



SPECIAL PLANNING COMMISSION MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 2026 - MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER - The Planning Commission Special Meeting was called to order by Chair Harlan at 6:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG - Commissioner Dickson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Jeffrey Harlan, Vice Chair Jon Zich, Commissioner Angely Andrade, Commissioner Robert Dickson, Commissioner Karen Klepack, Commissioner David Martinez, and Commissioner Johnny Rojas

Absent: None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - MATTERS NOT LISTED ON THE AGENDA:

Jay Humphrey, a Costa Mesa resident, expressed concern about the City's declining park acreage relative to population growth. He noted that City documents identify a need for approximately 575 acres of park space but do not identify opportunities to acquire additional land. He suggested using park fees generated by development at the Fairview Developmental Center to incentivize the dedication of land for City-owned and operated parks and open space. He emphasized that City ownership would ensure long-term public access and help address the City's declining park acreage per resident.

PLANNING COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Commissioner Martinez announced upcoming community events, including free Pacific Symphony "Symphony on the Go" concerts at Vista Park on August 19 and Schiffer Park on August 29, both beginning at 6:30 p.m. He also highlighted the Costa Mesa Historical Society's 60th anniversary celebration, with an event at the Diego Sepulveda Adobe on August 29 and a special anniversary gala the following day.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. JULY 27, 2026 UNOFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES

MOVED/SECOND: ZICH/MARTINEZ

MOTION: Move the item.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: None

Absent: None

Recused: None

Motion carried: 7-0

ACTION:

Planning Commission approved the minutes.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVE A GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT TO AMEND THE SIXTH CYCLE HOUSING ELEMENT (2021-2029) OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA'S GENERAL PLAN (PCTY-26-0030) TO ADD ADDITIONAL HOUSING ELEMENT SITES TO THE SITES INVENTORY, AND ASSOCIATED REVISIONS

Presentation by Advanced Planning Manager Anna McGill.

Commission Questions and Discussion:

Vice Chair Zich asked a series of questions regarding the revised Housing Element, including changes to the site inventory, the timing of City Council and HCD review, and the total housing capacity. Staff explained that approximately 7,000 units of site capacity had been removed and a similar amount added, with some ongoing refinements to final numbers due to the City continuing to honor property-owner requests. Vice Chair Zich emphasized the importance of having clear and legible information before making a recommendation to the City Council.

Vice Chair Zich also questioned the relationship between projected population growth, planned housing capacity, and the City's affordable housing needs. Staff explained that SCAG population projections and RHNA allocations use different methodologies and that the City's existing household income distribution does not directly correlate with RHNA income allocations. Staff additionally clarified that the Housing Element Amendment is a targeted amendment to identify sites to adequately meet RHNA capacity. Some of the data and tables in the Housing Minutes - Costa Mesa Planning Commission Special Meeting - August 17, 2026-

Element were from the original adoption in 2022/23 and are not entirely up to date now. However, the Housing Element data is meant to be a snapshot of information at the time of its preparation and updated data/tables would be included in the upcoming 7th RHNA cycle Housing Element.

Additionally, Vice Chair Zich raised concerns regarding open-space standards and definitions, particularly whether balconies may be counted as open space. Staff explained that the Housing Element reflects regulations in place when it was prepared and that subsequent zoning amendments provide greater flexibility in how open space is provided. Staff confirmed that the applicable minimum publicly accessible open-space requirement discussed for the Mixed-Use Overlay District is 30%.

Commissioner Martinez asked about the criteria for adding new Housing Element sites, particularly whether demonstrated developer interest could qualify a Measure K property without meeting the other site-selection criteria. Staff confirmed that documented developer interest, such as a letter of intent, pre-application, or active entitlement process, is sufficient for a Measure K site to be added to the sites inventory.

He also asked whether property owners of the newly identified sites had been contacted to avoid future removal requests. Staff confirmed that property owners were notified multiple times and that sites were removed when owners requested the City to do so. Commissioner Martinez expressed concern that the Planning Commission was being asked to recommend a document while the public and HCD review periods were still underway. He requested that the recommendation specify that staff could make only minor revisions without returning the Housing Element to the Planning Commission for further review.

Commissioner Martinez also identified technical corrections, including incomplete dates and maps that needed to reflect the updated Housing Element sites. Finally, he sought clarification regarding RHNA income categories and the City's capacity requirements. Staff explained that very-low- and low-income units may be combined as "lower income" for purposes of the sites inventory, while individual projects would ultimately be credited to the appropriate income category based on anticipated rents and household income levels.

Commissioner Andrade asked why the Fairview Developmental Center was listed at a maximum of 2,300 units in the Housing Element despite the Planning Commission's recommendation to study up to 4,000 units. Staff explained that the higher number was not included because the City Council had not yet made a determination on the Specific Plan or 4,000 units and the additional units would not increase the needed low-, very-low-, or moderate-income capacity, only the above moderate income category, which is not needed to meet RHNA capacity.

Commissioner Andrade also asked about potential housing opportunities on college properties and whether developers could dedicate or sell land to the City for additional green space. Staff noted that college, university, school, and faith-based properties may have additional housing opportunities under State law and discussed flexible approaches for providing open space.

Finally, Commissioner Andrade raised concerns about concentrating housing development on the Westside and potentially losing industrial and creative community spaces. Staff explained that new Housing Element sites are limited to Measure K areas and were selected in part to meet affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH) requirements, which aims to distribute housing opportunities throughout the City. Staff also clarified that the Mixed-Use Overlay District allows opportunities for both residential and nonresidential uses, while properties outside Measure K areas remain subject to existing zoning and Measure Y requirements.

Commissioner Dickson requested clearer summary tables in the staff report showing the proposed Housing Element site changes, including associated unit counts and APNs, to make the information easier for the Commission and public to understand. He also questioned the relationship between the 20% realistic development capacity reduction and the actual number of units that could ultimately be built, citing the Fairview Developmental Center as an example. Commissioner Dickson expressed concern that the projected capacity numbers did not appear to have a clear connection to realistic development potential.

Staff acknowledged the difficulty in estimating anticipated unit count vs. what ultimately gets built, explaining that the City's responsibility is to plan and zone for the required housing capacity, even though it cannot predict what developers will ultimately build. Staff explained that the 20% reduction assumes a site will develop at approximately 80% of its maximum capacity and that additional factors, including developer interest, existing development, and local knowledge of properties, are used to identify sites with a more realistic potential for redevelopment.

Chair Harlan emphasized that the Housing Element contains both background information and the City's actionable housing plan. He clarified that Chapter 4 is the operative portion, identifying the City's Housing Element programs, RHNA obligations, and commitments for the planning period. Staff confirmed that these policies continue to be implemented through measures such as amendments to the Zoning Code (including the NWWAB efforts), where specific development standards, including open-space requirements, would be established and applied to future projects.

Public comments:

Casey Griffin, representing a Costa Mesa car dealership property near Adams Avenue, expressed interest in developing housing on the approximately 3.3-acre Measure K site. He stated that the designated density of 30 units per acre could make a housing project financially difficult, particularly when incorporating affordable units and suggested that a higher density may be more appropriate given other development along Harbor Boulevard. He expressed a desire to continue working with staff and provide financial information to help determine how a viable housing project could be developed.

Jay Humphrey, a Costa Mesa resident, asked whether recently vacant Measure K properties, including the Nissan dealership and adjacent gym, had generated developer interest. He also discussed Measure Y requirements, noting that certain entitlement changes and development thresholds can trigger a public vote, and questioned how exemptions for affordable housing interact with State-mandated RHNA affordable housing requirements.

Cynthia McDonald expressed concern that the City's planning process had evolved significantly from its original intent and no longer reflected the community-driven vision residents were promised. She stated that important planning considerations, including infrastructure, fiscal impacts, environmental review, open space, transportation, and meaningful public involvement, remained insufficiently addressed. She argued that development decisions were becoming increasingly developer-driven and urged the Planning Commission to recommend Alternative B, which she stated would allow the City to meet its RHNA obligations while representing the environmentally superior option (in reference to the NWWAB EIR and disclosed project alternatives).

Anna Mendoza, representing PLC Communities, expressed interest in adding the approximately 0.8-acre property at 2148 Newport Boulevard to the Housing Element. She stated that its proximity to proposed Housing Element sites and existing multifamily development made it a logical addition to the site inventory.

Continued Commission questions:

Commissioner Martinez sought clarification regarding properties discussed during public comment. Staff confirmed that 2148 Newport Boulevard could not be added to the Housing Element through the current process because it is not a Measure K site and remains subject to Measure Y requirements.

Staff also discussed 2850 Harbor Boulevard, explaining that it is a Measure K property but is not currently designated as a Housing Element site and was studied at a density of 30 dwelling units per acre. Staff indicated they would continue

working with the property owner to explore options for increasing density and looking at other project alternatives that consider financially feasible, including potentially adding the property to the Housing Element or utilizing State density bonus and other housing laws.

Commissioner Andrade also asked about requests from other property owners seeking higher densities or the addition of parcels to the Housing Element. Staff explained that some requested properties are not Measure K sites and therefore cannot be added through the current process, while eligible properties may continue to be evaluated.

Commission comments after motion:

Commissioner Andrade motioned the staff recommendation to make the appropriate environmental analysis determination and Planning Commission recommendation to the City Council to adopt a resolution to amend the Housing Element of the General Plan, and direct staff to incorporate revisions in response to HCD comment and the public review period, prior to City Council consideration and adoption. She expressed appreciation to staff and the project team for their extensive work, community outreach, and coordination with property owners and developers throughout the Housing Element process. She also appreciated the incorporation of Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and Environmental Justice Policy considerations and the emphasis on prioritizing green space where opportunities exist. She concluded by expressing interest in seeing how the City Council moves the Housing Element forward.

Commissioner Martinez requested two friendly amendments to the motion. First, he proposed clarifying that staff be directed to incorporate only minor revisions in response to HCD and public comments. Second, he requested that staff meet with Mr. Griffin regarding potential housing development opportunities for his Harbor Boulevard property.

Commissioner Andrade agreed to both friendly amendments.

Commissioner Martinez thanked staff for their work and emphasized that obtaining a certified Housing Element was his primary goal. He noted that certification would help the City maintain its planning and permitting authority and address its current exposure to the builder's remedy. He also stated that the proposed Housing Element and Mixed-Use Overlay District would streamline housing development for more than 90 additional identified Housing Element sites. He concluded by expressing support for the motion.

Vice Chair Zich stated that he would not support the motion, citing longstanding concerns with the Housing Element process and questioning whether the

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document was sufficiently complete to recommend to the City Council. He expressed frustration with the evolving requirements for obtaining a certified Housing Element and noted that the final version presented to Council could differ from the version before the Planning Commission.

Vice Chair Zich expressed concern that the Housing Element did not reflect the promises made to residents through Measure K, particularly regarding neighborhood protection, commercial revitalization, affordable housing, open space, local control, and traffic mitigation. He also raised concerns about the loss of commercial properties and tax revenue and stated that he could not support the Housing Element.

Commissioner Dickson stated that he would not support the Housing Element recommendation, emphasizing that he supports certification but believes the City is moving forward too quickly with an unfinished and internally inconsistent document. He expressed concern about missed deadlines, unresolved questions, and the broader implications of applying the Mixed-Use Overlay District (MUOD) to Housing Element sites without sufficient site-specific analysis or flexibility.

Commissioner Dickson urged the City to allow additional time to address outstanding issues and ensure consistency before forwarding the Housing Element to the City Council. He emphasized the importance of balancing housing production with open space, community character, local businesses, and quality of life, arguing that the City should not prioritize maximizing housing units at the expense of Costa Mesa's long-term livability.

Chair Harlan expressed support for the motion, acknowledging concerns about the evolving and complex Housing Element process. He stated that the document was sufficiently complete for City Council consideration and emphasized that the Council would ultimately make the final decision after considering the Planning Commission's analysis and concerns.

MOVED/SECOND: ANDRADE/MARTINEZ

MOTION: Move staff's recommendation with two friendly amendments; first clarifying that staff be directed to incorporate only minor revisions in response to HCD and public comments and secondly, directing staff meet with Mr. Griffin regarding potential housing development opportunities for his Harbor Boulevard property.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Dickson

Absent: None

Recused: None

Motion carried: 5-2

ACTION:

The Planning Commission adopted a resolution to:

1. Find that the project is consistent with the Costa Mesa City Council adopted Resolution No. 2022-67, certifying the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and adopting the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) statutorily and that the project is statutorily exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.085(a) (Senate Bill 131); and
2. Recommend that the City Council adopt a Resolution to approve a General Plan Amendment to amend the City of Costa Mesa Sixth Cycle (2021-2029) Housing Element of the City's General Plan and direct staff to incorporate only minor revisions in response to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) comments and the public review period, prior to City Council consideration and adoption.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. STUDY SESSION TO INTRODUCE PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE WE ALL BELONG (NWWAB) ZONING CODE AMENDMENTS, CITYWIDE MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS, AND PROPOSED REPEALING OF URBAN PLANS (PCTY-26-0004), AMENDMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS OF THE COSTA MESA GENERAL PLAN: CIRCULATION, COMMUNITY DESIGN, LAND USE, NOISE, AND OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION (PGPA-26-0002), AMENDMENTS TO THE NEWPORT BOULEVARD SPECIFIC PLAN (PSPA-26-0003), NORTH COSTA MESA SPECIFIC PLAN (PSPA-26-0004), AND ONE METRO WEST SPECIFIC PLAN (PSPA-26-0005)**

Presentation by Senior Planner Michelle Halligan and Dudek team.

Commission Questions and Discussion:

Vice Chair Zich raised concerns about how significant and unavoidable environmental impacts identified through the Program EIR or future project-level studies would be addressed, questioning whether such impacts could affect project approval. He also questioned the removal of residential parking minimums and how the City would address parking impacts that spill into surrounding streets and neighborhoods. Vice Chair Zich asked about the proposed 20-foot maximum setback, questioning why building placement should be mandated rather than left

to developers; staff explained it supports community goals for more walkable, people-oriented development as well as feedback received during public outreach events. Finally, he questioned the goal of obtaining City Council approval by October and whether additional study and community discussion could extend the process into December or January. Staff confirmed that the City is continuing to maintain its original timeline, as presenting during the contract approval, of bringing these decisions to City Council in October.

Commissioner Dickson asked how public outreach comments were documented and whether the outreach summary reflected participants' actual comments or staff interpretations. Staff explained that written comments were reproduced, included in the appendices of outreach summaries for all three rounds of outreach, where possible, while verbal comments were summarized. Staff heard a range of input and sought to balance varying feedback received as part of the proposed amendments.

He also sought clarification on publicly accessible open space, particularly how privately owned spaces would be managed, what activities could occur there, and how property owners could address security, liability, hours, and access. Staff explained that in addition to the objective design standards and zoning requirements, maintenance agreements with the developer would establish specific requirements for accessibility, operations, safety, and security.

Finally, Commissioner Dickson questioned how the Mixed-Use Overlay District (MUOD) would apply within existing specific plan areas. Staff clarified that, except for Housing Element sites, property owners could choose whether to opt into the MUOD or the Specific Plan, depending on which route was the better fit for the proposed project.

Commissioner Martinez asked a series of questions regarding the proposed Mixed-Use Overlay District (MUOD) and related development standards. He sought clarification that the overlay is optional for non-Housing Element sites, questioned the six-unit limit for attached townhomes, and asked whether façade standards could address design concerns instead. He also asked about tenant protections for residential common-interest developments, with staff confirming that applicable state housing laws and tenant protections would apply.

Commissioner Martinez questioned why developers would be required to complete off-site improvements in addition to paying development impact fees and asked about the process for appealing those requirements. He also sought clarification on theater location restrictions, the origin of a 50-foot buffer requirement for the Cal Val property, and upper-story setback standards. Staff provided additional information to these questions and clarified that upper-story setbacks apply only along interior property lines adjacent to residential zones.

Public comments:

Casey Griffin, representing South Coast Toyota, clarified that the dealership will remain at its current location and be remodeled, while the former Nissan property at 2850 Harbor Boulevard provides an opportunity for redevelopment under Measure K. He expressed concern that proposed design standards, such as setbacks, could reduce achievable residential density below the stated 30 units per acre. Griffin encouraged the City to consider the cumulative effect of design requirements on actual development capacity while expressing support for staff's thoughtful approach to planning along Harbor Boulevard.

George Sakioka, representing the Sakioka Company, expressed strong support for the City's Neighborhoods Where We All Belong (NWWAB) process and proposed code revisions, stating that they encourage high-quality design and future housing development. He noted that his family has owned property in Costa Mesa since the 1950s and is beginning to plan new housing on its North Costa Mesa property with a development partner and design team. While generally supportive of the MUOD Standards, he identified several provisions of concern, as it relates to his site, and stated that discussions with City staff are ongoing and productive.

Chris Meany, with Wilson and Meany, a development partner working with the Sakioka family, expressed enthusiasm for creating a new residential neighborhood in North Costa Mesa that meets state housing requirements and establishes a long-term legacy for the Sakioka family. He encouraged the City to provide greater flexibility in the proposed standards for larger developments, particularly regarding open-space definitions, circulation, and the proposed 60-foot street dimensions. He stated that additional flexibility would help create more walkable neighborhoods and ensure projects can achieve required housing densities.

Commission comments:

Commissioner Martinez recommended several revisions to the proposed MUOD and Objective Design Standards (ODS). He supported clarifying the overlay zoning definition and removing the six-unit limit for attached townhomes. He expressed concern about requiring developers to resurface streets directly adjacent to projects, questioned requiring traffic studies when existing thresholds are not met, and suggested reconsidering which uses require conditional or minor conditional use permits.

Commissioner Martinez also recommended allowing higher densities on non-Housing Element MUOD sites to better align with nearby Housing Element sites. He suggested relying on noise and building standards rather than restricting commercial operating and delivery hours. Regarding design standards, he

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encouraged greater flexibility in façade length, modulation, and material requirements to avoid unnecessary costs or loss of usable space. Finally, he supported more flexible private street standards focused primarily on providing adequate emergency access rather than requiring private streets to meet all City street design standards.

Commissioner Dickson emphasized the need to balance flexibility for development with protecting residents' quality of life. He supported allowing well-designed, larger projects flexibility from standard zoning requirements without requiring numerous variances, while still preserving key community priorities. He stressed that traffic and parking remain significant concerns, noting that most Costa Mesa residents continue to rely on cars and that parking spillover is a frequent community complaint. He supported traffic studies based on appropriate project or trip-generation thresholds and cautioned against eliminating parking requirements without considering real-world impacts.

Commissioner Dickson also advocated for protecting the Town Center vision, carefully balancing publicly accessible and resident open space, maintaining adequate setbacks and buffers next to residential neighborhoods, and preserving standards addressing light, air, privacy, and convenient parking. Overall, he encouraged the City to maintain development flexibility while ensuring new regulations protect the livability of both new developments and surrounding neighborhoods.

Chair Harlan supported increasing allowable density for non-Housing Element sites along Harbor Boulevard to promote more compatible development and avoid significant differences in scale between neighboring properties. He also encouraged staff to conduct a broader review of the Newport Boulevard Specific Plan, questioning whether its original goals and implementation measures remain relevant. Chair Harlan noted that development in the area has become increasingly pedestrian- and neighborhood-oriented and suggested the plan should better reflect those trends. He recommended removing or reconsidering outdated provisions, such as business improvement initiatives, signage programs, organizational efforts, and certain infrastructure studies, while providing the City Council with justification for any provisions that remain.

MOVED/SECOND: MARTINEZ/DICKSON

MOTION: Receive the presentation, request staff incorporate feedback, and file the report.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Chair Harlan, Vice Chair Zich, Commissioner Andrade, Commissioner Dickson, Commissioner Klepack, Commissioner Martinez, Commissioner Rojas

Nays: None

Absent: None

Recused: None
Motion carried: 7-0

ACTION: Planning Commission received the presentation, requested that staff incorporate feedback, and file the report.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS:

1. PUBLIC WORKS REPORT - None.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT - Director Tai provided an update on upcoming advanced planning initiatives. She stated that Neighborhoods Where We All Belong (NWWAB) would return to the Planning Commission in September and later proceed to the City Council. She also noted that the Planning Commission's Housing Element recommendation would go to the City Council on September 1, along with an item concerning the Airport Land Use Commission's opinion on the NWWAB effort. Additionally, the City Council is scheduled to revisit the Ohio House matter previously considered by the Planning Commission.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT:

1. CITY ATTORNEY REPORT - None.

ADJOURNMENT AT 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by:

CARRIE TAI, SECRETARY
COSTA MESA PLANNING COMMISSION