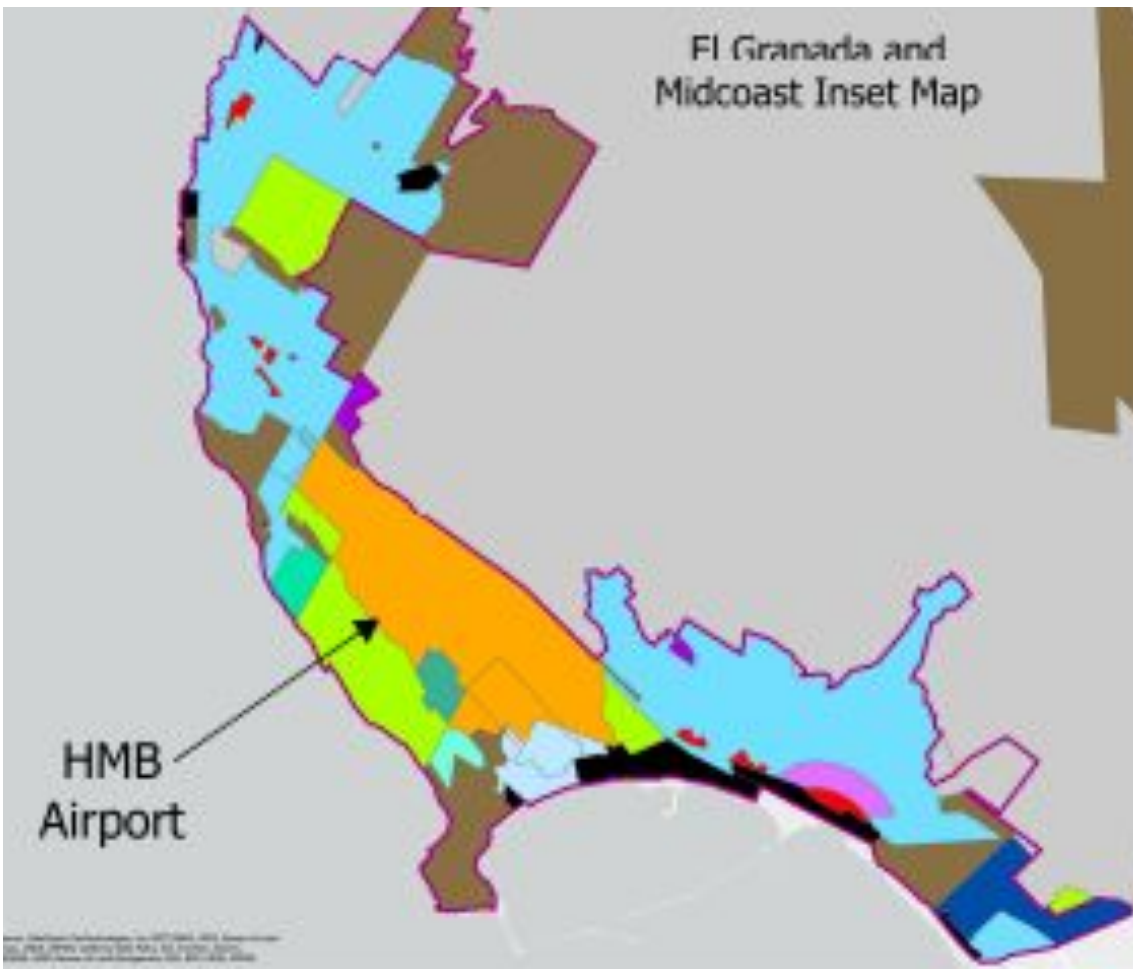
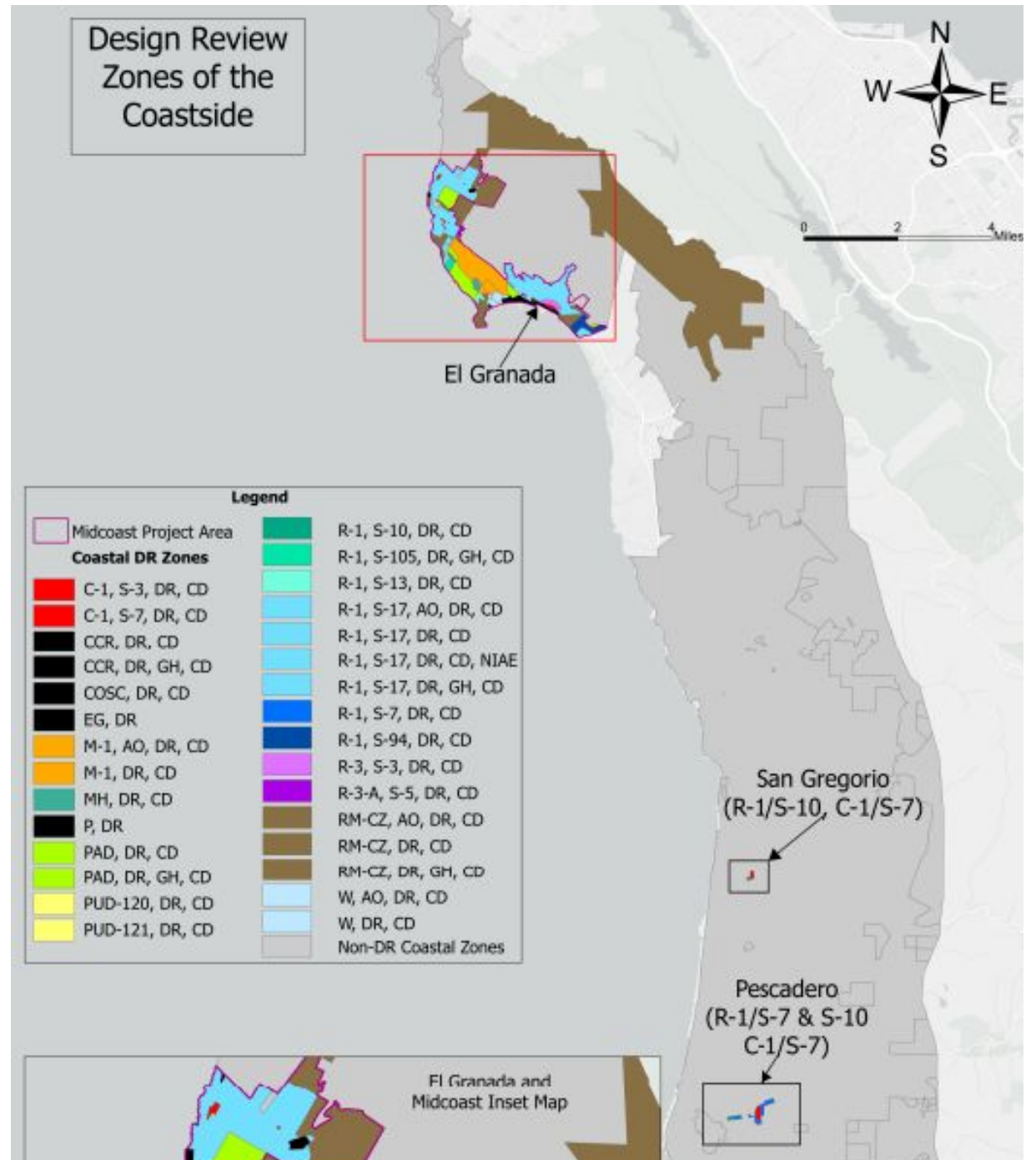


FI Granarla and Midcoast Inset Map



Design Review Zones of the Coastside



Legend

Midcoast Project Area	R-1, S-10, DR, CD
Coastal DR Zones	R-1, S-105, DR, GH, CD
C-1, S-3, DR, CD	R-1, S-13, DR, CD
C-1, S-7, DR, CD	R-1, S-17, AO, DR, CD
CCR, DR, CD	R-1, S-17, DR, CD
CCR, DR, GH, CD	R-1, S-17, DR, CD, NIAE
COSC, DR, CD	R-1, S-17, DR, GH, CD
EG, DR	R-1, S-7, DR, CD
M-1, AO, DR, CD	R-1, S-94, DR, CD
M-1, DR, CD	R-3, S-3, DR, CD
MH, DR, CD	R-3-A, S-5, DR, CD
P, DR	RM-CZ, AO, DR, CD
PAD, DR, CD	RM-CZ, DR, CD
PAD, DR, GH, CD	RM-CZ, DR, GH, CD
PUD-120, DR, CD	W, AO, DR, CD
PUD-121, DR, CD	W, DR, CD
	Non-DR Coastal Zones

FI Granarla and Midcoast Inset Map



COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

Goals of the Design Review (DR) Ordinance Update Project (Project)

- 1. Revise the current DR Zoning District design standards such that they are objective**
 - a. Replace subjective standards, which cannot be enforced per State law for State-streamlined housing project types (such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and SB 9 and SB 35 projects), to ensure that new projects remain compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods; and

- 2. Further streamline design review, including establish a ministerial design review process in areas outside of the Coastal Zone**
 - a. Further streamline Design Review throughout the County
 - b. Eliminates the Bayside Design Review Committee (BDRC) and the Emerald Lake Hills Design Review Officer (DRO) hearing.
 - c. Exceptions: New processes to allow for Minor Exceptions (subject to approval by the Director, when a project is in substantial conformance) and Major Exceptions to the standards through a use permit process.

Goals of the Design Review (DR) Ordinance Update Project (Project)

3. The Project makes other updates to address Coastside Design Review Committee (CDRC) feedback and public concerns.

- a. Midcoast: Require story poles for larger projects
- b. Increases the size threshold for projects exempt from CDRC review from 150 sq. ft. to 500 sq. ft.
- c. Establish consistent height measurement standards.
- d. Strengthen exterior lighting standards
 - 1) Consider increasing maximum color rating to 3000 based on public comment
- e. Imposes design review standards on small projects that do not require other County permits (e.g., exterior painting, lighting).

SECTIONS:

8.256.010. ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE AND LEGISLATIVE INTENT OF DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT

8.256.020. ESTABLISHMENT OF DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE, DESIGN REVIEW

8.256.030. ADMINISTRATOR AND DESIGN REVIEW OFFICER REQUIREMENT FOR DESIGN REVIEW AND APPROVAL

8.256.040. EXEMPTIONS

8.256.041. APPLICATIONS SUBJECT TO MINISTERIAL REVIEW

8.256.045. APPLICATIONS SUBJECT TO DISCRETIONARY REVIEW

8.256.050. PRE-DESIGN CONFERENCE

8.256.060. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

8.256.070. ACTION ON APPLICATION FOR DESIGN REVIEW

8.256.080. PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT

8.256.090. NOTICE

8.256.100. FINDINGS

8.256.110. APPEALS

8.256.120. AMENDMENT

8.256.130. EXPIRATION

8.256.140. INSPECTION AND OCCUPANCY AND MAINTENANCE

8.256.141. BUILDING HEIGHT MEASUREMENT IN URBAN MIDCOAST DR DISTRICTS

8.256.142. GENERAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING APPLICATION OF DESIGN STANDARDS

8.256.170. GENERAL DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

8.256.180. DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS APPLICATION TABLE

8.256.150. STANDARDS FOR DESIGN IN EMERALD LAKE HILLS AND OAK KNOLL

8.256.160. MANOR (AREAS ZONED RH/DR) AND DEVONSHIRE STANDARDS FOR DESIGN IN PALOMAR PARK

8.256.170. STANDARDS FOR DESIGN IN OTHER AREAS

8.256.190. STANDARDS FOR DESIGN IN PLANNED COLMA DISTRICT

8.256.200. STANDARDS FOR DESIGN FOR ONE-FAMILY AND TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDCOAST (EL GRANADA, MIRAMAR, MOSS BEACH, MONTARA)

8.256.210. STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF TREES AND VEGETATION

8.256.220. DROUGHT

8.256.230. VIOLATIONS

565.23.

8.256.255. GLOSSARY

Main Changes to Ordinance:

- Exemptions
- Ministerial Review
- Discretionary Review
 - Story Poles in Midcoast
- Building Height in Midcoast
- Recommendations
- DR Standards Table

- Changes shown in Tracked Changed in Attachment D

8.256.040. EXEMPTIONS. The Design Review Administrator (DRA) may exempt activities which otherwise require a ministerial or discretionary design review process from the requirements of as allowed in this Chapter, when sSuch activities shall be

listed and described in exemption guidance prepared by, in the judgment of the DRA,;
Exempt projects shall be those that are determined to be minor in nature and will not have an adverse effect on compliance with design standards or guideline or zoning regulations applicable to the property or structure in question.

A. Over-the-Counter Exemptions: Such minor activities, as listed and described in exemption guidance prepared by the DRA, may be exempted by staff;

B. Formal Exemption: Projects exempt from Design Review subject to a formal exemption application process. All new construction that is 500 square feet or less and complies with setbacks, except that construction must be under 16 feet in height in the Midcoast, which are not eligible for an over-the-counter exemption.

C. Applications for a Formal Exemption

1. Applications for a formal exemption shall be filed in the manner prescribed by the DRA and shall be accompanied by a fee set by resolution of the Board of Supervisors.
2. A notice of pending application for formal exemption under this Section shall be on a form provided by the County and conspicuously posted by the applicant at eye level at the front of the property nearest the street. Public notice shall be provided at least ten calendar days prior to a decision on an exemption.
3. Such notices shall be on forms provided by the County.
4. The DRA shall consider any public comments received during the comment period prior to a decision on a formal exemption.
5. Exemptions shall be documented by the DRA, whose decision of exemptions shall be final.

Exemptions

- Codifies Exemption criteria
- Expands Coastal Exemption from 150 sf to 500 sf (to match current Bayside exemption for 500 sf)
 - Must meet setbacks
 - Must be under 16' in height

Ministerial Process

Table 2: Review Process by Project Type in Coastal Zone		
	Current Ordinance	Updated Ordinance
State-streamlined housing (e.g., ADUs)	Ministerial review with no objective standards applied	Ministerial review with objective standards
Non-State-streamlined housing (SFDs, Additions)	Discretionary review with objective and subjective standards	Discretionary review with objective standards

Coastal Zone

- Allows for application of DR standards to State-streamlined housing projects (mainly ADUs, limited application otherwise)
- Makes previously subjective standards into objective standards
- Maintains discretionary review process

i. Demonstration of Scale (Applications subject to Section 8.256.045 (Discretionary Review) for consideration by the Coastside Design Review Committee).

1. Applicant shall visually demonstrate project scale using story poles at the project site.

2. For smaller scale projects, as defined below, alternative methods to demonstrate scale (such as digital imaging simulations, virtual or augmented reality simulations, and/or other visual techniques) may be used. Small scale projects include:

a. New buildings and additions that are 800 sq. ft. or less in size, which

meet criteria below:

i. Meets setback requirements;

ii. Less than 16 feet in height; or Ground-floor additions; or Second or third-story additions that do not alter the roofline of an existing structure;

b. Projects that are not visible from public streets or neighboring residences within 50 feet, based on staff determination.

3. Story poles shall be constructed according to the following specifications:

a. Story poles shall be placed at all outside building corners and along the highest roof ridgeline. The elevation of the lowest finished floor and highest ridge shall be visibly marked on the pole. In order to identify the building envelope and the ridgeline, netting shall be extended on grade, from one corner pole to the other and atop one pole to another along the direction of the ridgeline, respectively. The netting used shall be orange snow fencing material, or comparable netting, measuring at least 24 inches in width.

Story Poles Required for Discretionary Review in Midcoast

Midcoast Only (For CDRC Review), with the following project types exempted:

- Project 800 sf or less that meet setbacks and: less than 16' height, ground floor, or no change to roofline of 2nd or 3rd story addition
- Not visible from street or residences within 50 feet

Building Height in Urban Midcoast

8.256.141. BUILDING HEIGHT MEASUREMENT IN URBAN MIDCOAST DR DISTRICTS

In urban areas of the Midcoast subject to Design Review, building height shall be measured as the vertical distance from any point on the natural or existing grade to the topmost point of the building immediately above.

Same as S-17:

Building height shall be measured as the vertical distance from any point on the natural grade to the topmost point of the building immediately above.

Coastal Zone

- Allows for consistent height measurement in Urban Midcoast DR, including:
 - C-1
 - R-1
 - M-1
 - RM-CZ
 - EG
 - W*

Former Standards included now as Recommendations

Could not be made objective (e.g., quantitative)

- Climate Change standards: Passive heating and cooling, etc.
- Privacy of Interior Areas and Outdoor Areas
 - Portions of Buildings with Non-Conforming Setbacks: New standard regulating window height and roof decks, similar to ADU requirements
- View Protection Standards removed, now recommendations

Difficult to Enforce:

- Prominent/Street Facing Garage

DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS & APPLICATION TABLE					
No.	STANDARD	ADUs	Emerald Lake Hills/Oak Knoll (ELH), Palomar Park (PP), Devonshire (DEV)	MidCoast	All Other DR Areas (Coastal Zone)
A Building Siting					
1	For lots wider than 75 feet in area of proposed development, single story and low eave design shall be used in the transition area between the development and any adjoining areas designated for agriculture, recreation, or open space. The transition area for side-abutting development is defined as within 15 feet from both sides of a shared lot line. The building eave facing the shared lot line with adjoining open space shall be no higher than 12 feet or, when the adjoining open space area contains buildings within 15 feet of the shared lot line, the eave shall be no higher than 10% higher than the height of the adjoining building(s). (For low eave design, see Figures 11-15).	X (Montara Only)		X (Montara Only)	X
2	Structures are set back from the edge of bluffs and cliffs a distance equal to the maximum proposed height of the building or located in areas of the property that are not visible, as viewed from scenic areas below.	X (Coastal zone only)		X (Source: CDM; other areas)	X
3	Locate and design new development and landscaping so that ocean views are not blocked from public viewing points such as public roads and <u>publicly-owned lands</u> .	X (Coastal zone only)		X (LCP 8.12.b)	X (LCP 8.12.b)

DR STANDARDS TABLE

Table Format

- Standards listed with applicable areas checked
 - With ADU as project type
 - Area applies for all other State-streamlined housing
- Blue Highlight: New area for application of existing standard

“All Other DR Areas (Coastal Zone):

- Non-residential zoning districts or non-residential development located in the Midcoast Project Area and*
- Areas in the Coastal Zone outside of the Midcoast Project Area.*

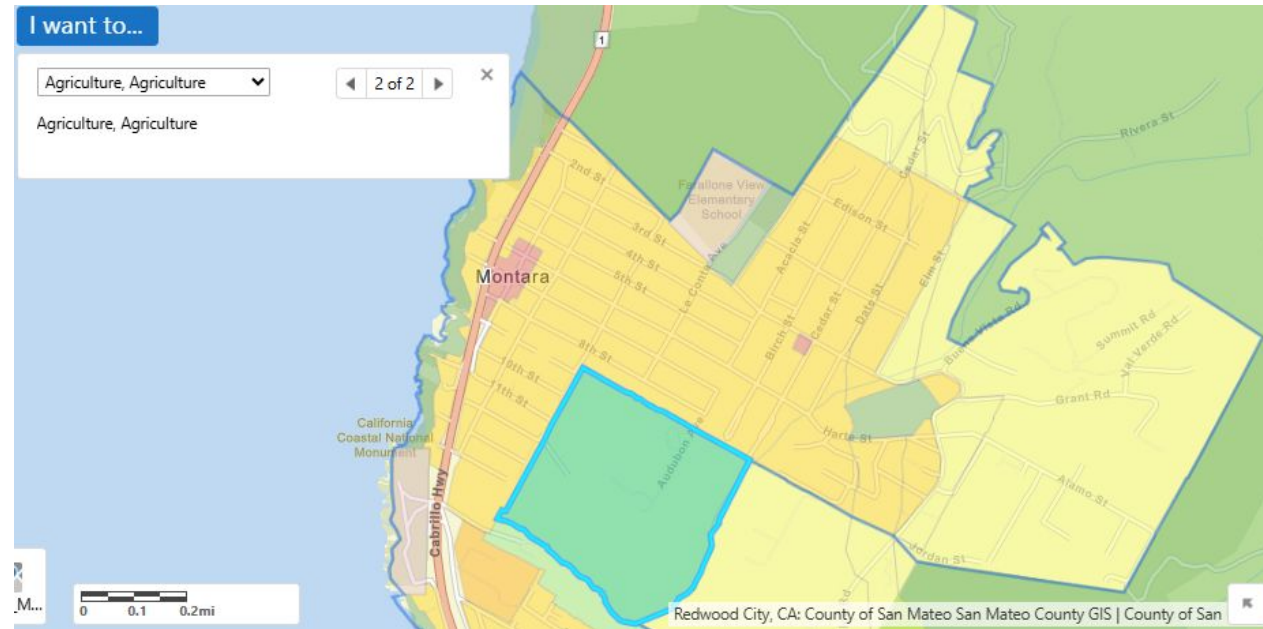
DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS & APPLICATION TABLE

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DR STANDARDS TABLE

Highlight of Main Changes of Standards

Montara – Agricultural designation in green



DR STANDARDS TABLE

G	Exterior Lighting				
1	All exterior, landscape, and site lighting shall be designed and located so that light is the minimum necessary to support the activity designated for that area, where light bulb is shielded, and light is downward-directed, away from neighbors, and confined to the site. Soffit lighting shall be limited to covered entry areas and outdoor covered patios (limited to a maximum of 1 soffit light for every 5 linear feet of these areas). Flood lights are not allowed. (See Figure 28)	X	X (Source: PPDR standards)	X	X
2	For areas visible from and within 50 feet from scenic corridors, limit the number of exterior light fixtures to the minimum required by Building Code.	X		X	X
3	All exterior lighting shall use warm, yellow light tones with a color rating of 2200 Kelvin (k) or lower.	X		X	X
4	Lighting around the perimeter of a site is prohibited, except where it is controlled by motion sensor which extinguishes the light no later than	X	X	X	X

Exterior Lighting

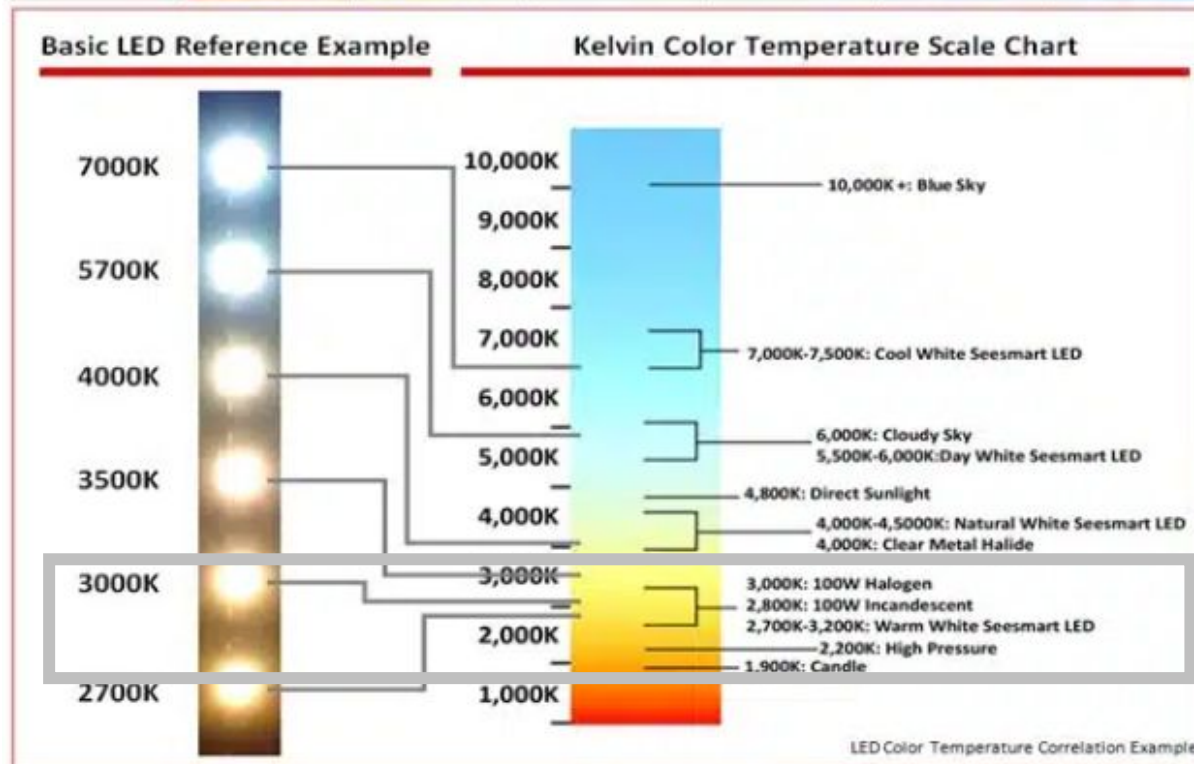
- Keeps shielded, downward directed requirements
- Limits soffit lighting
- Prohibits flood lights
- Limits color rating to 2200 Kelvin
- Perimeter lighting prohibited, unless motion-sensored light that extinguishes after 10 mins

Kelvin Color Temperature	2700K	3000K	3500K	4100K	5000K	6500K
Associated Effects and Moods	Ambiant Intimate Personal	Calm Warm	Friendly Inviting	Precise Clean Efficient	Daylight Vibrant	Daylight Alert
Appropriate Applications	Living/Family Rooms Commercial/Hospitality	Living/Family Rooms Commercial/Hospitality	Kitchen/Bath Light Commercial	Garage Commercial	Commercial Industrial Institutional	Commercial Industrial Institutional

DR STANDARDS TABLE

Exterior Lighting

- Current Draft Ordinance: Limits color rating to 2200 Kelvin
- Staff:
 - Increase to 3000k for single-family residential;
 - Lower rating will apply to multiple-family residential, institutional, commercial projects



Pros/Cons analysis on 2200k/2700k/3000k light color rating limit options:

Potential Color Rating Limit Options	Pros	Cons
2,200k maximum limit Level provides a very warm, amber-toned light	Warmest tone of yellow of the three options, with lowest level of dark sky impacts, but still compliant with dark sky standards	Adoption of this option would set the lowest level, potentially causing a significant number of properties with non-compliant lighting to be in violation
2,700k maximum limit Level provides warm, soft, and inviting light with golden undertones	Cooler tone of yellow of the options with somewhat higher level of dark sky impacts, but still compliant with dark sky standards	Adoption of this option would set a somewhat higher limit, potentially causing a lesser number of properties with non-compliant lighting to be in violation
3,000k maximum limit Level often called "warm white"	Coollest tone of yellow of the options with higher level of dark sky impacts, but still compliant with dark sky standards.	Adoption of this option would set the highest kelvin limit, potentially causing the fewest properties with non-compliant lighting to be in violation

	are exempt.				
2	All planned developments (e.g., subdivisions), single-family homes, commercial, multifamily, and industrial construction projects, additions onto existing		Δ	x	Δ
<u>No.</u>	<u>STANDARD</u>	<u>ADUs</u>	<u>Emerald Lake Hills/Oak Knoll (ELH),... Palomar Park (PP),... Devonshire (DEV)</u>	<u>MidCoast</u>	<u>All Other DR Areas (Coastal Zone)</u>
	development, or where 50% or more exterior glass will be replaced, must have bird-friendly treatment. Treatment is defined as: 1) one of the following applied to Surface 1/Exterior glass: a) opaque 1/4" dots or 1/8" lines with 2x2" spacing, b) low reflectance opaque materials, c) non-glass double skin facades, and 2) screens, metal screens or solar shading (External blinds, shutters, or rollers that can be moved based on the sun's position). In addition, regardless of height, all glass railings, all areas with transparent corners, fly-through features, and all glass up to 24 ft. above a green roof, must be treated. Exemptions: Single-family homes up to 30-ft above grade, first-floor storefronts, and all operable sash windows.				

DR STANDARDS TABLE

Bird-Strike Proof Glass

- No current standard
- Stand-alone SFDs up to 30 feet high exempt, 1st floor storefronts, sash windows
- Applies to:
 - Planned development, multi-family, industrial, commercial
 - Buildings where 50% of glass is replaced
 - Additions to existing development
- Measures:
 - Treatment
 - Screens

PUBLIC REVIEW OF ORDINANCE

Project Webpage:

<https://www.smcgov.org/planning/design-review-dr-ordinance-update-project>

Public Meetings:

BDRC: [September 2025](#)

BDRC: [October 2025](#)

CDRC: [August 2025](#)

CDRC: [September 2025](#)

CDRC: [October 2025](#)

[Midcoast Community Council on October 22, 2025](#)

Recommendation by Planning Commission: January 28, 2026

<https://www.smcgov.org/planning/event/planning-commission-hearing-january-28-2026>

smcgov.org/planning/design-review-dr-ordinance-update-project

Planning and Building

Design Review (DR) Ordinance Update Project

About the Project:

The Department is preparing an update to the Design Review (DR) Ordinance to achieve these goals:

1. Update existing Design Review standards with the goal to make them more objective, in response to State Laws preventing the County's ability to apply design review standards which are not objective to certain projects.
2. Simplify application of required standards by eliminating duplicate, repetitive standards and clarifying confusing standards.
3. Allow for more design flexibility to reflect contemporary styles.

To collect Bayside Design Review Committee (BDRC) and the Coastside Design Review Committee (CDRC) feedback on the draft design standards, the draft design standards were made available for review in Summer 2025. The BDRC reviewed the standards at their September and October 2025 public meetings. The CDRC reviewed the standards at their August, September, and October 2025 public meetings.

The Department made a presentation to the Midcoast Community Council on October 22, 2025, with discussion focused on standards regulating exterior lighting. The tentative date for Planning Commission review and recommendation to the Board of Supervisors is January 2026. The tentative date for Board of Supervisors review and adoption is February 2026.

The draft ordinance will be made available prior to the schedule Planning Commission hearing date.

County File No. PLN2025-00232

Contact:

For questions or comments about this project, please contact [Camille Leung](#)