



# AGENDA REPORT

SAN CLEMENTE CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
Meeting Date: May 25, 2022

Agenda Item 10A  
Approvals:  
City Manager CS  
Dept. Head CGD  
Attorney CS  
Finance JW

**Department:** Community Development, Planning Division  
**Prepared By:** Sara Toma, AICP, Senior Planner

**Subject:** *PERMIT STREAMLINING – REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL*

**Fiscal Impact:** None to receive this report. The City Council previously allocated funding for the work programs outlined below in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget. Any additional projects initiated may require an appropriation of supplemental funding to undertake.

**Summary:** This report provides information about opportunities to streamline the City’s permit approval process. Current efforts to accomplish this task include the Housing Element Rezoning Program, the development of the Implementation Plan of the City’s Local Coastal Program, six Specific Plan Updates, and an upgrade to the Community Development Department’s permit-tracking system.

**Background:** On March 1, 2022, the City Council directed staff to bring back a report on potential code or design guideline modifications to streamline the permitting process.

As an ongoing work program, staff routinely amends the zoning code to clarify procedures, streamline or eliminate various planning permits, and modify or eliminate some ineffective rules. Some of the topics of focus have been general procedures, permit and process eliminations, permit exemptions, formalization of procedures/role of the design review subcommittee, and allowing more staff-level decisions to shorten the review process. This report identifies streamlining processes currently underway, and future streamlining ideas that staff has compiled to bring forward in the future when the current efforts have been completed.

**Discussion:**

**Planning Division Work Program**

The Planning Division is working on four major projects that will facilitate the streamlining permit process by removing barriers that cause project delays such as the level of hearing body review, amendments to regulations, application submittal requirements, and design review time. These projects will help promote a faster development review process, create certainty for developers, and further the goals, policies, and implementation measures of the City’s General Plan.

The Planning Division’s current work program includes the Housing Element Rezoning Program, the preparation of the Implementation Plan of the City’s Local Coastal

Program, six Specific Plan Updates, and an upgrade to the Community Development Department's permit tracking system.

### ***I. Housing Element Rezoning Program***

The Housing Element Rezoning Program would implement the Zoning Program in the 6<sup>th</sup> Cycle Housing Element (2021-2029). This effort will amend zoning regulations to:

- Update the City's existing Affordable Housing Overlay District;
- Require by-right approval of residential development if 20 percent of the units are set aside for lower income (very low and low) households;
- Remove Conditional Use Permit Requirements for 5+ units for projects that meet certain objective standards up to a certain threshold;
- Develop and codify objective design standards; and
- Evaluate, and revise the development standards for height limits, lot coverage, and parking requirements to ensure that residential development projects have the ability to achieve the allowable densities.

### ***II. Implementation Plan of the Local Coastal Program***

The City is working on obtaining a fully certified Local Coastal Program (LCP) and is currently preparing the Implementation Plan, which is the companion document to the recently certified Coastal Land Use Plan. This effort will result in a new Title 18 of the municipal code for development in the Coastal Zone. Having a certified LCP will give the City more control over approving projects within the Coastal Zone and provide greater certainty to local property owners and businesses.

The result of this LCP effort will be a streamlined Coastal Development Permit (CDP) process for local property owners by enabling them to obtain a single permit from the City. The efforts on the Housing Element and Specific Plan updates described in this report will also need to be incorporated into the Coastal Implementation Plan.

### ***III. Specific Plan Updates***

Staff is updating six Specific Plans to be consistent with the City's General Plan and the recently certified Coastal Land Use Plan. The amendments include the allowance of auto uses, including electric vehicle delivery service centers, in the Business Parks, and a streamlined review process for development in the Los Molinos area with codified design guidelines. The six Specific Plan Updates include the following:

1. West Pico Corridor,
2. Forster Ranch,
3. Marblehead Coastal,
4. Marblehead Inland,
5. Rancho San Clemente, and

6. Talega.

**IV. Permit Tracking System Upgrade**

The City's permit tracking system (TRAKiT) which allows applicants to submit building permits, check project status, and provide other property search features is currently in the process of being upgraded. The update will include an e-TRAKiT planning and building application submittal portal that will allow prospective applicants to submit ministerial or discretionary permit applications and required documents online. This will reduce time and cost for both the applicant and City by reducing submittal errors and ensuring faster processing time. This customer friendly web based system upgrade will track all building permits, inspections, site plan reviews, and code enforcement violations. The workflow provided by the system allows for the efficient transfer of work, providing visibility, comprehensive collaboration tools, and reporting.

Moreover, the public will continue to be able to utilize the upgraded e-TRAKiT system to view application status and review comments, allowing users to manage projects more effectively.

**Future Streamlining Opportunities**

Staff has compiled a list of future streamlining opportunities. This list is provided as Attachment 1. These prospective recommendations include simplification of some applications, addressing the processing of minor additions and remodels in proximity to historic resources, allowing more staff level decisions and changing some process levels from Planning Commission to a Zoning Administrator approval. A future Planning Division work program includes updating the City's Design Guidelines and codifying objective design standards to simplify review and process decisions.

Staff anticipates bringing forward these potential code modifications to City Council for consideration once the current efforts underway have been completed. Staff expects to pursue these opportunities to further streamline the review process once work on the Housing Element update and rezoning program, and Specific Plan updates are completed and we have made progress in merging these updates into the Local Coastal Program. Staff anticipates initiating some of these efforts, including updating the City's Design Guidelines, in Fiscal Year 2023.

**Recommended**

**Action:** STAFF RECOMMENDS THAT the City Council receive and file this report.

**Attachments:** Attachment 1: List of Future Streamlining Opportunities

**Notification:** None.

<b>List of Future Streamlining Opportunities</b>	
<b>Signs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign programs with City Planner approval, except for historic structures and signage on new development and major remodels approved through a discretionary process. For such signage, allow subsequent review with ZA approval (vs. PC).</li> <li>• Monument signs with City Planner approval when they consolidate advertising of multiple tenants.</li> </ul>
<b>Simplify Applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish work on consolidating applications with similar findings to simplify our process and make it more intuitive (note: Council initiated this in the past). We would expand this to include signage applications and possibly combining special events/temporary use permits.</li> </ul>
<b>Residential Buildings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, new development and additions over 500 square feet on sites with 3+ units within 300 feet of residential zoned historic structures are subject to PC approval of Cultural Heritage Permits, except for projects:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Not visible from right of way adjoining historic structure sites,</li> <li>2) Not in the architectural overlay,</li> <li>3) Not abutting historic structure sites,</li> <li>4) Not on sites with historic structure sites, or</li> <li>5) Not visible from a public view corridor.</li> </ol> <p>New buildings and additions over 500 square feet require PC approval. Staff suggests allowing projects with City Planner approval vs. PC if located 100-300 feet from historic structures.</p> </li> <li>• Minor remodels/additions to single-family and duplexes adjoining historic structure sites (not in architectural overlay).               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allow additions under 50% with ZA approval vs. PC if not screened from the street. Currently, the limit is 500 square feet w/ZA approval.</li> <li>○ Allow ZA to approve accessory buildings visible from street (currently PC).</li> <li>○ Allow staff to approve accessory buildings screened from the street.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Accessory Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessory structures (all sites) - Allow with City Planner approval where a project has proposed materials and design in character with the primary building's appearance and has a height and size that maintain visual focus of primary buildings from the public right-of-way and support an open street scene along the block on the same side of the street as the project.</li> <li>• Residential accessory buildings - Allow with City Planner approval up to height limit of the zone (vs. 15 feet) if they comply with setbacks.</li> <li>• Nonresidential accessory buildings with ZA approval vs. PC.</li> <li>• Allow walls over 3 ½ feet in front yard/street side yard with City Planner approval if criteria are met (and we incorporate common conditions into the zoning code).</li> </ul>

ATTACHMENT 1

<b>Parking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow off-site and shared parking agreements with ZA or City Planner approval (vs. PC).</li></ul>
<b>Design Guidelines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update City Design Guidelines (General Plan Implementation Measure)</li><li>• Codify design guidelines as objective development standards to simplify review and processing (some of this work is underway with the Housing Element Rezoning Program and the West Pico Corridor Specific Plan Update).</li></ul>