

**DOCKETED**

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**SAN RAFAEL**  
THE CITY WITH A MISSION  
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**Agenda Item No: 6.b**

**Meeting Date: September 2, 2025**

## **SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

**Department: Community Development**

**Prepared by: Don Jeppson, AIA CBO**  
**Chief Building Official**  
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**Sustainability Program Manager**

**City Manager Approval:** \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "CJ", is written over the line for City Manager Approval.

**TOPIC: TRIENNIAL BUILDING CODE ORDINANCE AMENDMENTS**

**SUBJECT: INTRODUCTION OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE 12 (BUILDING REGULATIONS) OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF SAN RAFAEL, BY REPEALING TITLE 12 AND AMENDING TITLE 12 THEREOF; ADOPTING THE 2025 EDITION OF THE CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE, THE CALIFORNIA RESIDENTIAL CODE, THE CALIFORNIA MECHANICAL CODE, THE CALIFORNIA PLUMBING CODE, THE CALIFORNIA ELECTRICAL CODE, THE CALIFORNIA EXISTING BUILDING CODE, THE CALIFORNIA GREEN BUILDING STANDARDS CODE, THE CALIFORNIA ENERGY CODE, AND THE CALIFORNIA REFERENCED STANDARDS CODE WITH APPENDICES AND AMENDMENTS HEREIN; ADOPTING THE 2024 EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE AND THE INTERNATIONAL POOL AND SPA CODE WITH AMENDMENTS; AMENDING CHAPTER 12.360 SINGLE-FAMILY MODEL REACH CODE – FLEXPATH; HEREIN; AND ADOPTING FINDINGS OF FACT SUPPORTING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE CODE**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommend that the City Council introduce the Ordinance, waive further reading, refer to it by title only, and set a public hearing for Monday, September 15, 2025.

**BACKGROUND:**

The State of California Code of Regulations Title 24 construction codes are typically updated and published on a three-year cycle. The California Building Standards Commission publishes the triennial codes, and State law mandates that these codes become effective throughout California 180 days after the publication date. For this latest cycle, the publication date was July 1, 2025, meaning that the current cycle of State construction codes becomes effective on January 1, 2026. This fosters uniformity in fire prevention, life/safety, and construction standards statewide. Local jurisdictions are permitted to amend the published codes based on and to suit local climatic, geological, or topographical conditions.

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**FOR CITY CLERK ONLY**

**Council Meeting:**

**Disposition:**

The proposed ordinance adopts the latest version of California Title 24 construction codes. Specifically, this includes the 2025 California Building Code, 2025 California Residential Code, the 2025 California Mechanical Code, the 2025 California Plumbing Code, the 2025 California Electrical Code, the 2024 International Property Maintenance Code, the 2024 International Pool and Spa Code, the 2025 California Existing Building Code, the 2025 California Green Building Standards Code, and the California Referenced Standard Code with appendices and local amendments. State law mandates that these codes become effective statewide on January 1, 2026, with or without the incorporation of local jurisdiction amendments. Building permit applications filed with the City before January 1, 2026, would be subject to the currently adopted codes and City ordinance.

The purpose of the codes is to establish the minimum requirements to safeguard the public health, safety, and general welfare through requirements for structural strength, means of egress, access to persons with disabilities, sanitation, adequate lighting and ventilation, and energy conservation; and to provide safety to firefighters and emergency responders during emergency operations. Below is a summary of each of these codes:

**2025 California Building Code:** The provisions of this code shall apply to the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, maintenance, removal, and demolition of every building or structure or any appurtenances connected or attached to such buildings or structures.

**2025 California Residential Code:** The provisions of this code shall apply to the construction, alteration, movement, enlargement, replacement, repair, equipment, use and occupancy, location, removal and demolition of detached one- and two-family dwellings and townhouses not more than three stories above-grade in height with a separate means of egress and their accessory structures not more than three stories above the grade plane in height.

**2025 California Mechanical Code:** The provisions of this code shall apply to the installation, alteration, repair, and replacement of mechanical systems, including equipment, appliances, fixtures, fittings, and appurtenances, including ventilating, heating, cooling, air conditioning, and refrigeration systems, incinerators, and other energy-related systems.

**2025 California Plumbing Code:** The provisions of this code shall apply to the installation, alteration, repair, and replacement of plumbing systems, including equipment, appliances, fixtures, fittings, and appurtenances, where connected to a water or sewage system, gas system, and all aspects of medical gas systems.

**2025 California Electrical Code:** The provisions of this code shall apply to the installation and removal of electrical conductors, equipment, and raceways; signaling and communications conductors, equipment, and raceways; and optical fiber cables and raceways to public and private properties, including yards, lots, parking lots, buildings, structures, mobile homes, recreational vehicles, and floating buildings.

**2024 International Property Maintenance Code:** The provision of this code shall apply to all existing residential and nonresidential structures and all existing premises and constitute minimum requirements and standards for premises, structures, equipment and facilities for light, ventilation, space, heating, sanitation, protection from the elements, life safety, safety from fire and other hazards, and for safe and sanitary maintenance; the responsibility of owners, operators and occupants; the occupancy of existing structures and premises, and for administration, enforcement and penalties.

**2024 International Pool and Spa Code:** The provisions of this code shall apply to the construction, alteration, movement, renovation, replacement, repair, and maintenance of aquatic recreation

facilities, pools, and spas. The pools and spas covered by this code are either permanent or temporary and shall be only those that are designed and manufactured to be connected to a circulation system and that are intended for swimming, bathing, or wading. The purpose of this code is to establish minimum standards to provide a reasonable level of safety and protection of life, health, property, and public welfare by regulating and controlling the design, construction, installation, quality of materials, location, and maintenance or use of pools and spas.

**2025 California Existing Building Code:** The provisions of this code provide flexibility to permit the use of alternative approaches to achieve compliance with minimum requirements to safeguard the public health, safety, and welfare insofar as they are affected by the repair, alteration, change of occupancy, addition, and relocation of existing buildings. This code shall apply to the repair, alteration, change of occupancy, addition, and relocation of all existing buildings, regardless of occupancy.

**2025 California Historical Building Code:** The provisions of this code provide regulations for the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, relocation, or reconstruction of buildings or properties designated as qualified historical buildings or properties. The intent is to facilitate and provide cost-effective solutions for the preservation and continuing use of historical buildings or properties, while providing reasonable safety for building occupants and access for persons with disabilities.

**2025 California Energy Code:** The provisions of this code shall set minimum efficiency requirements for new and renovated buildings, assuring reductions in energy use and emissions over the life of the building.

**2025 California Green Building Standards Code:** The provisions of this code improve public health, safety, and general welfare by enhancing the design and construction of buildings through the use of building concepts having a reduced negative impact or positive environmental impact and encouraging sustainable construction practices.

**2025 California Referenced Standard Code:** The provisions of this code provide construction standards.

*Update:* A version of this item was originally presented to the City Council on [August 18, 2025](#). Instead of having a second reading at the September 2<sup>nd</sup> City Council meeting, we must revisit the item because, on the morning after its initial adoption on August 19<sup>th</sup>, staff were notified by the California Energy Commission (CEC) that they could not approve the ordinance as written. They are supportive of increasing the Target Scores for the FlexPath Reach Code until January 1, 2027, but stated that the January 1, 2029, increase could not be approved at this time since it would have to be an amendment to the 2028 State Code, which is not available yet. The Ordinance amendment under consideration at this September 2<sup>nd</sup> Council meeting reflects the direction from the CEC, including a new requirement that the State Codes Team develop jurisdiction-specific cost-effectiveness memos and have them referenced in any proposed Ordinances. This memo, specific to San Rafael, is provided as Attachment 2 to this report.

The public hearing on the proposed ordinance will be held at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the City Council on September 15, 2025, a procedure required because the ordinance adopts various adopted State codes by reference, with appropriate local amendments, per [Government Code Sections 50022.1 through 50022.10](#). The City Council last adopted the State codes [on November 21, 2022](#), and the most recent Reach Code on [May 20, 2024](#).

**ANALYSIS:**

[Assembly Bill \(AB\) 130](#), adopted in June 2025, prohibits cities from adopting local amendments to the residential code unless certain exceptions are met, including fire safety and home hardening. One of the exceptions allows local amendments if they are “substantially equivalent” to codes in effect September

30, 2025. Another allows local amendments if the amendments are necessary to implement an amendment adopted to align with a general plan adopted or approved on or before June 10, 2025, and that permits mixed-fuel residential construction consistent with federal law while also incentivizing all-electric construction as part of an adopted greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategy. Staff believe these exceptions would apply to the City of San Rafael since the City Council adopted the initial FlexPath Reach Code on [May 20, 2024](#), and since San Rafael maintains a qualified greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategy and has [conforming policies in the General Plan 2040](#). These exceptions are reflected in the Findings in Attachment 1.

Many of the proposed local amendments, including Reach Codes, are carried over from previously adopted codes and have been adjusted for reference changes or format changes in the new codes. New amendments include a definition for “kitchen” and increasing the width of stair landings when a fire riser is present. Other amendments pertaining to fire safety, such as the International Pool and Spa Code and the International Property Maintenance Code, are included as well. Previously adopted electric vehicle (EV) amendments have been removed because the State Code has been improved to a similar standard.

An amendment to the Single-Family Model Reach Code – FlexPath is included as well, to proactively amend the target scores upward, which was the intention when the Code was adopted in 2024. Due to [AB 130](#), this amendment allows the City to proceed with the original plan using a future implementation date, while meeting the September 30, 2025, effective date of the exceptions in AB 130. Target scores will increase for each building vintage (year of construction) as shown in Table 12.360 A-1 on page 11 of the Ordinance in Attachment 1. However, further increases for 2029 have not been included in the ordinance due to a recent ruling by the California Energy Commission disallowing code amendments in future triennial code cycles. Should data and feedback from the building community not support these new target scores, they would not need to be implemented at the discretion of the Chief Building Official. These amendments are all supported by the [2022 Cost-Effectiveness Study: Single Family Building Upgrades](#) and subsequent memos commissioned by the [California Statewide Energy Codes and Standards program](#). These are reflected in the Findings in Attachment 1 and the data in Attachments 2 and 3.

The proposed ordinance adopts the California Green Building Standards and incorporates them into the City’s local building code. This is consistent with the action taken by the Council at the last code adoption hearings in 2013, 2017, 2019, and 2022. Staff may recommend adopting additional non-residential Reach Codes for the City Council in the future.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

It has been determined that the proposed ordinance amendments are covered by the ‘general rule’ that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) applies only to projects that have the potential to cause a significant, physical environmental impact. Under CEQA [Section 15061\(b\)\(3\)](#), the ordinance amendments are not subject to environmental review.

**OPTIONS:**

The City Council has the following options to consider on this matter:

1. Introduce the Ordinance and set the public hearing for adoption as proposed.
2. Introduce the Ordinance with amendments as directed by the Council at the meeting and set the public hearing for adoption.
3. Postpone the introduction of the Ordinance to allow amendments to be incorporated into the Ordinance. Should the City Council decide to postpone adoption of the Ordinance, the State

codes will become effective on January 1, 2026, without the benefit of the recommended local amendments.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Staff recommend that the City Council introduce the Ordinance, waive further reading, refer to it by title only, and set a public hearing for Monday, September 15, 2025.

**ATTACHMENT:**

1. Draft Ordinance: Title 12, 2025 Building Codes
2. Cost-Effectiveness Results Summary - San Rafael
3. 2022 to 2025 FlexPath Memo