



PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: June 22, 2026

ITEM NUMBER: PH-3

SUBJECT: PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO TITLE 13 (PLANNING, ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT) OF THE COSTA MESA MUNICIPAL CODE TO UPDATE LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS FOR VARIOUS NON-RESIDENTIAL USES INCLUDE BUT NOT LIMITED TO, PERSONAL SERVICES, ARTISAN STUDIO AND RETAIL USES, ACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT USES, EVENT CENTERS AND ASSEMBLY USES, SPECIALIZED FITNESS STUDIOS, AND OTHER NON-RESIDENTIAL USES AND STANDARDS- PCTY-26-0001

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

**PRESENTATION BY: AMBER GREGG, CONTRACT PLANNER, AND
MARTINA CARON, PLANNING MANAGER**

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RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission:

1. Find that the proposed Zoning Code Amendment is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15305; and
2. Adopt a Resolution Recommending that the City Council approve amendments to Title 13 (Planning, Zoning and Development) of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code related to commercial land use classifications, emerging commercial uses, development standards, and implementation of Floor Area Ratio regulations.

APPLICANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT

City-Initiated request.

BACKGROUND

The Zoning Code (Title 13 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code) serves as the primary regulatory framework governing land use and development throughout the City. A clear and modern Zoning Code supports economic development by providing certainty for property owners, tenants, and investors while ensuring that new development remains consistent with the City's General Plan and community objectives.

While the Zoning Code has been periodically updated, the overall structure of the Citywide Land Use Matrix has remained largely unchanged since its adoption in 1997. Since that time, commercial business models, consumer preferences, and tenant demands have evolved significantly. New business types, including wellness-oriented services, specialized fitness facilities, active entertainment venues, artisan production spaces, food halls, ghost kitchens, commercial kitchens, and e-sports-related uses are increasingly common but are not clearly addressed within the City's existing regulatory framework.

As a result, applicants frequently seek clarification regarding land use classifications, parking requirements, and entitlement procedures. In many instances, businesses must be evaluated through use determinations or discretionary approvals because they are not specifically identified within the Zoning Code. This creates uncertainty for applicants, increases processing time, and can discourage reinvestment in commercial properties.

On April 13, 2026, the Planning Commission conducted a study session to review potential amendments intended to modernize the City's land use framework and address several recurring implementation issues. The Planning Commission was generally supportive of the proposed Zoning Code Amendments and expressed appreciation for the effort to modernize regulations. Commissioners discussed several implementation considerations, including potential traffic and circulation impacts associated with ghost kitchens, operational considerations for small fitness studios, and the importance of maintaining parking requirements that reflect current Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) data. Additional comments included support for adding new land use categories such as escape rooms, climbing gyms, and trampoline parks.

The Commission also discussed Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operations (MEHKOs), noting that while the County currently administers the program, cities have the option to regulate MEHKOs directly if they establish and conduct the necessary health inspection and enforcement framework.

Other topics raised included the potential future need to address autonomous vehicle dispatch and repair operations, ensuring EV charging infrastructure is properly maintained, conducting outreach with commercial property owners, and monitoring emerging retail and commercial trends for future code updates. No public comments were received.

A link to the April 13, 2026, Planning Commission Agenda Report is provided below; the minutes are provided under Attachment 3.

April 13, 2026, Agenda Report:

<https://costamesa.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7976488&GUID=694B0C33-AB5F-4F28-8F1C-4E67CB6704A9&Options=&Search=>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Staff is proposing eleven targeted Zoning Code updates intended to modernize land use classifications and development standards and improve regulatory clarity. These updates are also intended to support the City's economic development goals by facilitating reinvestment in commercial properties, reducing uncertainty in the entitlement process, and better accommodating evolving business models. The proposed amendments are intentionally narrow in scope and focus on a limited set of high-priority and commonly occurring issues. Although there are additional Code topics that may merit future evaluation, the current effort is designed to advance a manageable package of amendments that can be effectively studied and implemented within existing staffing capacity and current departmental work program constraints. See a summary of the proposed amendments below:

Table 1. Summary of Proposed Zoning Code Updates

PROPOSED UPDATES TO LAND USE MATRIX			
TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	Current Process	Proposed Process
1. Personal Services	Establishes a broader Personal Services category for one-on-one customer-serving grooming, wellness, and similar uses that are currently regulated separately or not clearly identified. Adds regulations for group instruction for setting. New definition and special land use regulations proposed.	CUP* if not expressly called out	Permitted by right
2. Artisan Studio	Consolidates small-scale creative production, artist spaces, and related accessory retail uses into one category. Provides a clearer framework for hybrid businesses that produce and sell goods on-site. New definition and special land use regulations proposed.	CUP if not expressly called out	Permitted by right
3. Active Entertainment	New category for indoor, participant-based entertainment uses of 15,000 square feet or less, where customers actively engage in recreation or gaming activities. Uses would be allowed by right in Commercial zones and require MCUP in MG and MP Industrial zones. Examples include escape rooms, virtual reality venues, and similar uses. Parking requirements and definition added. Uses larger than 15,000 square feet would fall under Amusement Centers and would require a CUP. New definition and special land use regulations proposed.	CUP if not expressly called out	Permitted by right; MCUP* Industrial Zones; and CUP >15,000 sf

PROPOSED UPDATES TO LAND USE MATRIX			
TOPIC	DESCRIPTION	Current Process	Proposed Process
4. Event Centers and Assembly Uses	Consolidates banquet halls, assembly halls, reception venues, conference facilities, and spectator-oriented e-sports arenas into a single classification of event center. This update distinguishes assembly uses from active entertainment and applies consistent operating standards. New definition and special land use regulations proposed.	CUP	CUP Clarifies Standard
5. Small Fitness Studios	Establishes a category for smaller instructional fitness uses, generally 15,000 square feet or less, such as yoga, Pilates, martial arts, dance, and similar studios. This would distinguish these uses from larger fitness clubs and health clubs that operate at a greater scale and intensity and are regulated under existing "Physical Fitness Facility" uses. Parking requirements, new definition, and special land use regulations proposed.	CUP if not expressly called out	Permitted by right
6. (a) Food Halls	Defines food halls as a specifically identified restaurant-related use to clarify how multi-vendor dining spaces are classified and reviewed. Food Halls are regulated under existing standards.	Limited Definition	Clarifies Standard
6. (b) Ghost Kitchens	Defines and adds ghost kitchens to the Food And Beverage Section of the Zoning Code as a specifically identified restaurant-related use to clarify how multi-vendor dining spaces are classified and reviewed. Parking requirements, new definition and special land use regulations proposed.	CUP if not expressly called out	Ghost Kitchen Permitted or MCUP*
7. Electric Vehicle Charging	Establishes electric vehicle charging stations as a permitted use, consistent with State law. New definition and development standards proposed.	Silent	Permitted by right
8. Sports Clubs	Clarifies that indoor sports clubs, such as basketball, pickleball, volleyball, and soccer training facilities, are regulated under the existing "Physical Fitness Facility" uses. These uses require a Conditional Use Permit consistent with the existing framework for larger fitness and recreation facilities. New definition proposed.	CUP	Clarifies Standard
9. Commercial Kitchens	Establishes land use classification for commercial kitchens, including catering kitchens, shared kitchens, and similar food preparation facilities without traditional on-site dining. Provides a clearer framework for evaluating newer food service business models. Parking requirements and a new definition proposed.	CUP if not expressly called out	Permitted by right in Industrial Zones
10. Height Deviation	Allows limited height deviations for commercial development through Minor Conditional Use Permit review to accommodate architectural features and functional rooftop elements. The amendment is intended to provide flexibility for building modernization while maintaining compatibility with surrounding development. Revised development standards proposed.	Variance	Up to 12 ft or 40% increase with MCUP
11. Floor Area Ratio Definition	Clarifies how "Gross Floor Area" is measured for non-residential FAR implementation by identifying which building areas are included and excluded from the calculation. The amendment is intended to improve consistency and better align FAR with occupiable area and site intensity. Revised definitions proposed.	Limited Definition	Clarifies Standard
* CUP means Conditional Use Permit; MCUP means Minor Conditional Use Permit			

Land Use Matrix Updates

Nine amendments are proposed to consolidate specific uses into general categories, add specified uses, and clarify existing uses. The proposed amendments would modernize several land use categories to reflect emerging commercial trends. The following provides additional detail on the consolidation of specific uses into general categories.

1. *Personal Services and Personal Services, Group*

The Zoning Code currently contains several individual uses such as barber shops, massage establishments, and laundry services that function similarly but are regulated separately. These individual uses make it difficult to consistently classify similar businesses, make it challenging to determine other uses as “similar” when not explicitly permitted, and often require staff to interpret how new or hybrid service models fit within outdated or narrowly defined categories. For example, the Code specifically permits barber shops but is silent on beauty salons and nail salons.

The proposed amendment establishes a comprehensive Personal Services category encompassing personal care, grooming, and wellness-related services provided directly to customers. These individual uses would be combined into one similar “Personal Services” category for regulation purposes. Examples include:

- Barber and beauty salons
- Nail salons
- Day spas
- Wellness centers offering services such as cryotherapy or infrared therapy
- Massage establishments (subject to existing regulations)
- Tattoo and body art establishments (subject to CUP requirements)

Personal Services are permitted by right, and services offering group services or instruction have additional operational regulations that must comply with under Special Land Use Regulations (See Exhibit G of the Resolution). This change improves clarity and aligns the Zoning Code with the regulatory framework while maintaining City standards.

2. *Artisan Studio*

Several creative and production-related uses are currently listed separately in the Zoning Code. Regulating these uses as separate categories can create complexity and make it difficult to consistently classify businesses that combine elements of production, design, and retail. In recent years, more artisan businesses are emerging to fill once vacant brick and mortar spaces. These businesses often operate as hybrid

spaces, for example, an artisan may produce goods on-site while also selling them directly to customers (i.e. a ceramicist, artist, or other small-scale production). Under the current structure, these types of uses may not fit squarely into a single category, requiring staff interpretation or additional entitlement review.

The proposed amendment consolidates these uses into a new “Artisan Studio” category that allows small-scale creative production with accessory retail sales to be permitted by right. Examples include:

- Artist and maker studios
- Custom woodworking
- Photography studios
- Recording studios
- Small-scale craft production

Consolidating these uses into a single category improves clarity and provides greater flexibility for evolving business models by regulating them based on shared operational characteristics rather than narrowly defined activities. For example, a furniture maker who designs, builds, and sells products on-site would be clearly permitted within this category, rather than being split between manufacturing and retail classifications or requiring a use determination.

This new category supports creative industries and aligns with trends in adaptive reuse of commercial spaces. For commercial zones, it does not permit more intense industrial uses such as automotive uses or food manufacturing.

Staff did examine if this category of uses could fit under Personal Services. However, while “Personal Services” involve services performed directly on or for a customer (such as grooming, wellness treatments, or body care), Artisan Studio uses are centered on the creation, fabrication, or production of goods, with accessory retail sales. These uses may involve equipment, materials, and operational characteristics more similar to light production or workshop environments than customer-focused service activities. Maintaining a separate classification ensures that these uses can be appropriately regulated based on their operational impacts, including potential noise, equipment, or workspace needs, while also enabling them to establish in commercial areas.

3. Active Entertainment

“Active Entertainment” refers to indoor uses that provide interactive, participant-based recreation where customers are actively engaged in an activity, rather than observing or receiving a service. For example, an escape room or virtual reality gaming venue where customers rotate through timed sessions would be an Active Entertainment uses.

The existing Zoning Code identifies entertainment uses individually, including bowling centers, billiard parlors, and skating rinks, while imposing the same development standards for the uses, for example parking requirements are 10 spaces per 1,000 sf.

Staff proposes establishing a broader “Active Entertainment” category that would consolidate these listed uses and capture other interactive and participant-based indoor recreation uses. The proposed amendments establish special land use regulations for the uses and permit them by right if they are less than 15,000 square feet in size (see Exhibit G for details). Examples include:

- Escape rooms
- Virtual reality gaming venues
- Sports simulators
- Interactive arcades
- E-sports gaming lounges

For similar uses that are 15,000 square feet or larger, staff proposes classifying them separately as an “Amusement Center” and requiring a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). The reason for this is as the scale of the facility increases, the potential for negative land use impacts to surrounding uses also increases. Larger facilities often attract a regional customer base, accommodate greater numbers of patrons, generate higher parking demand, create increased vehicle trips, and may result in greater noise, crowd management, and circulation concerns. The 15,000 square-foot threshold serves as an objective standard that distinguishes smaller neighborhood and community serving entertainment uses from larger facilities that may function as regional destinations. Requiring a CUP for larger facilities provides the City with the opportunity to evaluate site-specific operational characteristics, including parking demand, circulation patterns, hours of operation, security measures, noise mitigation, and compatibility with surrounding land uses. Examples of these uses may include:

- Trampoline parks
- Indoor Mini-Golf
- Large Entertainment Centers
- Roller Rinks

4. Event Centers and Assembly Uses

The proposed amendment would also consolidate several assembly-related uses into a single classification. The proposed Event Center category would include but not be limited to Banquet Facilities, Assembly Halls, and E-Sports Arenas, and would include indoor or outdoor venues designed to host organized gatherings such as:

- Banquet halls
- Reception facilities

- Conference venues
- E-sports arenas designed for spectator events

The review process would continue to require a CUP but provided added Special Land Use Regulations (see Exhibit G for details). The new classification would continue to distinguish these uses from “Active Entertainment” uses and ensures consistent parking and operational standards.

5. *Small Fitness Studios*

Fitness-related uses have evolved significantly in recent years, with many smaller studios focusing on specialized instruction rather than traditional gym facilities. Staff proposes establishing a “Small Fitness Studio” category to address smaller-scale instructional fitness uses and are generally designed for one or two concurrent class oriented uses. Examples include:

- Yoga studios
- Pilates studios
- Martial arts studios
- Dance instruction studios
- High-intensity interval training (HIIT) studios

The proposed amendments include a new definition and special land use regulations (see Exhibit G for details). The uses in this category would be permitted by right in most commercial zones. The new definition includes operational characteristics typical of these uses, such as scheduled classes and smaller square footage. Establishing an operational threshold helps provide a clear objective standard to distinguish Small Fitness Studios from larger fitness facilities and health clubs currently permitted with a CUP under “Physical Fitness Facilities”, which operate at a greater scale and intensity. Small Fitness Studios typically have limited occupancy at any given time, shorter customer durations, and activity patterns that are more predictable. In contrast, larger fitness facilities such as 24 Hour Fitness, often include multiple activity areas, extended hours of operation, and higher membership volumes, which can result in increased parking demand and traffic generation.

6. *Food Halls and Ghost Kitchens*

The Zoning Code currently regulates food and beverage uses under Article IV; however, the Zoning Code does not specifically identify Food Halls or Ghost Kitchens as permitted uses. As these business models have become more common, the absence of clear classifications has created uncertainty during project review and made it difficult to consistently permit these uses under existing restaurant categories. Staff proposes new definitions to help in the review of these land uses.

Food Halls – A Food Hall is a shared dining destination that brings together multiple independent food and beverage vendors under one roof. Customers can purchase

food and drinks from a variety of vendors and enjoy them in common seating areas, creating a market-style dining experience with diverse culinary options in a single location. The proposed amendments include a definition for Food Halls. The operation for Food Halls would fall under existing food and beverage service requirements so no additional regulations are needed.

Ghost Kitchen – A Ghost Kitchen is a commercial food preparation facility that prepares meals and beverages exclusively for delivery, mobile ordering, or customer pick-up. Unlike a traditional restaurant, a ghost kitchen does not provide dine-in service and may support multiple food brands operating from a shared kitchen space. Amendments for Ghost Kitchens include a definition and new operational regulations (see Exhibit D for details). Ghost Kitchens are a more intensive food service model, often involving multiple kitchen operators within a single facility and generating substantial pick-up and delivery traffic, even where on-site dining is limited or absent. Due to this, a MCUP would be required in C1 zones to review for potential negative impacts; the use would be permitted by right in the C2 and Industrial zones.

Clearly identifying and defining these uses in the Zoning Code will improve regulatory clarity, reduce reliance on staff interpretation, and ensure that they are evaluated and regulated consistent with their operational characteristics and potential impacts.

7. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

Electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure is an increasingly important component of development. The California Building Code also requires inclusion of EV charging infrastructure in new or remodeled developments. Furthermore, State law (Assembly Bill 1236, [Government Code Section 65850.7](#)) requires that EV charging stations be permitted and subject to streamlined, ministerial review. However, EV charging stations and associated equipment are not clearly identified within the Zoning Code, which can create uncertainty for applicants.

The proposed amendment would explicitly identify EV charging stations as an allowed use and clarify that they are permitted by right as both primary and accessory uses, consistent with State requirements. This update improves clarity, ensures consistency with State law, and supports the continued expansion of EV infrastructure throughout the City by allowing property owners and businesses to readily understand that these facilities are permitted without requiring additional interpretation.

8. Sports Clubs

The Zoning Code currently includes “Physical Fitness Facilities” uses, which requires a CUP, but does not clearly distinguish larger indoor sports facilities or member clubs that are increasingly common in commercial areas. These uses often include specialized

courts, training facilities or fields and operating as sports clubs, which are different from traditional gyms, large and smaller fitness studios.

Sports clubs are indoor recreational facilities focused on organized or league-based or member activities, often involving larger floor areas and specialized equipment. Examples include indoor soccer facilities, basketball training centers, pickleball courts, volleyball facilities, and similar uses.

The proposed amendment would incorporate sports clubs into the existing “Physical Fitness Facilities” within the Zoning Code clarifying the City permits these uses with a Conditional Use Permit.

9. Commercial Kitchens

The Zoning Code currently does not clearly define or classify commercial kitchens that operate independently of traditional restaurants, for example, a catering company preparing food for off-site events or a shared kitchen used by multiple small food entrepreneurs. Unlike traditional restaurants, commercial kitchens do not include on-site dining and have different operational characteristics, such as delivery activity, scheduled food preparation, and limited customer presence. As a result, commercial kitchens may be inconsistently categorized as restaurant or unlisted uses. These uses differ from ghost kitchens in that individual direct customer take-out services are not part of the use.

The proposed amendment would allow Commercial Kitchens by right in Industrial zones and establish a classification for commercial kitchens, including catering kitchens and shared kitchen facilities, to align this with the current food manufacturing land use and clearly define how these uses are regulated within the Zoning Code. Establishing a clear classification improves consistency in code administration, ensures that appropriate development and operational standards are applied, and supports the growing demand for flexible, small-scale food production spaces. It also helps distinguish these uses from traditional restaurants and more intensive food manufacturing operations.

10. Non-residential Height Limits

In most commercial zones, building height is currently limited to two stories or 30 feet, with only a narrow exception allowing up to a five percent increase when necessary to screen existing roof-mounted equipment. Height limits are an important tool for maintaining neighborhood compatibility and consistent building scale; however, when applied too rigidly, they can also limit the ability to incorporate architectural elements, functional rooftop features, and may make it more difficult for commercial properties to modernize, reposition, and compete for new investment and tenants.

In many cities, commercial height standards allow limited flexibility for features such as parapets, cornices, elevator overruns, stair enclosures, screening elements, roof access

structures, and rooftop amenities, provided the additional height does not create a full additional story or materially alter the perceived mass and scale of the building. Flexible standards allow for creativity and functional upgrades to existing buildings.

Staff proposes a process to allow a height deviation up to 12 feet or 40%, whichever is less, of the allowable height through the MCUP process. The Zoning Code already provides a similar discretionary review framework for antenna-related height exceptions. In addition to the required MCUP findings, staff proposes (Exhibit C) that the review authority find that the proposed height is:

- (a) Compatible with the existing and anticipated development in the vicinity;
- (b) Enhances the architecture and design of the development; and
- (c) Would not be materially detrimental to surrounding properties or uses and would not adversely affect the public health, safety, or welfare.

Any request for additional height would also be subject to the applicable planning application procedures, and staff would evaluate the project for consistency with the City's review criteria contained in Zoning Code Section 13-29(e). This process will allow the City to continue to evaluate the modification to ensure it maintains a compatible and harmonious relationship between the proposed building and site development and adjacent properties.

11. Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the City's primary tool for regulating the intensity of nonresidential development. FARs are established in the General Plan and further implemented through the Zoning Code. FAR establishes the amount of building floor area permitted on a site in relation to the size of the lot and is used to ensure that development intensity remains consistent with the General Plan and the City's broader land use objectives.

In the General Plan, FAR is also directly tied to traffic generation and the City's ability to evaluate development intensity based on anticipated trips. Because nonresidential traffic impacts are generally calculated based on the amount and type of active floor area associated with a use, FAR is regulated through building floor area as a practical way to manage the relationship between development intensity, land use, and trip generation. Therefore, it is important that the floor area counted toward FAR reflects the portions of a building that contribute to occupancy, activity, and traffic demand.

The Zoning Code currently provides the following limited definitions for use in application review:

Floor area ratio.

The gross floor area of a building or project divided by the project lot area upon which it is located.

Gross floor area.

The area of all floors within the walls of a structure except elevator and other vertical shafts (including stairwells) and elevator equipment areas.

Given these limited definitions, the “Gross Floor Area” definition is the primary basis for implementing Floor Area Ratio (FAR); however, the current definition can result in unintended limitations for development, particularly for building areas devoted to operations or support functions rather than occupancy or site activity, which also do not impact a use’s trip generation calculations. The lack of clarity creates confusion for applicants and staff, complicates plan check and entitlement review, and may discourage tenant improvements or reinvestment in existing commercial properties.

To address this issue, staff is proposing to further expand the definitions of “Gross Floor Area” to clarify its application to nonresidential uses and to better identify which building areas should be included in FAR. See below for the proposed definition:

Nonresidential Gross Floor Area

The total horizontal area of all floors within the exterior walls of a structure that contribute to the building’s occupancy or intensity of use. Nonresidential gross floor area excludes garages or carports used for required parking, elevator and stair shafts, mechanical shafts, pipe chases, mechanical equipment rooms, electrical rooms, and other utility or service spaces devoted exclusively to building operations and maintenance. Basement, cellar, storage or attic areas used solely for accessory building functions and not intended for human occupancy are also excluded.

The intent of the proposed update is to ensure that FAR more accurately reflects occupiable building area and the functional intensity of a site, while excluding certain building service and utility areas that do not generate occupancy or increase operational demand or increase use trip calculations. This proposed clarification will improve consistency in code administration, reduce ambiguity during project review, and better align FAR implementation with the practical way commercial and industrial buildings are designed and operated. By providing greater certainty regarding how floor area is measured, the amendment would help support tenant improvements, building modernization, and reinvestment in existing commercial properties, while maintaining the City’s intent to regulate overall development intensity.

ADDITIONAL AMENDMENTS

Parking Standards

As part of the proposed Zoning Code amendments, staff aligned certain land use classifications with the City's existing off-street parking standards contained in Table 13-89 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code.

The proposed amendments do not introduce new parking ratios. Instead, the updated land use categories are being associated with the most appropriate existing parking standards based on the operational characteristics of each use. This approach maintains consistency with the City's established parking framework while ensuring that newly defined or consolidated land use classifications are clearly linked to the applicable parking requirements.

For example, uses categorized as Active Entertainment or Small Fitness Studios would follow the existing parking requirements currently applied to similar recreation and fitness-related uses. Similarly, Artisan Studio uses would be aligned with the parking standards that apply to retail and office uses.

Aligning the updated use classifications with existing parking standards helps ensure that parking requirements remain consistent with current City regulations while providing clarity for staff, property owners, and businesses regarding the applicable parking ratios. In addition, parking ratios that had a minimum number of parking spaces as a requirement were stricken resulting in a standard parking ratio for all businesses regardless of size. For example, Retail required "4 spaces per 1,000 square feet with a minimum of 6 spaces," and staff is proposing to strike "with a minimum of 6 spaces".

The table below summarizes the applicable parking standards associated with the proposed land use classifications.

Table 2: Parking Standards

USE	PARKING STANDARD
Personal Services	6 spaces per 1,000 square feet
Personal Services (Group Instruction/Setting)	10 spaces per 1,000 square feet
Small Fitness Studios	10 spaces per 1,000 square feet
Active Entertainment	10 spaces per 1,000 square feet
Artisan Studio	4 spaces per 1,000 square feet
Event Centers / Assembly Uses	1 space per 3 seats or 1 space per 35 square feet of seating area

USE	PARKING STANDARD
Ghost Kitchen	6 spaces per 1,000 square feet
Commercial Kitchen	3 spaces per 1,000 square feet

DISCUSSION

The proposed amendments represent a targeted effort to modernize the City's commercial land use framework. Rather than regulating emerging business models through subjective "similar use" determinations, the amendments establish clear classifications, definitions, and operational standards for uses that are increasingly common throughout Southern California.

The amendments reduce ambiguity within the Land Use Matrix by consolidating narrowly defined categories into broader use classifications based upon operational characteristics. This approach provides greater predictability for property owners, business operators, and City staff while maintaining the City's ability to evaluate compatibility and potential impacts.

Economic Development Benefits

The proposed amendments are intended to support economic development. By modernizing the City's Land Use Matrix and categorizing uses rather than calling them out specifically the following economic developments are achieved:

- Reducing uncertainty during tenant leasing and entitlement review.
- Facilitating adaptive reuse of existing commercial buildings.
- Providing flexibility for evolving business models.
- Supporting reinvestment in aging commercial centers.
- Improving consistency in permit processing.
- Encouraging activation of vacant commercial spaces.
- Aligning the Zoning Code with contemporary market conditions.
- Promoting redevelopment and upgrading of non-residential sites

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The proposed Zoning Code Amendment is consistent with the Costa Mesa General Plan. The amendments support the General Plan's economic development objectives by encouraging reinvestment in commercial properties, improving regulatory clarity, facilitating adaptive reuse, and maintaining development standards that protect community character while accommodating evolving business models. Additionally, the proposed definition of "Nonresidential Gross Floor Area", further implements and clarifies trip generating area calculations, as required by the General Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The proposed Zoning Code Amendment has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The proposed amendments are exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the Common Sense Exemption, because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that adoption of the ordinance may have a significant effect on the environment. The amendments primarily involve updates to land use classifications, definitions, and administrative development standards. Additionally, portions of the amendment are categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15305 (Minor Alterations in Land Use Limitations).

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to California Government Code Section 65854 (amended by Assembly Bill 2904 in 2025) public notification for amending the Zoning Code has been completed no less than 20 days prior to the date of the public hearing:

1. On-site posting. A public notice was posted at City Hall and on the City's website on May 29, 2026.
2. Newspaper publication. A public notice was published in the Daily Pilot newspaper on May 30, 2026.

CONCLUSION

The proposed amendments represent a focused effort to modernize the Costa Mesa Zoning Code and address recurring implementation issues identified by staff, property owners, and business operators. The amendments establish clear classifications for emerging commercial uses, improve consistency in code administration, provide targeted flexibility for building modernization, and clarify implementation of key development standards. Collectively, the amendments will help support economic development, adaptive reuse, and reinvestment in commercial properties while maintaining the City's long-standing planning and compatibility objectives.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the attached Resolution recommending the City Council adopt the proposed Zoning Code Amendment.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution, Title 13 Amendment
Draft City Council Ordinance, Title 13 Amendment
Exhibit A: Chapter 1, Article 2, Definitions
Exhibit B: Chapter IV, Citywide Land Use Matrix

Exhibit C: Chapter V, Development Standards, Article 3 Commercial Districts
Exhibit D: Chapter V, Development Standards, Article 4, Establishments where food and beverages are served
Exhibit E: Chapter VI, Off-Street Parking Standards, Article 2, Nonresidential Districts
Exhibit F: Chapter VI, Off-Street Parking Standards, Article 3, Development Standards
Exhibit G: Chapter IX, Special Land Use Regulations

2. Strikethrough format of the proposed Zoning Code amendments

Exhibit A: Chapter 1, Article 2, Definitions
Exhibit B: Chapter IV, Citywide Land Use Matrix
Exhibit C: Chapter V, Development Standards, Article 3 Commercial Districts
Exhibit D: Chapter V, Development Standards, Article 4, Establishments where food and beverages are served
Exhibit E: Chapter VI, Off-Street Parking Standards, Article 2, Nonresidential Districts
Exhibit F: Chapter VI, Off-Street Parking Standards, Article 3, Development Standards
Exhibit G: Chapter IX, Special Land Use Regulations

3. Planning Commission April 13, 2026, Study Session Minutes