

Regulatory Reform Directives for County Permitting – Policy Guidance

Permitting Topic	Ordinance Amendment Consideration	Explanation and Goal of Amendment
Amendments Related to Uses and Structures	1. Streamline Permitting for Certain Uses and Structures - Entitle certain uses and structures through a Planned Development (PD) Permit rather than a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) - Eliminate expiration dates for CUPs converted to PDs - Entitle certain uses and structures through a Zoning Clearance (ZC) rather than a PD or CUP	These amendments support County Strategic Plan Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality, and Diverse and Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence.
	2. Exempt Certain Uses and Structures from Land Use Entitlement Consider establishing development standards for certain uses and structures, exempting them if they meet these standards	This amendment supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality and Diverse and Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence.
	3. Increase Maximum Allowed Size of Detached Accessory Structures Increase the maximum allowed size of detached accessory structures in residential zones to a combined total of 4,000 square feet, consolidating the separate allowances for accessory residential and agricultural buildings into a single, unified limit.	This amendment would simplify the approval process for detached accessory buildings, providing greater flexibility for property owners in residential areas, while reducing confusion and uncertainty.
	4. Rezone CO and C1 Zone Properties to CPD	Rezoning Commercial Office and Neighborhood Commercial (CO and C1) Zoned properties to Commercial Planned Development (CPD) would expand business opportunities in existing commercially zoned properties without conflicting with the underlying Commercial General Plan land use designation for these properties. This amendment supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Reliable Infrastructure and Sustainability and Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities.

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	5. Rezone Certain Urban Residential Lots to RPD ○ Evaluate residential areas within the Existing Communities in the unincorporated area that meet certain criteria and consider rezoning them to the Residential Planned Development (RPD) Zone. ○ Initial Criteria for evaluation: ▪ Located in an Existing Community ▪ Has adequate water and sewer services	Re-zoning residentially zoned properties in Existing Communities with adequate services and infrastructure, to the RPD Zone would provide more flexibility in density and design opportunities, ultimately increasing affordable housing options. This proposal supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Reliable Infrastructure and Sustainability and Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities.
	6. Update Permitted Uses in Industrial Zones and other zones Update the permitted uses in Industrial Zones to include a wider range of activities across the MI and M2 zones, such as heavy equipment sales, alcohol and soap, and micro-breweries and micro-distilleries ○ Consider establishing development standards for micro-breweries and micro-distilleries with tasting rooms. ○ Establish zoning language allowing “flex uses” on Industrial, AE, and OS zoned parcels via a simplified CUP amendment, limited solely to the proposed “flex use” and exempt from further condition review.	These amendments would allow the County to stay competitive in industry clusters and support the County Strategic Plan Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality and Diverse and Innovative Workforce.
	7. Develop Standards for Retail Nurseries ○ Develop standards for retail nurseries and expand the zoning districts where they are permitted ○ Downshift permit type for a retail nursery from CUP to PD and/or ZC. ▪ E.g. Agricultural Sales Facilities, Small Agricultural Structures	This amendment allows for greater flexibility and opportunities for these types of businesses to meet future needs and industry growth. This amendment supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Reliable Infrastructure and Sustainability and Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities.
Other Regulation Refinements	8. Align Certain County Environmental Regulations ○ Update NCZO standards in collaboration with the Ventura County Environmental Health Division	This amendment would align with local, state, and federal laws pertaining to these topic areas and supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Reliable Infrastructure and

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	and the Public Works Agency Integrated Waste Management Department regarding: ▪ Solid Waste ▪ Recycling Facilities ▪ Waste Water Treatment	Sustainability and Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities.
	9. Enhance Flexibility in Development ○ Review and revise sections of the NCZO to introduce greater flexibility	This amendment would create more flexibility and expand development opportunities for property owners and supports the County Strategic Plan Priorities: Reliable Infrastructure and Sustainability and Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities.
Planning Director Observations	10. Streamline Permit Modifications ○ Explore options for creating more flexible permit modification processes, including: ▪ Ministerial Modifications ▪ Permit Adjustments ▪ Director's substantial consistency determinations, to enable staff-level approvals without the need for hearings.	This amendment would provide greater efficiency and streamlining of modifications to existing entitlements and supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality and Diverse and Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence.
	11. Simplify CUP Time Extension Process ○ Evaluate implementing a ministerial time extension process for CUPs, processed administratively without discretionary review. ○ Applications requesting time extensions with no modifications (or only de minimis modifications) and with no active violations on record (RMA and Fire) would not be subject to review of existing permit conditions. ○ Consider extending permit durations and establishing standardized term lengths to improve predictability.	This amendment would streamline the application review process for CUP time extension requests, reducing permit review processing timelines and costs to the property owners. This proposal supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Reliable Infrastructure and Sustainability.
	12. Modify Review Process for Administrative Adjustments to Required Development Standards ○ Establish a lower-level review process for minor adjustments to setbacks and heights of accessory structures, walls, and fences, allowing	This amendment would provide greater flexibility and opportunities for property owners to make minor adjustments, thereby avoiding the need for a Variance process and its associated strict findings and higher costs. This proposal supports County Strategic Plan

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	for modifications of up to a certain percentage (e.g. X%) without the need for a Variance process.	Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality and Diverse and Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence.
	13. Offsets for Discretionary Tree Permits Allow for consideration of in lieu fee offsets in connection with Discretionary Tree Permits without the need for Planned Development Permit.	This amendment would provide greater flexibility and opportunities for property owners to satisfy tree replacement or in lieu fee requirements administratively. This proposal supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality and Diverse and Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence.
	14. Temporary Use Permit Develop standards and a process to entitle certain uses through a ministerial Temporary Use Permit (TUP)	This amendment would streamline the permit process and create equitable opportunities for property owners hosting temporary activities, such as events and storage. This proposal supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality, Reliable Infrastructure and Sustainability and Diverse and Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence.
Land Use Regulations - Existing Communities	15. Refining Land Use Regulations to Balance Growth and Sustainable Existing Communities - Consider amendments to certain General Plan policies, including the Guidelines of Orderly Development, to address land use and development challenges in unincorporated areas. These proposed amendments would aim to: - Ensure essential services such as water and sanitation are available to support sustainable development within the County of Ventura's Existing Communities, while prioritizing the preservation of agricultural and open space lands.	These updates would prioritize the preservation of agricultural and open space lands while promoting responsible growth and development in Existing Communities. By striking a balance between these competing interests, this proposal supports all five of the County's Strategic Plan Priorities.
Incorporate "Zoning Clearances" into Building Permit Review Process	16. Enhance Building Permit Review Process Eliminating the requirement for a separate ZC, allowing applicants to proceed directly to obtaining a Building Permit	This amendment would streamline the permit process, reducing unnecessary steps and expediting review timelines. This proposal supports County Strategic Plan Priorities:

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		Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality and Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence.
	17. Improve Permitting System Update and refine the permitting process by making revisions to the Accela permitting database and make corresponding amendments to the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (NCZO)	This amendment aims to improve efficiency and clarity, ensures consistency and accuracy, and creates transparency. This proposal supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality, Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence, and Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities.
Pre-Approved Plans	18. Ventura County Pre-Approved Plans Program Adopting a pre-approved plans program with a library of pre-approved plans for various housing types (e.g., single-family homes, accessory dwelling units, multifamily buildings)	This program would promote efficient, affordable, and community-friendly housing, while preserving and stabilizing the unique character of our neighborhoods. This proposal supports County Strategic Plan Priorities: Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality, Innovative Workforce Dedicated to Service Excellence, and Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities.
Permit Streamlining	19. Ministerial Permit Processing Improvements - Ensure ministerial permits are processed using objective, non-discretionary criteria applicable solely to the requested permit. - Update the Zoning Clearance Application and accompanying instructions to remove any requests for information beyond what is necessary for ministerial review.	
Environmental Review	20. Establish a list of qualified third-party CEQA consultants under contract with the County, and allow project applicants to select a consultant from the list. Applicants utilizing this process could enter into a Memorandum of Understanding or similar arrangement with the County in order to clearly delineate specific roles in the CEQA process.	This will allow applicants to initiate the CEQA review process without needing to wait several months for a County RFP

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	21. Consider initiation of transition from ISAGS to Appendix G or applicable CEQA thresholds. Staff will report back to Board with a recommendation to initiate this transition or provide recommendations on how to simplify and prioritize objective analysis through the CEQA process.	Will align County thresholds with State guidelines and other agencies, making CEQA review more uniform and efficient
Completeness Review	22. Consistent Permit Completeness Review ○ Ensure that the review of permit applications for completeness is consistent with State law by applying specific, objective criteria for required information and the adequacy of that information, without requiring identification of mitigation measures during completeness review. ○ Avoid cross-referencing additional or discretionary requirements, including extra studies, in the application. ▪ E.g., Initial Study Biological Assessments (ISBA) should be limited to the first three sections (<i>Construction Footprint Description, Survey Area Description and Methodology, The Biological Inventory</i>), excluding Section 4 (<i>Impact Assessment</i>). ○ Assess practices used by other counties to inform and standardize completeness review procedures.	Aligns County completeness process with applicable State law; avoid lengthy completeness review that intrudes upon the CEQA analysis