



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 11, 2025 ITEM NUMBER: NB-1

SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION REGARDING POTENTIAL ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS

**FROM: ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT/
PLANNING DIVISION**

**PRESENTATION BY: CARRIE TAI, AICP, ECONOMIC AND
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTOR**

**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION 714-754-5245
CONTACT: planninginfo@costamesaca.gov**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission receive the staff presentation and provide feedback on potential Zoning Code Amendments.

BACKGROUND

At its July 28, 2025 meeting, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on a Zoning Code Amendment to make minor technical updates to the Zoning Code for State law consistency, formalizing Zoning Administrator determinations, and clarifying language for ease of use. During the approval action, Commissioners embarked on a discussion of other potential zoning changes that would benefit land use and development in the City. Planning Commissioners have also submitted ideas previously for Zoning Code Amendments.

For at least 2-3 years, staff has convened a list of Zoning Code Amendments needed to further the City's economic development efforts and business friendly climate, reflect updated business types and uses looking to locate in the City, and increase transparency and objectivity to the development review process.

Staff recently embarked on the first of many periodic updates to the Zoning Code, which ensure that the City's Zoning Code meets State law, clarify code sections, align the Code to current practices and procedures and modify procedures to increase efficiency in

entitlement and permit reviews. Given recent staffing challenges as well as the increased volume of strategic planning initiatives and development work levels, periodic updates are currently expected to take place annually. However, as workloads allow, staff anticipates about two or three periodic updates annually.

Zoning Code Amendments vary substantially in levels of work effort. Amendments that affect a high volume of properties with minimal policy change can typically be accomplished quickly. Amendments that represent significant policy changes require a substantial work effort, public participation, study of examples, and environmental review. Therefore, the complexity of a particular Zoning Code Amendment dictates the time needed for that work effort.

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this discussion is for staff to present the list(s) of needed Zoning Code Amendments that has thus far been identified, and for Planning Commission to provide feedback on the level of interest and prioritization for these Zoning Code Amendments.

The list of Zoning Code Amendments is included as Attachment 1. The potential Zoning Code Amendments are sorted by Categories, Subject, Description, as well as a "Level" 1 through 3, which demonstrates the anticipated complexity of the Zoning Code Amendment. The Levels are as follows: Level 1 represents a minor update, Level 2 represents a moderate work effort, and Level 3 represents a substantial work effort. The purpose of including the Levels is to provide insight into the capability of staff resources. This list is not exhaustive and is expected to be dynamic as continuing discussions will trigger other topics.

Note that with the exception of corrections, there is no policy direction proposed or indicated on the list of potential Zoning Code Amendments. The purpose of this discussion is for the Planning Commission to determine what issues should be prioritized. All policy framework, discussions, and recommendations for the respective topics will be presented when the actual items return to Planning Commission.

Other Zoning Code Amendments

There are several categories of Zoning Code Amendments that are being addressed as separate work efforts, as described below.

Housing-Element-related Zoning Code Amendments

Zoning Code Amendments identified as Housing Element-related or requested by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), will be undertaken as part of the "Neighborhoods Where We All Belong" effort. The scope of

this category of amendments includes housing review procedures, objective design standards for residential uses,

Minor Technical Updates

Staff periodically updates the Zoning Code to respond to State law (particularly the months following a legislative session) and correct ambiguities to ensure that there are minimal conflicts between the City's Zoning Code and State law. Some recent examples of this are the Accessory Dwelling Unit Ordinance updates and the Senate Bill 9 update.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

There is no environmental determination needed for this discussion item. However, each Zoning Code Amendment will be evaluated pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act at the time of its analysis and recommendation.

PUBLIC NOTICE

There is no public notice requirement for a discussion item. However, staff anticipates future topic-specific Study Sessions for which courtesy notice (newspaper or social media) will be provided. Furthermore, all Zoning Code Amendments are subject to public hearing notices pursuant to State law and the Municipal Code.

CONCLUSION

The list of potential Zoning Code Amendments is substantial. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission conduct a discussion and provide consensus feedback for prioritizing categories or types of Zoning Code Amendments.

ATTACHMENTS

1. List of Potential Code Amendments