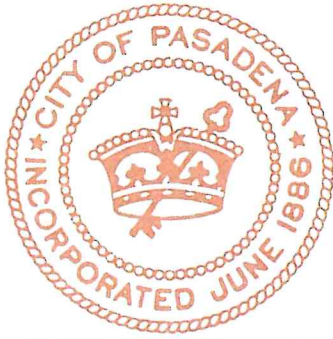




Agenda Report

October 27, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Planning & Community Development Department

SUBJECT: **APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO TITLE 17 (ZONING CODE) OF THE PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE AND THE CITY'S SPECIFIC PLANS FOR PREDEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEWS (PPRs), DESIGN REVIEW, SIGNS AND AWNINGS, OUTDOOR AND TEMPORARY USES, ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUs), PARKING AND TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENTS (TODs), IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW STATE LEGISLATION, AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the Zoning Code and Specific Plan Amendments are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the "Common Sense" exemption that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA;
2. Adopt the Findings for the Zoning Code and Specific Plan Amendments in Attachment A;
3. Approve the Zoning Code and Specific Plan Amendments as outlined in this report and in Attachment B; and
4. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance for the Zoning Code and Specific Plan Amendments within 120 days consistent with the provisions set forth in the report and in Attachment B.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On August 27, 2025, the Planning Commission voted to recommend the City Council approve the proposed Zoning Code and Specific Plan Amendments as recommended by staff, with the following changes:

1. Design Review – For new multifamily projects, maintain the existing threshold of 10 units for projects to be reviewed by the Design Commission. Staff supports this recommended change.
2. Parking – For existing buildings that are greater than 50 years old, do not require additional parking for additions necessary to meet building, safety or fire requirements. Staff supports this recommended change.

OTHER MEETINGS:

On June 18, 2024, staff presented recommended changes to the Predevelopment Plan Review (PPR) Section to the Economic Development and Technology. On December 10, 2024, staff presented the recommended changes to the Design Review Section to the Design Commission. Both were supportive of the proposed changes.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past two years, the Planning Division has undertaken several Zoning Code Amendments to encourage housing development, improve the development review process and be consistent with recent State legislation. This includes updating the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance, adopting Research and Development (R&D) zoning standards, adopting the Adaptive Reuse Ordinance and establishing an Administrative Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process for alcohol sales at restaurants.

These Zoning Code and Specific Plan Amendments (Amendments) propose changes to standards and/ or procedures to continue improving the development review process, comply with state law, and complete other miscellaneous updates:

1. Predevelopment Plan Reviews (PPRs) – PMC Section 17.60.040.C: Update the thresholds related to when to require PPR.
2. Design Review – PMC Section 17.61.030: Update the thresholds related to when to require design review and clarify and streamline the review process;
3. Signs and Awnings – PMC Chapters 17.48 and 17.50: Clarify requirements for signs and incorporate design standards for signs and awnings.
4. Outdoor and Temporary Uses – PMC Sections 17.50.180, 17.50.320 and 17.61.040: Consolidate and update the list of outdoor and temporary uses and the Temporary Use Permit (TUP) process.
5. ADUs – PMC Section 17.50.275: Revise ADU Ordinance to respond to comments from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).
6. Parking and Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs) – PMC Chapters 17.46 and 17.50 and Specific Plan Parking Sections: Standardize parking requirements for new uses and changes in use and update parking standards for TOD areas.
7. Implementation of New State Legislation – PMC Chapters 17.46, 17.50 and 17.76 and PMC and Specific Plan Land Use Tables: Revise standards related to

Parking for Single-Family Additions, Secondhand Stores and Donation Facilities, Notices for Public Hearings, and Employee Housing.

8. Other Miscellaneous Updates – PMC Chapters 17.76 and 17.80 and PMC and Specific Plan Land Use Tables: Revise standards related to Meeting Continuances, Animal Grooming and Animal Hospital Uses, and Definitions.

ANALYSIS:

1. PPRs

The PPR process was last updated in 2004 and is currently required for most multifamily and larger non-residential projects. The main objective is to achieve better projects through early consultation between City staff and applicants. The PPR process is the first step an applicant follows when pursuing a project. They are informational items only and not formal applications. Comments are provided from multiple departments on the proposed project. Table 1 provides a summary of the proposed changes to the PPR thresholds:

Table 1. PPR Thresholds

Existing Threshold to Require PPR	Proposed Threshold to Require PPR
1. Multifamily projects with 10+ units	Make optional
2. Nonresidential projects with 25,000+ SF of gross floor area (GFA)	No change
3. Master Plans or Master Plan Amendments	For Master Plan Amendments, clarify it is only required with new construction
4. Projects with street vacations	No changes
5. Projects in Hillside Development (HD) overlays that require a Hillside Development Permit (HDP)	
6. Subdivisions in HD overlays and all other subdivisions of 5+ lots	
7. Projects with affordable housing on religious facilities sites	
8. Other projects as determined by the Director	Require for projects that include a General Plan or Zoning Map Amendment (with new construction)
9. General Plan or Zoning Map Amendments (proposed new threshold that does not currently exist)	

The most significant change is to make PPR optional for new multi-family projects. Staff has heard from applicants that requiring a PPR for residential projects does not always provide a benefit. Residential projects already go through the Preliminary Consultation process, where applicants receive comments on design considerations as well as comments from other departments. This makes two preliminary reviews, which becomes duplicative. If a PPR is optional for residential projects, an applicant can elect to go through that process and receive information if they think it will be beneficial. The proposed Amendments also include a new threshold requiring PPRs for projects that include a General Plan and/or Zoning Map Amendment with new construction.

2. Design Review

The Design Review process was last updated in 2009 and consists of the following:

- a. Preliminary Consultation: Review high-level design considerations such as site design, massing, architectural concept, and response to surrounding context. Comments are provided; no decision is made during this phase.
- b. Concept Design Review: Main step in the design review process and includes environmental review. Review the design, proportions, solid-to-void relationship, and compliance with applicable design guidelines. A public hearing is held for projects that require Design Commission review.
- c. Final Design Review: Review the construction details, building materials and colors, and landscaping.

The Director of Planning and Community Development (Director) may also authorize Consolidated Design Review, where Concept Design Review and Final Design Review are combined as one step. Depending on the size of the building, the review authority is either the Director (staff level) or the Design Commission. Decisions can be appealed or called for review by a member of the City Council or Design Commission. While the design review process remains very instrumental in the development process, there is some overlap with the PPR process and the thresholds for requiring design review are not always consistent with other sections of the Zoning Code. Table 2 provides a summary of the proposed changes to the design review thresholds:

Table 2. Design Review Thresholds

Existing Threshold	Proposed Threshold
1. New construction – Nonresidential: <u>Central District:</u> ≤5,000 SF – Director >5,000 SF – Design Commission <u>Outside the Central District:</u> 5,000 to 25,000 SF – Director >25,000 SF – Design Commission	No changes
2. New construction – Multifamily Residential: ≤10 units – Director >10 units – Design Commission	No changes. Staff recommended the threshold be raised to 20 units. However, the Planning Commission recommended the threshold remain at 10 units.
3. Major Rehabilitation to Existing Structures: <u>Central District:</u> ≤10,000 SF – Director >10,000 SF – Design Commission <u>Outside the Central District:</u> ≤25,000 SF – Director >25,000 SF – Design Commission	<u>Central District:</u> ≤25,000 SF – Director >25,000 SF – Design Commission <u>Outside the Central District:</u> 5,000 to 50,000 SF – Director >50,000 SF – Design Commission

Multi-Family

For new multifamily construction, all projects will continue to require design review. Staff recommended increasing the threshold to require Design Commission review to 20

units to streamline smaller in-fill sites. However, since these are projects in established neighborhoods typically on smaller lots, the Planning Commission felt the threshold should remain at 10 units so neighbors are notified and can participate in a hearing process. Staff is supportive of keeping the threshold the same.

Affordable Projects

The proposed Amendments will also allow multifamily projects where 50% or more of the units are designated as affordable to automatically qualify for Consolidated Design Review. This will streamline the process and aid in addressing Program 9 of the Housing Element (Removal of Constraints).

Major Rehabilitation

The City Council recently approved Zoning Code Amendments allowing exterior improvements for the adaptive reuse of structures to be reviewed at the Director level, regardless of the building's size. For other major rehabilitations to existing structures, most projects will continue to require design review. However, under the proposed Amendments, the threshold to require Design Commission review would increase from 10,000 to 25,000 square feet within the Central District and from 25,000 to 50,000 square feet outside the Central District. In most instances, such rehabilitations are voluntary upgrades or tenant improvements and requiring Design Commission review for smaller projects has been identified as a disincentive to improve properties.

Preliminary Consultation

Currently there is very limited information that is codified related to Preliminary Consultation. The proposed Amendments would formalize the Preliminary Consultation step by including a purpose for the step, identifying exemptions for smaller projects and establishing procedures. A significant change will require public notice of a Preliminary Consultation when presented to the Design Commission. Currently this review is not publicly noticed.

Findings and Conditions for Project Approvals

The findings for Design Review call for the project to meet the Design Review purpose, which focus on architecture, landscaping and historic preservation. The proposed Amendments add the following Design Review purposes:

- Complete environmental review per CEQA.
- Ensure public improvements with an essential nexus and rough proportionality to the project are incorporated with regards to mobility, accessibility, public safety, landscaping/trees, and infrastructure.

The proposed Amendments also allow clarify that conditions of approval can be incorporated related to public improvements.

3. Signs and Awnings

The Sign Ordinance was last updated in 2009 and provides regulations for all commercial signage. Staff has identified several areas of the Ordinance that should be

updated to provide better clarity and streamline reviews. Below is a summary of the proposed changes to the Ordinance:

Sign Exceptions

Sign Exceptions are a type of variance from the City's sign regulations. They are processed similar to a Minor Variance with the Hearing Officer as the review authority. The proposed Amendments have the Director as the review authority. This will streamline the process and promote business activity. Decisions will continue to be distributed and posted online and can still be called up or appealed to the Board of Zoning Appeals. This is consistent with other entitlements that have been shifted to the Director as the review authority.

Sign Standards

The proposed Amendments will clarify numerous standards including those for building identification signs, monument signs for nonresidential uses and the types of signage for basement and upper floor occupants. The proposed changes will also streamline review for wall signs and awnings. Director level design review is only recommended for signs on historic resources in the Central District and building identification signs throughout the City (a Certificate of Appropriateness will still be required for signs on historic resources outside the Central District).

4. Outdoor and Temporary Uses

The proposed Amendments would consolidate all ongoing outdoor uses and storage into one section and all temporary uses (indoor or outdoor) in another section. For TUPs, staff has found the types of temporary uses and/or length of times permitted do not always reflect the needs of the community. The proposed Amendments would increase the length of time for temporary permits related to new development such as construction yards, real estate offices, and structures. Also proposed are changes to provide more flexibility in the times permitted for outdoor events and sales (e.g., allow one event for a longer period or multiple events for shorter periods).

5. ADUs

The City adopted its current ADU Ordinance on April 15, 2024, and subsequently submitted it to HCD for their review. On February 26, 2025, HCD provided six findings (comments) on the Ordinance (Attachment C). Below is a summary of the findings and proposed changes to the Ordinance:

- Finding #1 – ADUs for Multifamily: Recently adopted SB 1211 allows additional detached ADUs for existing multifamily properties. The number of detached ADUs shall not exceed the number of existing multifamily units and an overall maximum of eight detached ADUs.
 - Staff Response: Amend Ordinance to comply with new legislation.
- Finding #2 – Government Code Sections: The Ordinance references Government Code Sections that were recently removed or renumbered.
 - Staff Response: Amend Ordinance to reference updated Sections.
- Finding #3 – Number of Units, Single-Family Lots: The Ordinance does not

clearly state that the following is permitted: one converted ADU; one new construction ADU; and one Junior ADU.

- Staff Response: Amend Ordinance to provide for all ADU combinations.
- Finding #4 – Front Yard Setbacks: The Ordinance limits attached Exempt ADUs of 800 square feet or less from encroaching within front setbacks.
 - Staff Response: Amend Ordinance to remove the front yard setback requirement for Exempt ADUs.
- Finding #5 – Height for New Construction Attached ADUs: The Ordinance states ADUs shall not exceed 25 feet and two stories in height, or what is permitted in the underlying zone, whichever is less.
 - Staff Response: Amend Ordinance to clearly state second story ADUs are permitted.
- Finding #6 – Parking. The Ordinance does not indicate that parking standards do not apply to Exempt ADUs.
 - Staff Response: Amend Ordinance to clarify that the parking standards do not apply to Exempt ADUs.

Separately, HCD contacted staff regarding the following:

- Comment – Height and Floor Area. The Ordinance measures height and floor area per the Zoning Code. Both should use the California Building Code (CBC).
 - Staff Response: For height, amend Ordinance to allow applicants the flexibility of using either the Zoning Code or CBC. For floor area, amend Ordinance to use the CBC.

6. Parking and TODs

Parking Requirements for New Uses and Changes in Use

Parking has consistently been identified as a barrier when new businesses wish to reoccupy vacant spaces. This is because many uses have different parking standards and the new use must provide additional parking if the requirement is higher.

To address this concern, the Lincoln Avenue, East Colorado, South Fair Oaks, Central District and Lamanda Park Specific Plans included the following:

1. Require the same parking standard of two parking spaces per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area for most office, retail, restaurant, service and industrial uses, require 0.5 parking spaces per hotel room for lodging uses and 1.5 spaces per work/live unit (standards for recreation, education and public assembly uses remained unchanged).
2. Remove additional parking requirements for a change of use within designated historic resources and structures built prior to 1970. Parking would still be required for additions.

The proposed Amendments will expand both items above Citywide (to all specific plans and nonresidential zones outside specific plans), with the following changes to item #2:

- Remove additional parking requirement for a change of use within designated historic resources and for structures greater than 50 years old- removing the

reference to 1970- except for the following:

- Additional parking shall still be required for recreation, education, and public assembly uses.
- Additional parking shall be required for building additions. However, the Planning Commission recommended that parking not be required for additions necessary to meet building, safety, or fire requirements. Staff supports this change.
- Existing parking spaces shall not be reduced except to provide disabled parking and access, electric vehicle charging spaces and/or bicycle parking.

Attachment D provides a map of the City's specific plan areas and other commercial zoning districts.

Parking and TOD Areas

Pasadena has several TOD areas, which include most of the Central District and the areas surrounding light-rail stations. The areas include reduced parking requirements and maximum parking caps. A Minor CUP and parking study is required to further reduce the requirements or exceed the caps. Attachment E provides a map of the City's TOD areas. Properties outside TOD areas do not have reduced parking requirements but have maximum parking caps. A Variance and parking study is required to further reduce the requirements or exceed the caps.

Since the TOD standards were adopted in the early 2000s, the state legislature has removed minimum parking requirements for most businesses within ½-mile of major transit stops, negating the need for additional parking reductions in TOD areas. Therefore, the proposed Amendments will remove the reduced parking requirements in TOD areas and apply one Citywide standard for parking caps. Overall, the proposed caps will result in less parking than what is currently required within and outside TOD areas, reflecting best practices for planning and mobility. The proposed Amendments will also require an Administrative Minor CUP and parking study to further reduce the requirements or exceed the caps.

7. Implementation of New State Legislation

Assembly Bills (ABs) 1308, 2632, and 2904 became effective over the past two years and require amendments to the Zoning Code. The full text of the bills can be found in Attachment F. Additional amendments are required to comply with the California Employee Housing Act. Below is a summary of the legislation and recommendations to be in compliance with state law:

AB 1308: Parking for Single-Family Additions

The Zoning Code permits single-family additions up to 500 square feet in non-hillside areas without increasing parking. Additions of 500 to 1,200 square feet must provide two parking spaces. Additions greater than 1,200 square feet require the construction of a two-car garage. For hillside areas, additions greater than 150 square feet require the construction of a two-car garage and may require unenclosed guest spaces. AB 1308 prohibits cities from imposing parking requirements for any additions to single-family

residences, regardless of size, unless the resulting dwelling exceeds the size limits of the underlying zoning district (e.g., height, lot coverage, setbacks or floor area).

The proposed Amendments will remove the parking requirements for single-family additions to comply with the new bill. Parking shall still be required if the resulting dwelling exceeds one of the size limits of the underlying zoning district.

AB 2632: Secondhand Stores and Donation Facilities

The Zoning Code considers Secondhand Clothing, Appliance and Furniture Stores as a retail use. It is allowed by-right in most commercial zoning districts. However, if the use also includes a drop-off facility for donated goods, a CUP is required for a Charitable Institution land use. AB 2632 requires cities to allow thrift stores or secondhand stores as a use by-right in all zoning districts that allow retail sales. In addition, cities cannot restrict secondhand stores from receiving donated items for sale. Cities can adopt reasonable operational standards related to the donation of items. The proposed Amendments will include adding *Retail Sales with Donation Drop-off* as a separate by-right use and incorporate operational standards when the use includes a drop-off facility.

AB 2904: Public Noticing

The Zoning Code requires public noticing for Planning Commission public hearings a minimum 14 days for Zoning Code Amendments. AB 2904 requires public noticing for Planning Commission a minimum 20 days for Zoning Code Amendments that affect the permitted uses of real property. The proposed Amendments will revise noticing requirements to comply with the new bill.

Employee Housing Act: Requirements for Employee and Farmworker Housing

The California Employee Housing Act has specific requirements about employee and farmworker housing, which are enforced by HCD. To comply with state requirements and implement Program #23 of the General Plan Housing Element, the proposed Amendments will allow the following:

- Employee housing with six or fewer residents in a single-family residential zone to be treated the same as any single-family residence; and
- Employee housing for farmworkers consisting of no more than 12 units or 36 beds to be permitted in the same manner as other agricultural uses in the same zone.

8. Other Miscellaneous Updates

Meeting Continuances

The Zoning Code allows public hearings to be continued only two times within a 90-day period. After that, new notification is required. Staff has found this to delay some projects, particularly those where different groups are working together to address concerns. The proposed Amendments will remove the two-hearing limit, and an item will only be re-noticed if it is continued to a date uncertain.

Animal Grooming and Animal Hospital Uses

As part of Lincoln Avenue, Central District and Lamanda Park Specific Plans, Animal Grooming and Animal Hospitals were permitted by-right in all commercial and industrial zones. However, this is not the case in the City's other specific plans or in commercial zones outside specific plan areas. The proposed Amendments will add the uses by-right in commercial and industrial zones Citywide. The use is neighborhood serving and activities are required to be conducted indoors.

Glossary

The proposed Amendments include updates to various definitions.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The proposed Amendments implement numerous goals, policies and programs of the General Plan Land Use Element including the following:

Policy 12.3 – Adequate Parking, Policy 19.1 – Parking Standards, Program C-2 – Process and Development Review and Entitlement and Program C-5 – Affordable Housing Entitlement Process.

The proposed Amendments also implement numerous policies and programs of the General Plan Housing Element including the following:

Policy HE-2.8 – Development Process, Program #9 – Development Review, Program #23 – Zoning Code Updates

A full summary of the General Plan's supporting policies and programs can be found in Attachment A.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The action proposed herein is exempt from CEQA pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the "Common Sense" exemption that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. The proposed Amendments focus on procedural changes to the review process and provide additional clarity on terms and standards used. They also revise sections to comply with recent state legislation and implement programs of the 2021-2029 Housing Element.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed Amendments would encourage housing development, improve the development review process and be consistent with recent State legislation. In addition, they include technical changes to streamline implementation of the Zoning Code, clarify the application of development standards, and other corrections for internal consistency within the Zoning Code. Staff recommends the City Council make the required findings and adopt the proposed Amendments.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact to the City by adopting the proposed Amendments.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Approved by:



MIGUEL MARQUEZ
City Manager

Attachments (6):

- A. Findings for Zoning Code Amendments
- B. Summary of Zoning Code Amendments
- C. Letter from HCD on the City's ADU Ordinance
- D. Map of Specific Plan Areas and Other Commercial Zones
- E. Map of TOD Areas
- F. AB 1308, 2632 and 2904 Bill Text