



Santa Ana Zoning Code

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

June 2024

Santa Ana Zoning Code Update
Stakeholder Interviews Summary

This page is intentionally blank.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

Contents

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
KEY TAKE-AWAYS	2
SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS	3
GENERAL COMMENTS	3
ORGANIZATION AND CLARITY	5
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW PROCESS.....	7
PLANNING COMMISSION	7
PROJECT REVIEW COSTS AND TIMING	7
TENANT IMPROVEMENTS	9
CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS	9
LAND USE REGULATIONS/DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS BY LAND USE TYPE	10
SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL	10
MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL	11
COMMERCIAL.....	12
INDUSTRIAL.....	13
MIXED USE	14
SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENTS & SPECIFIC PLANS.....	15
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	16
HISTORIC STRUCTURES	18
OTHER USES.....	19
SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS.....	20
GENERAL COMMENTS	20
HEIGHT.....	21
DENSITY.....	22
SETBACKS & LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS.....	23
SOLAR	24
OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS	24
PARKING STANDARDS.....	25
SIGNS.....	28

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

HEIGHT..... 28

REGULATION & ENFORCEMENT 28

DIGITAL SIGNS..... 29

OTHER 29

PERCEIVED TRENDS IN SANTA ANA..... 29

PUBLIC AMENITIES 30

NON-ZONING RELATED 31

HIGHLIGHTS

Seventy- four

community
members
participated in
interviews
conducted
between
February 5,
2024 and April
19, 2024.

Introduction and Background

The City of Santa Ana initiated a comprehensive Zoning Code update in early 2024. The update focuses on implementing policies and actions in the Santa Ana General Plan, adopted on April 19, 2022. Through this process, the City also looks to modernize the Zoning Code to reflect current land use practices and trends, streamline application review processes, and improve the Code's usability.

During February through April of 2024, the consultant team retained by the City interviewed community stakeholders to help inform the update and identify land use and development needs, opportunities, and issues. Interviews were conducted with architects, market-rate and affordable housing developers, community groups, Planning Commissioners, City Council members, and others involved in the development industry. Interview sessions generally consisted of small groups of two to five attendees. To encourage wide-ranging and open discussion, participants were assured that all comments would remain anonymous. This summary groups discussion and comments by topic areas relevant to the Zoning Code.

Key Take-Aways

Code Organization & Review Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To increase clarity of regulations, several participants suggested creating matrices of allowable uses and required permits.• Participants want to see increased flexibility in the Zoning Code and streamlined processes whenever possible.• Certainty of permit fees and application review timelines would benefit developers.
Land Use Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commercial zoning districts should allow a greater range of uses, with flexibility provided to interpret allowed uses.• Industrial businesses are moving toward clean industries and light manufacturing; the zoning regulations should reflect trends.• For mixed-use projects, retail is hard to attract to ground-level spaces. The regulations should allow more variety of uses based on the location.
Development Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In multi-family residential districts, parking standards, open space, and minimum density requirements were frequently identified as too restrictive.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

Public Amenities

- Public land should be used for public amenities such as parks and community centers and can be used in collaboration with non-profit organizations.

Summary of Participants' Comments

Comments and key themes mentioned during the interviews are presented in this report. Due to the range of comments received, comments may contradict each other, reflecting participants' differences of opinion. Also, no priority or weight should be inferred in the comments. This represents a reporting of many differing perspectives.

General Comments

Participants mostly agreed that working with City staff is positive, and they appreciate the “first look” process offered by the City. However, many cited how it is hard to develop in Santa Ana given the disconnect between what the City envisions and the Zoning Code regulations. Many projects require concessions and variances to move forward.

- Several participants mentioned a disconnect between the Zoning Code regulations and what the City envisions, such as overly prescriptive and restrictive land use regulations when the City looks to be “business friendly.”
- Working with City staff is a positive experience because they are responsive, organized, problem solvers, and accessible.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

HIGHLIGHTS

“Find a balance between culture/history and progressive land use policies while promoting housing production and new businesses.”

- Several participants said they appreciate the City’s “first look” process to receive initial feedback on their site plans.
- Some participants expressed that the City is not as developer friendly as it used to be; getting development through has been tougher due to review requirements.
- Some cited a lack of communication up front about what is required by the Planning Department.
- The City needs to find a balance between culture/history and progressive land use policies while promoting housing production and new businesses. For example, long-established businesses associated with Mexican culture should not be displaced.
- The Housing and Planning Departments have conflicting programs and practices. The desire for increased affordable housing production (Housing) may be challenged by imposition of developments standards, particularly with regard to parking.
- Almost all the projects/entitlements that move forward require some concession, amendment, or variance.
- The City should support economic and environmental justice in its land use practices.
- Planners need to be empowered to make more decisions at the staff level instead of relying upon hearing bodies.
- Consolidating lots is very hard.
- Development in the City is going well, and most projects being built are good projects.
- Ensure that the Zoning Code is not punitive and that properties made nonconforming due to a change in zoning are not penalized.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Ensure that nonconforming uses can continue to operate if a district or zoning regulations change.
- Reduce the impacts of new development on existing neighborhoods.
- The Zoning Code should reflect what the City Council wants, which is building housing, supporting affordable housing, and bringing in student housing.
- Fine-tune the Zoning Code to facilitate the City's vision, which is moving toward mixed-use development.
- Figure out a way to mix business with residential; you can protect neighborhoods without diminishing economic development and can retain existing businesses.

Organization and Clarity

Participants expressed that the Code is challenging to work with due to a lack of consistency between different documents. They also expressed frustration over the Code limiting allowable uses and wish to see more flexibility to allow innovation and better adapt to market conditions. They also suggested creating a matrix of allowed uses, making digital content more accessible, and improving overall organization.

- The current Zoning Code is not friendly to the general public; you need to be familiar with all the different components of regulations to understand what can be built. There is also a lack of consistency across the Zoning Code sections, including specific

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

plans, design guidelines, and other rules and regulations due to the Code being amended over time.

- The initial response from the City to projects is “no;” you must be persistent to understand what the Code allows.
- The City needs to clean up the inconsistencies between zoning districts and new General Plan land use designations.
- Participants currently use the Zoning Code mostly through code amendments to make it friendlier to affordable housing projects that they oversee, fund, and build.
- Nonconforming provisions can become restrictive and lack flexibility at times.
- Currently if the use is not listed, then you can’t do it. The Code needs to shift away from this prescriptive approach.
- Many participants expressed the desire for flexibility within the Zoning Code and for it to be able to adapt to market conditions and be innovative.
- Participants want to see a matrix of allowable uses with corresponding zones and permit requirements to help with clarity and organization.
- Several participants suggested better online accessibility, switching to digital submissions, using online tools, having parcel information online, and having better clarity on the City’s website.
- The City needs a mechanism to seek a determination from the Director if something is not clear.
- The Downtown Business District has lost its unique development regulations; a downtown-specific zoning district could retain this unique character.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- The noxious uses ordinance (incorporated into the Zoning Code) is the only tool the City has to address proposed projects near schools or residential uses.

Development Review Process

Planning Commission

Participants overall want to see processes streamlined and fewer projects subject to Planning Commission review.

- Several participants want to see certain processes, such as alcohol permits and telecommunication projects, not have to go through the Planning Commission.
- Make more projects ministerial, unless a project application is complex and requests variances or other concessions.
- More architects and designers should serve on the Planning Commission.
- The Planning Commission has been too hard on certain projects and picky on design when it wasn't necessary.

Project Review Costs and Timing

Uncertainty and lengthy timelines are deterrents to projects. Participants want more by-right uses and shortened timelines to entice more development.

- Participants expressed wanting to see more consistency in the response time and shortened timelines.
- Create more certainty in processing fees.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Several participants expressed frustration over the time delay in processing projects and an overall long process unless you are paying for the expedited process.
- The length of time for a conditional use permit, variance, or to change uses is a deterrent to the project.
- The timing of application processing is fair, and the level of information required is fair.
- The current streamlining is working.
- The permit streamlining legislation passed by the State legislature (circa 2017-2021) is still not enough to fast-track projects.
- Processes should allow applicants to check in with City staff with a progressed set of application materials. This would avoid having someone spending time and money on detailed schematics if you are unsure whether you are heading in the right direction.
- Minimize discretionary review for residential projects.
- The Site Plan approval process is very front-loaded with information, plans, and technical reports. It is very expensive without having any assurances or early direction as to whether the project will be approved. A preliminary review for large projects and a summary up-front of all the potential development impact fees-the big line items-would help with project certainty.
- The review/application process is direct and clear but cumbersome because of the long list of things to go through.
- The hard part is going through all the committee approvals. The Fire Department is a notable constraint, both in terms of their requirements and review times.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Interdepartmental coordination works and helps with timing of meeting tax credit deadlines (for affordable housing projects).
- The City process for re-use of a building and change of use (e.g., from retail to gym) was a long process because it needed to go through development plan review (administrative approval). A property owner risks losing a tenant because of the long timeline.
- The City needs a “package” process to allow building on substandard lots, including addressing Public Works’ standards.

Tenant Improvements

- Improve the application process by making submittal requirements clear and simple for tenant improvements versus new development.

Conditional Use Permits

- Do not require a conditional use permit for almost everything.
- There should be some areas in Santa Ana where alcohol permits do not require a conditional use permit, like downtown or in “entertainment districts” with an associated bona fide eating establishment.
- Make conditional use permit requirements less restrictive.
- Drive-through development all require conditional use permits and are not allowed on some streets. It would be nice to have uniformity and an administrative process.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

Land Use Regulations/Development Standards by Land Use Type

Single-family Residential

Santa Ana should have more of a mix of housing, allowing townhouses and duplexes in single-family residential districts. Currently, the height and minimum lot sizes keep developers from being able to do so.

HIGHLIGHTS

“Santa Ana lacks a mix of housing types. Currently, it is mostly apartments with few ownership units. Residents want more family housing consisting of larger units.”

- Participants identified certain areas of the City that are underutilized and could be rezoned for residential use. Some examples include the northeast area (4th Street and Tustin Avenue) and large medical facilities near Lincoln Street and Grand Avenue.
- Multiple participants stated that simple additions to homes are hard and a deterrent for owners who want to build an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) or remodel.
- Several participants cited a desire to see more density in R-1 and R-2 neighborhoods, but certain rules, such as minimum lot size, prevent denser housing.
- Santa Ana lacks a mix of housing. Currently, it is mostly apartments with few ownership units. Residents want more family housing consisting of larger units.
- To provide mid-density housing, reduce the residential setback and allow for additional height in residential areas.
- Consider allowing individual trash storage and mailboxes for any “single-family” product type, even attached, as the City currently

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

requires common trash and gang mailboxes for attached for-sale products, which is less desirable to potential homeowners.

- In residential districts, allow accessory commercial unit provisions for some commercial uses (like corner markets).
- The City does not allow small-lot subdivisions on sites; thus, a developer had to do a detached condominium map. Ideally, the code should allow small-lot subdivisions.

Multi-family Residential

Open space requirements for multi-family housing are a hurdle for development. Developers also struggle with minimum density standards.

- Open space development standards are too restrictive. Open spaces that are flexible and versatile are preferred.
- A few noted that they would rather not have requirements for open space in rental multi-family products.
- Good standards are those that are flexible between public and private open space provisions.
- The minimum density requirements are too restrictive for some sites. A density range of 18 to 20 units per acre is ideal for townhomes.
- The City does a good job with multi-family development.
- Open space requirements need to be simplified rather than be split between private and common.
- Many multi-generational families live in the City, but there is a lack of housing that supports these households.

Commercial

The commercial zoning districts need a greater and more flexible range of uses.

- Increase flexibility in changes in tenant mix with less restrictive land use descriptions.
- More flexibility is needed for site retrofits to comply with changing laws and requirements.
- Ensure favorable continuation of nonconforming uses and structures.
- Multiple participants want to have a full range of uses in commercial districts, including medical office, general office, and residential. Owners need control of determining the right mix of tenants for their centers and ensuring that restaurants are allowed uses, as that is what drives foot traffic in centers.
- In commercial areas, plan more pedestrian-oriented features and crime prevention through environmental design.
- Standards for accessory commercial uses should be incorporated into the Zoning Code.
- Several participants expressed concern over vacant lots in commercial districts, especially along Bristol. Live/work might be a better use than commercial.
- Santa Ana lacks high-quality retail. Participants would like to see more, but make sure to balance current culture-focused retail uses with higher-end commercial businesses.
- Improve and update strip malls and First Street retail.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Within commercial centers with multiple tenants, don't have restrictions or regulations that prevent leasing spaces (e.g., overly restrictive parking, limits on allowable uses).
- Create standards that are compatible with ADA access for any commercial use on the ground floor when flood zone/grades are at issue.
- South Bristol development should make this a money-making corridor.
- Currently, regulations do not allow stand-alone bars because everything must be a bona fide restaurant. The only way to open a bar in the City is to buy someone out of their existing license, which favors large establishments with deeper pockets.
- A few noted they would like to see locally owned retail and small businesses that contribute significantly to Santa Ana get prioritized in the planning process. In Downtown, multiple locally owned businesses have been displaced because they are not included in the new developments.
- The City needs to do more along the corridors to help businesses and create vibrancy.

Industrial

Participants want to move toward clean industries and to protect residential neighborhoods from noxious uses.

- Several participants expressed a desire to allow certain uses in industrial zoning, such as churches, fulfillment centers, and ecommerce, but industrial district regulations are very restrictive and lack flexibility of uses.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- More warehousing may be warranted.
- Some participants want to see zoning regulations that prohibit distribution centers.
- Participants want to move toward cleaner industries, aerospace businesses, biotech, and IT businesses.
- Protect neighborhoods from industrial use by creating buffers, moving toward clean energy, and working on amortization of noxious uses.
- The height limit should be changed in industrial districts. New Class A space users want 40 to 50 interior heights, but current standards only allow 35 feet.
- Existing trash recycling businesses need to be relocated.
- Industrial buildings should be available for multi-use.

Mixed Use

Requiring retail/commercial on the ground level is a challenge because retailers are not coming. Mixed use needs to be located closer to transit and have flexibility within the Code for different uses.

- Mixed use near transit works well.
- Mixed-use properties are of increased interest for commercial property owners.
- Live/work works because they are not required to be a commercial condo.
- The requirement to provide retail in mixed use is not viable. Developers can build but retailers either won't come or won't survive.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- La Placita is horizontal mixed use. It's in a retail center area. The ground floor is not retail but community spaces/common area/management offices/services.
- It is critical for the Zoning Code to have flexibility with mixed use; encourage live/work or home office unless downtown.
- We want more spaces for shared use; spaces for startups would be good.
- Community center and green space should be on-site.

Specific Developments & Specific Plans

Specific development provisions have worked favorably for projects, but the process takes time. The Specific Plans are clear, and developers build more residential because there is no mixed-use requirement.

- Rezoning through the Specific Development provision is working favorably for projects because they can get the allowable heights needed, reduce parking ratio requirements, adjust setbacks, etc. However, it takes time and a high-level approval authority.
- Specific Developments have worked in the City's favor.
- SD-85 is quasi-retail and industrial. The developer got a specific parking ratio for less than traditional retail (parking is a big issue) and got additional reader board signage facing the freeway.
- Some standards are written for a Specific Development with a lot of detail. That makes it difficult over time. How does that shift from standards tailored for a Specific Development into a more general zone?

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- SD-84 includes art uses and allows artists to use blowtorches, as a result they are not forced into industrial zones.
- The Harbor Corridor specific plan is good because it does not require Mixed Use/Commercial.
- The Harbor Corridor specific plan has a clear, direct, and easy process if you meet all the standards. However, the standards are sometimes difficult to meet because the language is not straightforward (“if this, then go to this section...”), so developers mix and match at least two housing types allowed to meet requirements for open space and parking and thus achieve development goals.
- SP-2 has straightforward standards and allows mixing different types of uses in a project to be able to satisfy open space and parking requirements.
- The Midtown Specific Plan is very out of date, and the City does not have a legible pdf.

Affordable Housing

Participants would like to see more variety in affordable housing types, especially addressing housing for larger families.

- Many projects need increased density to make affordable units pencil out.
- Affordable for-sale units don’t make sense; it is better to build rental affordable.
- The City should consider providing a tenant-opportunity-to-purchase program.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Encourage “acquisition rehab” because the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance only requires 15% affordable housing, and it does not get activated when working on a Specific Development.
- Offer a more streamlined process for affordable housing projects.
- Several participants expressed concern over allowing too many concessions for affordable projects.
- Expand concessions offerings to be not just economic benefits but also community benefit and looking at the social use of the site.
- It used to make sense to pay the affordable housing in-lieu fee, but the fee increased and is harder to pay, which means that developers often choose to construct affordable units.
- One developer worked on multiple projects that necessitated General Plan amendments; each project was unique and required different standards to achieve development objectives. of creating development standards.
- Community meeting inputs often require developers to provide something not worked into their pro forma.
- Some cities are identifying mixed use as the opportunity incorporating affordable housing with other services (e.g., local ballet school). It would be great to see community centers, health centers, and services that help people, but this is hard to do without transportation access.
- Several participants talked about affordable housing needing to be close to transportation hubs.
- Find strategies to use existing structures using State funding for properties at risk of being lost (i.e., adaptive reuse). In the

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

conversion of commercial to affordable housing, seismic retrofit issues are affecting processing times.

- Several participants expressed a need for more diversity in housing type and housing for larger families (three to four bedrooms).
- Concern was expressed generally over gentrification and displacement.
- Affordable housing developers will not do a project more than four stories because if you do more density, you need underground parking and that is too costly.

Historic Structures

Residents appreciate the fact that Santa Ana's first neighborhoods display historic character worthy of preservation. City practices and processes should make preservation easier.

- The City should be stricter with historic homes. Owners must apply to put their project on the historic list, but City turns them down. The City should make it easier, not harder, to be on the list. The City may be concerned about losing tax revenue by putting property on the list. This is not true. If on the list, stricter historic standards apply (window types, can't take off redwood/cedar siding and replace with modern). The process in Planning takes so long before it gets to the Historic Commission. So, the time is not really the historic compliance, it is Planning's review. Planning's process upfront and plan check process at the end: both take a

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

long time. The City used to have a Planning staff person that would shepherd applicants in process – very helpful.

- Historic buildings: create flexibility in adaptive reuse and clearer information to the public.
- For historic structures throughout the City, it would be nice to have a single contact for historic-related development questions.
 - Request adaptive reuse standards
 - Signs and certain structures which aren't allowed
- Getting political support, especially for historic buildings, took several years.

Other Uses

Other uses that were raised by participants included self-storage, food trucks, the cannabis industry, car washes, adaptive reuse, adult entertainment, care homes.

- There is a need for more self-storage due to more family housing being built, but self-storage cannot be built due to current regulations. Allowed self-storage under certain circumstances with a conditional use permit.
- The food truck industry needs clarity about where they can operate. They are a part of the City's fabric, and they should be allowed to be permanent. The State has said if cities adopt this into the Code, the City can have a say on this, but Code Enforcement said the City is not required to allow them.
- The streamlined process for cannabis works well and the ordinance has a cap on the number of dispensaries. It is good revenue that can be used to improve the City.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- The City should be firmer about locating car washes near housing because of the noise.
- Several participants said that there are too many car washes and auto-body shops.
- Provide more flexibility with ground-floor uses on adaptive reuse. Commercial does not always make sense due to location and due to the nature of the project. There is almost always a parking loss; however, regulations do not allow parking loss.
- An issue of concern is the prevalence of sex shops on Bristol between Warner, Segerstrom, and Harbor.
- The definition of care home needs to be looked at and possibly updated.
- Land use standards are too specific, and staff interpret them too specifically. If someone comes in with a use that isn't specifically listed, staff interprets it as not being allowed, even if it's like other allowed uses.

Specific Development Standards

General Comments

Some participants expressed that development standards are too restrictive and prescriptive, not allowing for enough flexibility. Others said they do not having issues working with the City's standards.

- Several participants highlighted that the design requirements are hard to meet and have jeopardized past projects.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- If a developer does not have specific development standards to work with, it is hard to underwrite because standards are vague.
- Multiple participants did not have issues working with the City's development standards.
- Participants prefer larger projects on consolidated or large parcels. Such projects favor large developers over small developers. As a result, townhome or smaller-scale development are less common because they are constructed by smaller-scale developers.
- Legal substandard lots are not able to be built on. They do not meet minimum lot size and usually can't meet parking, setbacks, access, and trash requirements; all need a variance. Flexibility or revised standards are needed.
- The Code doesn't allow arcades and usable space to project over the public right-of-way. They are allowed in the transit codes but have not materialized.
- The General Plan's area of focus does not have development standards but a mix of existing standards; what will be proposed in those areas is important.
- Limitations on development are built into the Code with intent but are not specifically stated. Some standards undermine the vision, goals, and intent of the General Plan by limiting what can be built.

Height

- Density and height come to mind as issues, and density bonus agreements are often used.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Several participants stated that the current building height requirements are good and not too much of an issue.
- Increase the height of multi-family residential buildings, ideally three to four stories for 60 to 90 units.
- Do not restrict height on certain structures like fences and gazebos.
- The Code should have height allowance for buildings of cultural significance.
- Rooftop outdoor amenities should be counted as a supported use rather than count as a story and affect the total building height.

Density

Many developers use density bonuses to achieve the inclusionary housing ordinance, while others use it when development standards are too restrictive. As a note, the General Plan establishes density parameters, which will be reflected in the Zoning Code.

- Density bonuses give relief from standards. High density allows for more creative site planning. Bonuses are used when the development standards are hard to meet.
- Multiple participants want restricted density and are concerned that the density developers want to do is very high and will result in more traffic.
- Participants expressed wanting to keep density on the lower side.
- A couple of participants want to see increased density in Santa Ana, especially near transportation.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Higher densities in new zoning districts, as provided for in the new General Plan, need to match.

Setbacks & Landscape Requirements

Participants discussed that setback requirements are too large and that landscape requirements can conflict with the businesses' space needs.

- The second story step-back requirement should be removed; it adds costs, buildings look clunky, and achievable square footage is reduced.
- Have reasonable standards or flexibility in setbacks or building step-backs from different uses or districts.
- From an economic standpoint, commercial owners should be able to maximize square footage. Don't let landscaping requirements conflict with businesses' space needs but still require some greenery in developments.
- Several participants stated that setback standards are too large and are especially hard for larger affordable projects.
- Setbacks are easy to meet.
- The City does not allow gating but some clients want gates. The City wants the public to be able to walk through a project, but this is challenging to allow for higher-priced projects.
- Usually, cities allow use of fire lanes for open space requirements but not Santa Ana; the City should allow this.
- There is inconsistency with the Open Space Master Plan and what is financially feasible; currently the requirements are too high to make a project work.

Solar

- Solar on historic homes should be approved by staff, unless going through a removal, where it would go through Planning Commission.
- It would be great to see expanded use of solar throughout the City. Schools have done a good job with solar parking lots.

Objective Design Standards

Participants have varied views on objective design standards (ODS), with some expressing that ODS in other cities have been effective and created consistency, while others express that the lack of flexibility is too restrictive.

- In other cities, ODS have created clarity for development and have been beneficial.
- The Historic Commission worked on design guidelines for the City many years ago. They were well done.
- Some participants prefer to see more consistency in application of architectural style throughout the City rather than a mix of modern and Spanish styles.
- Several participants expressed that ODS would need to be flexible for projects.
- It can be hard to meet standards due to the type of construction and technology (e.g., wood structures are hard to set back on upper levels).

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- ODS works in areas where there is already an established character, such as historic districts, but in new and expanding areas, more flexibility is needed.
- High-quality materiality is often written into ODS, but having a list of materials not accepted works to keep minimum standards.

Parking Standards

Residential projects need more parking because of the needs of the population, while participants are okay with the current requirements or want less parking in commercial districts. Multiple projects have provided more parking because of City insistence on it.

- With rideshare options, people are not using cars as much.
- It is unlikely that one parking ratio works for everyone.
- Some affordable housing projects cannot afford to provide parking.
- Consider removing parking standards in the downtown area.
- Several participants mentioned that parking requirements were the biggest constraint to projects and the primary cause for amendments.
- Several participants expressed that parking requirements are too high.
- Lack of parking is an issue in older districts.
- The code should provide for larger parking spaces; 9 x 18 is best.
- The size of a parking stall is a barrier; need to offer compact parking.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Parking standards are fair; a 10% discount can be given for infill projects.
- It would help to establish clear regulations for parking that are not subject to change simply because neighbors object.
- Developers do parking studies to back up the parking need they but end up doing more than what the studies recommend to reflect market desires for parking.
- The Planning Commission is approving less parking for projects. Many participants state there is not enough parking and neighborhoods will suffer.
- If a use requires a CUP or variance for parking, it is a deterrent due to the length of time and costs.
- Traffic turned out to be less or not an issue on projects near Main Place, and it would be interesting to know how those projects are parked – at what ratio because there are no issues with parking.
- Parking is a big issue in City. The streetcar will reduce auto demand, but it will take a transition of mindset.
- Parking is a huge cost and a main driver of space for a project. Adopt a “park once” mentality for mixed-use development.
- The City’s experience with parking is informed by the old multi-family lot, with larger units, and it is not reflective of what housing is being built. It is looking back to what it has been rather than looking forward to new trends.
- The City does not want unbundled parking, but it should provide the opportunity for the owner to unbundle parking.
- Loading standards are also requirements that are too restrictive, especially for mixed-use development.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Do not dictate parking because developers will go with the right ratio needed to be able to sell/rent their properties.

Residential

- Several participants expressed that the required parking for projects is too much, especially the guest parking.
- Parking ratio requirements need to be lower, ideally to one space per unit or less.
- Parking requirements for multi-residential need to be higher. A minimum of one per unit is not enough when units have multiple bedrooms and are larger.
- Residential areas are overparked with street parking; people are not using garages.
- Market-rate developers do not want too much parking, but too little parking impacts the neighborhood unless near transportation.
- Parking standards need to relate to population types (e.g. seniors, large families, etc.).
- Buyers of townhomes want two-car garages.
- The market supports usually 1.75 space/unit but the City requires and insists upon 2.0 spaces/unit.
- Base the parking ratio in multi-family residential on the type of unit rather than a flat rate.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

Commercial

- Several participants said that parking requirements for commercial uses, especially around the service industry, are too high; the ratio and standards should be lowered.
- Parking should be market driven.
- Parking is okay, but don't reduce the area for truck maneuvering.
- Near transit-oriented development, the zero parking is not working with the market and developers; developers want/need to build more.
- Parking in small centers is a problem and restrictive.

Signs

Height

Overall, an increase in the height of signs is wanted to increase visibility.

- Higher signs along 17th Street would be preferable.
- Limit shopping center signage that restricts visibility by the motoring public at busy arterials.
- Allowed sign heights need to be increased generally.

Regulation & Enforcement

More enforcement is needed. Parked trucks are illegally used for banner signs. Signs look junky; there is no coordination. Consistency in design or color is warranted.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- The regulations seem okay, but a sign program is required for centers with 2+ tenants.
- Sign regulations are good, but issues still exist; violators are all around the City. Use City staff to actively enforce them.
- Make sign regulations easier to understand.
- In the industrial areas off State Route 55, businesses (illegally) use trucks for banner signage.
- Under today's regulations, the height of an existing monument sign would need to be cut in half if an owner requested the same today for a new sign. In one instance, an owner said the sign was grandfathered in, so they were able to change the face only without triggering the need for a new sign.
- The City is enforcing sign regulations on legacy signage; they want to encourage iconic, colorful signs.

Digital Signs

- The City was good to deny a lot of digital signs.
- A few participants want the City to transition and consider allowing digital signs.

Other

Perceived Trends in Santa Ana

The main trends seen in Santa Ana include a decline in retail uses but an increase in event venues. Think ahead to the aging population and spaces that will be underutilized; reimagine them.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Retail is declining in Santa Ana; there is more of a demand for medical/dental space.
- More restaurants are being built than previously anticipated.
- Santa Ana seems to prefer for-sale versus rental housing right now.
- Many requests for banquet space and similar venues seem to be in process. Is there an overall need for more event spaces? Maybe empty lots could be used for such with temporary use permits.
- Santa Ana has an aging population that will leave more schools half used or empty. Other cities are allowing housing projects on school properties.
- Santa Ana has done its fair share of housing; it is the second-most dense city in California; people can get around without a car.
- The office market has been heavily impacted by COVID and office buildings are not used as much, switching to light manufacturing and clean industry.

Public Amenities

- Santa Ana needs more free gyms and outdoor gyms.
- Several participants talked about the need to improve public facilities, community centers, and libraries; improve and beautify parks; and create walkable neighborhoods.
- Santa Ana needs more community spaces, both indoor and outdoor.
- Community organizations have had to fight hard to get community spaces.
- Create safer access to public spaces through bike lanes, signage and lighting, and ADA compliant amenities.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- Walking to the nearest park is dangerous because the sidewalks are inadequate, there is litter and homelessness, and the bus stop is too far away.
- Several participants talked about the public land along Bristol being used to benefit the residents by creating walking parks, small dog parks, senior community centers, expansion of teen center, or more libraries (on the west side of the City).
- Several participants expressed concern about food deserts in Santa Ana, in the Delhi neighborhood and Ward 4 in particular, and the lack of access to healthy and affordable food.
- There is a lack of reliable transportation and amenities around existing bus stops.
- Many cyclists use the streets, but Santa Ana has a lot of unsafe road conditions and a lack of education surrounding the new bike lanes.
- The City has a lot of culture; find more spaces for cultural events.
- Protect cultural businesses and make cultural events allowed/easier.

Non-Zoning Related

During the interviews, participants shared thoughts about conditions in Santa Ana not related to the Zoning Code update. Those are captured below but will not be addressed by the update.

- Increased truck traffic does not mean pollution, especially EV trucks.

Stakeholder Interviews Summary

- One participant expressed the desire to see more meso-American buildings in the City.
- A participant commented that many laundromats are broken. They are critical community resources and places where people gather.
- Increase the quality of life by improving parks, creating walkable streets, and providing a high level of civic services.
- The City's economic vision is lacking. More focus is needed on creating more revenue and economic vitality/sustainability.
- Plan check corrections can sometime be over the top.
- Contract building plan check doesn't always work well because staff is not familiar. In-house staff take more care in doing things right and working with customers.
- Code enforcement staff should work with property owners to let them know what they should be doing.
- Projects with landscaping start great but are not maintained over time. Code enforcement is lacking in enforcing it, so people do not maintain landscaping.
- More property maintenance would be great, but don't penalize lower-income neighborhoods.
- Think ahead about the community's needs. Google fiber and wi-fi are amenities that will be needed and bring in more people.
- There are other ways to address environmental justice issues right away that do not have to be accomplished through zoning code revisions.
- Make it easier for women and immigrants to open businesses.