



DATE: May 28, 2025

TO: Orange County Planning Commission

FROM: OC Development Services/Planning

SUBJECT: Public Hearing for General Plan Amendment S19-01 (Safety Element)

PROPOSAL: Recommend for adoption by the Board of Supervisors the proposed General Plan Amendment to the Safety Element to comply with recent State mandated changes regarding fire safety and to make additional technical amendments.

**GENERAL PLAN
DESIGNATION/
ZONING
DISTRICT:** N/A

LOCATION: Unincorporated Areas of Orange County

APPLICANT: OC Development Services/Planning

**STAFF
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RECOMMENDED ACTION:

OC Development Services/Planning recommends the Planning Commission:

- a. Receive staff report.
- b. Conduct public hearing.
- c. Adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 2025-04 (Attachment 1) recommending the Board of Supervisors:
 1. Find that Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) No. IP 22-0133, previously adopted by the Board of Supervisors on September 27, 2022, and Addendum No. 1, adopted by the Board of Supervisors on June 25, 2024, for the Housing-Related

Updates to the County of Orange General Plan and Comprehensive Zoning Code, adequately address the effects of the proposed project, reflect the independent judgement of the County of Orange, and are approved for the proposed project based on the additional findings that the circumstances of the project are substantially the same, and IS/ND No. IP 22-0133 and Addendum No. 1 adequately address the effects of the proposed project; no substantial changes have been made in the project; no substantial changes have occurred in the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken; and no new information of substantial importance to the project which was not known or could not have been known when the IS/ND No. IP 22-0133 and Addendum No. 1 were adopted has become known; therefore no further environmental review is required.

- a. IS/ND No. IP 22-0133 and Addendum No. 1 are adequate to satisfy the requirements of CEQA for General Plan Amendment S19-01.
2. Adopt General Plan Amendment S19-01 to the Orange County Safety Element for compliance with recent State mandated changes regarding fire safety and to make additional technical amendments.

BACKGROUND:

The County of Orange General Plan includes both state-mandated and optional elements that provide goals, policies, and objectives on a variety of topics. State law mandates when the Safety Element shall be revised or amended. In accordance with Senate Bill 1241 (2012), local jurisdictions are required to comply with the Safety Element requirements for State Responsibility Areas and very high fire hazard severity zones upon the next revision of the Housing Element (Government Code Section 65302, subd. (g)(3)). The County adopted a revised Housing Element earlier this year and thus, the Safety Element must be revised. The proposed General Plan Amendment S19-01 (Safety Element) has been prepared to meet state regulations regarding fire safety.

DISCUSSION:

On October 23, 2019, the Planning Commission authorized OC Development Services/Planning to initiate General Plan Amendment S19-01 (Safety Element) to incorporate the new State requirements into the Safety Element and make necessary technical changes. The Safety Element was reviewed and revised as appropriate to address new statutory considerations regarding the risk of fire in the State Responsibility Areas and in very-high fire hazard severity zones, in addition to other technical revisions.

Fire Safety:

To comply with recent statutory requirements, the proposed amendment to the Safety Element includes the following revisions and additions summarized below:

- Updated fire hazard severity zone maps from the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.
- Updated historical data on wildfires in Orange County.
- Information regarding wildfire hazard areas available from the United States Geological Survey (USGS).
- Maps depicting the general location and distribution of existing and planned uses of land in very high fire hazard severity zones and in State Responsibility Areas, including structures, roads, utilities, and essential public facilities.
- Updated information regarding the local, state, and federal agencies with responsibility for fire protection, including special districts and local offices of emergency services. (California Government Code Section §65302, subd. (g)(3)(A).)
- New and updated goals and policies that protect the community from the unreasonable risk of wildfire.
- References to any fire safety plans or other documents adopted by the County for fire risk reduction.

Technical Revisions:

In addition to the fire safety components, technical revisions are also proposed to be included in the Safety Element amendment as summarized below:

- Addition of updated information regarding the County of Orange and Orange County Operational Area - Unified Emergency Operations Plan.
- Addition of updated information regarding the Orange County Operational Area Emergency Operations Center.

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Review

The proposed Safety Element amendment must be evaluated by the Board of Forestry Resources Protection Committee (Committee) to determine if the revised Safety Element meets the fire safety planning requirements outlined in California Government Code Section §65302. The Safety Element was submitted for review to the Committee on April 11, 2025. The Committee approved the Safety Element with two minor revisions on May 13, 2025 (Attachment 2). The Committee recommended edits were incorporated into the Safety Element, and the revisions are provided in Attachment 3 (Strikethrough Version).

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA: The circumstances of the proposed General Plan Amendment S19-01 (Safety Element) are substantially the same as IS/ND No. IP 22-0133, previously adopted by the Board of Supervisors on September 27, 2022, and Addendum No. 1 adopted by the Board of Supervisors on June 25, 2024, for the Housing-Related Updates to the OC General Plan and Comprehensive Zoning Code. These documents include minor changes or additions necessary, and both documents adequately address the effects of the proposed General Plan Amendment S19-01 (Safety Element). No substantial changes have been made in the project, no substantial changes have occurred in the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken, and no new information

of substantial importance to the project which was not known or could not have been known when IS/ND No. IP 22-0133 and Addendum No. 1 were adopted have become known; therefore no further environmental review is required.

Submitted by:

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OC Development Services/Planning

Concurred by:

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Cindy Salazar
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Cindy Salazar, Planning Division Manager
OC Public Works/Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Planning Commission Resolution No. 2025-04
2. Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Approval Notice – May 14, 2025
3. Proposed General Plan Amendment S19-01 (Safety Element) – Strikethrough Version
4. Initial Study/Negative Declaration No. IP 22-0133 and Addendum No. 1