

Providence City Plan Commission

November 18, 2025



AGENDA ITEM 4 ■ ZONING ORDINANCE AMENDMENT

OVERVIEW

PROPONENT: Department of Planning and Development (DPD) **RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend approval of the proposed amendment

CASE NO./ CPC Referral 3605

PROJECT TYPE: Zoning Ordinance Amendment

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Amendment of zoning ordinance **PROJECT PLANNER:** Choyon Manjrekar

Discussion

A working group of City staff representing the Departments of Planning and Development, Inspection and Standards, and the Law Department have been meeting regularly to develop Zoning Ordinance amendments to respond to changes in state law; to implement policies of the Comprehensive Plan; and to make adjustments in the Ordinance where necessary to correct mistakes, clarify regulations, and address issues as we identify them. The attached Ordinance amendment includes changes in all three categories. It is accompanied by a spreadsheet that describes each proposed change. Highlights include:

- Revised rowhouse regulations: We introduced new regulations for rowhouses in our last amendment. After working with developers, we identified several changes that will make rowhouse development simpler and easier.
- Gas Stations: This implements an objective of the Comprehensive Plan to allow them by special use permit when residential use is infeasible.
- Transitional Shelters: This implements an objective of the Comprehensive Plan to allow them by right rather than special use permit.
- Adaptive Reuse: New state law allows us to prohibit conversion of buildings in industrial zones to residential where we find incompatibility between residential and industrial uses. We are proposing the prohibition in the heaviest industrial zones.
- Fences: We've specified that lower fence height in a front yard is for residential use only. Community gardens, for example, may have a taller fence.
- Parking for Educational Facilities: We've revised parking rules for college campuses per the MOU with the colleges, and reduced bike parking rules for K-12 schools.

- Modification: We've added new language, including the new character-based modifications now required by new state law.
- Land Development Project: We've deleted open space for common use as a basis for a dimensional adjustment since we don't think that this is a public amenity deserving of adjustments. Note that open space for public use will still be eligible for adjustments.
- Subdivision into Nonconforming Lots: We've specified that a plat book is required to demonstrate that undersized lots formerly existed. We've also raised the minimum lot size to 3,000 SF since state law requires us to reduce all lot sizes by up to 15% through administrative modification. This would allow for lots as small as 2,550 SF through this process. The 3,000 SF lot size is also consistent with the new rules in Section 2003.E. See next item below.
- Oversized Lot Subdivision. This is a new provision in state law, whereby subdivisions may be created based on lot sizes in the vicinity of the lot to be subdivided.

The zoning amendment is consistent with the goals of chapter nine of the Providence Comprehensive Plan which aims to promote and manage growth through land development, ensure the strength and stability of the City's neighborhoods by directing growth to appropriate areas, and promoting a balance of uses to support sustainable patterns of development for a higher quality of life. The amendment would further conform to objective LU.3 of the plan which aims to manage growth in residential areas and promote a variety of housing options. The amendment also conforms to objective LU.9 of the plan which intends to promote design excellence and historic preservation through appropriate land controls.

The change would be in conformance with the purposes of zoning outlined in section 101 of the zoning ordinance as the criteria include definition of a range of uses and allowable intensities appropriate to the City's character and providing for orderly growth and development.

Recommendation

Based on the foregoing discussion, the DPD recommends that the CPC make a positive recommendation to the City Council to approve the proposed amendment.