

City of La Quinta

CITY COUNCIL MEETING: July 21, 2015

STAFF REPORT

AGENDA TITLE: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT CODE TUNE UP

RECOMMEDATION

Discuss status of the proposed development code tune up and provide direction.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- City Council has requested review of the City’s development code (“code”) to identify measures to modernize and improve the permitting process.
- The code identifies the procedures and processes for development approvals, and determines the level of review by the Community Development Director, Planning Commission and/or City Council.
- Staff is proposing that a Project Action Team (PAT) and an Ad-hoc Committee be formed to identify improvements with the permitting process. The schedule would commence on August 13 and run through January 2016.
- Final recommendations would be presented to the Architectural & Landscape Review Board, Planning Commission and City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT

No immediate fiscal impact is anticipated from this effort.

BACKGROUND

City Council wishes to evaluate the current code and identify ways to streamline the review of development applications. As a result, a code “tune up” is proposed. The code establishes the development approvals procedures, and identifies standards and permitted land uses. It also identifies the approvals that are reviewed by the Community Development Director, Planning Commission and/or City Council.

Over the last year, improvements have been made to the permitting process via new permit tracking software and the new customer center. Both have resulted in a more timely and efficient permit review process. Additional efforts are underway to fully implement the features of the permit tracking software, which will provide even greater opportunities and reduce permit-processing time.

The next step entails “tuning up” municipal code standards and procedures that have existed for a number of years, some since incorporation in 1982. The opportunity to

review these items is timely with respect to the aforementioned interests and recent improvements, with the ultimate purpose of improving the effectiveness of the City's land use and development review process.

ANALYSIS

City staff has identified the following guiding principles for this tune-up:

- ◆ **Flexible** – A code that is flexible and achieves all legal requirements for land use and development permit applications while not hampering the ability to facilitate quality development and high service standards.
- ◆ **Smart** – A code that contains everything it should and nothing it should not; that is easy to understand and allows property owners and developers to effectively manage their development projects. The application review and approval criteria must allow for an appropriate amount of analysis and discretion consistent with the project's required level of review.
- ◆ **Local** – A code that provides for meaningful public involvement in a way that reflects La Quinta's character and results in development consistent with the General Plan.

Based upon these guiding principles, staff has identified the following as integral components to the tune up effort:

- Project Action Team (PAT): Assemble key City staff, including representatives from the Building, Public Works and Planning Divisions, to inventory current permitting procedures and define key issues and concerns relevant to improving the permitting process. The PAT will also be responsible for assessing progress of the permitting process on a periodic basis.
- Ad-Hoc Committee: This committee will assist City staff in identifying issues, receiving feedback and providing recommendations. The Ad-Hoc Committee will consist of two City Council members, two Planning Commissioners and one Architecture and Landscape Review Board member.
- Outreach to stakeholders: An outreach plan consisting of an on-line survey, community/stakeholder meeting(s), and learning conversations with recent customers. The PAT will facilitate the outreach activities with the results presented to the Ad-Hoc Committee for review.
- Development Code review: The PAT will review the code and prepare recommendations for improving procedures and code provisions based on the information and feedback received from outreach activities and the Ad-Hoc Committee.
- Customer service goals: The PAT will identify customer service goals that would guide the streamlining process and establish measurable metrics for permitting activities.

- Expedited review process: The PAT will evaluate an expedited entitlement application review process that relies upon consultant or contractor staff resources at the applicant's expense.
- Research permitting process: The PAT will investigate best practices used by others that can be applied to the City's processes. Results will be shared with the Ad-Hoc Committee and included in the final recommendations.
- Recommend Code Tune Up: Code modification recommendations will be presented to the Architectural & Landscape Review Board, Planning Commission and City Council for review and consideration. An implementation plan and timetable will be included.

The following is a proposed schedule:

- August 13 – PAT kick-off meeting
 - September 10 - First Ad-Hoc Committee meeting
 - September 14 - October 9 – Community outreach
 - October 29 – Second Ad-Hoc Committee meeting
 - November 19 – Final Ad-Hoc Committee meeting*
 - December through January 2016 - Presentations to Architectural & Landscape Review Board, Planning Commission and City Council
- * Additional Ad-Hoc meetings may occur, if deemed necessary.*

A streamlined permitting process enhances the customer service experience and encourages economic investment. A code that is flexible, smart and local will ensure the City's processes are responsive to our customers' needs, and convey the message that the City of La Quinta is the place to do business.

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Report approved by: Frank J. Spevacek, City Manager

