



STAFF REPORT
2/26/2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Gabriel Perez, Development Services Director

SUBJECT: Ordinance No. 1220 (Second Reading) Zoning Ordinance Amendment No. 24-02 – Streamline Code Amendments - Phase 2 to amend Coachella Municipal Code Title 17 regarding zoning district permitted uses, development standards and development review process in the City. City-Initiated.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt Ordinance No. 1220 to amend Coachella Municipal Code (C.M.C.) chapters 17.11, 17.13, 17.14, 17.15, 17.16, 17.24, 17.26, 17.28, 17.30, 17.38, 17.60, 17.70, 17.72, 17.76, and 17.77 to modify zoning district permitted uses, development standards and development review process.

BACKGROUND:

On December 14, 2022 Planning Division staff identified to the Coachella City Council a work program to update the Coachella Municipal Code Title 17, Zoning, to streamline the development review process, create more flexibility in development standards, and modify Zoning Ordinance to address new changes required by State Law. Staff has identified Code Amendments as follows:

- Sidewalk Vending: Adopt amendments to address SB 946 allowing cities, by ordinance or resolution, to adopt requirements for the public safety regulating any type of vending and the time, place, and manner of vending from a vehicle upon a street if requirements are directly related to objective health, safety, or welfare concern.
- Housing Law Updates: Revise residential zoning standards to address new State housing law related to flexibility for construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and SB 9 (Atkins) that requires cities to apply a ministerial review process for eligible development of up to two principal dwelling units on a parcel in a single-family residential zone.
- Residential Front Yard Structures: Revise requirements for residential front yards that would permit certain structures to encroach into the front yard setback such as covered vehicle canopies over residential driveways.
- Parking Standards: Revise commercial parking requirement to be commensurate with parking standards in surrounding Coachella Valley cities and allow for applicant initiated parking studies as a method to identify projected parking demand for proposed uses and reduce parking below minimum parking requirements if warranted. Staff will further

evaluate the merits of eliminating minimum parking requirements.

- Sign Ordinance: Revise sign ordinance to only permit freestanding signs in association with multi-tenant commercial centers. The existing sign ordinance permits a 25-foot high freestanding sign for any business.
- Special Events: Establish a new permitting mechanism for a range of allowable special events in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Residential Block Walls: Revise residential development standards to allow for front yard obscuring block walls in the front yard that would accommodate courtyards and front yard pools subject to aesthetic performance standards.
- Commercial Landscape Maintenance: Revise requirements for commercial landscape maintenance responsibilities to ensure landscape areas subject to approved landscape plans are maintained in a first class condition.
- Architectural Review Permit Findings: Currently no findings are identified in the Zoning Ordinance for the approval of Architectural Review permits.
- Minor Variances: Modify minor variance provisions that allow for administrative variances to allow for more flexibility from a numeric development standard by as much as 20% without strict variance findings.
- ADU Ordinance: Relocate ADU regulations as its own separate chapter in the municipal code and update the ordinance to comply with State ADU requirements. Revise ADU regulations to clarify approval, parking, and architectural requirements.

The proposed amendments would modernize the Coachella Municipal Code, allow greater flexibility in development standards, improve aesthetics of residential neighborhoods and commercial centers, streamline the development review process, and establish performance standards for energy efficiency and heat island reduction.

The Planning Commission at the regular meeting of September 4, 2024 requested the amendments be reviewed at a study session on September 19, 2024 and October 16, 2024. The Planning Commission on November 20, 2024 recommended that the City Council approve the proposed code amendments with modifications that include:

- Reducing the minimum setback of an accessory structure from 10 to 5 feet from the sides or wall planes of any other structure. (Chapter 17.60 Development Standards)
- Allowance of canopies intended to provide cover for Recreational Vehicles within residential side yard setbacks. (Chapter 17.60 Development Standards)
- Establishing an amnesty program for existing unpermitted residential driveway canopies constructed prior to December 2022 and subject to obtaining a building permit and required inspections. (The December 2022 was selected as a threshold due to the availability to check condition of residential front yards on online street view platforms).

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Planning staff prepared code amendments to the Coachella Municipal Code and proposes several Municipal Code Amendments to Title 17, Zoning to streamline the Zoning Ordinance as follows:

Planned Unit Developments (Chapter 17.38)

- All Zoning Districts. Extends ability for a planned unit development (PUD) application across all zoning districts. The current ordinance limits planned unit developments to residential districts. Staff believes this change would promote flexibility and creativity for new development projects across all zoning districts. The City of Palm Springs allows for a planned unit development across all zoning districts.
- Procedure. The procedures for a planned unit development would be amended by removing the need for a PUD overlay zone and would only require approval of a conditions use permit (CUP). The City of La Quinta currently allows PUDs with approval of a CUP. City Council at the December 11, 2024 meeting requested that a PUD still require City Council approval.
- Public Benefit. The new PUD standards would require a public benefit to offset impact of the exception from development standards which may include affordable housing, on-site public amenities, or off-site improvements. The current PUD standards allow for flexibility in development standards without any consideration of a public benefit.

Development Standards (Chapter 17.60)

- Front Yard Wall: This would allow front yard courtyards in single-family zones by allowing a 6-foot-high wall built to front property line subject to findings related to design, materials, and health/safety considerations. The current wall standard requires that wall may not obscure view to the front yard.

The Planning Commission discussed at the October 16, 2024 study session the following:

- Consider requiring a landscape maintenance agreement with residents that propose a courtyard.
 - Courtyard door width at a size that does not facilitate passage of vehicles for storage in a courtyard.
 - Use code language of front yard wall heights up to 6 feet.
 - Provide conceptual courtyard styles.
 - Consideration of courtyard allowances extended only for pre-2000 homes. This was not included the final amendments.
- Front Yard Pool and Spa: Allows a front yard pool and spa with construction of a courtyard. The current standards prohibit front yard pools and spas.
 - Driveway Trellis: Established development standards for a single-family driveway canopy as follows:
 - Height. Maximum height of 12 feet
 - Coverage: 60% total driveway coverage or 400 square feet in area, whichever is less.
 - Setbacks: 5 feet from side property lines and no encroachment into public right of way. Driveway canopies are not permitted in the C.M.C. but have proliferated as unpermitted structures throughout the city.

The Commission discussed at the October 16, 2024 study session the following, which are incorporated into the code amendments:

- Offer three different architectural styles for single family residential driveway canopies or conceptual drawings for canopies to ensure they are compatible with the community.
- Consider criteria for neighborhoods where a driveway canopy would be permitted with criteria such as neighborhood age and limitations on homes with garage converted into accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The code amendment revisions would allow a driveway canopy for homes built prior to the year 2000 and would not allow canopies for garages at dwelling that have been converted into an ADU or living space.
- Educate residents on ordinance amendments.
- Pre-fab structures not preferred. Code amendments have been revised to require custom built structures.
- Safety consideration of the structure.
- Consider an amnesty program for existing canopies.

Administration Generally (Chapter 17.70)

- Appeals. Modify requirement of the application decision appeal date from 15 days on which the decision was made, rather than current standards that identifies the appeal date from when the notice of determination was mailed.
- Minor Modification Permit. Allow for minor modifications by 10% of any numerical development standard with approval of a minor modification permit with a limit of 4 modifications per land parcel without the requirement of variance hardship findings. The existing minor modification regulations of Section 17.70.120 is classified as a minor variance requiring variance hardship findings.

The Commission discussed at the October 16, 2024 study session the following, which are incorporated into the code amendments:

- Administrative level decisions on minor modifications shall be reported to the Planning Commission to allow the opportunity to call-up the item. This was included in revised code amendments.
- Not apply to front yard hardscape requirements. This was included in revised code amendments.
- Applicant Requests to Change Approved Applications. Establishes a process for project modifications by an applicant where the Planning Director may approve minor modifications if deemed minor by the Director. Any modification not considered minor shall require approval by the final decision-making authority that considered the project.

Architectural Review (Chapter 17.72)

- Architectural Review Findings. Establishes findings for granting architectural review approval.

Residential Districts (R-R Rural Rancho Chapter 17.11, S-N Suburban Neighborhood Chapter 17.13, G-N General Neighborhood Chapter 17.14, U-N Urban Neighborhood 17.15)

- Agricultural Uses. Add existing commercial agricultural activity as a permitted use.
- Energy Efficient Design and Heat Island Reduction Strategies. Requires energy efficient design and heat island reduction strategies for residential development to implement General Plan Policy 2.2 (Energy efficient building and site design strategies) and Policy 4.5 (Heat island reduction strategies). (S-N and G-N zones only)
- Perimeter Landscape Setback. Established a 10-foot minimum perimeter landscape setback for residential developments and an average 20-foot perimeter landscape setback. This is a common setback for Coachella Valley cities. A shade standard of 30 percent of landscape area is required. (R-R Chapter 17.11, R-E Chapter 17.12, S-N, G-N zones only)
- California Native Species. Requires California native plant and tree species in at least 40 percent of required landscape areas. (S-N and G-N zones only)
- Perimeter Rear-facing Building Variation. Require single-family dwellings greater than 1 story with rear elevations with frontage along perimeter streets to include structural variation. (S-N and G-N zones only)
- Vista Santa Rosa equestrian and agricultural themed improvements. Requires equestrian themed improvements modeled after the Vista Santa Rosa design guidelines at project perimeters along Avenue 50, Avenue 52, Van Buren Street, Avenue 53, Avenue 54 South of Avenue 50 to include equestrian rail fencing, agrarian lighting, signage, 10-foot-wide decomposed grant trail and date palms planted 20 feet on center. (S-N, G-N, and R-C zones only)
- Proactive Circulation Design. Residential projects with new proposed streets shall incorporate circulation design to minimize traffic speeds and reduce the need for speed bumps. (S-N and G-N zones only)

C-N Neighborhood Commercial Zone (Chapter 17.24)

- Remove building size limits. Remove the limit of 10,000 square feet for single commercial building floor area and 35,000 square feet for multi-tenant retail building floor area. The current building limits make many existing commercial buildings nonconforming structures.
- Cesar Chavez Street Sidewalk Improvements. Sidewalks shall be constructed at a minimum nine (9) feet for new development projects.
- New Cesar Chavez Street Development. New development on the Cesar Chavez Street Corridor shall demonstrate compliance with the Improving Neighborhood Connections Along Coachella's Harrison Street Corridor report.

C-N Neighborhood Commercial, C-G General Commercial and R-C Regional Commercial Zones (Chapters 17.24, 17.26, and 17.28)

- Agricultural Uses. Add existing commercial agricultural activity as a permitted use.
- Landscape Maintenance. All landscape areas shall be maintained consistent with approved landscape plans. Landscape modifications shall be approved by the Planning Director and referred to the Planning Commission for review at the Director's discretion.
- Rooftop Screening. Requires mechanical equipment to be screened.
- Energy Efficient Design and Heat Island Reduction Strategies Require Energy Efficient Design and Heat Island Reduction Strategies for Commercial and Residential Development to implement General Plan Policy 2.2 (Energy efficient building and site design strategies) and Policy 4.5 (Heat island reduction strategies).

The Commission discussed at the October 16, 2024 study session the following:

- Requirement of pressure washing along commercial building frontages, which was added to the code amendments.

M-S Manufacturing Zone (Chapter 17.30)

- Permitted Uses. Adds existing commercial agricultural activity and nurseries as permitted uses.
- Conditional Uses. Adds hotels as a conditional use on building sites along frontage of Major or Primary Arterials.

The proposed amendments would provide much needed updates to the Coachella Municipal Code. Staff requests that the City Council review and consider the alternatives listed below.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1) Adopt Ordinance No. 1220 (ZOA No. 24-02), second reading, to amend Coachella Municipal Code chapters 17.11, 17.13, 17.14, 17.15, 17.16, 17.24, 17.26, 17.28, 17.30, 17.38, 17.60, 17.70, 17.72, 17.76, 17.7 to amend zoning district permitted uses, development standards and development review procedures.
- 3) Deny the ordinance.
- 4) Continue this item and provide staff with direction.

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE(S):

Staff recommends Alternative #1.

Attachments:

1. Ordinance No. 1220 (ZOA No. 24-02) second reading
Exhibit A - Redlines of Code chapters 17.11, 17.13, 17.14, 17.15, 17.16, 17.24,
17.26, 17.28, 17.30, 17.38, 17.60, 17.70, 17.72, 17.76, 17.77