



**STAFF REPORT**  
**2/16/2022**

**TO:** Planning Commission Chair and Commissioners

**FROM:** Gabriel Perez, Development Services Director

**SUBJECT:** Interpretation of Coachella Municipal Code Section 17.72.010.F.1 (Architectural Review) approval authority for the architectural review of single-family residences.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the information contained in the staff report and provide an interpretation of Coachella Municipal Code Section 17.72.010.F.1.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Coachella Zoning Ordinance sets forth the process for the review and approval of land use entitlement applications for projects within the City. Depending upon the type, size and scope of a project, the Zoning Code assigns responsibility for application review and approval among the City's Planning Director, the Planning Commission and the City Council. The Planning Division presented streamlining Zoning Ordinance recommendations to the Planning Commission on April 20, 2016. The streamlining code amendments included:

- Allowances for minor variances for setbacks, fence height, off-street parking, building height, sign area, and accessory structures that can be approved by the Planning Director.
- Administrative Architectural Review for certain commercial, single-family residential and multi-family residential projects where previously the Planning Commission was the approval authority of all Architectural Reviews.
- Call-Up procedures that allow Planning Commission and City Council to consider an item that was decided by a lower decision-making body if the "call-up" is requested within 15 days of the decision.

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the recommendations and the City Council adopted the streamlining zoning ordinance amendments on May 25, 2016.

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:**

Planning Division staff requests that the Planning Commission provide an interpretation of Section 17.72.010.F.1, in Chapter 17.71 - Architectural Review, due to the ambiguity of the standards for

administrative approval of single-family residences. The Zoning Ordinance language of Section 17.72.010.F.1 is as follows, with the pertinent language in bold:

F. Approving Authority and Basis for Approval of Architectural Review.

1. For Architectural Review involving (i) **Not more than three single family residences pursuant to Section 17.16.030(C) and new one-family and two-family dwelling units** pursuant to Section 17.18.030F1 (ii) five hundred (500) square feet of new multifamily residential square footage or less or (iii) two thousand (2,000) square feet of new commercial/industrial square footage or less, the planning director shall be the reviewing and approval authority. For all other architectural review, the planning commission shall be the approving authority.

In the reading of this section, it would appear that a residential builder could propose construction of 1 to 3 single-family residences under an administrative Architectural Review approval. Single-family residential projects exceeding 3 single family units such as Valencia (Pulte), Escondida Pointe (D.R. Horton), Mariposa Pointe (D.R. Horton) were approved through an administrative Architectural Review and did not require consideration by the Planning Commission. The Development Services Department previously authorized the administrative review of these projects insofar as no more than three “production home” plans were proposed. The 2016 staff report to the Planning Commission (Attachment 2) stated that the administrative review was intended for small projects. Valencia, Escondida Pointe, and Mariposa Pointe are projects that exceed 20 homes and are considered major residential developments in the City of Coachella.

Single-family residential production builders have proposed single-family residential plans limited to 3 plans in order to qualify as an administrative Architectural Review, based on a previous interpretation of the Architectural Review decision-making authority by the Development Services Department. Staff believes that staff report presented to the Planning Commission on April 20, 2016, clearly intended the administrative Architectural Review to apply to single-family residential projects that did not exceed 1-3 individual homes rather than large production single-family home tracts that offer only 3 single-family residential plan options.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

- 1) Request that a) staff prepare a Planning Commission Resolution approving an interpretation that Coachella Municipal Code Section 17.72.010.F.1 applies to proposed single-family residential projects that do not exceed 3 single family residences and does not apply to residential projects where more than 3 single-family residences are proposed; and b) staff prepare a zoning ordinance amendment for future consideration that clarifies administrative Architectural Review decision-making authority.
- 2) Request that staff prepare a Planning Commission Resolution approving an interpretation that affirms that Coachella Municipal Code Section 17.72.010.F.1 can apply to residential projects where more than 3 single-family residences are proposed.
- 3) Continue this item and provide staff and the applicant with direction.

**RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE:**

Staff recommends alternative #1 as staff believes this would encourage more architectural variety from single-family residential builders for new residential neighborhoods citywide.

Attachments: 1. Chapter 17.72 Architectural Review  
2. April 20, 2016 Planning Commission Staff Report – ZOA 16-02 Streamlining Code Amendments