Service District provides emergency services and evacuation assistance. If approved, the existing single-family residence used as a STR is not anticipated to adversely impact the health, safety and welfare of the community.

King Salmon: The evacuation route signs in King Salmon are clearly posted and areas outside of the Hazard Zone are nearby, approximately 800 feet to the north. The Humboldt Bay Harbor District property at the north end of King Salmon Beach includes an area mapped as an evacuation area and

safe location at an elevation above the hazard and run-up areas. This includes an area at approximately 35 feet above sea level and is adjacent to the PG&E property which has areas over 60 feet above sea level. The subject parcel is at latitude 40 degrees and 44 minutes and according to the Humboldt County GIS Bay Contours (LiDAR), the subject parcel has elevations between 8 feet and 10 feet above sea level. This is within the tsunami hazard zone, and the 100-year, and 500-year Tsunami Run-up zone according to Plate 15 in the Technical Report and the property is likely to be inundated under the more likely tsunami events. The project is conditioned to provide an evacuation plan and route map to renters, and the designated evacuation area is within a walkable distance. If approved, the existing single-family residence used as a STR is not anticipated to adversely impact the health, safety and welfare of the community.

Samoa: The Town of Samoa is a Tsunami Ready Community, certified by the National Weather Service because of the development of a Tsunami Safety Plan in 2013. The safety plan identifies an assembly point which provides an evacuation map (Attachment 11), and the Peninsula Community Service District provides assistance in Tsunami Evacuation scenarios. There are requirements for new development below the level of the 100-year Tsunami run-up elevations described in Tsunami Predictions for the West Coast of the Continental United States (Technical Report H-78-26 by the Army Corps of Engineers). Table 1 shows the parcels elevation above sea level, Latitude, and the 100-year and 500-year Tsunami elevations. The subject parcels (#5-9 in table 1) are outside of the 100-year Tsunami Run-up zone. The Parcels 7 and 8 are within the 500-year Tsunami Run Up zone but the elevation of the homes is only marginally located within this zone and therefore, most likely tsunami events would not inundate the property. If approved, the existing single-family residences used for STRs are not anticipated to adversely impact the health, safety and welfare of the community.

Neighborhood Concentration of Short-Term Rentals:

The requirements for short-term rentals for parcels with a density of one or more units per acre include the standard that STR's shall not exceed ten percent of the dwellings on the access road and that there shall not be another short-term rental in a 600-foot radius of the dwelling to be used as a short-term rental. Exceptions to these standards are allowed with a Special Permit in order for the decision-maker to consider whether granting an exception would be detrimental to the community. In particular, the concern is conversion of communities to vacation rental neighborhoods and the loss of housing available to local residents and the local workforce.

King Salmon: In the King Salmon area, there would not be more than 10 percent of the dwellings on the access road being used as short-term rentals, however there is a previously approved short-term rental immediately adjacent to the project site and this would exceed to restriction of one STR in a 600-foot radius. A Special Permit for an exception to this standard was already approved by the Planning Commission for this adjacent STR and consideration of this current proposal was included in the Commission's analysis. In the image below, the red pin shows the location of the current proposed STR and the green pin shows the location of the recently approved STR. In the King Salmon area, there are over 100 residences and with approval of these two short-term rentals it would be a very

small number of available units that are not available for long term renters or homeowners. In staff's opinion approval of this exception would not create any substantial changes to the character of the King Salmon Community.

Samoa: In the Samoa area there are 2 previously approved and 7 proposed short-term rentals. Five of the STRs are pre-existing (in operation prior to the adoption of the STR ordinance) and two are new proposed STR's. The five pre-existing are the subject of this staff report and the two new are analyzed more thoroughly in a separate staff report. The image below shows the location of the pre-existing STR's that are part of this request as red pins and the proposed new STR's are shown in green pins. All seven STR's are all within a 600-foot radius of each other and previously approved permits. Approval of 4 of the pre-existing rentals and the 2 new rentals would exceed the 10% per block neighborhood concentration standard.

The table and the image below show the houses per block included the calculation and the percentages of STRs per block. According to the US Census data from 2024, the Samoa Community has approximately 88 residential dwellings, and there are 9 approved or pending applications for short-term rentals within the entire community. To date, there have been two approved short-term rental applications, both of which are outside of the Tsunami Hazard Area and only require an Administrative Permit, and there are an additional 7 proposed to be discussed at the June 4th hearing. If all nine of these proposed short-term rentals were approved, 10.2 percent of the existing residential units in the Samoa Community would be short-term rentals. This report includes the five that are pre-existing STR's only (the other two are analyzed more fully in separate staff reports) because the Commission may want to consider whether pre-existing STR's may have different considerations and impacts than any proposed new STR's relative to neighborhood impacts.

Table 2. Proposed and existing STRs per block, with percentage of housing utilized for STRS.

Street	Houses	# of existing	# of new	Percentage of STRs
Sunset Ave	23	2	0	8.7%
Vance Ave	18	3	0	16.7%
Samoa Ct.	9	1	1	11.7% / 22.2%
Murphy Ave	4	0	1	25%
Fenwick Ave	15	1	0	6.7%

As mentioned above, in addition to the 2 previously approved short-term rentals, if these five STR's were approved and the two proposed new STR's approved, 10.2 percent of the existing residential units in the Samoa Community would be short-term rentals. The Samoa Community has traditionally been an area that is more affordable for local residents. According to Zillow, in the last 2 years the median sales price of homes within the Samoa Community is approximately $370,000. This is in comparison to the median sales price of homes in the Eureka area (zip code 95501) which was

approximately $400,000 and the Arcata area (zip code 95521) which was approximately $450,000. The concern with Neighborhood Concentration is that housing units for local residents will be lost and short-term rentals will drive out affordable housing, converting communities primarily into vacation communities that are unavailable for local workers and residents. The loss of affordable housing and changing the character of the community could adversely impact the welfare of the community and the quality of the neighborhood.

During consideration of the short-term rental ordinance, special consideration was given to the existing STR's. Existing STR's (those operating on or before October 26, 2023) were excluded from the cap that was established to protect the county's housing stock (2% of the total housing stock in the greater Humboldt Bay Area). While not specifically excluded from the neighborhood concentration standards, it could similarly be argued that the pre-existing STR's should be considered as part of the baseline and that permitting them would not be converting available housing. As such, Planning staff does not believe that approval of these 5 pre-existing short-term rentals would adversely affect the quality of the neighborhood or the general public welfare.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:
The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either responded with no comment, or recommended approval. (Attachment 13).

RECOMMENDATIONS:
Based on a review of Planning Division reference sources and comments from all involved referral agencies, Planning staff conclude that the applicant has submitted evidence in support of making all of the required findings for approval of the Consolidated Conditional Use Permits and Special Permits. Staff recommend that the Planning Commission find the project exempt from further environmental review pursuant to Section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)- Existing Facilities.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Planning Commission could elect not to approve the project. The Commission could also choose to add or delete conditions of approval. Additionally, the Commission could choose to approve some, but not all of the proposed projects based on specific circumstances.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Project Locations and Owner Information
2. Draft Resolution for PLN-2025-19438
    A. Conditions of Approval
    B. Site Plan
    C. Evidence of Existing Operation

    D. Good Neighbor Guide

3. Draft Resolution for PLN-2025-19431
    A. Conditions of Approval
    B. Site Plan
    C. Evidence of Existing Operation
    D. Good Neighbor Guide
    E. Evacuation Map
4. Draft Resolution for PLN-2026-19492
    A. Conditions of Approval
    B. Site Plan
    C. Evidence of Existing Operation
    D. Good Neighbor Guide
    E. Evacuation Map
5. Draft Resolution for PLN-2025-19432
    A. Conditions of Approval
    B. Site Plan
    C. Evidence of Existing Operation
    D. Good Neighbor Guide
6. Draft Resolution for PLN-2025-19433
    A. Conditions of Approval
    B. Site Plan
    C. Evidence of Existing Operation
    D. Good Neighbor Guide
7. Draft Resolution for PLN-2025-19439
    A. Conditions of Approval
    B. Site Plan
    C. Evidence of Existing Operation
    D. Good Neighbor Guide
8. Draft Resolution for PLN-2025-19424
    A. Conditions of Approval

   B. Site Plan
   C. Evidence of Existing Operation
   D. Good Neighbor Guide
9. Draft Resolution for PLN-2025-19425
   A. Conditions of Approval
   B. Site Plan
   C. Evidence of Existing Operation
   D. Good Neighbor Guide
10. Draft Resolution for PLN-2025-19422
   A. Conditions of Approval
   B. Site Plan
   C. Evidence of Existing Operation
   D. Good Neighbor Guide
11. Town of Samoa Evacuation Route Map
12. Plate 15 - Tsunami Run-Up Graph
13. Referral Agency Comments

Please contact Kathleen Johnston, Assistant Planner, at (707) 441-2630 or by email at kjohnston@co.humboldt.ca.us if you have any questions about this item.