



Agenda Report

Item #: 25-445

Meeting Date: 10/07/2025

TITLE: ADOPT AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING TITLE 13 (PLANNING ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT) OF THE COSTA MESA MUNICIPAL CODE TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL UPDATES AND CLARIFICATIONS (CODE AMENDMENT PCTY-25-0001)

DEPARTMENT: ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT/PLANNING DIVISION

PRESENTED BY: CAITLYN CURLEY AND FROYLAN GARCIA, ASSISTANT PLANNERS, DANIEL INLOES AICP, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR

CONTACT INFORMATION: CAITLYN CURLEY, ASSISTANT PLANNER, 714-754-5692

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council adopt Ordinance No. 2025-XX approving Zoning Code Amendment PCTY-25-0001, amending Title 13 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (Planning, Zoning, and Development) to modify the City's Zoning Code to provide technical updates and clarifications.

BACKGROUND:

On June 23, 2025, the Planning Commission held a study session for the proposed Zoning Code Amendment. The Planning Commission received the staff presentation and provided feedback on the project. Details of the Planning Commission meeting and associated report and draft ordinance are available at the following link:

<https://costamesa.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7443282&GUID=AE089610-AFA1-4E8F-AA29-232D3985B67B>

On July 28, 2025, the Planning Commission reviewed the proposed Zoning Code Amendment. The Planning Commission supported the ordinance and voted 6-0 to recommend that the City Council adopt the ordinance with minor modifications. Details of the Planning Commission meeting and associated report and draft ordinance are available at the following link:

<https://costamesa.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7493951&GUID=CC465AE1-17DB-42DC-AFFE-DE83EDDAF04B>

At its regular meeting of September 16, 2025, the City Council conducted a legally noticed meeting and introduced on first reading an ordinance amending Title 13 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code (Planning, Zoning, and Development). At the meeting, the City Council discussed the Zoning Code Amendments, asked specific questions of staff, and obtained public input. The City Council voted unanimously, with Councilmember Reynolds absent, to introduce for first reading, by title only, Ordinance No. 2025-XX. See the links below for the September 16, 2025, City Council Agenda Report and video:

September 16, 2025, Agenda Report:

<https://costamesa.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=14765688&GUID=EB261462-ABBC-4577-B60C-024DE1007D59>

September 16, 2025, meeting video:

https://costamesa.granicus.com/player/clip/4307?view_id=14&redirect=true

ANALYSIS:

The proposed technical code clean-up includes several changes intended to improve clarity within the zoning code. The updates involve codifying existing Zoning Administrator determinations that staff regularly apply in day-to-day practice, as well as making code amendments necessary to ensure compliance with state law. The Planning Commission has reviewed the proposed updates and recommended approval with minor modifications.

The determinations and standards proposed to be codified are regular interpretations used daily at the planning counter. The proposed update codifies the existing fences and walls standard currently outlined in a handout by incorporating it directly into the Municipal Code. It also codifies several Zoning Administrator determinations, beginning with the addition of a definition for “individual counseling” and clarification that this use shall be parked at the office rate of 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet. Based on feedback from the Planning Commission, the update further clarifies that group counseling uses are also parked at the office rate. To enhance visual quality throughout the City, the update codifies determinations that prohibit exterior pipes and conduits, clarifies screening requirements for ground-mounted antenna equipment, limits excessive window coverage through an updated definition of “contiguous,” establishes clear standards for the placement of ground-mounted equipment near residential properties, and excludes mechanical and electrical equipment areas from parking calculations, thereby incentivizing internal equipment installations. Additionally, the update introduces new language to ensure that raised decks comply with main-structure setbacks to address privacy concerns.

In addition to codifying Zoning Administrator determinations, the update will ensure that the City is in compliance with state law. The update incorporates HCD comments on the City’s Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance to clarify that ADUs and Junior ADUs do not trigger a requirement for fire sprinklers in the main home, and establishes objective standards for stairways leading to second-story ADUs. The update also codifies the City’s SB 9 ordinance and provides clarification on driveway requirements, parking minimums, and the number of permitted units.

The Ordinance is being presented for final adoption. If approved, the Ordinance would become effective 30 days after adoption on November 6th, 2025.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The proposed amendments are exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) (General Rule) in that there is no possibility that the minor technical updates to the City’s Municipal Code provisions will have a significant impact on the environment.

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:

The adoption of the proposed Ordinance will help increase efficiency in the building permit process by making the City's Municipal Code clearer and more predictable. This will allow for a more efficient plan check and permitting process, which may lead to faster permit issuance.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed this report and approves it as to form.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Pursuant to Government Code section 65854(a), a public notice was published once in the Daily Pilot newspaper on October 2, 2025, exceeding the minimum 5 days prior to the October 7, 2025, public hearing.

As of this report, no written public comments have been received. Any additional written comments received will be forwarded under separate cover.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This item supports the following City Council Goal:

- Diversify, Stabilize and Increase Housing to Reflect Community Needs
- Achieve Long-term Fiscal Sustainability

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt Ordinance No. 2025-XX approving Code Amendment PCTY-25-0001, amending Title 13 of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code to modify the City's Zoning Code to provide technical updates and clarifications.