



Agenda Item

Joint Meeting of the Planning Commission and Design Review Committee

Item #: 2.1.

3/16/2026

File #: 26-0113

TO: Chair and Members of the Planning Commission and Design Review Committee

THRU: Hayden Beckman, Planning Manager

FROM: Anna Pehoushek, Assistant Community Development Director

1. SUBJECT

Historic Preservation Ordinance study session

2. SUMMARY

The City is preparing a Historic Preservation Ordinance to establish expanded content in the Orange Municipal Code that enables more effective management and protection of cultural resources in the community.

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Receive and file.
2. Provide initial feedback to staff regarding the proposed scope and objectives of a potential ordinance.

4. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The content of the Orange Municipal Code (OMC) related to historic properties and districts is contained in Chapter 17.17, Historic Districts of Title 17 (Zoning) (see Attachment 2). Preservation-related Code provisions originated in 1988 with subsequent modifications in 1995, 1998, 2018, and 2024 to address refinements to applicability, procedures, and establishment of the Eichler Historic Districts.

Chapter 17.17 is focused on four topics:

- Purpose and intent of historic districts;
- Procedures and criteria for establishing historic districts;
- Applicability of historic preservation design standards and Secretary of Interior Standards to new development and rehabilitation; and
- Use of State Historic Building Code.

Chapter 17.04, Definitions, defines a limited number of historic preservation terms.

Chapter 17.10, Specific Administrative Procedures, establishes the design review and demolition review process for projects involving historic districts and structures in Section 17.10.070 (Attachment 3) and Section 17.10.090 (Attachment 4).

Chapter 15.57, California Historic Building Code, adopts the California Historic Building Code by reference.

As the City's historic preservation program has evolved over time to encompass the management of resources across four historic districts (acknowledging the Plaza Historic District as part of the Old Towne District), preservation incentive programs have gained popularity, and historic resources have become an integral part of the City of Orange's identity, the provisions of the Orange Municipal Code have not adequately served the scope of the program. Therefore, development of a new comprehensive Historic Preservation Ordinance is warranted.

5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City of Orange recently initiated preparation of a Historic Preservation Ordinance. The ordinance will be applicable to:

- Properties located in the City's Old Towne Orange and Eichler Homes Tract Historic Districts;
- Historic properties located outside of a historic district but identified on the City's Inventory of Historic Resources;
- Properties with the potential to be designated with historic status due to architectural or other cultural significance; and
- Archaeological and paleontological resources.

The ordinance will also address criteria and procedures for recognition/designation of historic and cultural resources, and the Mills Act, among other topics.

At this early stage of the work effort, a joint study session with the Planning Commission and Design Review Committee is being held to provide an orientation to the project and review the topics that are expected to be addressed in the ordinance. The study session is intended to provide an overview of the City's existing historic resources framework and a high-level introduction to the components typically included in a historic preservation and cultural resources ordinance. The purpose is to set the stage for the Planning Commission and Design Review Committee, as the ordinance is drafted and brought to them for review, comments, and approvals. The study session will also offer an opportunity to field general questions, concerns, or preliminary observations. No detailed policy decisions or program-administration issues are being requested from the Planning Commission or Design Review Committee at this stage. More detailed, policy-specific discussions will occur once draft ordinance language is available for formal review.

6. ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 Orange Municipal Code, Chapter 17.17, Historic Districts
- Attachment 2 Orange Municipal Code, Section 17.10.070, Design Review
- Attachment 3 Orange Municipal Code, Section 17.10.090, Demolition Review