



REQUEST FOR PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

MEETING DATE: JULY 16, 2026

TITLE: MAJOR MODIFICATION TO THE MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS MANUAL


Director of Community Development

RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 1) Conduct the public hearing.
- 2) Adopt RESOLUTION NO. 26-4087 – A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF IRVINE, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING A MAJOR MODIFICATION TO THE MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS MANUAL (FILE NO. 00986715-PPA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Development Department is updating the City of Irvine Multi-Family Housing and Mixed-Use Development Objective Design Standards (ODS) Manual to introduce a new appendix with performance measures for by-right residential development projects in response to State housing laws aiming to streamline residential development.

Residential development projects typically require discretionary review, during which an approval body renders a decision at a public hearing and a resolution with appropriate conditions of approval is issued. These conditions include controls on the construction process, environmental protections, and other provisions to maintain the City's high aesthetic standards, as well as operational requirements that ensure ongoing land use compatibility. The performance measures mirror the standard conditions of approval that were recently adopted by the Planning Commission but have been modified to be entirely objective and able to be applied on a citywide basis.

With the influx of new State housing laws, which aim to remove barriers to development of residential projects, certain projects may be eligible to bypass the discretionary process altogether and instead only obtain grading/building permits prior to the start of construction. In this scenario, because a development proposal could bypass the discretionary review process, no approval resolution (and therefore no conditions of approval) would be issued for a residential development project.

In the absence of a mechanism by which conditions of approval can be added to a development project, staff is recommending adoption of uniform objective performance measures to be added to the City's existing ODS Manual. These measures would be applied on a citywide basis for eligible development projects. In order to ensure that measures are applied only to the extent they are applicable to each residential development, the Director of Community Development may approve modifications to individual requirements or remove certain requirements during the ministerial review provided that the modification is based on objective criteria and is not more restrictive.

Because the project involves the addition of a new appendix with new performance measures, a major modification to the ODS Manual is being processed for review by the Planning Commission.

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. 26-4087, approving a major modification to the ODS Manual (PC Attachment 3) to ensure that by-right residential projects remain subject to enforceable, longstanding City standards to preserve local control while also ensuring compliance with State law.

COMMISSION / BOARD / COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Not applicable.

ANALYSIS

Background

On November 26, 2024, the City Council adopted the ODS Manual (codified by Chapter 3-18 of the Irvine Zoning Ordinance) to comply with State housing laws (e.g., Senate Bills 35 and 330). These laws require local jurisdictions to use objective standards when reviewing qualifying multi-family residential development projects and provide expanded opportunities for residential development to proceed via a streamlined, by-right approval process, bypassing the traditional discretionary review and public hearings.

Because discretionary review typically allows the City to apply standard and project-specific conditions of approval, by-right projects are not subject to these same requirements. To ensure these projects still adhere to critical City requirements, staff proposes amending the ODS Manual to establish objective performance measures for by-right (ministerial) projects.

ODS Manual Modification Procedure

Per Chapter 1, Section 1.6 of the ODS Manual, modifications are categorized by scope:

- A. Minor Modifications: minor adjustments to 1) comply with changes in State law; 2) ensure consistency with policies, goals, and objectives of the City as declared by

the City Council; and 3) revise existing standards established in the Manual. Examples include adjustments to numbering or clarifying language that do not significantly alter standards. Minor modifications shall be reviewed by the Director of Community Development and any approved minor modifications to the Manual be issued via an Approval Memorandum

- B. Major Modifications: include modifications that result in the addition or removal of standards within the ODS Manual. These include modifications that result in significant changes to design standards. Major modifications shall be reviewed by the Planning Commission via resolution at a noticed public hearing.

Because the proposed project introduces a new appendix and new regulatory standards, the proposed revision constitutes a major modification.

ODS Manual Modifications

The ODS Manual is proposed to be modified as follows (PC Attachment 1):

- 1) Adoption of Appendix A to establish performance measures for multifamily residential projects that are eligible for ministerial approval (covering project phasing, construction, and operation). These performance measures reflect longstanding City requirements found in the Standard Conditions document, Zoning Ordinance, and current development practices; they do not introduce new regulatory burdens but rather transition existing standards into an objective format for application to by-right multifamily residential projects.
- 2) Update Chapter 1 to:
 - a. Introduce Section 1.3A: By Right Residential and Residential Mixed-Use Development to clarify when Appendix A applies;
 - b. Modify Section 1.5: User Guide to ensure the User Guide workflow to integrate by-right housing projects; and
 - c. Update Chapter 1 to include findings for major modifications.

Public Outreach

On June 25, 2026, notice of the July 16, 2026 Planning Commission public hearing was published in the *Irvine World News*. As of the writing of this report, staff has not received correspondence regarding this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Pursuant to Section 4 of the City of Irvine California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) procedures and Article 5 of the CEQA Guidelines, it has been determined that the proposed project is covered by the Common Sense Exemption [Section 15061(b)(3)], for projects where it can be seen with certainty that the activity in question will have no significant effect on the environment (PC Attachment 2).

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The proposed revisions represent updates to the ODS Manual address by-right housing development in response to State law. The Planning Commission may propose to change, alter, or decline any or all the proposed revisions.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Not applicable.

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PC ATTACHMENTS

1. Revisions to the Objective Design Standards Manual (including Appendix A)
2. Notice of Exemption
3. Planning Commission Resolution No. 26-4087, Approving a Major Modification to the Objective Design Standards Manual, with Exhibit A

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