



CARSON PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

DATE: February 25, 2025
FROM: Planning & Community Development
BY: Christopher Palmer, AICP - Planning Manager
SUBJECT: 2025ZTA-01 – Carson Municipal Code Amendment
Administrative Approval of Tentative Parcel Maps and
Tentative Tract Maps for Condominium Purposes

PROJECT/APPLICANT INFORMATION

Project Summary: Consideration of a recommendation to the City Council concerning a Carson Municipal Code Text Amendment that would modify the existing municipal code to allow administrative approval of tentative parcel maps and tentative tract maps for condominium purposes

Project Location: Citywide
Zoning: All zones
Project Applicant: City of Carson

I. OVERVIEW

A. Introduction

The Carson 2040 General Plan (General Plan) was adopted in April of 2023, and contains nine elements. It is designed to tailor to the current needs of the City and anticipated futures needs of the City. It introduces a greater mix of land uses to reflect new and changing priorities. It encourages sustainability through transit-oriented, mixed-use, infill development and greater opportunity and equity. It promotes development in the core area and provides greater diversity of non-residential uses. The overarching policies, themes and goals of the General Plan are centered around promotion of housing in compliance with State Law, becoming more business friendly, expediting entitlement processes that promote high quality development and eliminating impediments to development.

A few examples of these themes found throughout the General Plan include:

- *Assembly Bill 686: which requires the City to affirmatively further fair housing in identifying specific plans and programs, as well as an assessment of fair housing practices and impediments.*
- *Various Economic Development Principles (EDP) from the City's Economic Development Element:*
 - *EDP-5. Establish an inventory of ready-to-go sites, complete with zoning, infrastructure, and environmental clearance... Establishing objective zoning and design regulations to expedite permitting and approval.*
 - *EDP-6. Identify and support the redevelopment of outdated commercial areas to provide affordable, flexible, and high-quality office and/or R&D facilities to attract small, incubating technology companies.*
 - *ED P-7. Create flexibility around commercial floorplates to allow for uses and programs to evolve and adapt to the fast-paced changes of the retail industry*

Full implementation of the General Plan requires staff to continually monitor and review current land use policies to ensure that the City's intended outcomes and goals are being met. Some of this work has already been completed. Examples include but are not limited to the City recently adopting Phase 1 of a Comprehensive Update to the Carson Municipal Code. Regulations included in the March 19, 2024, adoption made most housing development permissible by-right in compliance with State and Local laws. This included all forms of multifamily development whether apartments or condominiums.

In November of 2024, the Planning Commission recommended to the City Council a General Plan Amendment aimed at ensuring the protection of the public health, safety and welfare through proposing a requirement to develop a specific plan prior to development of shuttered refineries.

Currently, staff is working on Phase 2 of the Comprehensive Update of the Carson Municipal Code and its adoption will also further implement the City's General Plan.

B. Project Description

Advanced planning consists of comprehensive review of the municipal code. Systemically, staff monitors the adopted regulations and makes recommendations on outdated policies and procedures all in concert with the General Plan's guidance.

Currently, tentative parcel maps and tentative tract maps are under the purview of the Planning Commission whether or not associated with a proposed development. Prior to the Phase 1 adoption, a proposed multifamily development would need approval from the Planning Commission, and if the developer was proposing to sell the units, they would also need the Commission to approve the subdivision to permit the sale of the units. A condominium is not a land use, it is a form of ownership. Whether or not a unit is for sale does not affect the use of the land. However, these two actions have been linked historically.

Recently, the Planning Commission voted to approve a tentative parcel map to subdivide land for two existing businesses. The owner simply desired to sell one of his businesses but was required to ask permission from the Planning Commission to split a single lot into two lots. This process took nearly a year, and no development was proposed and no physical change to the existing site was required.

The California Board of Real Estate estimated that the time involved in securing an approved tentative map takes a minimum of two years. Staff's own research concluded that even simple maps of simply dividing one parcel into two can take over a year to process. This is problematic considering the goals of the General Plan; specifically, the efforts towards removing impediments to housing and becoming more business friendly.

If a development is permissible by-right, it should not be stalled or hindered by a process that does not regulate land use. The Subdivision Map Act and the City's subdivision ordinance govern the requirements for tentative tract and parcel maps and final review is managed through the City's Public Works Division along with the Los Angeles County Public Works Department. The Final Map is signed by City officials and then development can occur. This is a lengthy process.

Staff determined that by-right land uses should be reflected consistently within the municipal code and proposes that administrative approval be allowed for subdivisions that are not proposing development. In addition, when a subdivision is proposed in conjunction with a by-right development, then the review of the subdivision portion be administrative as well.

II. ANALYSIS

A. General Plan Consistency

The General Plan's Housing Element was conceived to remove impediments to development. The Housing Element highlights among others Assembly Bill 686, which requires the City to affirmatively further fair housing in identifying specific plans and programs, as well as an assessment of fair housing practices and impediments. By requiring a subdivision to be reviewed by the Planning Commission can potentially turn a by-right land use into a project, which can exceed two years in the entitlement phase when the use itself is something that can be approved within weeks.

The Economic Development Element highlights several goals to ensure the City is business friendly and encourages quality development. By creating a by-right path to subdivisions, the City reduces development costs to an applicant by thousands of dollars. The expedited nature of an administrative review saves time and brings development to market exponentially faster.

B. Zoning Ordinance Compliance

The proposed amendment will not alter design standards, density, parking or any other development standard or land use consideration. The proposed amendment proposes solely that by-right land uses requiring subdivision of land be considered at the administrative level.

III. PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public Notice was given in accordance with both State Law and the Carson Municipal Code. The Planning Department published a public hearing notice in the local paper.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The proposed amendment to the CMC is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under the “common sense” exemption in CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the adoption of this ordinance may have a significant effect on the environment. The creation of a Maps does not, in itself, result in impacts to the physical environment. Instead, the only result of creating Maps is that the resulting units may be separately owned rather than rented, which is not, in itself, a physical or environmental impact.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The proposed amendment ensures that the City will not violate State Law that protects and streamlines housing development. It also helps staff to expedite quality development. Accordingly, Staff is recommending that the Planning Commission continue this item to March 11, 2025, to receive additional public testimony if any.