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CORTE MADERA TOWN COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

REPORT DATE: October 2, 2025
MEETING DATE: October 7, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Town Council

FROM: Bernie Zipay, Chief Building Official
Phoebe Goulden, Climate Action and Adaptation Coordinator

SUBJECT: First Reading and Possible Introduction of an Ordinance Amending Title 15 - Buildings and Construction - of the Corte Madera Municipal Code to Adopt the 2025 California Building Standards Code, Known as Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, with Continued Local Amendments



RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the Town Council, after reviewing all information, presentations, and public testimony, take the following actions:

- 1) Introduce the proposed ordinance (Attachment 1) amending Title 15 (Buildings and Construction) of the Corte Madera Municipal Code to adopt by reference the 2025 edition of the California Building Standards Code and local amendments thereto by: repealing and reenacting Chapters 15.01, 15.03, 15.05, 15.06, 15.07, 15.08, 15.09, 15.11, 15.13, 15.15, 15.17, and 15.19, adopting by reference, and amending as noted, parts 2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 12 of the 2025 California Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations) incorporating the 2025 California Building Code, Residential Code, Electrical Code, Mechanical Code, Plumbing Code, Energy Code, Historical Building Code, Existing Building Code, Green Building Standards Code, and Referenced Standards Code; and creating a new Chapter 15.18, adopting by reference the 2024 International Property Maintenance Code; and finding that adoption of the ordinance is exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA guidelines; and adopting findings of fact supporting the amendments to the codes, by title only, and waive further reading of ordinance, and
- 2) Schedule a public hearing on the adoption by reference of the 2025 California

Building Standards Code, as proposed, for the next regular meeting of the Town Council on October 21, 2025.

BACKGROUND:

California cities and counties are required to enforce minimum construction standards contained in the California Building Standards Code (Title 24 of the State of California Code of Regulations). The California Building Standards Code includes the Building, Residential, Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing, Energy, Historical Building, Green Building Standards, and Fire Codes. The California Building Standards Code is updated and published on a three-year cycle by the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC) and is based on the triennial International Building Codes.

Once the California Building Standards Code is published, local jurisdictions have 180 days to make changes or modifications to the Code based on express finding that these modifications are necessary to address local climatic, geological, or topographical conditions, and adopt an Amended Code. Otherwise, the State code becomes the default code for the jurisdiction. The local jurisdiction may also add requirements for local enforcement. Local amendments are often called reach codes because they exceed or “reach” beyond the requirements of the State code. Local amendments to the California Building Standards Code must be readopted and filed with CBSC for each triennial edition of Title 24 to be enforceable.

On [November 15, 2022](#), Town Council adopted the 2022 California Building Standards Code with local amendments, and on [July 16, 2024](#), Council further amended the 2022 code to adopt revised reach codes, discussed below. The 2022 code and current local amendments are effective through December 31, 2025. On July 1, 2025, CBSC published the 2025 California Building Standards Code, which will become effective statewide on January 1, 2026.

On June 30, 2025, Governor Newsom signed [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 130](#), a budget trailer bill, into law. The bill included components of a bill previously known as [AB 306](#) (Schultz) that was intended to reduce construction costs and increase housing supply by placing strict limits on changes to the building code, including local amendments. The Town Council officially opposed AB 306 in [a letter](#) approved on June 3, 2025, that was sent to Senate Committees reviewing the bill.

The adopted legislation prohibits local jurisdictions from adopting amendments to the Building Standards Code affecting residential units between October 1, 2025, and June 1, 2031, unless the amendments fall within specific exceptions. Three exceptions are particularly relevant to local reach codes: First, a jurisdiction may readopt “substantially equivalent” reach codes in effect as of September 30, 2025 (in other words, the jurisdiction may readopt prior changes). Second, a jurisdiction may adopt changes

“necessary to implement a local code amendment that is adopted to align with a general plan 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.” Third, a jurisdiction may adopt changes or modifications to administrative practices, including those relating to enforcement of building code violations.

The Town has two existing reach codes that were adopted by the Town Council at its [July 16, 2024 meeting](#): a single-family building remodel energy reach code and an electric vehicle readiness and infrastructure renovation reach code. The single-family remodel energy reach code requires that additions and alterations of 750 square feet of floor area or more in single-family homes achieve a target energy savings score, which varies based on building vintage, by choosing from a list of energy efficiency and electrification measures. The electric vehicle (EV) reach code increases requirements for electric vehicle charging infrastructure in newly constructed residential buildings and certain residential renovations.

At the August 20, 2025, Climate Action Committee meeting, the Committee discussed staff’s intended approach for reach code adoption during the 2025 building code adoption process and provided feedback to staff. The staff report from this meeting can be viewed [here](#) and video of the staff presentation and Committee’s discussion from this meeting can be viewed [here](#). At the September 17, 2025, Climate Action Committee meeting, the Committee reviewed revised reach code language and voted five to zero, with one abstention, to recommend that Town Council adopt the amended reach codes. Chair Burtis abstained from the vote due to concerns related to the method used to calculate altered square footage and lack of flexibility in the measure compliance details in the single-family energy reach code. The staff report from this meeting can be viewed [here](#) and video of the staff presentation and Committee’s discussion from this meeting can be viewed [here](#).

DISCUSSION:

Town staff is recommending adoption of the latest version of the California Building Standards Code with continued local amendments. Specifically, this includes the 2025 California Building Code, the 2025 California Residential Code, the 2025 California Electrical Code, the 2025 California Mechanical Code, the 2025 California Plumbing Code, the 2025 California Energy Code, the 2025 California Historical Building Code, 2025 California Existing Building Code, 2025 California Green Building Standards Code, 2025 California Referenced Standards Code, and the 2024 International Property Maintenance Code, with amendments as shown in the proposed ordinance (Attachment 1). In a separate agenda item, the Fire Department will present the adoption of the 2025 Wildland-Urban Interface Code and the 2025 Fire Code.

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. The codes are updated every three years to incorporate new technologies, improve energy efficiency, enhance structural resilience and safety, and promote better air quality and public health. These updates help ensure that buildings are more sustainable, healthier, and safer for their occupants and the surrounding communities. A comprehensive overview of changes between the 2022 and 2025 codes can be located on the [CBSC website](#). Below is a summary of each of the codes proposed for adoption:

2025 California Building Code (Part 2 of Title 24): 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 (Part 2.5 of Title 24): 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 Electrical Code (Part 3 of Title 24): The provisions of this code 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.

2025 California Mechanical Code (Part 4 of Title 24): The provisions of this code 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 (Part 5 of Title 24): The provisions of this code 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 Energy Code (Part 6 of Title 24): The provisions of this code set minimum efficiency requirements for new and renovated buildings, assuring

reductions in energy use and emissions over the life of the building.

2025 California Historical Building Code (Part 8 of Title 24): 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 Existing Building Code (Part 10 of Title 24): 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 Green Building Standards Code (Part 11 of Title 24): 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 Standards Code (Part 12 of Title 24): The provisions of this code provide construction standards.

2024 International Property Maintenance Code: The provision of this code 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. If there is a conflict between the California Building Standards Code and the International Property Maintenance Code, the most restrictive will be enforced.

The 2024 International Property Maintenance Code is proposed to be adopted by the Town for the first time this year. This code will provide additional oversight capabilities to enforce health and safety standards for existing residential and nonresidential structures.

Staff is proposing to continue most of the Town's existing local amendments to the state code into the 2025 code. These are primarily administrative amendments to allow for proper administration of the code and of future appeal or abatement actions. Under these administrative amendments, appeals of the Building Division's determinations under the

California Building Standards Code would be administered by the building code appeals board established in Chapter 2.22 of the Corte Madera Municipal Code pursuant to state law, and abatement of dangerous and substandard building conditions would be administered pursuant to the nuisance regulations contained in the Corte Madera Municipal Code. Several previous administrative amendments are no longer necessary due to updates to the state code and would be removed from the Municipal Code by the proposed ordinance.

Staff is also proposing to readopt the Town's existing reach codes with updates for the 2025 code cycle under the "substantially equivalent" and "general plan" exemptions provided in AB 130/AB 306. Staff believe these exceptions apply to the Town of Corte Madera because Town Council initially adopted these reach codes on July 16, 2024, and these codes align with the Town's [Climate Action Plan](#) and [General Plan](#). The proposed ordinance includes specific findings related to these exceptions.

For the single-family building remodel energy reach code, changes this year include minor updates to language to align with the 2025 state code, a reduced target score for the 1992-2010 building vintage, and decreasing the square footage threshold at which enhanced energy saving requirements apply to 500 square feet, from the current 750 square feet. The 1992-2010 building vintage is the newest category of homes covered by the reach code, representing a small portion of Corte Madera's building stock that is substantially more energy efficient than older homes. Due to the premature ending of the federal solar tax credit at the end of 2025, solar will no longer be cost effective in this building vintage, which limits the target energy savings score that can be set in this vintage.

The reduced threshold of 500 square feet was recommended by the Climate Action Committee and will bring Corte Madera in alignment with nearby jurisdictions that have adopted or are in the process of adopting the same reach code, including the County of Marin, Mill Valley, Tiburon, and San Rafael. Having the same threshold as neighboring jurisdictions improves consistency for the building community, which often works across jurisdictions. The staff does not have data on how many more projects this change will impact but expects it to be about a 50% increase, or about 10-15 additional projects a year. Increasing the scope of this existing reach code would increase energy savings and associated GHG emission reductions in existing homes, which are the largest contributor to emissions from the built environment in Corte Madera. Compared to developing a new reach code, these emission reductions can be achieved without a significant impact on staff time, as the code and compliance process are already in place.

[2025 CALGreen](#) EV requirements exceed the Town's current reach code requirements for multifamily residential and several of the triggers for multifamily, hotels and motels modifications. Only two portions of the Town's electric vehicle readiness and infrastructure reach code still exceed the 2025 state code and are recommended for

readoption:

- Single-family homes, duplexes, and townhomes with attached private garages: For new construction or when upgrading the main electrical service panel, be Level 2 EV Ready.
- Multifamily, Hotels and Motels Modifications: If the electrical service panel is modified, designate electrical capacity for 20% of parking spaces to be Level 2 EV Ready

These codes facilitate EV adoption by requiring the addition of EV charging infrastructure at logical triggers during planned construction projects, reducing costs compared to adding EV charging infrastructure later.

If introduced tonight, the public hearing on the proposed ordinance will be held at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Town Council on October 21, 2025, a procedure required because the ordinance adopts State codes by reference, with local amendments, per [Government Code Sections 50022.1 through 50022.10](#). The Town Council last adopted the State codes on [November 15, 2022](#), and the most recent reach code on [July 16, 2024](#).

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

WORK PLAN:

This project is identified in the [2025 staff work plan](#) as item 53 under Category II, Land Use and Economic Development: “Adopt building code amendments for 2025 code cycle including updated green building reach codes.”

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

Staff recommends the Town Council find that adoption of this ordinance is exempt from the requirements of CEQA under the common sense exemption in 14 C.C.R. § 15061 on the grounds that it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. And further finding that the ordinance is exempt from the requirements of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines sections 15307 and 15308 as an action by a regulatory agency taken to protect the environment and natural resources.

OPTIONS:

1. Introduce the ordinance as proposed;
2. Instruct staff to revise the proposed ordinance and return to the Council for introduction of the revised ordinance; or
3. Direct staff to provide more information regarding the proposed ordinance; however, notwithstanding the action that is chosen by the Town Council, application and enforcement of the California Building Standards Code is still mandated by California law.

If the Town Council chooses to introduce the ordinance, then it must set a public hearing for the adoption by reference of the California Building Standards Code as provided by the proposed ordinance for its next regular meeting on October 21, 2025, in order for the ordinance to take effect on January 1, 2026.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Proposed Ordinance including Exhibit A (Cost-Effectiveness Information for Energy Code Amendments) and Exhibit B (Expressly Marked Amendments)

THIS ITEM HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE TOWN MANAGER.