

**1994**



**GENERAL PLAN**  
**and LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM**  
for the COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA

ADOPTED by the BOARD of SUPERVISORS • 5/24/94  
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EFFECTIVE DATE • 12/19/94

County of Santa Cruz  
**1994**  
**General Plan and  
Local Coastal Program  
Land Use Plan**

Adopted by the Board of Supervisors May 24, 1994  
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## **Chapter 1**

# **INTRODUCTION**

- PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC SETTING
- STATE GENERAL PLAN LAW
- PLANNING HISTORY - COUNTY
- PLANNING HISTORY - COASTAL
- 1994 GENERAL PLAN AND LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM
- ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS
- PREPARATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW
- INTERPRETATION
- ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
- PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS  
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# INTRODUCTION

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## **PURPOSE**

The General Plan is a set of policies and programs to guide future growth and development in a manner consistent with the goals and quality of life desired by Santa Cruz County citizens. These policies become the basis for all decisions related to the use of land and future expansion of the community.

The policies and underlying philosophy of the General Plan have an effect upon all County residents and visitors. Planning for the County budget, water and sewer systems, roads, natural resource protection, police protection, fire and emergency services, libraries, schools and parks are all connected to the policies and programs contained in the plan.

Because of the direct or indirect links to all County citizens, the 1994 updated General Plan has broadened its scope to reflect the importance of items previously not included in the 1980 General Plan. It is the intent of this updated plan to strengthen existing natural and agricultural

resource protection policies, and to preserve and enhance the economic base and rural character of the County. The plan guides commercial and residential development in a way which accommodates reasonable growth and redevelopment while limiting urban expansion.

The 1994 General Plan serves two functions: it is a regulatory framework against which all proposed development is measured; and it is a vision statement for the desired future of the County. By its nature, the General Plan language must be both legal and philosophical, reflecting the dual purpose of the document.

## **PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC SETTING**

Santa Cruz County is the second smallest county in California, containing a total of 282,240 acres (441 square miles), located between the San Francisco Bay Area and Monterey Peninsula. (Figure 1-1) The 1990 census estimated the County population at about 230,000.

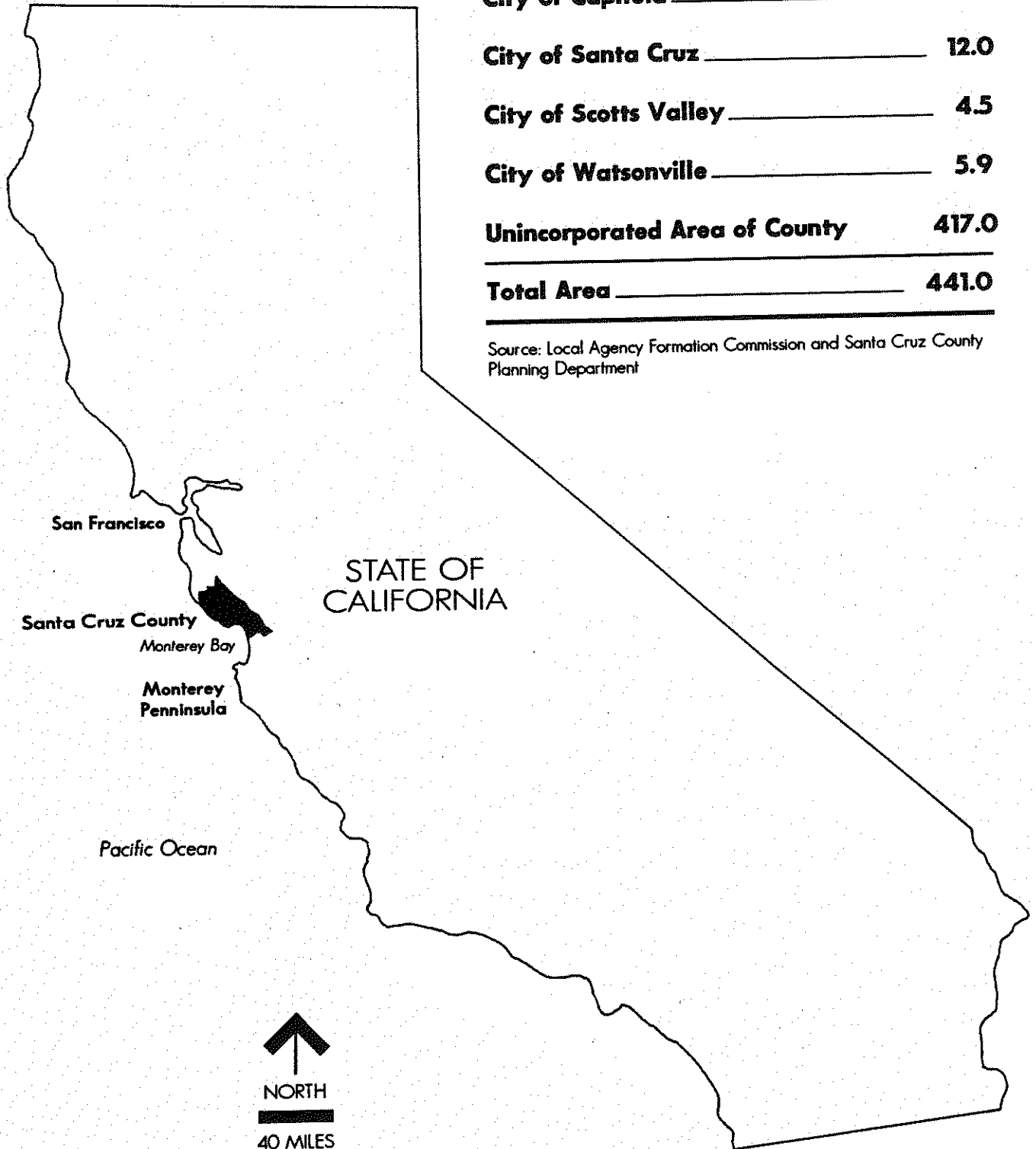


# SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SIZE

Estimated Area in Square Miles

City of Capitola	1.6
City of Santa Cruz	12.0
City of Scotts Valley	4.5
City of Watsonville	5.9
Unincorporated Area of County	417.0
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>441.0</b>

Source: Local Agency Formation Commission and Santa Cruz County Planning Department



## County of Santa Cruz VICINITY MAP

The physical environment of Santa Cruz County is truly one of the most beautiful and diverse in California. The topography of the County is varied in character, containing such features as the forested Santa Cruz Mountains in the north and northeast, the mid-County coastal terraces where a large portion of the County's population is located, and the alluvial south County which is predominately in agricultural use. The central California coast location and the County's topographic features contribute to the ideal Mediterranean climate of Santa Cruz County.

Due to this climate and the variety of landscape types, the County of Santa Cruz contains a diverse economic base which is often natural resource based and includes visitor serving and service industries, agriculture and manufacturing.

The dominant economic activities are centered in the agricultural and food processing of the south County and in service and tourism in the North County. Other economic activities include quarrying, forestry, wood products, fishing and other manufacturing. Two major educational institutions, Cabrillo Community College and the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California, are located in mid- and north County areas respectively.

With a spectacular coastline, accessible beaches, and wooded mountains all in proximity to several northern California metropolitan areas, Santa Cruz County is an important vacation and recreation area. Within its borders are several state parks and a number of state beaches.

Five major state highways connect Santa Cruz with adjacent counties. Highway 1 leads along the coast from San Francisco south to the Cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola, and Watsonville and then on to Monterey. Highway 9 traverses the County from the City of Santa Cruz through the rural villages of Felton, Ben Lomond and Boulder Creek. Highway 17 also crosses the Santa Cruz Mountains into Santa Clara County passing through the City of Scotts Valley. Highways 129 and 152 join the City of Watsonville with neighboring Santa Clara County. The Southern Pacific Railroad presently provides freight service to the Pajaro Valley along the coast of the County and extends into the San Lorenzo Valley. One small airport accommodating private planes is located in Watsonville.

Consistent with the California Coastal Act of 1976 and Measure J, the growth management referendum of 1978, the County maintains a distinction between urban and rural areas through the use of a stable Urban/Rural Boundary. The Urban/Rural Boundary is represented by an Urban Services Line (USL) and a Rural Services Line (RSL).

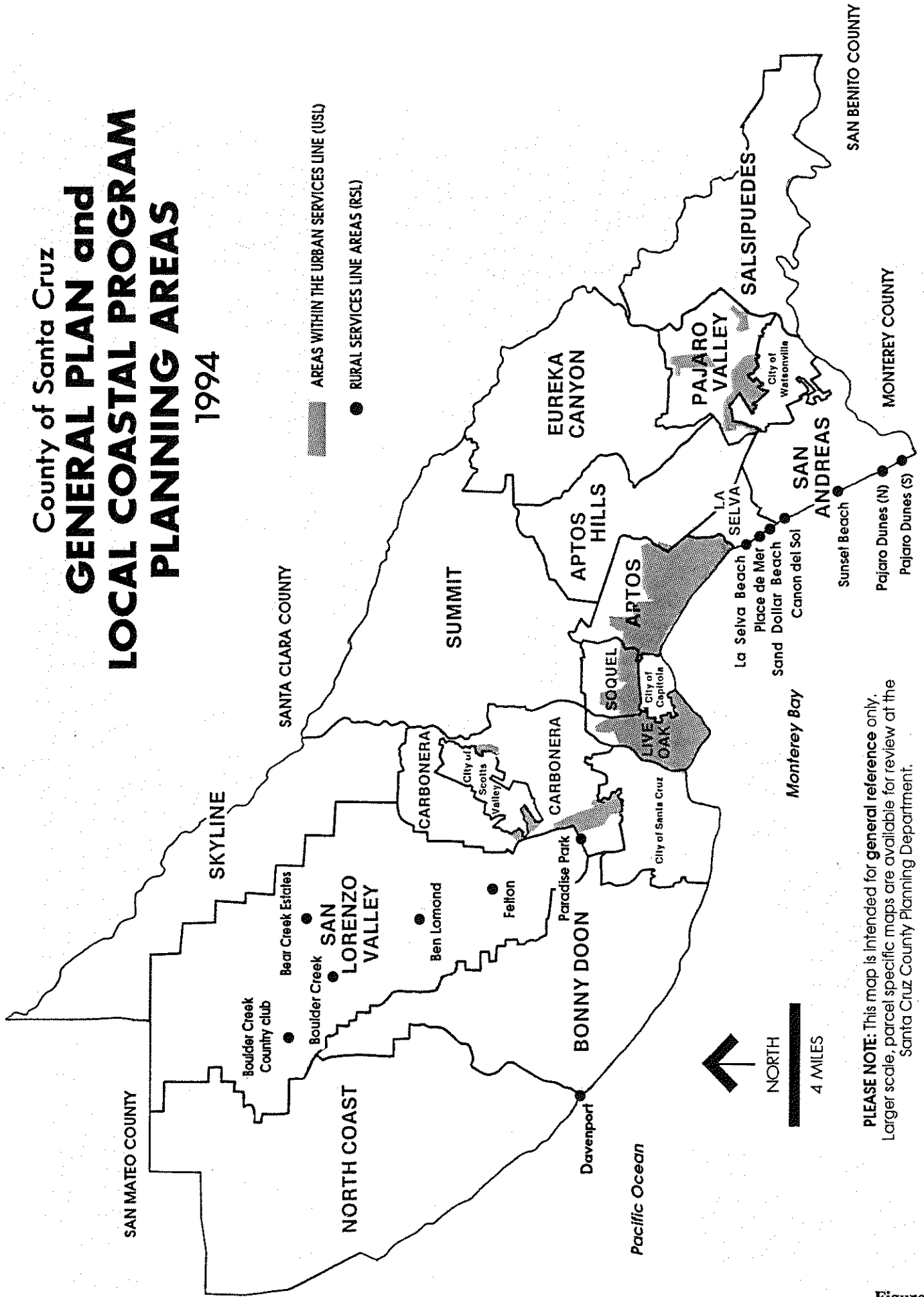
Urban concentrations of development are located within the four incorporated cities of Scotts Valley, Santa Cruz, Capitola and Watsonville; and in the unincorporated areas of Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, and Freedom, as defined by the Urban Services Line. It is basic County policy to direct a large share of the County's growth into the areas within the USL to facilitate the provision of services for future growth and preservation of the character of the rural portion of the County.

In addition to the areas within the Urban Services Line, there are also urban enclaves (located outside the USL) which are recognized as having urban densities which may or may not have all urban services. These enclaves are defined by a Rural Services Line (RSL) and include the communities of Davenport, Boulder Creek, Boulder Creek Country Club, Bear Creek Estates, Ben Lomond, Felton, Paradise Park, La Selva Beach, Place de Mer, Sand Dollar Beach, Canon del Sol, Sunset Beach, Pajaro Dunes North, and Pajaro Dunes South.

Chapter 2 (Land Use: General Land use Policies - Planning Framework) contains an expanded description of the distinction between urban and rural areas of the County.

# County of Santa Cruz GENERAL PLAN and LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM PLANNING AREAS

1994



**PLEASE NOTE:** This map is intended for general reference only. Larger scale, parcel specific maps are available for review at the Santa Cruz County Planning Department.

**Figure 1-2**  
**Page 1-5**

# STATE GENERAL PLAN LAW

The California Planning and Zoning Law (Section 65300 et seq. of the Government Code) requires adoption of a comprehensive long-term General Plan for the physical development of a county. Certain elements are required by law to be included in the General Plan, such as Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Safety and Noise; other elements, such as Community

Design, Parks and Recreation, and Public Facilities are optional. Figure 1-3 indicates which chapters address the issues of the required General Plan elements as well as identifies which chapters incorporate Local Coastal Program policies. The Local Coastal Program is required by separate law and is described in the Planning History-Coastal section of this chapter.

Figure 1-3 Chapters Which Address General Plan Elements and the Local Coastal Program								
	CHAPTER							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>REQUIRED ELEMENTS:</b>								
LAND USE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CIRCULATION			X					
HOUSING		X		X				
CONSERVATION					X			X
OPEN SPACE					X	X		
SAFETY						X		
NOISE			X				X	
<b>OPTIONAL ELEMENTS:</b>								
PARKS & RECREATION							X	
PUBLIC FACILITIES							X	
COMMUNITY DESIGN								X
<b>The LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM LAND USE PLAN is Incorporated In 7 chapters of the General Plan and the Glossary</b>	X	X	X		X	X	X	X



The Land Use Element is shown to be implemented by all of the chapters of this General Plan. Because Land Use policies are spread throughout the document, policies relating to Land Use Designations (Classifications) are also found in several separate chapters. Figure 1-4 lists

each of Santa Cruz County General Plan and Local Coastal Program Land Use Designations followed by the chapter which contains the primary policies corresponding to the Designation.

<b>Figure 1-4</b>		<b>Chapter</b>
<b>General Plan Land Use Designations</b>		
AG	Agriculture	5
C-O	Office Commercial	2
C-N	Neighborhood Commercial	2
C-C	Community Commercial	2
C-V	Visitor Accommodations	2
C-S	Service Commercial/Light Industrial	2
I	Heavy Industrial	2
Q	Quarry/Mining	5
O-U	Urban-Open Space	5
O-C	Resource Conservation	5
O-L	Lake, Reservoir, Lagoon	5
O-R	Parks, Recreation and Open Space Proposed Parks and Recreation (Overlay) Designation	7
P	Public Facility	2
R-M	Mountain Residential	2
R-R	Rural Residential	2
R-S	Suburban Residential	2
R-UVL	Urban Residential, Very Low Density	2
R-UL	Urban Residential, Low Density	2
R-UM	Urban Residential, Medium Density	2
R-UH	Urban Residential, High Density	2

## PLANNING HISTORY - COUNTY

Santa Cruz County's first comprehensive General Plan was prepared in the late 1950s and adopted in 1961. At that time, the County's population was 82,000, and the projected 1985 population was 200,000. The 1961 plan showed urban development along the coastal terrace and around the City of Watsonville, with rural development extending into portions of the foothills and mountains. Large areas were designated for commercial recreation and farming, allowing for development of private recreational facilities such as camps, conference centers and resorts, as well as residences on large parcels. Also large portions of the County in the mountains along the Summit/Skyline ridge and in the North Coast area were set aside as "conserved" areas to be afforded full protection from any uses that would harm their natural character.

In the 1960s, the County adopted several area plans which later were updated and replaced in the 1970s by a series of Area General Plans. The eight area plans that were adopted in the County covered the planning areas of Bonny Doon, San Lorenzo Valley, Live Oak, Soquel, Aptos, La Selva, Pajaro Beach, and Pajaro Valley.

In the late 1960s, comprehensive water planning was expanded with the adoption of the County's Master Plan for Water Development 1968-2020, which identified a series of potential reservoir sites and water facilities to serve the County's water needs. In 1973, the County adopted the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan providing extensive inventories of County resources and policies for protection as well as development of these resources. That plan served as the Recreation, Open Space, and Conservation elements to the County General Plan. A series of other functional elements to the General Plan, as required by state law at that time, were adopted starting in 1969, including the Housing, Seismic Safety, Fire Safety, Noise, and Scenic Highways Elements.

By 1972, coastal development throughout California had resulted in the degradation and, in some instances, destruction of coastal resources and had greatly decreased opportunities for public access to the shore. Recognizing these trends, California voters passed Proposition 20 which led to the California Coastal Act of 1976, followed by the adoption of the County's Local Coastal Program

in 1981. (See the Planning History - Coastal section for additional background.) During this same time period, the growth rate of Santa Cruz County was one of the fastest in the State, due to the natural attractiveness of the coastal and mountain areas, as well as the jobs-to-housing imbalance in adjacent Santa Clara County.

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The rapid growth rate of the 1970s coupled with the community desire for agricultural and environmental protection, and preservation of quality of life, led to the passage in 1978 of a ballot referendum, Measure J (the growth management referendum). Measure J called for a comprehensive growth management system, including population growth limits, the provision of affordable housing, preservation of agricultural lands and natural resources, the retention of a distinction between urban and rural areas, and an enhancement of the quality of life within the County's urban areas. In the early 1980s, the County adopted a series of reports and ordinances with the 1980 General Plan and Local Coastal Program to implement this ballot referendum.

In addition, from 1977 to 1986, the County adopted several ordinances regulating land use activities. Although these ordinances were not developed solely in response to Measure J, they have also become an integral part of the County's Growth Management System.

An overall evaluation of the Growth Management System was conducted in 1986. The Growth Impact Study encompassed four reports: Growth Trends Report (August 1986), Measure J - A Report on Progress Toward Housing Objectives (September 1986), the Santa Cruz County Growth Management System Environmental Impact Report (December 1986) and the Growth Management Study Final Report (December 1986).

In response to report recommendations, additional emphasis was placed on evaluating the impacts of development on the County's rural resources and the County's policies regarding rural resources. A Preliminary Rural Resources Assessment was completed in 1991 which concluded that the policies relating to rural development have adequately protected the rural natural resources.

## THE 1980 GENERAL PLAN

The 1980 General Plan represented a major integration and consolidation of existing planning policy in the County. The Plan brought together the land use and growth management policies previously found in the countywide General Plan and its various functional elements, the several Area General Plans, and other planning documents, resolutions and County ordinances. In addition, the plan included Housing and Transportation Elements, energy policies, and revised General Plan maps prepared to a consistent format and set of mapping designations.

## VILLAGE/TOWN/COMMUNITY/ SPECIFIC PLANS

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, several companion documents to the General Plan were prepared for various special areas. The purpose of these plans is to provide a more focussed and detailed analysis of an area than is otherwise found in the General Plan. All the adopted plans were prepared with extensive citizen participation at community workshops. These Village, Town, Community or Specific Plans take a variety of forms and address unique land use and character issues relevant to the focus area. Figure 1-6 lists the plans which have been completed, as well as additional plans proposed for future adoption.

## PLANNING HISTORY - COASTAL

In 1972, California voters recognized that the California Coastal Zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource of vital and enduring interest to all the people and exists as a delicately balanced ecosystem. The permanent protection of the state's natural and scenic resources was determined to be a paramount concern to the present and future residents of the state and nation. These fundamental findings led to the passage of Proposition 20 and later formed the basis for the California Coastal Act of 1976. Proposition 20 temporarily set up a State Coastal Conservation and Development Commission and six Regional Commissions to regulate coastal development while the Commission prepared a statewide Coastal Plan.

Based on this statewide Coastal Plan, the State Legislature passed the Coastal Act of 1976. This Act sets up detailed policies for permanent coastal management.

The basic goals of the Coastal Act, as stated in Public Resources Code Section 30001.5 are to:

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

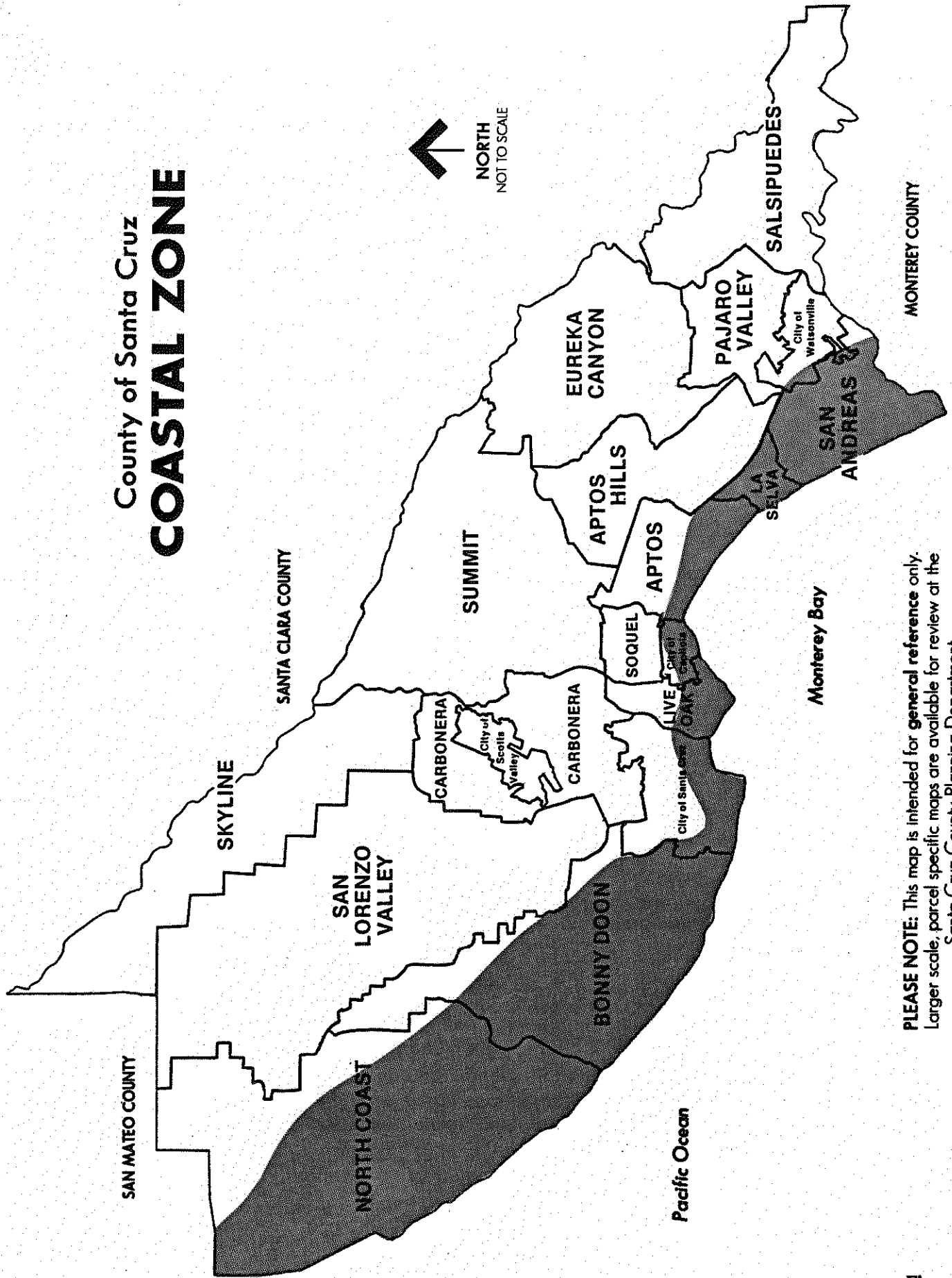
Most of the authority vested in the California Commission by the Coastal Act is to be transferred to the local governments through adoption and certification of "Local Coastal Programs."

## THE 1983 LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM

As required by the California Coastal Act of 1976, the County prepared and adopted a Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan for the coastal zone of the County. (See Figure 1-5, County of Santa Cruz Coastal Zone.) This Land Use Plan was certified by the California Coastal Commission on January 12, 1982. As a part of the implementation of the Land Use Plan, the plan was adopted on November 16, 1982 as an element of the County General Plan to be effective in the unincorporated portion of the coastal zone of the County of Santa Cruz; and thereby amended the previous General Plan policies where the Local Coastal Program policies were more stringent. The California Coastal Commission certified the County's implementation program and on January 13, 1983, transferred coastal permit authority to the County. Except for coastal inundation and public trust areas, coastal development permits are issued by the County, with right of appeal to the California Coastal Commission in those instances specifically defined in the County Code Chapter titled, Coastal Zone Regulations). The Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan was published as a separate companion volume to the 1980 General Plan, but is now incorporated into the 1994 General Plan document.



# County of Santa Cruz COASTAL ZONE



**PLEASE NOTE:** This map is intended for general reference only. Larger scale, parcel specific maps are available for review at the Santa Cruz County Planning Department.

## **THE 1994 GENERAL PLAN AND LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM**

In 1989 the County Planning staff was directed by the Board of Supervisors to begin an update to the 1980 General Plan. The process included information gathering with numerous public meetings culminating in the development of a General Plan Background Report, 1991.

The Background Report and associated technical appendix describe the existing physical conditions and related land use trends of the County and form the base for the policies of the plan. The report was prepared as an informational document and was used as a reference source in creating the 1994 General Plan. (See Appendix A, List of Sources and References.)

During this data collection phase, in 1990, Santa Cruz County voters passed Measure C, a referendum declaring the 1990s as the "Decade of the Environment". The referendum set forth resource protection and development policies and has strengthened the foundation of the 1994 General Plan.

As a result of the findings of the Preliminary Rural Resources Assessment, the 1994 General Plan retains the existing resource protection policies for the rural areas of the County and focuses on development issues in the unincorporated urban areas of the County.

More than thirty public meetings were held to gather input from citizens. (Two urban area plans, Live Oak and Pajaro Valley are expected to be completed in the future as companion documents to the General Plan/Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan.) Based on public input, the four prominent issues outlined in the 1980 General Plan continue to be primary areas of concern as the County approaches buildout.

1. Providing adequate services, particularly water, to the present and future residents,
2. Providing affordable housing,
3. Preserving the County's environmental quality, and
4. Preventing conversions of agricultural lands.

In addition to these issues, many community meeting participants expressed the desire to see infill development compatible with the existing neighborhoods and incorporating reduced urban densities.

The goals of the 1994 General Plan and Local Coastal Program reflect the concerns for these issues. The goals, which are found at the beginning of each chapter, set forth the guiding principles for development and quality of life for Santa Cruz County.

# GENERAL PLAN AND LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM LAND USE PLAN ORGANIZATION AND CONTENTS

The 1994 General Plan consists of several parts which are organized into three volumes; the General Plan/Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (GP/LCP) document itself; a collection of Village, Town, Community and Specific Plans; and the General Plan and Local Coastal Program Environmental Impact Report. (See Figure 1-6.)

Figure 1-6 Organization of the General Plan
<b>VOLUME I</b>
<p style="text-align: center;">The 1994 General Plan and Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan</p> <p>Appendices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Sources and References for the General Plan and Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Background Source Documents</li> <li>2. Reference Documents</li> </ul> </li> <li>B. Sensitive Habitat Plant and Animal Species</li> <li>C. Mitigation Measures for Development Impacts on School Facilities</li> </ul>
<b>VOLUME II</b>
<p style="text-align: center;">Village/Town/Community/Specific Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aptos Village Community Design Framework – 1985</li> <li>• Aptos Village Parking &amp; Circulation Feasibility Study</li> <li>• Ben Lomond Town Plan – 1990</li> <li>• Boulder Creek Specific Plan – 1992</li> <li>• Corralitos Plan (to be completed)</li> <li>• Felton Town Plan – 1987</li> <li>• Live Oak Community Plan (to be completed)</li> <li>• North Coast Beaches Master Plan</li> <li>• Pajaro Valley Community Plan (to be completed)</li> <li>• Seacliff Village Plan – 2003</li> <li>• Seascape “Benchlands” Specific Plan – 1988</li> <li>• Soquel Village Plan - 1990</li> </ul>
<b>VOLUME III</b>
<p style="text-align: center;">General Plan and Local Coastal Program Environmental Impact Report - 1993</p>

The heart of the plan (Volume I) is a combination of this document (which includes the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan) and associated appendices. This document contains eight chapters, a glossary, and appendices, each addressing specific subject areas, and includes the seven State mandated General Plan elements described in the Authority and Purpose section of each chapter as well as optional elements of Parks and Recreation, Public Facilities and Community Design. This portion of the plan constitutes the operative land use policies of the County and supersedes the policies found in the background source documents of Appendix A.

Appendix A contains two lists of documents; one list includes background source documents which were used to develop this plan; and the other list includes companion documents to the 1994 General Plan which are adopted by reference. The documents which are considered background sources include language which is important historic information, but has been superseded by the adoption of the 1994 General Plan. (Examples of Background Source Documents are the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, 1972 and Master Plan for Water Development 1968-2020; 1968.) The documents which are adopted by reference contain policy language which has not been superseded by the 1994 General Plan, but rather complements this document. (Examples of reference documents are the California Coastal Act and the Hazardous Waste Management Plan.)

Appendix B is comprised of information which is too detailed to include with the bulk of the General Plan text. Appendix B contains lists of Sensitive Habitat Plant and Animal Species and is dynamic in nature. These lists do not require Board of Supervisor approval or California Coastal Commission certification to be updated.

Appendix C contains information regarding mitigation measures for impacts of development projects on school facilities.

Volume II of the General Plan consists of all the village, town, community and specific plans adopted by the County, as well as other detailed adopted planning documents. Those plans that cover areas in the coastal zone are part of the Local Coastal Program. The village, town, community and specific plans have equal policy weight with the General Plan and Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan. These plans require General Plan and Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan amendments when revisions are proposed. (See Interpretation section.) *(Revised by Resolution 138-2003)*