

CITY OF MERCED
Planning & Permitting Division

STAFF REPORT: #15-17

AGENDA ITEM: 4.1

FROM: Kim Espinosa,
Planning Manager

PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING DATE: Sept. 9, 2015

PREPARED BY: Kim Espinosa,
Planning Manager

CITY COUNCIL
MEETING DATE: Sept. 8, 2015

SUBJECT: **Overview of the Public Review Draft of the New Merced Zoning Ordinance**, initiated by the City of Merced, to give the Planning Commission an overview of the recently-released Public Review Draft of the Zoning Ordinance, which is a comprehensive update of Title 20 of the Merced Municipal Code.

ACTION: Information Only

SUMMARY

Introduction

At the September 9, 2015, Planning Commission meeting, City staff will present an overview and provide copies of the Public Review Draft of the new Merced Zoning Ordinance. This is the first comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinance since its adoption in the early 1960's and represents a complete redesign, update, and modernization of the Zoning Ordinance in order to make the Ordinance easier to use and understand for the general public and to provide specific guidance to developers, making the development process simpler and faster. The goal was to facilitate the City's overall growth and development and enhance the community's overall appearance, access to services, and economic health.

The process began in 2012 with the hiring of a consultant, The Planning Center (now known as Placeworks), with the use of grant funds. Before the grant funds ran out in December 2013, the consultants prepared a preliminary draft of the new ordinance. Since that time, City Planning Staff took over responsibility for the project and facilitated the Focus Group meetings from July 2013 to March 2015 (see below). City staff also completely reformatted the ordinance with the use of color, enhanced graphics and photographs, and added provisions to address various issues that came up throughout the Focus Group process. In December 2014, City staff produced a Focus Group Review Draft for the Focus Group to review; and in September 2015, City staff produced the Public Review Draft with changes as asked for by the Focus Group along with various changes that arose from City staff's experience with implementing the current Zoning Ordinance.

Focus Group

The Merced Zoning Ordinance Update Focus Group was made up of Merced residents with various interests, including developers, engineers, planners, real estate, banking, and other interested citizens (see below for the members). The Zoning Ordinance Focus Group met a total of 17 times from July 2013 to March 2015. Over the course of the meetings, the Focus Group made recommendations on the draft Zoning Ordinance.

Focus Group Members: Jim Abbate, Christina Alley, Ann Andersen, Todd Bender, Kenra Bragonier, Adam Cox, Tony Dossetti (Council Member), Ron Ewing, Loren Gonella, Forrest Hansen, Flip Hassett, Jack Lesch, Elmer Lorenzi, Des Johnston, Guy Maxwell, Carole McCoy (former Planning Commissioner), Michelle Paloutzian, Garth Pecchinino, Joe Ramirez, Mike Salvadori, Stan Thurston (Mayor), Brandon Williams (former Planning Commissioner), Jim Xu, and Chairman Bruce Logue

Along with the Public Review Draft, a summary of the Focus Group's recommendations and a summary table of the major changes proposed to the existing ordinance in the Draft will be provided to the Planning Commission. After the Planning Commission has had some time to review the Draft, Planning Commission study sessions and perhaps a joint study session with the City Council will be scheduled. Public hearings to consider adoption of the new ordinance are expected in late 2015/early 2016.