



# CITY OF MERCED ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE FOCUS GROUP

## MINUTES

Merced Civic Center  
First Floor Sam Pipes Room

678 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street  
Thursday, January 21, 2016  
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

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

#### B. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Kenra Bragonier, Adam Cox, Tony Dossetti, Flip Hassett, Jack Lesch, Elmer Lorenzi, Michelle Paloutzian, and Acting Chairperson Guy Maxwell

Members Absent: Jim Abbate, Christina Alley, Ann Andersen, Todd Bender, Loren Gonella, Des Johnston, Carole McCoy, Joe Ramirez, Mike Salvadori, Stan Thurston, Brandon Williams, Jim Xu, and Chairperson Bruce Logue

Staff/Guests Present: Director of Development Services David Gonzalves, Planning Manager Kim Espinosa, City Council Member Michael Belluomini, Planning Commissioner Pete Padilla, and Recording Secretaries Vicci Lane and Stephani Davis

C. APPROVAL OF ACTION MINUTES

M/S BRAGONIER-LESCH, and carried by unanimous voice vote of Members present, to approve the Minutes of March 26, 2015, as submitted.

D. ITEMS

1. Comments on Items from Joint Planning Commission/City Council Study Session on December 7, 2015 (as outlined in Memo of December 15, 2015)

**Secretary's Note:** Group Member DOSSETTI abstained from the votes since the City Council would be making the final decision on adopting the Zoning Ordinance at a later date. Group Member COX, President and CEO of the Greater Merced Chamber of Commerce, abstained from the votes since Council Member BELLUOMINI would be speaking to that organization at a later date on these items.

City Council Member BELLUOMINI gave a brief overview of his suggested changes to the Draft Merced Zoning Ordinance.

Responding to a comment from the Focus Group, Director of Development Services GONZALVES stated that the awnings which were in place downtown were taken down because they were unsafe.

The Focus Group commented on the items outlined in the Memo of December 15, 2015.

1. *Page 14, Section 20.08.030B3, Variation in Lot Dimensions for R-1-6 subdivisions*

The Focus Group discussed that lowering the percentage from the existing 40% to 25% might be considered not very business-friendly. They also wanted to ensure that a project wasn't turned away just because it didn't hit a precise percentage; they wanted to make sure the City was still able to be flexible. Planning Manager ESPINOSA and Director of Development Services GONZALVES confirmed that this provision is not used that often and when it is used, it usually doesn't come very close to the 40% threshold. The Focus Group Members who were present (two abstentions), voted unanimously to leave this section as is.

**2. Page 31, Section 20.10.030 5a, Pedestrian Circulation**

The Focus Group discussed whether the awnings were necessary because it doesn't rain that many days in Merced and because certain businesses might have certain design standards that don't include awnings. Ms. ESPINOSA noted that if they wanted awnings added, the use of "should" or "shall" would need to be specified. The Focus Group Members who were present (two abstentions), voted unanimously to add that functional awnings "should" (but not "shall") be added to protect pedestrians from the rain when walking along building frontages of businesses which abut each other.

**3. Page 36, Section 20.12.030, Table 20.12-2-Development Standards for Industrial Zoning Districts**

Ms. ESPINOSA and Mr. GONZALVES stated that the City Council direction was to be as unrestrictive as possible on the Industrial Zoning Districts. The Focus Group agreed that a 15-foot setback sounded feasible. The Focus Group Members who were present (two abstentions), voted unanimously to change the I-H (Heavy Industrial Zone) Exterior Setback to 15 feet from zero.

**4. Page 84, Section 20.22.040D3h, Side Court Apartments**

The Focus Group discussed various aspects of the Side Court Apartments. The Focus Group Members who were present (two abstentions), voted unanimously to add the following additional sub-sections to the Side Court Yard Apartments section: (4) a) The side courtyard shall be a shared space accessible to all building residents. (4) b) Pathways shall be provided from each unit to the side courtyard and from the side courtyard to a public sidewalk adjacent to the site.

**5. Page 120, Table 20.38-1-Off-Street Parking Requirements for Multiple Family Dwelling/Condominiums**

The Focus Group discussed whether they wanted to make the distinction between dorm apartments, also known as student housing, and conventional apartments. Mr. GONZALVES explained that making different requirements for different classifications of apartments might lead to developers incorrectly classifying a project to qualify for the lower parking requirements. Ms. ESPINOSA noted that after some research, she found other jurisdictions avoided this problem by not making the distinction between student housing and conventional apartments. She went over the January 21, 2016, memo entitled "Options for Multi-Family Parking

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Requirements” that was distributed to the Focus Group this morning. One option discussed in the memo (Option C) was to use the number of bathrooms to determine parking while the other options used bedrooms, but adjusted the ratio of spaces per bedroom (ranging from 0.5 spaces per bedroom over 2 bedrooms in a unit to 1 space per additional bedroom over 2).

Some Focus Group Members wanted to ensure that the City remained flexible; when public transportation becomes more viable, there may not be a need for as much parking. Some Members were inclined toward Option D (0.75 spaces per bedroom over 2 bedrooms), but others were inclined toward Option B (0.5 spaces per bedroom over 2 bedrooms.) In addition, some Members were concerned with developers who didn’t manage their own projects being less concerned with the amount of parking because they didn’t have to deal with tenant complaints. . The Focus Group Members agreed to continue the discussion on this item and the other items in the Memo until the next meeting.

2. Determine Whether Another Meeting Will Be Necessary

It was determined that another meeting would be necessary to finish discussing the items above. February 4, 2016, was announced as the date of the next meeting.

E. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



David Gonzalves, Secretary  
Zoning Ordinance Update

APPROVED:

Guy Maxwell, Acting Chairperson  
Zoning Ordinance Update