



# Zoning Code Update

Planning Commission

September 9, 2020

# Background

- The Sonoma Zoning Code has not been comprehensively updated since 2005
- Since that time, major changes have occurred to State and federal housing laws, in addition to new development trends
- In January 2020, a joint session of the City Council and Planning Commission was held to begin discussions about zoning code priorities
- The City Council created an Ad Hoc Committee composed of Mayor Harvey and Council member Agrimonti



# Draft “Fix It List”

- Short Term (to City Council by end of 2020)
- Medium-term (next 12 months)
- Long-term (12+ months)



# Short Term Fixes

## (to City Council by end of 2020)

- **New Temporary Tent Regulations:**
  - City has historically used temporary use permits to regulate temporary tents. Need to create a new permit to address tents.
- **Land Use Permit Requirements:**
  - Update indemnification language
- **Subdivisions:**
  - Separate subdivision provisions from the zoning code.
- **Definitions:**
  - Review and update all definitions. Need to check all definitions to remove unused or antiquated definitions, update to reflect best practices, and fill in gaps appropriately. Add definition for “available vacant land” to include description of applicable economic factors.
  - Consolidate all other code section definitions to have one location for all definitions. For example, the tree ordinance has definitions that are not included in Chapter 19.92.
  - Clarify definitions for accessory structures. Tree houses, shipping containers, etc. What’s included and excluded. What’s allowed – exempt, building permit, design review and what’s prohibited?
  - Discuss definitions of bars and restaurants
  - Site coverage and coverage
- **Permit Implementation, Time Limits and Extensions:**
  - Clarify effective date of permits
  - Add validity provisions
- **Noise Ordinance (Chapter 9.56)**
  - Revisit noise standards and exceptions
  - Clarify how noise is measured in relation to noise source and receptor sites

# Short Term Fixes Continued...

- **Tree Ordinance (Chapter 12.08)**
  - Expand protected trees
  - Simplify required tree replacement
  - Create standards to allow for applicants to obtain their own arborist for an existing conditions report
  - Create a fund for tree removal offsite
- **Signs and Display Advertising (Title 18)- Place in new Zoning Code**
  - Simplify allowable sizes
  - Consider making sign permits approvable by the Planning Director and not require Design Review
  - Consider revised building signage requirements to address flexibility and lighting.
  - Need to address signage inside the building on a window that is visible from the public ROW as exempt or should be regulated and subject to the sign standards like an exterior sign consistent with relevant laws.
  - Sign program for quicker, administrative approvals
- **Application Filing and Processing:**
  - Critically consider authority for land use and zoning decisions. Consider increasing permits approvable by the Planning Director, with appeals by the Planning Commission and City Council
  - Expand section outlining expiration of applications.
  - Expand and support Study Sessions for large projects
  - Need clearer standards for design review. Need to ensure that design review standards for residential development are consistent with the requirements of SB 35.
  - Consider extending time limits to two years and three for maps

# Medium Term Fixes (next 12 months)

- **Planning Area Standards:**
  - Critical evaluation of Planning Areas and their effectiveness
  - Consider simplifying standards to be consistent across the city
  - Consider creating design guidelines and moving objective standards to be consistent with state law
- **Site Planning, Use and Development Standards:**
  - Consider effectiveness and appropriateness of all General Property Development and Use Standards.
  - Compare General Property Development and Use Standards with Special Use Standards and consider consolidating or reorganizing
  - Clarify setbacks and how they are measured. Ensure internal consistency with definitions
  - Consider and evaluate Creekside development standards
  - Consider and evaluate Hillside development standards
- **Zoning District Provisions:**
  - Special Purpose and Overlay Districts
  - Zones and Allowable Uses
  - Discuss tiny homes in terms of zoning and any standards or conditions that should be associated.
- **Affordable Housing:**
  - Update to be consistent with State law
  - Simplify requirements and process
  - Clarify affordable housing requirements
  - Create an in lieu fee for fractional units

# Medium Term Fixes Continued...

- **Parking Standards:**
  - Critical evaluation of all parking standards
  - Critical evaluation of parking exception process
  - Create in lieu parking fund to be used for public transit options or bike/pedestrian improvements
  - Clarify parking standards, in particular back up and turning area and minimum driveway width
  - Consider increasing landscaping requirements and tree coverage to address urban heat islands
  - Consider adding solar requirements
  - Consider including electrical vehicle charging station requirements
  - Evaluate loading requirements
  - Address bicycle circulation and safety
  - Electric Scooters/Bike Share – Consider whether to include regulations or standards relative to zoning for rental bikes, which may include penalties for misuse, illegal parking, or other violations
  - Ensure all uses are properly defined
- **Special Use Standards:**
  - Critically evaluate all special use standards and consider consolidating with General Use Standards. Consider moving residential accessory uses and structures to general use standards.
  - Need clearer standards for detached accessory structures and clarity of second story detached accessory structures. Discuss permitting process for allowing height increases.
  - Need standard and methodology for how to measure height. Need diagram.



# Long Term Term Fixes (12 months plus)

- **Streetscape:**
  - Evaluate the intent and effectiveness of streetscape standards and design
  - Update to include specific standards for road width, street trees etc.
- **Block Structure:**
  - Evaluate intent and effectiveness of Block design standards
  - Discuss best location for lot size standards. Currently in multiple places with conflicting standards
- **Historic Preservation and Infill in the Historic Zone:**
  - Consider the effectiveness of the Historic Preservation and Infill in the the Historic Zone
  - Discuss and consider strengthening preservation requirements and penalties
  - Consider expanding what is determined to be historic and worthy of preservation
  - Consider expanding the Downtown Sonoma Historic Design Guidelines to address historic preservation citywide
- **Fences, Hedges and Walls:**
  - Discuss standards and consider required clarifications and modifications
  - Correct location? Potentially move to general standards
- **Public Art:**
  - Discuss and consider appropriate location for this section
- **Dedications and exactions:**
  - Clarify impact fees, their calculations and applicability
  - Consider adding traffic impact fees
- **General Plan and Development Code/Zoning Map Amendments:**
  - Consider streamlining amendment process for minor changes and clarifications
  - Amend noticing requirements
- **Housing Allocation Process:**
  - Consider and discuss, ensure consistency with State law

# Conclusion

## Questions / Next Steps

