



STAFF REPORT
9/10/2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Kendra Reif, Community Development Director

SUBJECT: City of Coachella 6th Cycle Housing Element proposed amendments to Sections 17.16.020, 17.18.020, 17.18.030, 17.24.020 and 17.24.030 of the Coachella Municipal Code regarding affordable housing developments to bring the city's 6th Cycle Housing Element into compliance with state law. City-Initiated

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Adopt Ordinance No. 1225 approving amendments to the Coachella Municipal Code (C.M.C.) Sections 17.16.020, 17.18.020, 17.18.030, 17.24.020 and 17.24.030 of Title 17 ("Zoning") to permit certain affordable housing developments by right and amend certain height and density standards for affordable housing developments in order to bring the city's 6th Cycle Housing Element into compliance with state law.

BACKGROUND:

The City Council adopted the Coachella General Plan 2035 on April 22, 2015, that established the goals, policies, and implementation strategies that will implement the vision for the City of Coachella. The Housing Element is one of seven mandatory elements of a city's General Plan. One of the purposes of the Housing Element is to identify and analyze existing and projected housing needs in an effort to preserve, improve and develop housing for all economic segments of the community in accordance with State law. It is the only General Plan element for which State certification is required. State law requires that Housing Elements be updated periodically. As a jurisdiction in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region, the City of Coachella is required to adopt its updated Housing Element that covers the planning period from October 2021 through October 2029.

A new draft Housing Element was originally prepared in 2021. Since that time, the City has engaged in a series of consultations, workshops, and meetings with housing advocates, developers, local service providers, neighborhood associations, and the community-at-large to solicit input regarding the Element and issues related to its implementation. Further, the City has submitted a number of draft Elements to the State Department of Housing and Community Development

(HCD) for their review and approval, and HCD has suggested a number of proposed amendments to the City for State law compliance.

On July 27, 2023, HCD issued a third findings letter to the City noting the revised draft Element, incorporating prior revisions submitted, met the statutory requirements of State Housing Element Law. On September 13, 2023, the 6th Cycle Housing Element and Negative Declaration/Environmental Assessment were approved by the City Council. On October 2, 2023, the City submitted the Council approved Housing Element to HCD for final certification.

On December 1, 2023, HCD issued a fourth findings letter to the City indicating that while the wording of the Housing Element itself met legal requirements, the Housing Element cannot be found in substantial compliance with State law (and finally certified) until the City has completed necessary amendments to the City's Zoning Code to implement the updated Element. The city submitted an Electronic Site Inventory List to HCD on May 1, 2025 and it was accepted by HCD on May 1, 2025.

Staff prepared draft amendments to the Zoning Code for HCD's review and on May 15, 2025 HCD issued a letter accepting all of staff's draft amendments as being in compliance with State Housing Law to accommodate the lower-income regional housing need allocation (RHNA) pursuant to Government Code section 65585. (Attachment 2).

On July 2, 2025 the Planning Commission unanimously approved Resolution No. 2025-13 recommending the approval of the proposed Zoning Code amendments to the City Council.

On July 23, 2025 the City Council introduced of Ordinance No. 1225 approving the proposed Zoning Code amendments. The Ordinance is before the Council for second reading and adoption this evening.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

To bring the City's 6th Cycle Housing Element into compliance with State law and promote affordable housing in the City, Planning Staff prepared Code amendments to Title 17, Zoning, to permit certain affordable housing developments by right and to amend certain development standards to allow for affordable housing.

The proposed C.M.C. zoning amendments are as follows:

U-E Urban Employment Zone (Chapter 17.16.020), DT-PV Downtown Pueblo Viejo and TR-PV Downtown Transition Zones (Chapter 17.18.020), CN Neighborhood Commercial Zone (Chapter 17.24.020)

Permitted uses. Allows for multifamily developments in which at least 20 percent of the units are affordable to lower income households and meet all requirements pursuant to Government Code section 65583.2, subdivisions (h) and (i).

DT-PV Downtown Pueblo Viejo and TR-PV Downtown Transition Zones (Chapter 17.18.30)

Property Development Standards. Modifies building height limitation to 5 stories, or seventy-five (75) feet, whichever is less.

CN Neighborhood Commercial (Chapter 17.24.030)

Property Development Standards. Modifies minimum density to 20 dwelling units/acre for multifamily residential uses meeting state requirements and modifies the maximum height limit to four (4) stories or fifty (50) feet, whichever is less.

Once these Zoning Code amendments are approved by the City Council, the City's 6th Cycle Housing Element will fully comply with State law, allowing the city to implement the new 2021-2029 Housing Element.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

This Ordinance is a "project" subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). On April 22, 2015, the City Council adopted the Coachella General Plan 2035 and an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that analyzed the significant direct and indirect environmental effects of the General Plan 2035. On September 13, 2023, the Coachella City Council adopted a Negative Declaration of Environmental Impact (ND) when it adopted the 6th Cycle Housing Element, which concluded that the Housing Element updates would not result in significant direct or indirect effects to the environment beyond what had already been analyzed. Because this zoning Ordinance merely implements the provisions of the new Housing Element, the conclusions contained in the ND remain sufficient to outline the significant environmental impacts of this Ordinance. No facts or circumstances have significantly changed since adoption of the Housing Element and the ND. Therefore, no further environmental analysis of this Ordinance is required under CEQA.

ALTERNATIVES:

- 1) Adopt Ordinance No. 1225 approving amendments to the Coachella Municipal Code (C.M.C.) Sections 17.16.020, 17.18.020, 17.18.030, 17.24.020 and 17.24.030 of Title 17 ("Zoning") for adoption of the 2021-2029 Housing Element.
- 2) Re-Introduce Ordinance No. 1225 approving amendments to the Coachella Municipal Code (C.M.C.) Sections 17.16.020, 17.18.020, 17.18.030, 17.24.020 and 17.24.030 of Title 17 ("Zoning") for adoption of the 2021-2029 Housing Element *with further amendments*.
- 3) Recommend denial of Ordinance No. 1225.
- 4) Continue this item and provide staff with direction.

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE(S):

Staff recommends Alternative #1 as noted above.

Attachment:

1. Ordinance No. 1225, Amending Zoning Code to Conform with HCD Approved 6th Cycle Housing Element

Exhibit B – Draft 6th Cycle Housing Element of the City of Coachella

2. Letter from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD)