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New City of San Diego Code Updates Will Facilitate Faster Housing and Streamline Permitting Process

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES 2020 LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE UPDATES

SAN DIEGO – To keep up with the ever-changing needs of the City of San Diego’s land uses, today the City Council unanimously approved an update to the code that regulates the development and use of properties. Among the 44 items in this [Land Development Code Update](#), applicants can now turn ground floor commercial spaces into residential uses more quickly.

Additionally, recreational amenities in the public right of way will no longer need a development permit, and adult day care facility regulations will now be defined in the City’s Municipal Code.

“Each component of this update is a step toward fulfilling the City’s goals of creating more dynamic neighborhoods that are more inclusive and sustainable,” said Mayor Todd Gloria. **“These updates are also about adapting to the challenges we face during this time. We are enduring a housing crisis and it’s important we make it easier to build more homes for San Diegans. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it’s also critical that we support local businesses and help them get through this.”**

The City makes updates to the Land Development Code yearly and this update included corrections, regulatory reform and a new regulation. Several of the updates came as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Land Development Code Updates are crucial to keeping the City progressing in a positive direction, adapting to new trends such as an aging population, and anticipating for what is expected to come,” said Planning Department Director Mike Hansen. **“These updates remove unnecessary barriers to ensure our City’s needs, like making it easier to create housing, are met.”**

Here are some highlights from the update:

Downtown Parking: Eliminates minimum parking limits in the Gaslamp Quarter and instead establishes a maximum parking limit. Further, it creates design standards for above-grade parking levels throughout Downtown to allow these structures to be converted to residential, office and other uses in the future if parking demands change.

Temporary Storage in the Public Right of Way: Requires moving storage companies to have a temporary use permit if storage containers are placed within the public right of way. Currently, storage containers in the public right of way are not allowed at all. This change will help people who need to use temporary storage containers, but do not have a place to put them on private property.

Converting Ground Floor Commercial Space to Temporary Housing More Quickly: Currently, an applicant wanting to convert ground floor commercial space to temporary residential uses must provide evidence the commercial space has been vacant for six months. This will eliminate that requirement and, in a time where commercial space may be oversupplied due to a potential recession, it allows for space to be more quickly turned into much needed housing units.

Adding a Recreational Amenity Within Public Right of Way: A recreational amenity, which is any improvement that provides recreational value to residents or visitors and that enhances pedestrian or bicycle travel experience, will be defined and will no longer require a development permit within the public right of way. Instead, applicants will be able simply apply for a public right of way permit. This will make it easier to add much needed recreational amenities such as linear parks and bike racks.

Development Impact Fee Deferral: This will allow for anyone issued a construction permit between March 2020 and March 2022 to defer their development impact fees (DIF) for three years instead of two years. DIFs are one-time fees to help pay for public facilities. This change was made to provide relief for those impacted by COVID-19.

Outdoor Dining on Private Property: This will allow businesses, located near public transportation, to use their land more efficiently by permitting the use of their private parking lots for outdoor dining. The City has allowed businesses to do this temporarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow outdoor dining on parking lots into the future, after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. In another update, businesses in the Downtown area, including the Gaslamp Quarter, will be allowed to have outdoor dining on their property, with some restrictions, without obtaining a discretionary permit.

Adult Day Care Facilities: Due to San Diego's growing aging population, City planners have identified a need for places where seniors can safely go for the day to access resources and companionship. Currently, adult day care facilities are not a defined use in the City's Municipal Code. This will provide regulations for these facilities, similar to regulations in place for child care centers.

The City is [taking requests](#) from the public until March for the 2021 Land Development Code Update.

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