

# CITY OF HALF MOON BAY

## LCP LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT

### CHAPTER *1*

## INTRODUCTION

---

### A. OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

The Half Moon Bay Land Use Plan (LUP) is one of the key components of the City's Local Coastal Program. It is the City's definitive statement of public policy on the management of coastal access, the conservation of coastal resources, the protection of life and property from coastal hazards, the regulation of new development, the preservation of agriculture and scenic resources, and the provision of public services and transportation. The Plan is the product of more than seven years of community meetings, technical studies, and Planning Commission and City Council hearings focused on coastal preservation and development issues.

Because the entire City of Half Moon Bay lies within the Coastal Zone, the LUP also serves as the centerpiece of the Half Moon Bay General Plan. It includes the state-mandated Land Use, Circulation, and Conservation Elements. As such, the Plan defines the ultimate pattern of development in the community and provides the foundation for the City's Zoning Map. Adoption of this Plan ensures that the City will grow and change in a way that respects the natural environment, reflects transportation and other infrastructure capacity constraints, and protects the qualities that make Half Moon Bay unique.

This Plan is an update of the 1993 Half Moon Bay LUP, which was itself an update of an LUP adopted by the City in 1983. Many of the earlier policies have been carried forward. However, this LUP includes many new policies, developed both in response to new issues and to the changing requirements of the California Coastal Commission. State law requires that this document be submitted to the Coastal Commission for certification as part of the City's Local Coastal Program.

Each chapter of the Plan includes a description of the relevant requirements established by the Coastal Act, a brief summary of existing conditions and issues, and a set of policies. The policies are organized under topical headings and are numbered for easy reference.

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: generally, the text shown in New Times Roman font represents major portions of text that were carried forward from the current LCP, and non-Foundation Policies; the text shown in Arial font represents major portions of text that have been revised in the LUP update process, and Foundation Policies. There may be some places where this differentiation is not upheld. Our apologies if so. Changes made in the draft LUP since the release of the April 29, 2005 Public Review Draft are shown in underline and strike-through.

## **B. HALF MOON BAY AND ENVIRONS**

The City of Half Moon Bay is located on the California coast approximately 30 miles south of San Francisco. Among the more than 100 cities that comprise the San Francisco Bay Area, it is the only city that lies entirely within the Coastal Zone. Half Moon Bay is also the largest coastal community between Pacifica, 15 miles to the north, and Santa Cruz, 50 miles to the south. As such, it is the hub of commerce, tourism, and recreation for a large portion of the San Mateo County coast.

Half Moon Bay is one of the Bay Area's oldest communities and still retains a rich heritage shaped by its coastal location. The crescent-shaped bay that is the City's namesake was first explored by Gaspar de Portola in the late 1700s. The area was initially settled in the 1840s and became a farming and ranching outpost by the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Construction of the Ocean Shore Railroad from San Francisco in the early 1900s sparked a land speculation boom in the area and led to the creation of thousands of small lots along the coastal plain. When the railroad disappeared in the 1920s, the majority of these lots remained undeveloped. Their disposition remains a critical planning issue in the City today.

Much of the City's form was defined by the railroad-era subdivisions and by subsequent development that took place after the improvement of Highways 1 and 92, the major links to the rest of the Bay Area. With the Pacific Ocean on the west and the coastal hills just a mile or so to the east, the City evolved in a linear pattern. A well-defined downtown, highly valued for its pedestrian-oriented character, unique shops, and concentration of historic buildings, lies at the center of this area. To the north and south is a patchwork of residential areas, commercial uses, agricultural tracts, and scenic open space. This mixture of rural, agricultural, and suburban uses gives the City a character that is unique among the cities of San Mateo County. The City's semi-rural charm, coupled with its spectacular coastside setting, is among Half Moon Bay's most cherished and important qualities.

The City of Half Moon Bay incorporated in 1959 with fewer than 2,000 residents. Its population doubled during the 1960s, nearly doubled again during the 1970s, and continued to grow steadily through the 1980s and 1990s. Today, the City has about 12,500 residents. Half Moon Bay was the fastest growing city in San Mateo County during the 1990s, and continues to face tremendous growth pressure. This is a result of both the City's proximity to Silicon Valley and Peninsula job centers, and its desirability as a place to live. Strong planning and development regulations are imperative to protect the qualities that make Half Moon Bay what it is today, and to conserve the sensitive environmental resources that exist throughout the community.

The incorporated area encompasses eight square miles and includes 6.2 miles of shoreline. About three quarters of the shoreline is in public ownership, most of it within Half Moon Bay State Beach. The beach draws a large number of visitors and supports hiking, cycling, horseback riding, swimming, surfing, sunbathing, and picnicking. Beach access is constrained in some areas by limited parking and a lack of improved facilities, creating localized congestion and potential safety hazards. The capacity of Highway 1 is regularly exceeded on most weekends as visitors and residents attempt to reach the beach or enjoy a drive along the coast.

The shoreline itself is characterized by bluffs ranging in height from two feet to about 80 feet, with the higher bluffs generally located along the southern shoreline. Bluff retreat and erosion is occurring to varying degrees along the entire shoreline. While these are natural processes, they have been accelerated in some areas by development, agriculture, and recreational uses.

Sandy beaches and coastal dunes occur along the oceanfront, providing critical habitat for a range of plants and animals. Above the bluffs, an ecologically sensitive coastal prairie is interspersed with seasonal wetlands and eucalyptus forests, as well as urban and agricultural habitat areas. Many creeks bisect the coastal plain, each supporting riparian woodlands along the banks. The largest of these creeks—Pilarcitos Creek—drains a large part of the coastal hills and defines the canyon that separates Half Moon Bay from the eastern part of the county. To the east of Highway 1, grasslands and coastal scrub are prevalent on the hillsides.

Each of these plant communities is unique, and each requires careful management to prevent its degradation. Grading and development have already reduced habitat value in a number of places. Once compromised, these resources are very difficult to restore. Future activities must retain as much of the native landscape as possible, and restore elements of this landscape wherever feasible.

Figure 1-1 indicates the location of Half Moon Bay relative to the San Francisco Bay Area. Figure 1-2 indicates the City limits and the major features of the Half Moon Bay Planning Area.

## **C. COASTAL ACT REQUIREMENTS**

Land use along the California coast is governed by both federal and state law. In 1972, Congress passed legislation creating a federal coastal zone and establishing a federal coastal zone management policy. Congress declared that it was national policy to “encourage and assist the states to exercise effectively their responsibilities in the coastal zone through the development and implementation of management programs to achieve wise use of the land and water resources of the coastal zone” (Title 16 U.S.C. 1452b). The federal law also indicated that the ecological, historical, cultural, and aesthetic values of coastal areas were to be given full consideration, as was the need for economic development.

While the federal government created the coastal zone, California voters approved Proposition 20, the California Coastal Zone Conservation Act, in 1972. This ballot initiative established a directive to prepare a comprehensive coastal plan and set up temporary regional coastal commissions with permit authority. The permanent enabling law creating the Coastal Commission was approved by the State legislature in 1976. The 1976 Coastal Act established a different set of policies, a different boundary line, and different permitting procedures than had been established by Proposition 20. It transferred permitting authority, with certain limitations reserved for the state, to local governments contingent upon adoption and certification of Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) by the Coastal Commission.

The LCP includes the local government’s land use plans, zoning ordinances and maps, and other actions that meet the requirements of and implement the provisions of the Coastal Act. The land use plans include “the relevant portion of a local government’s general plan, or local coastal element which are sufficiently detailed to indicate the kinds, location, and intensity of land uses,

the applicable resource protection and development policies and, where necessary, a listing of implementing actions” (PRC Section 30108.5). The zoning ordinances, maps, and other actions must be consistent with the land use plans and must be adequate to ensure the implementation of local policies.

A local jurisdiction may only have review and permitting authority for coastal development after its LCP has been certified by the Coastal Commission. This authority is retained by the Coastal Commission itself for communities that lack a certified LCP. Although Half Moon Bay presently has a certified LCP, periodic updates and amendments are important to reflect emerging issues and changing conditions. Moreover, the Coastal Commission is required to periodically review the progress of local governments in carrying out the Coastal Act. The criteria by which an LCP is deemed adequate are defined in Sections 30200 through 30264 of the Coastal Act.

A major incentive for maintaining an up to date LCP is local control, including the authority over developments proposed by state agencies and special districts.

After an LCP is certified, the State Coastal Commission continues to exercise permit jurisdiction over certain areas, such as development in State Tidelands. The Commission may also consider appeals of local government decisions, provided that these decisions fall into one of the following categories (PRC Section 30603):

- (1) Developments approved by the local government between the sea and the first public road paralleling the sea, or within 300 feet of the inland extent of any beach, or of the mean high tideline of the sea where there is no beach, whichever distance is greater.
- (2) Developments approved by the local government not included in paragraph (1) that are located on tidelands, submerged lands, and public trust lands, within 100 feet of any wetland, estuary, or stream, or within 300 feet of the top of the seaward face of any coastal bluff.
- (3) Developments approved by the local government not included in paragraphs (1) or (2) that are located in a sensitive coastal resource area.
- (4) Any development approved by a coastal county that is not designated as the principal permitted use under the zoning ordinance or zoning district map.
- (5) Any development which constitutes a major public works project or a major energy facility.

Appeals may only be considered if it is alleged that the development does not conform to the standards set by the jurisdiction’s LCP or the public access policies of the Coastal Act.

The contents of the LCP itself are spelled out by the Coastal Act. The Program must include a specific public access component to ensure that maximum access to the coast and public recreation areas is provided (PRC Section 30500a). In addition, the LCP Land Use Plan must consider specific land uses and activities that have more than local importance. These include recreational facilities of regional or statewide significance, military and national defense installations, major energy facilities, regional transportation and public works facilities, state colleges and universities, coastal agriculture and fisheries, wildlife habitats, and a variety of uses that maximize public access to the coast or serve coastal visitors.

Due to the breadth of topics covered by the Coastal Act, state policies for the use of land within the coastal zone may sometimes conflict with one another. The state legislature has recognized this possibility, and has specifically directed that “such conflicts be resolved in a manner which on balance is the most protective of significant coastal resources” (PRC Section 30007.5). This directive is not intended to preclude development, but rather requires each local government to strike a balance between the protection of private property rights, the need for economic growth, and the need to protect coastal resources. The State has ruled that local governments must make these decisions in a regional, as well as local, context.

## **D. RELATIONSHIP OF THE LUP TO OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE HALF MOON BAY GENERAL PLAN**

Section 65300 of the State Government Code requires each city and county to adopt a comprehensive long-term general plan for its physical development. The plan must “comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies” (Section 65300.5) and must ensure the orderly physical development of the community. It must provide for the social and economic needs of local residents, addressing such topics as jobs, housing, traffic, commercial services, public safety, parks, schools, and infrastructure.

The general plan must include the following seven mandatory elements:

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Housing
- Open Space
- Conservation
- Safety
- Noise

Cities and counties are not required to organize their general plans under these headings and may combine elements to avoid redundancy. They may also add optional elements to address issues of local importance, such as historic preservation or community design.

The provisions of the LCP clearly overlap those of a general plan, but are not identical. Some topics, such as dredging and filling, are unique to the LCP; other topics, such as noise, are unique to the general plan. Moreover, the general plan is typically not parcel-specific, while the LCP must be detailed enough to determine principal permitted and conditional uses, as well as the specified standards that will be used to review development proposals in various land use categories.

Some of the 15 counties and 53 cities in California’s Coastal Zone have met the general plan and LCP requirements by incorporating “coastal elements” within their general plans. This is particularly true in communities where the coastal zone represents only part of the jurisdiction—for instance, in the coastal counties. Other communities have integrated the standards and

policies mandated by the Coastal Act into the other elements of their general plans. This is the approach that has been taken by the City of Half Moon Bay.

This LUP meets the state requirement for a Land Use, Circulation, and Conservation Element. Land use policies are contained primarily in Chapter 9 but appear throughout the document. Many of the scenic resource, agricultural, and public works policies also have implications for the way in which land is used. Circulation policies are contained in Chapter 10. Circulation is also addressed in the coastal access policies in Chapter 2. Conservation is the focus of Chapter 3, but is an integral consideration throughout the LUP. The LUP also includes the Land Use Diagram and the Circulation Diagram, both mandatory components of the general plan.

Other elements of the Half Moon Bay General Plan may be found under separate cover. The City adopted its Safety and Noise Elements in 1991. It is in the process of adopting an Open Space Element and an updated Housing Element. Half Moon Bay has also adopted a Parks and Recreation Element (1995). These other elements are consistent with the LUP and reflect the same assumptions about the future of the City.

## **E. SUMMARY OF THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE LUP UPDATE**

The Land Use Plan update was initiated in 1997 with the appointment of a Public Advisory Committee (PAC) by the Half Moon Bay City Council. The 22 members of the PAC were all residents of the City and represented a wide range of constituent groups. Over a period of five months, the PAC developed specific policy and action recommendations addressing natural resources, residential and commercial development, circulation, economic growth, parks and recreation, and agriculture.

In 1998, the City conducted two public workshops on the General Plan. The workshops covered not only the Local Coastal Program, but also broader issues related to the quality of life and the vision for Half Moon Bay's future. At the second public workshop, participants evaluated different scenarios for the City's growth. A clear preference was expressed for retaining a one percent annual growth cap and protecting small town character.

Following the completion of the PAC report and the public workshops, the Half Moon Bay Planning Commission began a comprehensive review and update of the adopted 1993 LUP. Policies were edited and updated based on current conditions, commissioner input, and emerging issues. Consistent with the direction provided by the community at the earlier workshops, the updated policies placed a strong emphasis on growth management, habitat protection, and resource conservation.

During 1999 and 2000, the technical studies necessary to support an integrated General Plan/LUP were completed. These included a transportation analysis, assessments of hazards and natural resources, and a transfer of development rights (TDR) study. A new Land Use Diagram was drafted and additional policies were evaluated.

~~When the City of Malibu submitted its LUP to the Coastal Commission in March 2000 for informal review, the Commission determined that the Plan was insufficiently detailed to~~

~~meet the requirements of the Coastal Act. In August 2000, Assembly Bill 988 amended the Coastal Act by requiring the Coastal Commission staff itself to prepare Malibu's LUP. Work on the Half Moon Bay LUP was momentarily suspended while the Malibu Plan was being prepared.~~

Work was begun again on the LUP in 2002, with a subcommittee of the City Council and the Planning Commission reviewing and revising LUP text and policies. After a hiatus related to staff changes, work turned again to promoting public involvement in the planning process in October 2004. Since then, there has been an ongoing series of public joint workshops, public education sessions and hearings involving the City Council, Planning Commission, and the public. This LUP reflects that work.

This document ~~is still a draft, and~~ addresses only the first step in the LCP Update process- the Foundational Policies and Infill Map. The LCP will be subject to revision prior to adoption. Revisions may be made in response to comments from the Coastal Commission, the Planning Commission, the City Council, and the public at large.

## **F. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

This LUP is guided by several overarching principles. Some of these principles have been established by the State and are articulated in the Coastal Act. Others have been established by the City of Half Moon Bay through its Public Advisory Committee, Planning Commission, and City Council.

### **Coastal Act Goals**

The Coastal Act establishes the following five goals to guide future activities in the coastal zone (PRC Section 30001.5):

- (1) Protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the coastal zone environment and its natural and manmade resources.
- (2) Assure orderly, balanced utilization and conservation of coastal zone resources, taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of the state.
- (3) Maximize public access to and along the coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone consistent with sound resource conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.
- (4) Assure priority for coastal-dependent and coastal-related development over other development on the coast.
- (5) Encourage state and local initiative and cooperation in preparing procedures to implement coordinated planning and development for mutually beneficial uses, including educational uses, in the coastal zone.

Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act (PRC Sections 30200 through 30263) provides additional direction on how the Land Use Plan should achieve these goals. Through the adoption of this LUP, the policies of the Coastal Act (Sections 30001.5, 30007.5, 30107.5, 30121, and 30210 through 30264) are adopted by reference by the City of Half Moon Bay as the guiding policies of the

Land Use Plan. These policies are supplemented by the local policies contained in this document, which are also adopted by the City.

The relevant sections of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act are cited in each chapter of this LUP. Prior to approving any Coastal Development Permit, the City must make the finding that the development conforms to the policies and requirements contained in the Land Use Plan, including the relevant sections of the Coastal Act.

## **Local Goals**

The City has adopted the following 16 planning goals closely based on the original Goals enunciated by the LCP Public Advisory Committee in 1997 to complement those set forth by the Coastal Act:

**GOAL 1: SMALL TOWN CHARACTER**

Preserve the small-town rural and historical character of Half Moon Bay.

**GOAL 2: SCENIC RESOURCES**

Preserve the natural beauty of Half Moon Bay's landscape, including its hills, blufftops, beaches, beach access routes, and significant natural features.

**GOAL 3: NATURAL RESOURCES**

Preserve, enhance, and where feasible restore Half Moon Bay's natural resources, including marine, coastal, plant and wildlife habitat open space, and stream and wetland resources, and provide appropriate public access to these resources.

**GOAL 4: BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

Protect, restore, and maintain natural habitat and enhance biological diversity. Prevent adverse impacts to rare, endangered, threatened, and unique species resulting from development and misuse of natural areas.

**GOAL 5: WATER QUALITY**

Protect and enhance the quality of local groundwater, surface water, creeks, and the ocean. Consider potential marine and aquatic impacts in local-decision making, defining and applying standards that effectively prevent water pollution.

**GOAL 6: OPEN SPACE AND VIEW PRESERVATION**

Retain the area's open, natural quality by requiring new development to be in character with natural landforms and to minimize the obstruction of important views and viewsheds.

**GOAL 7: BEACH ACCESS**

Provide beach and shoreline access while minimizing environmental impacts to coastal habitats.

**GOAL 8: TOURISM**

Recognize that Half Moon Bay will continue to be a tourist destination because of its location, landscape, coastal resources, open space, agricultural heritage and activities, and small town character. Maintain the existing economic benefits of tourism. Increase these benefits only where there will be no significant, adverse, unmitigatable impacts on the environment.

**GOAL 9: GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

Limit residential growth to a maximum annual rate of one percent, as per Measure D.

- GOAL 10: INTEGRATING CONSERVATION AND LAND USE PLANNING**  
Integrate natural resource conservation principles with the City’s planning and design review processes by educating project sponsors about local resource protection goals and policies early in the design and development process, and by pursuing the acquisition of natural habitat areas as permanent open space and natural parkland.
- GOAL 11: ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**  
Revise the environmental and design review processes to ensure the effective protection of natural resources and compliance with federal, state, and City policies and regulations. This includes establishing specific criteria for protection of natural resources, and developing effective monitoring and enforcement programs.
- GOAL 12: ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES**  
When considering applications for development or other land use changes, show a preference for projects that integrate and emphasize alternative transportation modes, including pedestrian and bicycle transit.
- GOAL 13: INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY**  
Allow development only when there is sufficient public infrastructure capacity—especially highway and local street capacity—to support it.
- GOAL 14: COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**  
Ensure that new commercial development serves both City residents and visitors.
- GOAL 15: SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
Require future residential and commercial development to support the community’s goals for sustainable economic development and a high quality of life. When evaluating economic development opportunities, place a priority on companies that do not cause significant environmental impacts, and that provide jobs with a range of wages suitable to the skill levels of existing residents.
- GOAL 16: AGRICULTURE**  
Preserve and enhance existing agricultural land and operations to promote the agricultural economy of Half Moon Bay. Promote and support agri-tourism to supplement farm income and to give economic value to open space lands.

## **G. LUP Policies**

### **1.4 General Policies**

#### **Policy 1-1**

The City shall adopt by reference those policies of the Coastal Act (Coastal Act Sections 30001.5, 30007.5, 30107.5, 30121, and 30210 through 30264) as the guiding policies of the Land Use Plan.

#### **Policy 1-2**

Where policies within the LUP overlap or conflict with one another, give precedence to the policy which is the most broadly protective of coastal resources, including resources which are scenic, historic, natural, agricultural, horticultural and recreational.

#### **Policy 1-2**

~~Where policies within the Land Use Plan overlap or conflict, on balance, the policy which is the most protective of coastal resources shall take precedence.~~

#### **Policy 1-3**

In the event that policies within the LUP are found to conflict with other elements of the City's General Plan or existing ordinances, give precedence to the policies of the LUP.

#### **Policy 1-3**

~~Where there are conflicts between the policies set forth in the Coastal Land Use Element and other elements of the City's General Plan or existing ordinances, on balance, the policies of this Coastal Land Use Element shall take precedence.~~

### **POLICY 1.4 DEVELOPMENT SHALL BE CONSISTENT WITH LUP**

#### **(FOUNDATION POLICY)**

Prior to the issuance of any development permit, require that the development meet all applicable requirements set forth in the Land Use Plan policies, General Plan Elements, Half Moon Bay Municipal Code, and all other provisions of the Half Moon Bay Local Coastal Program.

#### **Policy 1-4**

~~Prior to the issuance of any development permit required by this Plan, the City shall make the finding that the development meets the standards set forth in all applicable Land Use Plan policies.~~

### **POLICY 1-5 (FOUNDATION POLICY)**

No Coastal Development Permit shall be required for development exempt under the California Coastal Act and its Administrative Regulations. Other development approvals may be required by law.

#### **Policy 1-6**

The textual discussion is intended as elaboration of and justification for the Plan policies and map designations. Therefore, the text shall be considered a part of the Land Use Plan, serving as the findings justifying the specified policies and Land Use Maps. Appendices A and B are hereby incorporated into the Plan

**POLICY 1-7 (FOUNDATION POLICY)**

Maps adopted as part of the LUP by reference, including the Residential Infill Map, and the Downtown Area Map represent the best information available at the time of adoption. These maps depict parcel information from the San Mateo County Assessor's Office. Assessor's parcels are mapped for tax purposes only; therefore, the maps should not be used to determine if a parcel is a legal lot for land development purposes. Legal lots are those that are validly created or recognized under the State Subdivision Map Act and local ordinances. Due to limitations inherent to the mapping process, the precise location of features depicted on these maps may not be as shown. Actual locations of features, as defined by the policies and criteria of the LUP shall govern for regulatory purposes.

