



CITY OF MERCED ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE FOCUS GROUP

MINUTES

Merced Civic Center
First Floor Sam Pipes Room

678 W. 18th Street
Thursday, February 26, 2015
8:15 a.m.

Mission of Focus Group

Update the Zoning Ordinance to be more user-friendly and easier to understand for the Community.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson LOGUE called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m.

B. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Ann Andersen, Kenra Bragonier, Adam Cox, Jack Lesch, Bruce Logue, Elmer Lorenzi, Guy Maxwell, Michelle Paloutzian, Des Johnston, and Joe Ramirez

Members Absent: Jim Abbate, Christina Alley, Todd Bender, Tony Dossetti, Loren Gonella, Flip Hassett, Carole McCoy, Mike Salvadori, Stan Thurston, Brandon Williams, and Jim Xu

Staff Present: Director of Development Services David Gonzalves, Planning Manager Kim Espinosa, Associate Planner Julie Nelson, Director of Economic Development Frank Quintero and Recording Secretary Francisco Mendoza-Gonzalez

C. APPROVAL OF ACTION MINUTES

Group Member BRAGONIER identified a typo in the Draft Minutes of February 12, 2015. The section pertaining to “Primary Building Standards” (page 4) should reference “Table 20.10-2” instead of “Table 30.10-2.”

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M/S LORENZI-LESCH, and carried by unanimous voice vote (11 absent), to approve the Minutes of February 12, 2015, as submitted, with the correction suggested by Group Member BRAGONIER.

D. ITEMS

1. Questions/Comments on Focus Group Review Draft of Zoning Ordinance

The Focus Group discussed Chapters 20.12 - Industrial Zoning District and 20.14-Downtown Zoning Districts and made the following recommendations:

Purpose of the Industrial Zoning Districts 20.12.010 (A) and (B). Group Member BRAGONIER was concerned that parcels of any size could be rezoned to industrial and produce spot zoning adjacent to residential properties. To prevent this from happening, she suggested that a minimum zoning district size be established for the I-L and I-H zones. The Focus Group came to the consensus that there should be a 5-acre minimum zone size for the I-L zone and a 10-acre minimum zone size for the I-H zone (applies only for newly established industrial zones).

Recycling Collection Facilities, Small. Economic Development Director QUINTERO noted that small recycling collection facilities tend to generate high volumes of traffic. He explained that this results in slower traffic patterns that make it difficult for other industrial businesses to operate. The Focus Group came to the consensus that small recycling collection facilities should not be allowed in the I-H zone.

Recycling Collection Facilities, Large and Recycling Processing Facilities. The Focus Group came to the consensus that large recycling collection facilities and recycling processing facilities should be allowed in the I-H zone with a Site Plan Review Permit.

Warehousing, Wholesaling and Distribution. The Focus Group came to the consensus that warehousing, wholesaling and distributions should be permitted in the I-H zone with a Site Plan Review Permit. In addition, they recommended that Note #3 (page 35) be modified so that a Site Plan Review Permit is required for businesses that would like to dedicate more than 10% of their total building floor area to retail space.

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Development Standards for Industrial Zoning Districts 20.12.030 (Note #3). Director of Development Services GONZALVES explained that some industrial uses require tall buildings/structures to operate. He noted that in the past, the I-L and I-H zones contained height restrictions to address fire concerns. However, since then, there have been several advancements in fire prevention technology and fire suppression technology (e.g. fire sprinkler systems) that satisfy fire codes/concerns without limiting the height of a structure.

Planning Manager ESPINOSA was concerned about the visual impacts that tall industrial structures could have on nearby residential properties. However, she explained that in these situations, a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) would be required (CUP triggered by development on an Interface Overlay Zone). Said permit would contain conditions of approval reducing the impact that an industrial development could have on nearby residential properties, including a condition limiting the maximum height of a structure.

Associate Planner NELSON explained that the development standards in the industrial zones should be consistent with that of the Merced County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan. Doing so would prevent flight paths from being disrupted by tall industrial structures.

The Focus Group came to the consensus that structures in the industrial zones should not be limited to a maximum height or a maximum number of stories as long as they satisfy fire and building codes (thus, eliminating Note #3 on page 36 and the height limits in Table 20.12-2). However, when adjacent to residential zones, industrial development should require Conditional Use Permit approval with conditions restricting the maximum height of a structure. In addition, language should be added to Section 20.12.010 - *Purpose of the Industrial Zoning Districts*, requiring that development is compatible with the development standards set forth in the Merced County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan.

Zoning District Note #6(B). Group Member PALOUTZIAN suggested that Note #6(B) be modified as shown below, for clarity purposes (underline indicates added language):

“6B. Prohibited Uses. The manufacturing of the following uses are prohibited unless the Planning Commission determines otherwise...”

Planning Manager ESPINOSA concurred with Group Member PALOUTZIAN that such change would be needed.

Check Cashing/Payday Loan Establishments. The Focus Group came to the consensus that check cashing/payday loan establishments should not be allowed in the D-COR zone or in the City Center area (as defined in Note #4 on page 44).

Gas and Service Stations. Planning Manager ESPINOSA noted that gas and service stations will be subject to the special provisions outlined in Section 20.44.070. The reference to these additional regulations will be added to Table 20.14-1.

Retail, with Alcohol Sales (Less than 20,000 Square Feet in Building Size) and Retail, with Alcohol Sales (More than 20,000 Square Feet in Building Size). Planning Manager ESPINOSA noted that alcoholic beverage sales will be subject to the special provisions outlined in Section 20.44.010. The reference to these additional regulations will be added to Table 20.14-1.

Vehicle Sales. The Focus Group came to the consensus that vehicle sales should be permitted in the D-COR zone with Conditional Use Permit approval, but that large car lots should be discouraged in the Downtown core with only small showrooms being allowed.

Downtown Development Standards. The Focus Group was concerned that the downtown development standards may be too restrictive especially for the areas outside of the D-COR zone. They came to the consensus that additional leeway should be given to the driveway permitting process (page 47) and to the street-level building design guidelines (pages 48-50).

2. Scheduling Future Meetings

At the recommendation of staff, the Focus Group scheduled a meeting for March 12, 2015, at 8:15 a.m. and for March 26, 2015 at 8:15 a.m. Planning Manager ESPINOSA requested that for the next meeting, the group members use the remaining questions found in the Memorandum (“Focus Group Review Draft of New Zoning Ordinance”) from December 19, 2014, starting with Question #9.

E. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Kim Espinosa (for David Gonzalves)

David Gonzalves, Secretary
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APPROVED:

Bruce Logue, Chairperson
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