

The Development Code Update represents a comprehensive modernization of the City's regulatory framework, aligning land use and development standards with the vision set forth in the Cathedral City 2040 General Plan. While the following highlights capture many of the most significant changes, they are not exhaustive. Collectively, these updates are intended to advance implementation of the General Plan, stimulate economic development, reflect City Council priorities, ensure consistency with evolving State and Federal law, and incorporate best practices in contemporary planning and urban design. The result is a clearer, more flexible, and more predictable Code that supports high-quality development, improves livability, and better responds to the City's unique context.

Major Updates and Code Improvements

- **Creation of a Unified Downtown Mixed-Use Zone (MU-DT):**
The existing DRN and MXC zoning districts have been consolidated into a single Mixed-Use Downtown (MU-DT) zone. This change simplifies the regulatory framework for the downtown area, encourages a cohesive mix of uses, and supports a more vibrant, walkable urban core.
- **Renaming of Residential Zoning Districts:**
Residential zones have been renamed to more clearly communicate the intended development typologies and density ranges. This improves transparency for property owners, developers, and residents, and aligns zoning terminology with modern planning conventions.
- **Alignment of Parcel Sizes with General Plan Densities:**
Minimum parcel size requirements have been recalibrated across all zoning districts to ensure consistency with allowable densities in the 2040 General Plan. This resolves existing inconsistencies and enables more predictable and achievable development outcomes.
- **Consolidation of Commercial Zoning Districts:**
Multiple commercial zones have been streamlined into a more cohesive single zoning district that better reflects the range and intensity of commercial uses citywide, reducing redundancy and improving usability of the Code.
- **Creation of the Professional Office (PO) District:**
Business park and office zones have been merged into a single Professional Office (PO) zoning district, providing flexibility for a range of office and employment-generating uses while simplifying zoning classifications.
- **Elimination of the CTR Zone:**
The CTR zone has been removed and incorporated into the Mixed-Use Downtown

Zoning District. Given its limited geographic application, this change ensures consistency with surrounding land uses and supports integrated development patterns.

- **Citywide Land Use Consolidation:**

Land use categories have been standardized and consolidated across zoning districts to reduce duplication, clarify permitted uses, and improve administrative efficiency.

- **Streamlined Permitting Processes:**

The Code increases the number of ministerial approvals, reducing discretionary review where appropriate. This facilitates faster review by City staff and review bodies, lowers uncertainty, and supports economic development.

- **Centralized Development and Design Standards:**

Similar standards have been consolidated into unified sections, making the Code easier to navigate and apply.

- **New Shade Standards:**

A new section addresses shade provisions to mitigate the urban heat island effect and enhance comfort in the desert environment. These standards apply to both private development and the public realm and will be supplemented by additional forthcoming regulations.

- **Updated Landscaping Requirements:**

Landscaping standards now require layered planting (trees, shrubs, and groundcover), prohibit artificial turf, and establish objective limits on impervious surfaces. The standards also incorporate water-efficient landscaping practices consistent with regional water district guidance.

- **Refined Open Space Standards:**

Open space requirements have been enhanced, including updated screening standards for private open space to improve usability and privacy in residential developments.

- **Revised Development Standards:**

Setbacks and other dimensional standards have been reduced or adjusted in both residential and commercial zoning districts to encourage more efficient land use and better site design.

- **Modernized Parking Standards:**

Parking requirements have been reduced where appropriate to address over-supply, particularly in commercial areas. New procedures and findings provide a clear pathway for parking reductions, reflecting community input gathered during 2025 walking tours.

- **Innovative Parking Strategies:**

The Code introduces flexible solutions such as valet parking and shared parking arrangements for multi-tenant developments, promoting more efficient use of land.
- **Accessory Use Enhancements:**

New standards address accessory uses such as storage containers, providing clear criteria for their placement and use.
- **Updated Lighting Standards:**

Lighting regulations have been modernized to promote dark sky principles, reduce light pollution, and improve energy efficiency. Standards include curfews, dimming requirements, shielding, and automated controls.
- **Expanded and Tiered Use Permissions:**

Use regulations now better reflect intensity by scaling permissions (by right, ministerial, or conditional) based on factors such as size and operational characteristics.
- **New and Updated Use-Specific Standards (Division 4):**

Several new and revised sections provide detailed guidance for specific uses, including:

 - Integration of the recently adopted Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance
 - Standards for outdoor storage, displays, and sales
 - Updated regulations for drive-through and drive-in uses (circulation, stacking, hours, screening)
 - New standards for alcohol beverage manufacturing
 - Regulations for community gardens, including operations and maintenance
 - Development standards for bed and breakfast inns
 - Expanded and modernized home occupation allowances
 - New standards for small grocery stores and neighborhood markets to maintain community-serving scale
 - Regulations for restricted retail uses with buffers from sensitive receptors and design measures to deter crime
 - Updates to Density Bonus provisions to reflect current State law
- **Planned Unit Development (PUD) Overhaul:**

The PUD ordinance has been comprehensively revised to improve clarity, flexibility, and alignment with current development practices.

- **Objective Standards for Multifamily and Mixed-Use Development:**
New objective design and development standards provide clear expectations and support streamlined approvals.
- **Updated Subdivision Regulations:**
The subdivision ordinance has been fully modernized to align with State law and eliminate reliance on outdated County standards.
- **Expanded Definitions:**
Definitions have been clarified and expanded to reduce ambiguity and improve consistent interpretation of the Code.
- **Refined Permit Structure:**
The permit framework has been reorganized and clarified, including updates to discretionary processes such as PUD approvals.
- **Removal of Outdated Provisions:**
Obsolete language, standards, and terminology have been eliminated to reflect current policy direction and priorities.
- **Enhanced Use of Tables and Graphics:**
The Code incorporates more visual tools to improve readability, usability, and comprehension.
- **Improved Organization and Formatting:**
A restructured format enhances navigation and clarity for all users of the Code.
- **Implementation of the 2040 General Plan Land Use Framework:**
The updated Code directly translates the General Plan's land use vision into actionable regulations, ensuring consistency between policy and implementation.

Together, these changes create a more user-friendly, forward-looking Development Code that supports quality growth, economic vitality, and an improved built environment.