



COUNTY OF VENTURA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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November 18, 2025

County of Ventura Board of Supervisors

Subject: Development of Comprehensive Planning and Zoning Regulation Reform Program for the Ventura County Resource Management Agency and Planning Division

Recommendation(s):

1. Direct the Resource Management Agency (RMA) Director to develop and implement a comprehensive County Planning and Zoning Regulation Reform Program (“Program”) that modernizes and streamlines County permitting and land-use processes to improve efficiency, transparency and responsiveness.
2. Direct RMA and Planning staff to incorporate the concepts outlined in Exhibit 1 – Draft Policy/Zoning Reform Topics and Strategies, and to implement, where feasible, items that can be accomplished immediately without further approval. Staff are further directed to return to the Board by March 2026 with a prioritized implementation plan for inclusion in the next Planning Division Three-Year Work Plan (FY 2026–2029).
3. Direct the County Executive Officer (CEO) to expand the Permit Navigator role to strengthen coordination across County departments and serve as a single point of contact for complex permitting projects. The Permit Navigator will also establish a regular reporting framework/dashboard to the Board, providing updates on project applications, current status, key milestones, and performance outcomes.
4. Authorize the CEO and RMA Director to take all necessary actions to implement the Program and Permit Navigator role expansion, including staffing, process, and technology adjustments, consistent with the Board’s direction.

Discussion:

The permitting process often represents a resident’s most direct interaction with local government. Knowing this, it is incumbent on both policymakers and staff to create a process that is accessible, efficient and customer friendly. As members of this Board, we have heard consistently from residents, business owners, and community stakeholders that Ventura County’s development review and permitting processes, though designed to ensure quality and accountability, have become increasingly complex and difficult to navigate. This initiative responds directly to those concerns. Working in partnership with the Resource Management

Agency and Planning Division, our goal is to develop and implement a Comprehensive Planning and Zoning Regulation Reform Program (“Program”) that lays the groundwork for a modern, transparent, and predictable regulatory system.

The proposed Program advances the 2024–2027 Ventura County Strategic Plan priorities of Economic Vitality, Fiscal Responsibility, and Service Excellence by improving permitting efficiency, enhancing consistency, and reducing regulatory barriers that can hinder responsible development and business growth.

It is our priority to create a process that is clear, fair, efficient and predictable for residents and business owners alike. This comprehensive reform effort modernizes outdated regulations, strengthens accountability, and ensures that Ventura County remains a place where innovation and responsible development can thrive. By cutting red tape, improving customer service, and supporting progress rather than slowing it down, we aim to build a stronger foundation for our county’s economic future.

The Planning Division Three-Year Work Plan guides the County’s long-term land-use policy and ordinance priorities. The current cycle concludes in FY 2025–26, with a new plan scheduled for Board review and adoption in March 2026. While the existing Work Plan includes critical initiatives, it does not yet encompass a comprehensive reform of the County’s planning and zoning regulations.

We recognize that the Planning Division Three-Year Work Plan may require realignment to reflect the scope and priority of this comprehensive reform effort. To ensure timely progress, staff are directed to review and implement any reform measures that can be accomplished immediately and do not require additional approvals.

For all remaining items, staff are directed to return to the Board by March 2026 with:

- A prioritized implementation plan organized by phased work packages (Fast-Track, Mid-Level, and Comprehensive).
- Recommended ordinance amendments and administrative updates to modernize and streamline County regulations.
- A fiscal and staffing analysis for implementation within the FY 2026–29 Work Plan.

We recognize that any reform measures requiring an amendment to the zoning regulations or General Plan will be subject to future discretionary public hearings and possible environmental review in accordance with state law.

The Draft Regulatory Reform Directives for County Permitting – Policy Guidance (Exhibit 1) provides detailed guidance for targeted reforms to modernize Ventura County’s permitting framework. Key areas include streamlining entitlements by converting select discretionary permits, such as Conditional Use Permits and Planned Developments, to lower-level discretionary or ministerial permits under objective standards; integrating zoning and building reviews for greater efficiency; updating industrial, commercial, and residential zones to expand

allowable uses and support innovation, housing, and job creation; refining permit completeness reviews to align with State law; and enhancing administrative processes for ministerial modifications, time extensions, and minor development adjustments. These directives also identify opportunities for permit downshifting, temporary use permits, and pre-approved plan programs, all designed to simplify procedures, reduce review times, and provide clearer, more predictable outcomes for applicants. Staff will use these strategies to develop a prioritized implementation plan for Board consideration, implementing measures immediately where feasible and phasing longer-term reforms to be incorporated into the FY 2026–29 Planning Division Work Plan.

To further support these reforms, we believe expanding the Permit Navigator’s role within the CEO’s Office. Originally created as part of the County’s broader “Service Excellence” and “Economic Vitality” efforts, we believe this position has an important role to play as we undertake these reform efforts. This enhanced position would serve as the Board’s dedicated liaison for development and permitting activities, coordinating across departments and providing a single point of contact for projects navigating the County’s permitting process.

To support this expanded role, we recommend establishing a dashboard and regular reporting framework to the Board on a monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly basis, as determined by the Board, specifically covering:

- Active project applications and their status within the permitting pipeline;
- Key milestones, challenges, and resolutions; and
- Performance indicators demonstrating progress toward efficiency and customer service goals.

This approach is intended to reduce the need for direct Board office involvement in individual permitting matters by empowering the Permit Navigator to serve as a conduit for communication, issue resolution, and process accountability with Resource Management Agency staff. The role expansion directly supports the Board’s goals of advancing Economic Vitality (EV) and improving transparency in the County’s development processes.

In conclusion, we would like to acknowledge and thank the County’s Resource Management Agency/Planning Division for all of their support throughout the process of drafting this Board letter. They have been valuable partners in this effort, and their expertise and guidance has helped us create a proposed reform Program which we believe will have significant beneficial impacts. Comprehensive reform of the County permitting process is not just an administrative improvement. Rather, it is a clear signal to our residents that the Board of Supervisors and County staff truly believe in creating a more transparent, effective and responsive County government. By modernizing and simplifying our process while remaining in compliance with state law, as well as enhancing transparency, prioritizing customer service, and ensuring predictability, the County can build a permitting system that is efficient, fair, and trusted by all stakeholders.

Strategic Plan Alignment

This action supports the following 2024–2027 Ventura County Strategic Plan Focus Areas:

- Economic Vitality: Encourage investment and job creation through efficient planning processes.
- Fiscal Responsibility: Enhance accountability and resource efficiency in public service.
- Service Excellence: Provide responsive, transparent, and timely planning services to residents and businesses.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to the Board's discussion of this important initiative and to working together to build a more modern, transparent, and predictable permitting system that supports responsible growth and economic vitality across Ventura County.

Cordially,



Matt LaVere
Supervisor, First District



Jeff Gorell
Supervisor, Second District

Exhibits:

Exhibit 1 – Draft Policy/Zoning Reform Topics and Strategies