



# Agenda Item

## Orange City Council

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**Item #:** 10.1.

6/23/2026

**File #:** 25-0650

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**THRU:** Jarad Hildenbrand, City Manager

**FROM:** Russell Bunim, Community Development Director

### 1. SUBJECT

Progress update regarding the 2025 Design Review Committee (DRC) Ordinance No. 18-25

### 2. SUMMARY

The City Council adopted Ordinance No. 18-25 on October 28, 2025, thereby modifying the duties and responsibilities of the Design Review Committee (DRC), focusing on projects in historic districts, or involving historic structures outside of a district, to streamline the review process and ensure timely decision-making for projects subject to design review.

### 3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive and file.

### 4. FISCAL IMPACT

None.

### 5. STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 2: Enhance Economic Development and Achieve Fiscal Sustainability

Objective 2.2: Improve Design Review Process

Objective 2.12: Update Zoning Ordinance for process clarity and improve efficiency for new businesses

### 6. DISCUSSION AND BACKGROUND

Ordinance No. 18-25 was adopted on October 28, 2025, and became effective on December 12, 2025. The Ordinance modified the Orange Municipal Code by creating a "Historic Threshold" by which development projects would be evaluated to determine whether a design review application was processed administratively by staff or processed through the Design Review Committee.

The City Council requested on the date of adoption that staff return in six months to report on the impact of Ordinance No. 18-25 as it relates to the timely processing of development projects. Staff is pleased to report that the Ordinance has had two major positive outcomes:

1. Reduction in entitlement processing time; and
2. Marketing a streamlined design review process

#### Entitlement Processing

The OMC requires that when more than one type of application is filed for a single project, the application requiring the highest level of approval shall dictate the review process for the entire group of applications (OMC Table 17.08.020 (b)). As such, prior to the adoption of the Ordinance, the Design Review Committee would often be the first public hearing body to review a development project's entitlement applications.

By focusing the DRC's review scope on only those projects that meet the Historic Threshold, the Ordinance today requires Administrative Design Review for all other applications, which eliminates an entire public hearing from the discretionary review process. Projects not subject to discretionary Design Review action by the DRC save approximately six to eight weeks of processing time, when accounting for staff time to prepare staff reports, notifications, and staffing support of the item in a public hearing. As a result, the overall review time for any multi-application entitlement project has been reduced by at least two months, on average, which also translates to an overall reduced cost for entitlement review.

### Streamlined Design Review

As a result of the Ordinance, staff now utilize the Administrative Design Review process as a cost and time savings measure applicable to new and existing development applications in the entitlement process. Administrative Design Review is a valuable and reliable tool for staff in discussions with both current and prospective entitlement project applicants. Below is a list of current projects that have benefitted from the streamlined review process of not needing design review conducted by the Design Review Committee (DRC):

1. Melia Homes Small Lot Subdivision (2375 N. Tustin) - 71 residential units
2. Fletcher Small Lot Subdivision (715 W. Fletcher) - 15 residential units
3. Milan Subdivision (6146 E. Santiago Canyon Road) - 30 residential units
4. Dominic Veterinary Building (1012 N Tustin) - New Commercial Building
5. Crunch Fitness Wall Sign (3901 W Metropolitan Drive) - New Tenant Wall Sign
6. Rancho Ridge Planned Unit Development (PUD - 647 N. Rancho Road) - 11 residential units

The streamlined process has also reduced the number of DRC meetings, thus reducing staff time devoted to public noticing, report writing, packet preparation, coordinating public hearings with applicants, and preparation of meeting minutes. In summary, the ordinance saves time and cost to the applicant and city staff.

## **7. ATTACHMENTS**

- None