



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: PLANNING AND BUILDING

File #: 23-798

Board Meeting Date: 10/3/2023

Special Notice / Hearing: 10-Day Notice
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Steve Monowitz, Community Development Director
Subject: Adoption of an ordinance amending Division VII (Building Regulations) of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code, and a resolution ratifying the ordinance codes of various fire protection districts within the County

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to:

- A) Open public hearing
- B) Close public hearing
- C) Find that the adoption of the ordinance and resolution are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15308 and 15061(b) (3); and
- D) Introduce an ordinance amending the 2022 California Building Standards Code and Division VII (Building Regulations) of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code to incorporate local San Mateo County Fire Department Fire Code amendments, and waive reading of the ordinance in its entirety; and
- E) Adopt a resolution ratifying the ordinance codes of the Coastside Fire Protection District, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, Woodside Fire Protection District, and Redwood City Fire Department for enforcement within the unincorporated areas of San Mateo County lying within their jurisdictional boundaries and delegating enforcement to each respective fire chief.

BACKGROUND:

The State of California updates California Building Standards (Title 24) every three years. These standards consist of 12 specific codes, including but not limited to the residential, building, fire, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, and energy codes. Local jurisdictions must enforce the most current version of these codes and may establish more restrictive standards to address local conditions. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors adopted the 2022 version of the California

The San Mateo County Fire Department (County Fire) is proposing additional local amendments to Article 3 (Fire Code) of the County's adopted Building Regulations (Division VII of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code) necessary for fire safety based on local climatic, geological, and topographic conditions within San Mateo County.

In addition, the referenced fire districts have adopted local amendments to the Fire Code establishing additional fire safety requirements within their respective districts. In order for these additional requirements to be legally effective within the unincorporated areas of the County, the Board of Supervisors must approve the amendments, and the County must submit them to the California Building Standards Commission with facts and findings that the local climatic, geological, and topographical conditions warrant the additional requirements.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed local amendments to the 2022 California Building Standards Code and Division VII (Building Regulations) of the San Mateo County Ordinance Code submitted by the San Mateo County Fire Department, Coastside Fire Protection District, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, Woodside Fire Protection District, and Redwood City Fire Department establish additional local fire safety requirements necessary for the protection of the unincorporated areas of San Mateo County based on climatic, geological, and topographical conditions unique to San Mateo County, as detailed in Attachments A - B.

Primary issues addressed by these amendments include:

- Defining automatic fire sprinkler system requirements for additions and remodels;
- Defining requirements and clarifying criteria for fire service features, including but not limited to access, addressing, key box, and fire control room requirements; and
- Clarifying fire safety requirements within Wildland Urban Interface areas.

With regard to the requirements for the installation of fire sprinklers within existing buildings, all four fire districts propose a "50% rule" for alterations and additions with varying criteria, or for any change of occupancy that results in an increased fire hazard or risk. Menlo Park Fire Protection District and Woodside Fire Protection District propose to apply a "50% rule" for alterations and additions to existing structures regardless of the type of occupancy or area whenever an alteration, addition, or repair, or combination thereof, impacts 50% or more of the original gross floor area. The San Mateo County Fire Department and Coastside Fire Protection District propose the same 50% rule for all existing buildings and structures, except for Group R-3 One and Two-Family Dwellings, which have separately defined thresholds. Redwood City Fire Department proposes to require for fire sprinkler systems in existing one and two-family (duplex) residential dwellings and structures when 1,000 sq. ft. or more of floor area is added, or when alterations or additions replace or increase over 50% of the existing foundation for purposes other than a repair or reinforcement, or where over 50% of the existing framing above the sill plate is added, removed, or replaced for purposes other than repair. Redwood City Fire also proposes to require fire sprinklers in all other buildings and structures which add floor area such that the combined total of existing plus added floor area is 3,000 sq. ft. or more, or when an addition, tenant improvement, remodel, alteration, or modernization project meets the definition of a substantial remodel, addition, or repair.

Additional aspects of the local amendments include but are not limited to defining and/or clarifying fire department access requirements, additional definitions unique to fire safety, and additional

criteria for fire safety within Wildland Urban Interface areas.

The Planning and Building Department, in coordination with County Fire, recommends that the Board introduce the ordinance amending the County's Building Regulations to incorporate the recommended local Fire Code modifications. Further, staff has reviewed the fire districts' proposed amendments and recommends that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution ratifying the local agency amendments.

The ordinance and resolution have been reviewed and approved by the County Attorney's Office as to form.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Adoption of the proposed amendments is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines section 15308 as an action taken by the County for the protection of the environment, and under section 15061(b)(3) on the grounds that the proposed standards are more stringent than the State standards, there are no reasonably foreseeable adverse environmental impacts, and there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant adverse effect on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Ordinance amending the San Mateo County Building Regulations
- B. Resolution ratifying the following ordinances:
 - a. Coastside Fire Protection District Ordinance
 - b. Menlo Park Fire Protection District Ordinance
 - c. Woodside Fire Protection District Ordinance
 - d. Redwood City Fire Department Ordinance