

CITY OF PICO RIVERA COMPREHENSIVE ZONING CODE UPDATE

Meeting Summary

Date:	September 27, 2023
Time:	6:00 PM
Subject:	Round #1 Working Group Study Session (Working Group Meeting #3)
Attendees:	City and Project Team: Estefany Franco, Alvie Betancourt, Julia Gonzalez, Janet Rodriguez, Catherine Tang Saez, Arturo Nevarez, Anna Apostolos Community Group: Jaime Suarez, Miguel Perez, Jayro Queme

SUMMARY

This working group meeting centered on the City of Pico Rivera's (City) existing zoning code and related issues that were identified by the Dudek team as potential opportunities to streamline development processes.

Five primary issues were identified. Currently, the zoning code is divided into 45 chapters, which may be overwhelming for users and make it difficult to navigate the code. Dudek has recommended the reorganization of the code into five divisions containing the chapters' contents. Similarly, the code's chart note system is convoluted and is not user-friendly. Dudek has also recommended a simplification of this system to make it easier to understand. Third, the code contains complex terminology and contains instances of using multiple words to refer to a process or concept, leading Dudek to make the recommendation of removing variations and using simpler language. The City's zoning code relies too much on text; Dudek has recommended the use of tables and graphics to reduce strain and make the code user-friendly. Finally, the City's website is not easily navigable. Dudek has recommended updating the City's website to make the zoning code contents more accessible.

The discussion portion of the meeting was primarily focused on the proposed outline of the City's new zoning code. One of the community group participants noted that the development community process typically entails a review of additional regulations that might preclude a project from meeting zoning code standards before reviewing the zoning standard of the code. In response, both Dudek and City staff noted that regulations within the code outline may be shared once this process is underway to confirm that all content is included in the most appropriate division. Another participant suggested revising the name of the Parking Standards chapter to address all transportation modalities. Review processes of other cities in the region such as Pasadena and Downey were discussed, though no specific suggestions were detailed for processing improvements in the City.

Other relevant issues that were discussed included difficulties with definitions included in the zoning code, which may result in the rejection of certain uses. For example, massage establishments may be considered an Adult-oriented business, making it a challenge to approve these operations.

Full Discussion Notes:
Feedback on the Annotated Outline

Re: Organization and Placement of Citywide vs Zone Specific Standards

Jaime: Citywide standards should be located right below zone specific standards. Typical process for development community is before they go into a zone, they look at the citywide standards to review additional regulations that might preclude the project from achieving what is included in the zoning code.

For example, Zoning info. will likely include information about what is permitted in each but if there is requirement for a buffer in between uses located elsewhere in the code, the use may not be permitted on that particular lot.

Miguel: Confirmed the process is typically as Jaime noted.

Dudek/City: Noted we can share the regulations included within the code outline once it starts taking shape. The intent is to attach anything zone specific within the Zones and Uses, but we will keep this in mind and take a closer look to make sure we're not including anything in the Citywide standards section that would be better applied under zoning regulations.

Re: Title of Parking Chapter

Jayro: Title of Parking Chapter, specifically, revisions to Parking Standard name to be more broad/a catch all for different modes of transportation.

For example, would TDM strategies fit in this section?

Dudek/City: Noted we would keep this in mind as the outline is developed with regulations.

Posed Question: If you're a user of a code, can you identify any issues you have come across?

Re: Permitting and Plan Check

The City of Pasadena's permit/approval review was identified as a positive and streamlined experience – processing was quick even though they have strict guidelines (Concurrent review). Jaime noted he worked on about 15-20 homes and businesses in this City.

Downey – has a longer approval process. Jaime noted he has built about 6 homes in this City – review is not efficient. Plans will go through a whole review process with the different departments and will come back for second signatures. Interdepartmental review coordination is not efficient.

No specifics given for processing improvements in Pico Rivera.

Re: Code Usability in the City

Miguel: noted he has had recent clients that were looking for regulations of what is allowed but couldn't find it.

Jayro: noted that although he has a transportation planning background. It is difficult to understand design standards, it is difficult to navigate what is allowed and not allowed for example, ADU information is not included.

Other Issues:

Re: Definitions

Issues with zoning code definitions and Interpretation of definitions by staff can be a challenge where there is a disagreement. Although the definition is clear, he has worked his cities that will not allow a certain use because of that is how they typically implement it.

For example, Because Massage Establishments have historically gone hand in hand with Adult-oriented businesses, he has been dealing with an issue in another City with getting the use approved for a stretch therapy location because of the definition of massage establishment.

City: That is also a challenge on city side to allow for instructional facilities such as Pilates, stretch therapy or legitimate salon/spas because they want to be careful about approving businesses that would not operate as such. Through the Code Update the City is hoping to thread the needle with these types of issues.

Re: Receipt of Presentation Materials.

Participants noted timely receipt of materials (one week) before the meeting. They were able to review the documents.