



Agenda Item

Planning Commission

Item #: 4.1.

9/15/2025

File #: 25-0498

TO: Chair and Members of the Planning Commission

THRU: Anna Pehoushek, Assistant Community Development Director

FROM: Hayden Beckman, Planning Manager

1. SUBJECT

Public Hearing to consider an Ordinance modifying the duties and responsibilities of the Design Review Committee and finding of CEQA exemption.

2. SUMMARY

The proposed Ordinance amends the Orange Municipal Code to focus the purview of the Design Review Committee (DRC) on projects in historic districts or involving historic structures outside of a district in order to streamline the review process and ensure timely decision-making for projects subject to design review.

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Conduct and close the Public Hearing.
2. Adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 10-25 recommending the City Council adopt an Ordinance amending Title 12, Title 16 and Title 17 of the Orange Municipal Code to update duties and responsibilities of the Design Review Committee.
3. Find the Ordinance categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3).

4. AUTHORIZING GUIDELINES

Orange Municipal Code (OMC) Section 17.08.020 authorizes the Planning Commission to review and make advisory recommendations to the City Council on Zoning Ordinance Amendments.

5. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Orange Design Review Committee (DRC) (formerly the Design Review Board) was established in 1974 by Ordinance No. 4-74 for the purpose of upholding community aesthetics by reviewing the architectural design of new buildings and structures. The DRC currently provides discretionary review and approval for certain development projects and acts in an advisory capacity to the Planning Commission and City Council.

6. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

At the August 12, 2025, City Council meeting, the Council directed staff to prepare an Ordinance that modifies the current purview of the DRC to focus its review on the projects involving historic resources. The subject Ordinance accomplishes that direction, focusing DRC review on the following

types of projects:

- Properties located within a historic district;
- Properties listed on the City's historic inventory;
- Properties over 50 years old and determined by staff to be historic; or
- Demolition of a historic resource.

Under the proposed Ordinance, all other projects subject to design review would be reviewed through the Administrative Design Review (ADR) process, actionable by the Community Development Director, including:

- All new development, including major modifications to existing structures;
- All signs for new or existing businesses; and
- Demolition of a non-contributing structure in a historic district.

To accomplish these amendments, staff is proposing changes to elements of Orange Municipal Code Title 12, Title 16, and Title 17. The draft City Council Ordinance outlining each text modification is included within Attachment 1.

7. ANALYSIS AND STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES

The Ordinance is in response to direction from the City Council. The Ordinance provides key benefits including:

- Streamlined development review process to support economic development.
- Reduced time and cost burdens for the most common types of new development.
- Balances the goals of historic preservation with the need for efficient review processes.
- Efficient administration of the design review process while maintaining the integrity of historic districts and resources.

The proposed amendments are consistent with the City's General Plan and applicable state law and are intended to balance the goals of historic preservation with the need for an efficient review process.

8. PUBLIC NOTICE

On August 21, 2025, a notice was published in the Orange City News newspaper for a public hearing before the Planning Commission on September 15, 2025.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project is not subject to the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines (Common Sense Exemption) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that it would have a significant effect on the environment. For this reason, no further CEQA documentation is required.

10. ADVISORY BOARD ACTION

No advisory board review is required for this Ordinance.

11. ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 Planning Commission Resolution No. PC 10-25 with Draft City Council Ordinance No. XX-25 (Clean)
- Attachment 2 Draft City Council Ordinance No. XX-25 (Redlined)