



City of Costa Mesa

77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Agenda Report

Item #: 25-627

Meeting Date: 2/3/2026

TITLE: ADOPTION OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TITLE 13 OF THE COSTA MESA MUNICIPAL CODE TO ALLOW FOR MINISTERIAL APPROVAL OF TWO-UNIT SMALL LOT ORDINANCE PROJECTS (PCTY-25-0007)

DEPARTMENT: ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT/PLANNING DIVISION

PRESENTED BY: CHRIS YEAGER, SENIOR PLANNER

CONTACT INFORMATION: CHRIS YEAGER, SENIOR PLANNER, (714) 754-4883

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council adopt Ordinance No. 2026-XX, approving revisions to Title 13 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (Zoning Code) to allow for ministerial approval of two-unit Small Lot Ordinance (SLO) projects.

BACKGROUND:

On December 8, 2025, the Planning Commission reviewed the proposed Code Amendment. The Planning Commission supported the ordinance and voted 5-2 (Vice Chair Zich and Commissioner Dickson dissenting) to recommend that the City Council adopt the proposed ordinance. Agenda details for the meeting are found in the following link:

<https://costamesa.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7773714&GUID=CA876B52-3B66-4948-8923-756C5F19C165>

At its regular meeting of January 20, 2026, the City Council conducted a legally noticed meeting and introduced on first reading an ordinance amending Costa Mesa Municipal Code Title 13 to allow for the ministerial processing of two-unit Small Lot Ordinance projects. The City Council voted 5-1 (Buley absent) to introduce for first reading, by title only, Ordinance No. 2026-01. The City Council discussed the need to streamline housing processes and increase housing opportunities in the City. See the links below for the January 20, 2026, City Council Agenda Report and video:

January 20, 2026, Agenda Report

<https://costamesa.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7804152&GUID=0CD7A8AD-1A40-414D-AC3C-1B7FE3E81C91https>

January 20, 2026, Meeting Video:

https://costamesa.granicus.com/player/clip/4341?view_id=14&redirect=true

ANALYSIS:

Ordinance No. 2026-01 is included as Attachment 1 to this report. The Ordinance is being presented for final adoption. If approved, the Ordinance would become effective on the 31st day after adoption.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The adoption of the Ordinance is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the common-sense exemption. This exemption is typically applied to procedural-only code amendments in which no increase in density is created, no new land uses are authorized, and no reasonably foreseeable physical change to the environment could occur. The proposed Ordinance fits squarely within this category. It establishes a ministerial review process and objective standards for two-unit residential developments on parcels already zoned for residential use, and it does not expand the range of permitted uses or increase allowable density beyond what is already established under the General Plan and existing zoning regulations. The Ordinance also does not authorize construction on any specific site or grant any development entitlement; rather, it simply streamlines the review process by removing discretionary hearings and clarifying procedural steps. Any future project would remain subject to ministerial review and would be independently responsible for demonstrating eligibility for any applicable CEQA exemption. Because the Ordinance is limited to procedural changes and has no potential to result in a reasonably foreseeable physical impact on the environment, it is exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council may adopt the Ordinance as proposed, modify the Ordinance, or not adopt the Ordinance. If the City Council chooses to make substantive modifications to the Ordinance after introduction, the modified Ordinance would need to be brought back at a future meeting for adoption.

FISCAL REVIEW:

On January 20, 2026, in conjunction with the first reading of the Ordinance, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 2026-01 to establish a new fee applicable to two-unit Small Lot Subdivisions and SB 9 projects, designed to recover the City's costs for staff time required to process and review such applications under the revised procedures. Staff time required for application processing will be reduced, and the proposed fee will help achieve full cost recovery.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The proposed Resolution, draft Code Amendment and report have been prepared in conjunction with and review by the City Attorney's Office

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Pursuant to government Code Section 65854(a), a public notice was published once in the Daily Pilot newspaper on January 29, 2025 exceeding the minimum 5 days prior to the February 3, 2026, public hearing.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This item supports the following City Council Goal:

- Diversify, Stabilize and Increase Housing to Reflect Community Needs

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt Ordinance No. 2026-01 approving Code Amendment PCTY-25-0007 to allow for ministerial approval of two-unit SLO projects.